

**‘The Representation of Ireland and Irish Issues  
in Anthony Trollope’s Irish Fiction.’**

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This thesis, the first detailed scholarly analysis of Trollope's Irish fiction, examines the nature of Trollope's representation of Ireland and Irish issues, and identifies its formative influences and motivations. It is an interdisciplinary contextual study which has at its heart a close reading of Trollope's Irish novels and short stories. They are investigated with reference to the biographical, historical and cultural context of their creation, and in the light of current historical and literary critical thinking. The representation is measured for its authenticity. Ultimately the findings are used to draw general conclusions about the relationship between England and Ireland in the nineteenth century, and how this emerged in the literature of the period.

The Introduction establishes the background, aims, sources, methodology and structure of the study. It also provides a broad contextual description. Chapter One deals with Trollope's depiction of religion in Ireland. In particular it examines the degree to which this accords with or contests prevailing attitudes. The second chapter looks at Trollope's representation of the nature and role of women in his Irish fiction. It questions whether it duplicates the competing orthodox and progressive elements identified in his portrayal of women in his English fiction, asks how important nationality is seen to be in his characterisation, whether his Irish women carry symbolic weight and if so, to what purpose. The third chapter investigates Trollope's depiction of rural Ireland through his Irish landlords and tenants. It examines the degree of knowledge and insight displayed and measures the impact on it of Trollope's moral vision and mission, and the increasing significance and contentiousness of the Land Question.

Chapter Four moves on to a subject which presented Trollope with significant personal and artistic challenges – the Famine of 1845-51. The conflict which arises between the emotional and moral demands of his fiction and his Providentialist explanation of the Famine is investigated. The final chapter attempts to account for his anomalously dismissive and myopic approach to Irish nationalism.

The study concludes that Trollope's representation of Ireland is frequently insightful, nuanced and resistant to anti-Irish stereotyping. Where this is not the case, his particular relationship with Ireland and contemporary modes of viewing, valuing and imaging nationality emerge as particularly influential.

The value of this thesis lies primarily in its provision of the first full-length examination of Trollope's Irish fiction. It also draws together previously unconnected biographical, historiographical and literary-critical texts. In so doing, it offers a significant new insight into the nature and formation of not only Trollope's Irish writing, but also of the forces at work more generally in the creation of fictional representations of Ireland. This in turn sheds new light on the fascinating interface between Ireland and Britain during the nineteenth century.

**For Nic, Jonathan  
and Dan**

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Some of the material in Chapter Four has already appeared in 'Anthony Trollope's representation of the Great Famine', in Peter Gray (ed), *Victoria's Ireland? Irishness and Britishness, 1837-1901* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), pp.141-150.

# CONTENTS

Introduction	1
Chapter 1: Religion	25
Chapter 2: Women	78
Chapter 3: Landlords and Tenants	139
Chapter 4: The Famine	200
Chapter 5: Irish Nationalism	246
Conclusion	290
Bibliography	295

# INTRODUCTION

## Background

This study has grown out of a fascination with the complex relationship between Britain and Ireland in the nineteenth century, and, in particular, with how this manifests itself in the literature of the period. As a prominent English writer who was resident in Ireland for eighteen years, and who wrote extensively about that country, Anthony Trollope stood out as the ideal subject. He came with the wonderful bonus of the opportunity to undertake the first full-length examination of his Irish fiction.

## Aims

The study seeks to examine three key questions: First, what is the nature of Trollope's representation of Ireland and Irish issues? Second, what are its formative motivations and influences? Third, what, if anything, can be gleaned from the analysis of these about the nineteenth-century relationship between Britain and Ireland, and how this was translated into the literature of the day?

A dizzying series of subsidiary questions arises out of these general ones. They vary in significance with regard to the subject under discussion but include: How far does the depiction support or challenge prevailing images of, and attitudes to, Ireland? How does it respond to events and changes in Ireland? How far is it influenced by other Irish and English literary representations, and how does it compare with these? What is the impact on it of Trollope's particular application of the novel form, the language he chooses and the imagery he selects? How far is he restricted by contemporary expectations of the form? What part is played by Trollope's background, beliefs and his time in Ireland?

## Sources, Methodology and Structure

At the core of the analysis is a close reading of six novels set partly or entirely in Ireland, peopled by Irish characters and dealing with Irish issues: Trollope's debut novel *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* written between 1843 and 1845 and published in 1847; *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* written 1846-7 and published in 1848; *Castle Richmond*, written 1859-60 and published in 1860; *Phineas Finn* written 1866-7 and serialized in *Saint Pauls Magazine* from October 1867 until May 1869; *An Eye for an Eye* written in 1870 but not serialized in the *Whitehall Review* until 1878-9; and *The Landleaguers*, written in 1882, left unfinished at Trollope's death in December of that year, but serialized in *Life* between November 1882 and October 1883. To these are added two Irish short stories: 'The O'Conors of Castle Conor, County Mayo' which first appeared in 1860 and 'Father Giles of Ballymoy', published in *Argosy* in 1866.<sup>1</sup>

A series of letters about the Irish Famine written by Trollope to the *Examiner* which appeared between August 1849 and June 1850 provides an invaluable non-fictional account of that crucial time. This is used to inform analysis of Trollope's fictional portrayal, while the author's personal letters and his *An Autobiography* (1883) are employed to illuminate biographical events, relationships, beliefs, attitudes and artistic principles.<sup>2</sup>

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<sup>1</sup> Anthony Trollope, *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* (London: Newby, 1847; Rev. edn., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); *The Kellys and the O'Kellys, or Landlords and Tenants* (London: Colburn, 1848; Rev. edn., Oxford University Press, 1982); *Castle Richmond* (London, Chapman and Hall, 1860; Rev. edn., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989); *Phineas Finn; The Irish Member* (London: *Saint Pauls Magazine*, Oct. 1867-May 1869; Rev. edn., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); *An for an Eye* (London: *Whitehall Review*, Aug.1878-Feb. 1879; Rev. edn. London: Anthony Blond, Doughty Library, 1966); *The Landleaguers* (London: *Life*, Nov.1882-Oct.1883; Rev. edn., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1993); 'The O'Conors of Castle Conor, County Mayo' (London: *Harper's New Monthly Magazine*, May 1860), in Anthony Trollope, *Tales of All Countries* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1864; http; 'Father Giles of Ballymoy' (London: *Argosy*, May, 1866), in Anthony Trollope, *Novels and Stories* (London: Pilot, 1946),pp. 397-414.

<sup>2</sup> Trollope's letters to the *Examiner* about the Famine have been edited twice. The earlier edition includes a supplementary letter which is not part of his commissioned series, making seven letters in all: Helen Garlinghouse King (ed.), 'Trollope's Letters to the *Examiner*', *Princeton University Library Chronicle* 26 (1965), pp.71-101; Lance O. Tingay (ed.), *The Irish Famine: Six Letters to the Examiner, 1849-50 by Anthony Trollope* (London: Silverbridge, 1987). Anthony Trollope, *An Autobiography* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1883; Rev. edn., London: Penguin, 1996).

This interdisciplinary study is necessarily a contextual one allowing analysis of the texts to illuminate nineteenth-century perceptions and ideas of Ireland and its relationship with Britain, and also investigating how these formed and informed the texts. In each chapter the novels and stories are examined not only in the biographical, historical, intellectual and literary context of their creation but also with reference to subsequent historiographical and literary critical works. A measurement of Trollope's representation against the historiography is conducted as part of an estimation of its accuracy, for while these works are obviously fiction, their author's claims for their authenticity make this illuminating with regard to how far he achieves his purpose.

Five areas - religion, women, the landlord-tenant relationship, the Famine and Irish nationalism – have been selected as foci by reason of their prominence in the debates and literature of the period, their Irish significance and their contentiousness in terms of the relationship between Ireland and Britain.

Given the interconnectedness of these themes and issues no one simple chapter order suggested itself. With the exception of the Famine, their representation extends across all of Trollope's works, so no straightforward chronological sequence is possible. In the end I have adopted an order which moves from issues which, while they took on a particular complexion in Ireland, were also a more general preoccupation (religion and the nature and rôle of women), to those which, while they raised anxiety levels in Britain, are more particularly Irish (the Famine and Irish nationalism). This also appropriately reflects the trajectory of Trollope's responses to Irish issues from clear-sighted tolerance to blinkered intransigence.

Within the chapters - with one exception - the texts are examined in a broadly chronological order which allows an analysis in relation to changing conditions and attitudes, including those of the author. A thematic approach was deemed more appropriate for the chapter on women as, rather than the impact of the passage of time, the extent of its orthodoxy is of crucial importance to an understanding of Trollope's depiction.



## Trollope and Ireland

On December 9 1882, three days after Trollope's death, the critic Richard Holt Hutton in insisting that England had lost a uniquely valuable and accurate delineator of English society, identified the image that would travel with the author down the decades. '[W]ithout a familiar knowledge of [his] works', he declaimed, 'no historian who emulated the style of Macaulay would even attempt to delineate English society in the third quarter of the present century.'<sup>3</sup> It is still primarily as the author of works which vividly convey the essentially English establishment worlds of the cathedral cloister and parliamentary chambers that he is recognized and to the point where, outside particular academic circles, the information that Trollope lived in and wrote about Ireland is greeted with surprise. This perception of his essential Englishness goes some way to explaining the relative neglect of his Irish fiction. It has suffered through not being sufficiently English to interest English academics, whilst, given its authorship, being too English to qualify for inclusion in analyses of nineteenth-century Irish fiction. To a large extent R.C.Terry's complaint in 1977 that these works had been unfairly neglected as 'aberrations from the main course of his fiction' still stands.<sup>4</sup> Although John Cronin, Robert Tracy, Owen Dudley Edwards, Roy Foster and Melissa Fegan and others have since written accomplished articles and chapters which point to their interest and merit, no comprehensive study of Trollope's Irish fiction has been undertaken.<sup>5</sup> Trollope finds his way into some studies and anthologies of Irish

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<sup>3</sup> Unsigned essay, *Spectator*, 9 December 1882, pp. 573-4, in Donald Smalley (ed.), *Anthony Trollope: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), pp.504-8 (p.504).

<sup>4</sup> R.C.Terry, *Anthony Trollope: The Artist in Hiding* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977), p.175.

<sup>5</sup> John Cronin, 'Trollope and the Matter of Ireland' in Tony Bareham (ed.), *Anthony Trollope* (London: Vision Press, 1980), pp.13-31; Robert Tracy, ' "The Unnatural Ruin": Trollope and Nineteenth-Century Irish Fiction', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 37/3 (December 1982), pp.358-82; Owen Dudley Edwards, 'Anthony Trollope, the Irish writer', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 38 (1983-4), pp.1-42; R.F.Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch: Connections in Irish and English History*, (London: Penguin, 1993); R.F.Foster, *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making it Up in Ireland* (London: Allen Lane The Penguin Press, 2001), pp.127-47; Melissa Fegan, 'The Immigrant's Evasion: The Subtext of Trollope's Irish 'Famine' Novels' in *Literature and the Irish Famine, 1845-1919* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 2002), pp.104-130.

fiction but is still excluded from others.<sup>6</sup> On the evidence of the most recent research, it is for its location on the intersection of Anglo-Irish relations that its recognition and re-evaluation is guaranteed. Of the eleven articles in a 2004 issue of *Victorian Literature and Culture* dedicated to Victorian Ireland, four examine Trollope's Irish fiction.<sup>7</sup> Interestingly Hutton's recognition of his historical value has proved accurate in an Irish context in as much as, in relation to some Irish issues, Trollope is more likely to be referenced by historians than by literary critics.<sup>8</sup> It should be noted, however, that aside from issues of nationality Trollope's Irish fiction was likely to suffer in any case as belonging to a period which has lain in the shadow cast back on it by the giants of the Irish Literary Revival.<sup>9</sup>

Despite his apparently inescapable Englishness, there is no difficulty in establishing Anthony Trollope's Irish credentials. In his novel *An Eye for an Eye*, the young Englishman Fred Neville chooses to delay taking up his responsibilities as heir to his uncle's titles and estates by going with his regiment to Ireland. This proves to be his undoing. However, he is undone not primarily by the Irish air, the Irish whiskey, the untamed landscape of Ireland's west coast, or even the dark charms of his Irish Kate O'Hara, but rather by his own misreading of the country as an exotic, romantic location in which the usual rules do not apply, where he can seduce Kate with promises of marriage

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<sup>6</sup> W. J. McCormack by 1994 was noting that some literary critics were 'grudgingly' admitting Trollope's Irish-set novels for consideration: W. J. McCormack, *From Burke to Beckett; Ascendancy, Tradition and Betrayal in Literary History* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1994), pp.445-6. Trollope earns an entry in Robert Welch (ed.), *Oxford Companion to Irish Literature* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), and extracts from his work appear in Colm Tóibín (ed.), *The Penguin Book of Irish Fiction* (London: Penguin, 2001). He is considered in Seamus Deane, *A Short History of Irish Literature* (London: Hutchinson, 1986) but James M. Cahalan's limiting of Irish novels to those set in Ireland by Irish authors excludes Trollope from *The Irish Novel: A Critical History* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1988).

<sup>7</sup> *Victorian Literature and Culture* 32,1 (2004): Laura M. Berol, 'The Anglo-Irish Threat in Thackeray's and Trollope's Writings of the 1840s', pp.103-16; Bridget Matthews-Kane, 'Love's Labour's lost: Romantic Allegory In Trollope's *Castle Richmond*', pp.117-32; Jane Elizabeth Dougherty, 'An Angel in the House: The Act of Union and Anthony Trollope's Irish Hero', pp.133-46; Patrick Lonergan, 'The Representation of Phineas Finn: Anthony Trollope's Palliser Series and Victorian Ireland', pp.147-58. See also Neil McCaw, 'Some Mid-Victorian Irishness(es): Trollope, Thackeray, Eliot' in Neil McCaw (ed.), *Writing Irishness in Nineteenth-Century British Culture* (Aldershot: Ashgate, 2004), pp.129-57.

<sup>8</sup> Trollope has in particular attracted the attention of historians of the Irish Land Question. See below pp.192-3.

<sup>9</sup> Cahalan, p.xvii.

despite his promise to his uncle not to return with an Irish Catholic wife. Fred metaphorically teeters on the moral brink until he is actually pushed to his death from the Cliffs of Moher by Kate's demented and vengeful mother.<sup>10</sup> For him life as what Roy Foster describes as a 'marginal man' proves unsustainable.<sup>11</sup> For the young Trollope himself, however, it had the opposite effect. Socially, professionally, creatively, emotionally, morally it was the making of him. If here in his fiction he used Ireland as a testing ground, a means and location for the trial and transformation of character, it also existed for him as the actual location and means of a transformation in his own life. Marginality for him, though not without its later conflicts, was initially a wholly positive experience. As his biographer N. John Hall has noted, in Ireland Trollope underwent a 'miraculous metamorphosis'.<sup>12</sup> Robert Tracy has even gone so far as to insist that:

Ireland made Trollope. He is perhaps the only nineteenth-century Englishman - perhaps one of the very few Englishmen in history - to have benefited from an involvement in what Conor Cruise O'Brien likes to call 'the Irish predicament.'<sup>13</sup>

And even Michael Sadleir, who believed that Trollope's concentration on the condition of Ireland threatened to destroy his literary career before it was properly underway, allowed that, 'Ireland produced the man ...[and] by friendliness, sport and open air saved Trollope from himself.'<sup>14</sup> Moreover, Trollope in *An Autobiography* displayed no doubt as to the benefits of his sojourn in Ireland.<sup>15</sup>

Born in London in 1815 his childhood was blighted by his father's ill-health, professional and financial failure, increasingly volatile temper and mental state. The situation was exacerbated by the disappearance of an anticipated inheritance when an elderly uncle married and, inconveniently,

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<sup>10</sup> *An Eye for an Eye*.

<sup>11</sup> Foster, *Paddy*, pp.281-305.

<sup>12</sup> N.J.Hall, *Trollope: A Biography* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1981), p.81.

<sup>13</sup> Tracy, 'The Unnatural Ruin' p.359.

<sup>14</sup> Michael Sadleir, *Trollope: A Commentary* (London: Constable, 1927), p.142.

<sup>15</sup> *Autobiography*, p.43

produced an heir. Trollope *père* would eventually have to escape the bailiffs by fleeing to Belgium in 1834 where he died the following year. Anthony's school days at Harrow, Sunbury, Winchester and finally at Harrow again were particularly miserable. He was isolated by his comparative poverty, lack of social standing and his temperament and appearance.<sup>16</sup> At Winchester, for example, when his father followed his mother and brother on a moneymaking venture to America he left the young Anthony's college bills unpaid so that the school tradesmen refused him credit. As a result he became even more of a 'Pariah'. In his autobiography he painfully recalls his despair:

I suffered horribly! I could make no stand against it. I had no friends to whom I could pour out my sorrows. I was big, and awkward and ugly, and, I have no doubt, skulked about in a most unattractive manner. Of course I was ill-dressed and dirty. But ah, how well I remember all the agonies of my young heart, how I considered whether I should always be alone - whether I could not find my way up to the top of that college tower, and from thence put an end to everything.<sup>17</sup>

Such extreme experiences left him with what he describes as 'the weakness of a great desire to be loved.'<sup>18</sup> It expanded into a hunger for social acceptance and approval encouraged by a conservative belief that 'the society of the well-born and of the wealthy will as a rule be worth seeking.'<sup>19</sup>

He left school at nineteen with, at least by his own estimation, little effective education, 'an idle, desolate hanger on ... without any idea of a career, a profession or a trade.'<sup>20</sup> Eventually he joined the General Post Office in London as a clerk but his seven years there were neither happy nor successful ones. By his own account he was unpunctual, spent time with a 'fast set' given to smoking, drinking and playing cards and 'was hopelessly in debt.'<sup>21</sup> Nor was he morally comfortable with his lifestyle describing it as 'wretched. I hated the

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<sup>16</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 7-18.

<sup>17</sup> *Ibid.*, p.12.

<sup>18</sup> *Ibid.*, p.43.

<sup>19</sup> *Ibid.*, p.111.

<sup>20</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23.

<sup>21</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.34-5.

office. I hated my work. More than all I hated my idleness.'<sup>22</sup> His relationship with his superiors was not an easy one. It seems reasonable to assume that when Trollope happened to be the first to read a report that the position of Surveyor's Clerk in the central District of Ireland was to fall vacant and applied for it, there were some who were glad to see the back of him. R. H. Super, who has studied Post Office documents from the time, has concluded that Trollope's account of the move, like other accounts in his autobiography, contains some exaggerations.<sup>23</sup> His predecessor in Ireland, one George L. Turner whom Trollope described as 'absurdly incapable' was not dismissed as Trollope implied but transferred to the Money Order Office in Dublin. This is an illuminating point because Trollope used Turner's alleged, ineptitude as a measure of the low regard in which Ireland was held, concluding: 'It was probably thought then that none but a man absurdly incapable would go on a mission to the west of Ireland.'<sup>24</sup> To some extent this is Trollope as the conscious narrator of an exemplary tale wanting to emphasise the depths to which he had sunk, both in his own estimation and that of others, in order to provide a definite contrast with his later personal and professional success. A number of the anomalies in *An Autobiography* arise out of this deliberate crafting of plot and character to which Trollope is irresistibly drawn even in this non-fictional work.<sup>25</sup> It also seems probable, however, that Trollope was remembering perceptions of Ireland held by himself and others at the time, perceptions which he would have a vested interest in changing when that country became the site of his first achievements.

During his time in Ireland Trollope covered most of the country. He was stationed in Banagher, King's County until 1844. From there he moved to Clonmel, County Tipperary where he stayed until 1848. His next posting was to Mallow, County Cork until 1853. From 1853 until 1855 he was in Belfast and

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<sup>22</sup> *Ibid.*, p.37.

<sup>23</sup> R.H.Super, *Trollope in the Post Office* (Ann Arbor: University of Michigan Press, 1981), p.10

<sup>24</sup> *Autobiography*, p.42.

<sup>25</sup> For analyses of the 'anomalies' in Trollope's *An Autobiography* see James R. Kincaid, 'Trollope's Fictional Autobiography', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 37 (1982), pp.340-9; R.H.Super, 'Truth and Fiction in Trollope's *Autobiography*', *Nineteenth Century Literature* 48 (1993), pp.74-88.

finally in Dublin from 1855 until 1859.<sup>26</sup> Chapter four of *An Autobiography* opens with the contrast between his early miserable dissolute life and his later happiness and success, and especially the rôle played in this by his time in Ireland. He wants to correct any idea that he might have conveyed of his suffering being merely absurd, insisting: 'I was wretched, - sometimes almost unto death, ... There had clung to me a feeling that I had been looked upon always as an evil, an encumbrance, a useless thing.'<sup>27</sup> Following this, the transformation in Ireland is all the more dramatic and complete: 'But from the day on which I set my foot in Ireland all these evils went away from me. Since that time who has had a happier life than mine?'<sup>28</sup> While Trollope later makes the reader aware of his own energetic participation in his reformation, here Ireland is represented as possessing almost magical powers. Trollope is in a passive rôle, the evils which had been visited upon him simply disappearing. A list of his achievements in Ireland makes this understandable. The lonely, impoverished, inefficient twenty-six year old Post Office clerk who arrived in Ireland in 1841 would leave in 1859 a well-regarded civil servant, successful writer, husband and father of two children. The Post Office came to hold him in such esteem that during his residence in Ireland he was dispatched on missions to the West Country, Egypt and the West Indies. Although his literary ambitions predate 1841, his first novel *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* was written there and about Ireland as was his second *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*. *La Vendée* set in France and those quintessentially English novels *The Warden*, *Barchester Towers*, *The Three Clerks*, *Doctor Thorne* and *The Bertrams* were all published while he was based in Ireland.<sup>29</sup> The serialization

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<sup>26</sup> James Pope Hennessy, *Anthony, Trollope* (St.Albans: Granada, 1973), pp.69-180; Richard Mullen, *Anthony Trollope: A Victorian in His World* (London, Duckworth, 1990), pp.153-327; Hall, *Trollope*, pp.81-184; Victoria Glendinning, *Trollope* (London: Pimlico, 1993), pp.114-259.

<sup>27</sup> *Autobiography*, p.43.

<sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>29</sup> Anthony Trollope, *La Vendee* (London: Colborn, 1850; Rev. edn., London: Penguin, 1993); *The Warden* (London: Longman, 1855; Rev. edn., London: Penguin, 1982); *Barchester Towers* (London, 1857; Rev. edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); *The Three Clerks* (London: Bentley, 1858; Rev. edn., London: Penguin, 1993); *Doctor Thorne* (London: Chapman & Hall 1858; Rev. edn., London: Penguin, 1991); *The Bertrams* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1859; Rev. edn., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1991).

of *Framley Parsonage* in the new *Cornhill Magazine* in 1860 established Trollope as one of the foremost novelists of the day and coincided with his return to England.<sup>30</sup>

Behind both of these professional successes lies the emergence of a definite work ethic and a disciplined application not apparent in the London Trollope. He, however, was a young man, not just willing, but made desperate to reform by the torment of self-loathing. Coincident with this, he found himself in a job that freed him from his desk and allowed him to gallop around the countryside - an activity he found even more exhilarating when in pursuit of a fox.<sup>31</sup> Although his actual salary was not high, travel expenses and payments for days spent away from home made the move financially lucrative so that it became possible by 1844 for him to support not only himself but also a wife.<sup>32</sup> The necessity of keeping meticulous records in order to claim his expenses encouraged more orderly habits and the confidence of the young Trollope can only have been boosted by finding himself elevated from social inferior to the elite position enjoyed by British officials in Ireland.<sup>33</sup> The extent of his social acceptance is suggested by his comment that his 'Irish circle' was offended by his choice of an English bride.<sup>34</sup> He had evidently flourished in the atmosphere of kindness and hospitality he found in Banagher and had become quite the popular young bachelor!

In his autobiography Trollope owns that he had only very vague ideas about Ireland before his arrival as 'a land flowing with fun and whiskey, in which irregularity was the rule of life, and where broken heads were looked upon as honourable badges.'<sup>35</sup> Archibald Green, the narrator of his autobiographical anecdote 'Father Giles of Ballymoy', is also newly arrived on the island and carries with him a fear of 'the wild lawlessness and general savagery of the

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<sup>30</sup> Pope Hennessy, pp.69-180; Mullen; *Anthony Trollope*, pp.153-327; Hall, *Trollope*, pp.81-184; Glendinning, pp. 114 -259.

<sup>31</sup> Pope Hennessy, p.75; Mullen, *Anthony Trollope*, p.121; Hall, *Trollope*, p.85; Glendinning, p.121.

<sup>32</sup> Mullen, *Anthony Trollope*, p.118, p.152.

<sup>33</sup> *Ibid.*, p.152.

<sup>34</sup> *Autobiography*, p.50. See too the autobiographical 'O'Conors of Castle Conor' in which a rather gauche young Englishman is embraced by the generous and eponymous O'Conors.

<sup>35</sup> *Autobiography*, p.44.

people' and especially as they might be directed at an English Protestant.<sup>36</sup> A combination of this apprehension and the superior, brusque manner of a nervous young man asserting himself amongst foreigners, prevents explanations, or at least Green's comprehension of them, and an amusing misunderstanding develops. He believes that the priest, who has kindly agreed to allow the traveller to have the spare bed in his hotel room, is an interloper trying to climb into his bed with him. Green attacks him and is for a time in danger of his life from irate parishioners for having assaulted their beloved priest. Significantly, in the end, however, all is well and the two even become firm friends.<sup>37</sup> Like Green, the young Anthony Trollope arrived with some vague and stereotyped ideas of his new home and could be bullishly brusque and offhand, but the value he attaches to personal experience as a means of dispelling prejudice is underlined by this short story and is echoed in his autobiography when he confirms that his own uninformed, stereotyped idea of Irishness was unfounded: 'The Irish people did not murder me, nor did they even break my head.'<sup>38</sup>

Trollope's literary ambitions did not originate in Ireland. In his autobiography, he explains that from childhood he 'was always going about with some castle-in-the-air firmly built within [his] mind'<sup>39</sup> The sixty-year old author looking back remembered these early tales as having some of the very qualities he admired in successful fiction - consistency of character and plot, and adherence to reality. Writing on his mother's behalf to her publisher in 1835, Trollope inquired whether Richard Bentley could help him publish some 'lucubrations' of his own.<sup>40</sup> He dates ambitions to be an author to this period at the end of his schooldays. Believing poetry and drama to be too difficult and thinking he was not sufficiently well-educated for history, biography or essay

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<sup>36</sup> 'Father Giles', p.399.

<sup>37</sup> 'Father Giles', pp.397- 414.

<sup>38</sup> Super, *Trollope*, p.17, reports an incident in 1848 when A.T.'s harsh treatment of a mail guard earned him a disciplinary warning; *Autobiography*, p.46.

<sup>39</sup> *Autobiography*, p.32.

<sup>40</sup> A.T. to Richard Bentley, May 1835, in N. John Hall (ed.), *The Letters of Anthony Trollope* (Stanford Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1983), p.1.



writing, he opted for novel-writing.<sup>41</sup> His youth and the inertia which accompanied his time in London seems to have been the main obstacle to achieving his goal. His new more active and ordered life in Ireland provided the correct conditions and then the subject matter for his first novel. Wandering in County Leitrim with an old friend he came across the remains of a country house and 'while still among the ruined walls and decayed beams' fabricated the plot of *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*.<sup>42</sup> He began writing in 1843 and it was published in 1847 when Trollope was almost 32. It is a thoroughly Irish tale from its very specific and vivid setting, to the tragic disintegration of the Macdermots of the title, Catholic landowners with an estate too small and encumbered to generate the income necessary to sustain their pretensions to gentility. The beleaguered, well-meaning son of the house, Thady, kills his sister's seducer in the mistaken belief that he is abducting her, and is eventually hanged. His sister dies and his father, Larry, descends into drink and madness. Trollope displays a remarkable knowledge of Irish rural life and demonstrates his ability to step beyond contemporary literary and social norms - an Irish Catholic priest is offered as the moral touchstone of the book. While the tale is certainly an Irish one, the way in which Trollope draws on his experience with his troubled, difficult father to sensitively portray that of Thady and Larry implies an appreciation of the universal nature of human experience.

Trollope's second novel, *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*, published in 1848 is also very specifically set in Ireland. It opens with Daniel O'Connell's trial for conspiracy to incite disaffection and then moves to the west of Ireland, but it is a much less sombre piece than *The Macdermots*, a double-plotted novel of manners which is more recognizably Trollopian. Two courtships are played out at contrasting levels of Irish society between Frank O'Kelly (Lord Ballindine) and the heiress Fanny Wyndham, and the tenant farmer Martin Kelly and Anty Lynch. Obstacles arise to hinder the smooth passage of romance, characters must mature, endure, and learn the correct proportions of love and money that

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<sup>41</sup> *Autobiography*, p.39.

<sup>42</sup> *Ibid.*, p.49.

ensure happiness, but in the end the happy couples are united, and the villain, Anty's monstrous brother Barry, dispatched.<sup>43</sup>

Although not harshly treated by the critics, neither of these novels was a commercial success. The publisher of *The Kellys* attributed this to a dislike of Irish subjects, and the fact that both novels were published during the Famine must have played a part in a popular resistance to them.<sup>44</sup> Roy Foster has noted how representations of the Irish in *Punch* became more hostile at this time.<sup>45</sup> Melissa Fegan has similarly detected a hardening of attitudes to Irish distress in the *Times* and the *Illustrated London News*.<sup>46</sup> It was with a conscious awareness of the problematic nature of Irish subject matter that Trollope returned to it in fiction some eleven years later. *Castle Richmond* is the story of the worthy Fitzgerald family threatened with ruin because of an apparently bigamous marriage, set against the background of the Irish Famine of 1845-51, but written in 1859. In its opening chapter, Trollope concedes that, 'there is a strong feeling against things Irish... Irish servants need not apply, Irish acquaintances are treated with limited confidence, Irish cousins are regarded as being decidedly dangerous, and Irish stories are not popular with the booksellers.'<sup>47</sup> However, he protests the 'injustice of the above conclusions.'<sup>48</sup> He intends to use his extensive knowledge of Ireland to correct misrepresentations but on this occasion he was also 'leaving the Green Isle and my old friends, and would fain say a word of them as I do so.'<sup>49</sup> Although the elements of the Famine, a threatened inheritance and romantic entanglements are not obviously compatible ones, it is possible to imagine ways in which they could form a cohesive whole. However Trollope's stance on the causes and handling of the Famine make this impossible. Imbued with affection for Ireland and an abiding determination to reflect reality, but faced with the horrific suffering it

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<sup>43</sup> *The Kellys*.

<sup>44</sup> *Autobiography*, p.55.

<sup>45</sup> Foster, *Paddy*, p.174.

<sup>46</sup> Fegan, pp.41-66.

<sup>47</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.1

<sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>49</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

caused, Trollope, the British official, concluded that the Famine was the work of merciful Providence - God doing for the people what they could not do for themselves and turning a wretched land into a prosperous and happy one, and, moreover, that under the circumstances the government did all that it could. To emphasise the misery of the Famine would both undermine his main plot and challenge this reasoning, so he resorts to minimising it and striking a note of comforting reassurance for his English readers. Nonetheless a conflict remains between the main story of money, titles and romance, and the secondary one of the Famine.<sup>50</sup>

Coming up against resistance to Irish subjects, Trollope had to interrupt his writing of this novel to write *Framley Parsonage* because the new *Cornhill Magazine* did not want an Irish story for its first serialization but 'An English tale, on English life, with a clerical flavour.'<sup>51</sup>

Trollope left Ireland at the end of 1859 still with a feeling of fondness for the 'Green Isle' but also with a sense of escaping its isolation and moving back to the centre: 'I thought that a man who could write books ought not to live in Ireland - ought to live within the reach of publishers, the clubs, and the dinner-parties of the metropolis.'<sup>52</sup> His return to the mainland provided a welcome opportunity to satisfy his craving for popularity amongst men he admired and respected. He did not, as he put it, 'scruple' to declare that 'the society of the well-born and of the wealthy will as a rule be worth seeking' and seek it he did, joining a number of London clubs.<sup>53</sup>

The main Irish ingredient in *Phineas Finn, The Irish Member*, written about seven years later, and its sequel *Phineas Redux*, written in 1870-1871 is the eponymous hero himself. Trollope claimed to regret making him Irish, believing that a lack of respect for Irish politics made him unsympathetic and that he had blundered into this decision because he was visiting Ireland when

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<sup>50</sup> See Chapter Four, below

<sup>51</sup> *Autobiography*, p.94.

<sup>52</sup> *Ibid.*, p.88.

<sup>53</sup> *Ibid.*, p.111.

the idea of the story came to him.<sup>54</sup> Phineas is a fictional example of what Roy Foster has termed a 'Mick on the make', the alliterative twin to his 'marginal man' - in other words an Irishman reversing Trollope's journey by travelling to Britain to make good.<sup>55</sup> In these two novels, and more briefly in *The Prime Minister*, Phineas rises from being the son of an Irish Catholic doctor and aspiring MP to First Lord of the Admiralty. Ultimately, therefore, his Irishness proves not to be a bar. This is largely because, as Foster has pointed out, he is an acceptable Irishman.<sup>56</sup> He is attractive, charming, socially adept, does not flaunt his Catholicism and, when the real test comes, stands against Home Rule. Despite Trollope's apparent regret, making Phineas Irish also has the literary advantage, noted by John Cronin, of providing an outsider as a central figure through whom he can better explain and illuminate the complexities of British political and parliamentary life - the main theme of these novels.<sup>57</sup> Trollope's reservations about his hero's Irishness were almost certainly influenced by the fact that events had again intervened to affect the climate of opinion towards Ireland. While *Phineas Finn* was being serialized, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, supported by its American sister organisation the Fenian Brotherhood, staged an abortive insurrection in Ireland. Their activities attracted more concern when the location shifted to the mainland. In 1867 an unsuccessful attempt was made to seize Chester Castle and capture arms. The executions of 'The Manchester Martyrs' who had attempted to free their leader, Thomas Kelly, as he was being transported to prison in Manchester were followed by an explosion at Clerkenwell prison which killed twelve people.<sup>58</sup> The problematic Irish were again in the headlines.

*An Eye for an Eye* though written in 1870 was not published until 1878. So industrious and prolific was the once idle post office clerk that it was thought

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<sup>54</sup> *Ibid.*, p.202.

<sup>55</sup> Foster, *Paddy*, pp.263-281.

<sup>56</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.287-8.

<sup>57</sup> Cronin, p.30.

<sup>58</sup> Alvin Jackson, *Ireland, 1798-1998* (Oxford: Blackwell, 1999), p.100. For Fenians in England see Patrick Quinlivan and Paul Rose, *The Fenians in England, 1865-72: A Sense of Insecurity* (London, 1962, New Imprint: Calder, 1982); John Newsinger, *Fenianism in Mid-Victorian Britain* (London: Pluto, 1994)

judicious to hold back some of his work.<sup>59</sup> It is also possible that he and others were apprehensive about publishing this rather bleak Irish story. When he returned to the subject of Ireland some twelve years later at the end of his life, he produced a no less bleak but more bitterly biased work. It is a journey in attitude which Cronin has aptly characterised as a move from 'sympathetic insight to jingoistic diatribe'.<sup>60</sup>

Trollope began planning *The Landleaguers* in February 1882 and it was left unfinished at his death in December of that year.<sup>61</sup> When Charles Stewart Parnell, already President of the Home Rule Confederation, became President of the Land League founded by Michael Davitt to protect tenants against eviction and rack-renting, the two causes, agrarian and nationalist, were effectively united and enjoyed moral and financial support from America. Rural discontent had grown with the agricultural depression of the late 1870s and its ensuing starvation and evictions. By 1879 a full-scale Land War between tenants and proprietors had broken out employing, as well as the more disciplined tactic of boycott, the maiming of cattle, spoiling of crops, intimidation and physical violence. Early in May, the month in which Trollope paid his penultimate visit to Ireland, his friend W.E.Foster resigned in protest at Parnell's release from prison. His successor Lord Frederick Cavendish and his Under-Secretary, Thomas Burke, were assassinated while walking in Phoenix Park on the 6th May.<sup>62</sup> Trollope's novel tells the story of the sufferings of the conscientious English landlord Philip Jones and his family at the hands of the Land League. His land is flooded, his ten-year-old son, who has converted to Catholicism, initially refuses to identify the perpetrators and when he does agree to testify is assassinated. The novel reflects Trollope's anger and despondency at events in Ireland. He visited twice that year to gather material, convinced to the end of the importance of first-hand experience but his time

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<sup>59</sup> *Autobiography*, pp.218-9.

<sup>60</sup> Cronin, p.17.

<sup>61</sup> Mullen, *Anthony Trollope*, pp.644-8; Hall, *Trollope*, pp.501-6.

<sup>62</sup> For accounts of these events see Barbara Solow, *The Land Question and the Irish Economy, 1870-1903* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), pp.122-147; D. George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 3<sup>rd</sup> edn. (London: Routledge, 1995), pp.192-211; Alan O'Day, *Irish Home Rule* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp.5-78; Jackson, *Ireland*, pp.109-124.

was spent in select company amongst 'men who are well-informed and thoroughly loyal.'<sup>63</sup> They included a High Court Judge and a director of the Bank of Ireland who was a Land Commissioner. Thus it was a trip to Ireland which, in contrast to that of Archibald Green, had the potential to confirm rather than undermine preconceptions. Trollope believed that a combination of Parnell, Irish American support - even incitement - and Gladstone's misjudgements and appeasements was to blame for the state of Ireland and Irish demands for independence. *The Landleaguers* which, it should be remembered was left unfinished, is flawed in terms of unconvincing characters, excessively melodramatic action and lengthy unintegrated authorial lectures. Gone too is Trollope's more complex and balanced representation of Ireland.

Trollope's protest in the opening pages of *Castle Richmond* against an hostility to things Irish signals an awareness in his fiction of the difficulties of representing Ireland to a nineteenth-century English readership. If the condition of England dominated mid-century debates, the condition of Ireland was at least as prominent at points throughout the century in raising concern and alarm so that literary representations of Ireland and the Irish are often consciously representative. They have an emphasis and an import born of a mission to explain one nation to another, to account for differences in values, social structures and economic health, and to recommend courses of public response and government action. 'What distinguished the Irish novel from the traditional English novel, other than its Irish subject matter,' as Karen Faulkner has concluded, 'was its often proclaimed purpose of representing Irish life "as it really was" to an audience essentially unfamiliar with its neighbour in the west.'<sup>64</sup>

It was not simply an ignorance of Ireland that the writer of Irish fiction had to consider. The Act of Union in more thoroughly incorporating Ireland, also paradoxically threw a new light on Ireland's otherness, the ways –

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<sup>63</sup> A.T. to Rose Trollope, 23 May 1882, in Hall, *Letters*, p.963.

<sup>64</sup> Karen Faulkner, 'Anthony Trollope's Apprenticeship', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction* 38 (1983), pp.161-188 (p.163). While this is the case, it is worth noting that something similar was going on in the mid-century English novel which was delineating the real conditions of the lower orders to its middle and upper-class readers.

religious, social, cultural - in which it was worryingly not English. The consequent uneasiness could change at times of tension or crisis to a climate of hostility. Throughout the early Victorian period, when anxiety in Britain centred on issues of rapid population growth, urban overcrowding, disease, poverty and political unrest, the Irish were often seen as exacerbating an already problematic situation. The pre-Famine population of 8 million in a total British Isles population of 26.7 million could be perceived as a significant threat when rates of Irish immigration rose during the Famine. Moreover, those poor Irish who arrived then had little choice but to inhabit the worst accommodation and so contribute conspicuously to urban distress.<sup>65</sup> Irish involvement in Chartism, a Catholicism which took on even more alien and treacherous connotations in the context of the Oxford Movement and the 'Papal Aggression', the Repeal and Home Rule movements, as well as the more obviously disturbing Young Irelanders' Rising and Fenian attacks, enhanced perceptions of Ireland as antagonistic and threatening.<sup>66</sup>

Consciously and unconsciously, contemporary modes of understanding and imaging nationality influenced perceptions and representations. Many Victorians made sense of their world in terms of innate hierarchical regional, national or racial characteristics.<sup>67</sup> It was a way of seeing, or sometimes not

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<sup>65</sup> Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley, *The Irish in the Victorian City* (London: Croom Helm, 1985), Introduction, pp.1-3; J. F. C. Harrison, *Early Victorian Britain, 1832-51* (London: Harper Collins, Rev. edn., 1988), p.19.

<sup>66</sup> Swift and Gilley, pp.3-4, pp.6-8. As regards Irish involvement in Chartism, it seems likely that, as Thomas Carlyle suggested, those who were living a hand-to-mouth existence had little time or energy to devote to radical movements, and many of the Irish in Britain in the 1840s would have been in this category. Also there has been a traditional view, which has not been entirely overturned, that the opposition of Daniel O'Connell and the Catholic Church to Chartist membership, discouraged Irish involvement. Rachel O'Higgins, on the other hand, has made claims for considerable Irish involvement, and not just among the celebrated leadership. See Carlyle, *Chartism*, in Shelston (ed.), pp.174-5; John Belchem, 'English Working-Class Radicalism and the Irish, 1815-1850', in Swift and Gilley, *The Irish in the Victorian City*, pp.85-97; Rachel O'Higgins, 'The Irish Influence in the Chartist Movement' *Past and Present* 20 (1961), pp.83-96.

<sup>67</sup> Sheridan Gilley, 'English Attitudes to the Irish in England, 1780-1900' in Colin Holmes (ed.), *Immigrants and Minorities in British Society* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1978), pp.81-110. Gilley rightly questions the too easy equation of anti-Irishness with racism. Quite apart from the pertinent questions as to whether the Irish could be said to constitute a race, or all belong to a wider Celtic race, Victorians did not always use such terms with precision, so that, as Gilley points out there was often a 'verbal slide from "nation" to "race" '. My employment therefore of the three terms 'regional', 'national' and 'racial' is a conscious one which seeks to underline the importance of applying such terms accurately.

seeing, which is evident in representations of the Irish throughout the period and not only in the works of writers like Thomas Carlyle, Charles Kingsley and Rudyard Kipling who are associated with racial ideologies. Oblique, incidental, unremarked applications of it are testament to the degree to which it operated as part of what K.T.Hoppen has described as 'the mental furniture' of the period so that despite its prevalence, indeed because it is so prevalent, it is not always explicated.<sup>68</sup> Thus the sympathetic, compassionate writer Elizabeth Gaskell, not generally given to determinist thinking, can be found in her novel *North and South* making expedient use of the association of Irishness with weakness of character by attributing the suicide of John Boucher to his 'Irish blood'.<sup>69</sup> Similarly, terms like 'English' and 'British' could be employed in a puzzling, apparently interchangeable, fashion. Even the Scot Thomas Carlyle could devise the term 'Condition-of-England-Question' to denote what was really a 'Condition-of-Britain-Question' and by which he seemed to exclude, but probably intended the inclusion of the Welsh and his compatriots.<sup>70</sup> He could declaim: 'for the idle there is no place in this England *of ours*.' (my italics)<sup>71</sup> There was an unspoken assumption that England could stand for Britain, Englishness for Britishness in a way not true of Scotland or Wales.<sup>72</sup>

While all nineteenth-century portrayals of Ireland were certainly not negative and stereotypical, the prevailing ideology encouraged the replenishment of a stock of Irish types on which writers could draw. Sheridan Gilley has discerned an impulsive emotionalism as common to both negative and positive stereotypes so that if the acceptable 'good-natured Paddy' is generous, hospitable, effusively good-humoured and courageous, his

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<sup>68</sup> K. Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation, 1846-1886* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998), p.517.

<sup>69</sup> Elizabeth Gaskell, *North and South* (London, 1854-1855; Rev. edn. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982), p.308.

<sup>70</sup> Thomas Carlyle, 'Chartism', in Alan Shelston (ed.) *Thomas Carlyle: Selected Writings*, (London: Penguin, 1986), pp.149-232 (p.151).

<sup>71</sup> *Ibid.*, p.164.

<sup>72</sup> See Amy E. Martin, "'Becoming a Race Apart': Representing Irish Racial Difference and the British Working Class in Victorian Critiques of Capitalism", in Terrence McDonough (ed.), *Was Ireland A Colony?* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005), pp.186-211, especially p. 26, note 209 in which she discusses the problems of employing the terms 'British' and 'English'.



unacceptable evil twin is unreliable, immature, reckless, drunken and violent. This bipolar emotionalism is also evident in the explicitly Celtic qualities identified by Matthew Arnold. The sensitivity, sensibility, eloquence and poetic genius he describes have their dark side in a tendency to melancholy.

Some of the attitudes outlined above are reflected in the contemporary critical response to Trollope's Irish novels. It confirms the impossibility of writing an incidentally Irish tale since almost all of the reviews, approving or otherwise, make reference to their Irishness.<sup>73</sup> Some employ stereotypical notions of Irishness as measures. One critic, for example, applauds *The Kellys* for 'the true "emerald" humour', and Frank O'Kelly because he is an 'unfeigned Hibernian jontleman', while another, rejects the same novel, not for its faults or merits but because as the Famine raged and in the immediate wake of the Young Irelanders' rising he had grown sourly resistant to all things Irish.<sup>74</sup> He inquires bitterly: 'among a class with whom poverty, pathos, and passion, are ever alternating with fun, frolic, and folly, - what that is temperate, chaste, and enobling, can be expected.'<sup>75</sup> More, however, recognize in Trollope's portrayals an avoidance of stereotypes and applaud their authenticity. One critique of *The Macdermots* admiringly remarks: 'There is no extravagance, no caricature, none of the hacknied circumstances which raise a laugh at the expense of truth,' while a later piece in the *Dublin Review*, which assesses his Irish novels up to 1872, declares his delineation of Ireland to be so faithful as to be 'truly astonishing.'<sup>76</sup>

Trollope would have been delighted by this critical confirmation of the authenticity of his Irish world. It would have justified his many claims to an intimate knowledge of the country, and, moreover, confirmed the achievement

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<sup>73</sup> See, for example, Unsigned notice, *Critic*, 5 (1847), p.344, in Donald Smalley (ed.), *Anthony Trollope: The Critical Heritage* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, 1969), p.546; Unsigned notice, *Spectator*, 20 (1847), p.449, in Smalley, p.547; Unsigned notice, *John Bull*, 27 (1847), p.327, in Smalley, p.549.

<sup>74</sup> Unsigned notice, *Athenaeum*, 15 July 1848, p.701, in Smalley, p.553; Unsigned notice, *New Monthly Magazine*, 83 (1848), p.544, in Smalley, p.555.

<sup>75</sup> Unsigned notice, *New Monthly Magazine*, 83, in Smalley, p.555.

<sup>76</sup> Unsigned notice, *John Bull*, in Smalley, p.549; 'The Novels of Mr. Anthony Trollope', *Dublin Review*, 71 (1872), pp.393-430, in Smalley, pp.361-70 (p.364).

of his intention to portray convincing characters in real situations.<sup>77</sup> It is with obvious pride and delight that in *An Autobiography* he quotes Nathaniel Hawthorne's assessment of his English novels as, 'solid and substantial, ...and just as real as if some giant had hewn a great lump out of the earth and put it under a glass case, with all its inhabitants going about their daily business, and not suspecting that they were made a show of.'<sup>78</sup> Although aware of the complications of artifice, it was Trollope's aim to achieve as far as possible this level of lifelikeness. Sympathetic characterisation was for him much more crucial than plot and he wanted his readers to feel that they were reading about 'human beings like to themselves' who were neither impossibly saintly nor improbably villainous: '[M]en and women with flesh and blood. Creatures with whom we can sympathise...struggling amidst their woes.'<sup>79</sup> Significantly such an approach encourages an avoidance of stereotypes. Going on to examine contemporary trends in the novel, he explicitly declares himself 'realistic' but also resists exclusive definitions that ban allegedly foreign elements from the realist realm. A good realist novel could have 'sensational' features, just as tragedy and realism are not mutually exclusive.<sup>80</sup>

In a way that carries the potential to compete with these intentions, Trollope is uncompromising in the moral didactic rôle he sees for the novel. 'A vast proportion of the teaching of the day,' he insists, 'comes from these books which are in the hands of all readers', so that, 'the novelist, if he have a conscience must preach his sermons with the same purpose as the clergyman.'<sup>81</sup> Such idealistic intentions in turn sit strangely alongside the more pragmatic determination to make sure that his writing was a lucrative venture (*An Autobiography* famously provides a meticulous account of his literary earnings). Aside from its internal tensions, this artistic stance has obvious significance in this study. A nineteenth-century English writer who set himself the task of representing Ireland in a manner which was at once realistic,

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<sup>77</sup> *Autobiography*, p.56, p.57, p.60.

<sup>78</sup> *Ibid.*, p.96.

<sup>79</sup> *Ibid.*, p.96, p.147.

<sup>80</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.146-7.

<sup>81</sup> *Ibid.*, p.141, p.143.

peopled by sympathetic convincing characters, morally responsible, and commercially successful had a challenge on his hands.

From the happy distance of posthumous publication Trollope confidently judges his literary contemporaries according to these principles. Thackeray he places 'the first' for the forcefulness and truthfulness of his characters, the unity of his work and its moral force.<sup>82</sup> His friend George Eliot earns second place but he complains of too much philosophy, 'searching analysis' and obscurity in her later work.<sup>83</sup> While recognising Dickens's popularity, Trollope objects to his characters, typically complaining 'to my judgement they are not human beings.'<sup>84</sup> His disapproval of Benjamin Disraeli's work is undisguised and significantly centres on its 'flavour of paint and unreality.'<sup>85</sup> Although their literary careers did not entirely coincide, three of the these major novelists were very close to Trollope in age: Dickens (1812-1870), Thackeray (1811-1863) and George Eliot (1819-1880). There is an understandably strong sense of Trollope seeing himself as belonging to this English literary world. However, without remark he also reinforces the implications of the Union by claiming membership for his acquaintance Charles Lever.<sup>86</sup>

In this he should not, however, be seen as necessarily dismissive of the Irish fiction of the day. He was well-read in the works of Maria Edgeworth, Lady Morgan, Gerald Griffin, John and Michael Banim, and William Carleton. Moreover, just as it is relevant to note the coincidence of the publication of his first novel with Charlotte Bronte's *Jane Eyre*, Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*, Thackeray's *Vanity Fair*, and of the publication of *The Kellys* alongside Elizabeth Gaskell's *Mary Barton* and Charles Kingsley's *Yeast*, it is vital to examine his position in the Irish literary context.<sup>87</sup>

James Cahalan, whose definition of the Irish novel does not allow the English Trollope in to lighten the darkness, has asserted that if the first three

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<sup>82</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.156-7.

<sup>83</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.157-8.

<sup>84</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.158-60.

<sup>85</sup> *Ibid.*, p.166.

<sup>86</sup> *Ibid.*, p.161.

<sup>87</sup> Hall, *Trollope*, p.97-8; Glendinning, pp.152-3.

decades of the nineteenth century, with the exception of a few bright stars, was something of a literary dark age, the period from 1830-1890 was in many ways 'bleakest of all for the Irish novel.'<sup>88</sup> While he points to some continued development, he characterises it as a time of novelists whose political allegiances were complex and often contradictory and whose careers were difficult and uneven.<sup>89</sup> Reinforcing the idea of a literary barrenness around this time, although within narrower confines, Thomas Flanagan has insisted that 'Between Carleton's death and the beginning of the new century Ireland produced no prose writer of real stature.'<sup>90</sup>

As John Cronin has pointed out, by the time of *The Macdermots* most of the better-known Irish novelists had fallen silent. John Banim had died in 1842. William Carleton was still writing, although he had produced his best work by the middle of the century and would be dead by 1869. Charles Lever too was still at work and would write pieces more sombre than the rollicking tales with which he is most associated, but he was living not in Ireland but in Italy and would die in 1872.<sup>91</sup>

It was some thirty years since Maria Edgeworth had written her last novel on an Irish theme, *Ormond*. The reasons she gave her stepbrother in 1834 for ending her literary representations of Ireland point to the enormity of the task, and especially for a writer like Trollope who strove for authenticity:

It is impossible to draw Ireland as she now is in the book of fiction – realities are too strong, party passions too violent, to bear to see, or care to look at their faces in a looking glass. The people would only break the glass, and curse the fool who distorted nature, in a fever.<sup>92</sup>

Similarly, Cronin describes Gerald Griffin becoming oppressed by a 'ruinous scrupulosity and a conviction of the essential irrelevancy of the writer's trade to the realities of Irish life.' He burned his manuscripts, entered a religious

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<sup>88</sup> Cahalan, p.46.

<sup>89</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>90</sup> Thomas Flanagan, *The Irish Novelists, 1800-1850* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1958), pp.333-5

<sup>91</sup> Cronin, pp.14-16.

<sup>92</sup> Maria Edgeworth to Michael Pakenham Edgeworth, 1834. Quoted in Cronin, p.14.

teaching Order and died of typhus in 1840 at the early age of 36.<sup>93</sup> It was, therefore, to a land which some Irish writers felt beyond their powers, even their rights, to depict that Trollope came and set about capturing, and with the grimmest of times still to come for Ireland.

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<sup>93</sup> Cronin, p.15.

# CHAPTER ONE

## RELIGION

Just as Anthony Trollope is remembered as a quintessentially English author and not as a writer of Irish tales, so, when there is mention of his clergymen, the bishops and deans and archdeacons of Barsetshire rise up to obscure his Irish priests and parsons, regardless of the fact that his first clerical portrayals were Irish and therefore worthy of critical analysis. Moreover, his writing on religion in Ireland is of central interest because he was living and working at a time when religion was not only a sometimes-fraught matter of personal conscience but also a subject for energetic public and political debate, and an active source of social and national division and hostility. This chapter will draw Trollope's Irish clerics out of their relative critical obscurity to examine the nature of their representation and to identify the formative influences at work in its creation.

Given its highly charged character, it is important to establish the religious climate in England at the time – the England which was the land of Trollope's birth, education and young adulthood and whose people he largely addressed in his Irish fiction. Perhaps the most significant aspect of this, bearing in mind that Trollope was writing about a Catholic country, is the persistent undercurrent of anti-Catholicism which existed in Britain, and which at times of tension and controversy rose to a swell.<sup>94</sup> Issues of Roman Catholic civil rights and religious freedom were subjects for political debate and legislation from the Emancipation Act of 1829, through the Maynooth Grant issue in the mid-1840s and the so-called Papal Aggression of 1850 to the disestablishment of the Church in Ireland in 1869. Because Catholicism was so strongly associated with Irishness, concerns about increasing mid-century rates of Irish immigration contributed to fears of Catholic expansionism. Where, therefore, some supporters of John Henry Newman's Second Spring analysis of the growth of the Catholic Church in England saw Irish immigrants

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<sup>94</sup> E.R.Norman, *Anti-Catholicism in Victorian England* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1968), p.13.

as holy reinforcements for their cause, opponents viewed them as an alarming alien horde.<sup>95</sup> The Oxford Movement and its associated conversions to Romanism, though they were more symbolically than numerically significant, fuelled apprehensions of Roman Catholic encroachment.<sup>96</sup> As E.R.Norman has pointed out, opposition to Roman Catholicism on specifically religious grounds originated, ironically, both from an ignorance of the tenets of Catholicism, and informed antipathy to its creed and practices.<sup>97</sup> Criticisms on the various grounds of irrationality, perversion and national imperilment were levelled at the sacerdotal nature of the Catholic ministry, the invocation of saints, the veneration of the Virgin, transubstantiation, popular miracles and the primacy of the See of Rome. Allegiance to the Pope and perceived solidarity with Catholic co-religionists abroad occasioned suspicions of treason and subversion, and a factor encouraging the limitation of Roman Catholic civil rights was the belief that Catholicism was inimical to the orderly conduct of civil affairs and national prosperity. Moreover, for some, a Protestant Britain which was supreme commercially, technologically and colonially, was a patent confirmation of Divine disapproval of Catholicism.<sup>98</sup>

While physical manifestations of hostility to Catholicism did occur - during the Stockport riots in 1852 for example, two Roman Catholic chapels were sacked and desecrated<sup>99</sup> - antipathy manifested itself more often in the form of negative images of Catholicism in political debates, public meetings and lectures, the religious press and both popular and serious literature. Robert Inglis, described with wonderful acidity by E.R.Norman as one of two MPs who, during the Maynooth crisis, were 'famous for their defence of Protestant interests, and their innocence of perspective', gave a speech in 1851 in connection with the Ecclesiastical Titles Bill in which he declaimed that he and his party:

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<sup>95</sup> Mary Heimann, *Catholic Devotion in Victorian England* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p.12.

<sup>96</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>97</sup> Norman, p.13.

<sup>98</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.14-20.

<sup>99</sup> *Ibid.*, p.16.

looked to the State of England before the Reformation, and since, they contrasted the state of Protestant England with the state of any Roman Catholic country whatever. They felt that the contest at issue was one between light and darkness, between freedom and slavery, between the development of all the powers of the intellect, and the prostration of all those powers before the will of others.<sup>100</sup>

As D.G.Paz has explained, sermons by itinerant preachers, public meetings and lectures were popular in the Victorian era and were used to debate issues, communicate information and as a form of entertainment. Some of those with Catholicism as their theme were organized by sincere men of conviction who had no base motives, others by bigots, opportunists and sensationalist entertainers.<sup>101</sup> Paz, in *Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England*, includes a handbill dating from 1852 for an event which claims to be a 'demonstrative lecture' but is obviously more of an offensive side-show. It entices with promises of a performance of the 'Romish mass' with the professed intention of revealing 'the awful revilings of God' it involves and trades on a combination of anti-Catholicism and a base appetite for the thrill of the forbidden.<sup>102</sup> In no less emotive terms the *English Presbyterian Messenger* in January 1848 traced the source of Ireland's political and economic problems to Roman Catholicism:

The Gospel alone can remedy what coercion bills, and poor-laws and railroads, and tenant right, and repeal, and all outward institutions and measures, never can reach, the moral degradation and moral prostration of Ireland, through the curse of Popery, with its degrading idolatry and corrupting priesthood. Popery, body-debasing and soul-destroying Popery, is the root of Ireland's misery.<sup>103</sup>

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<sup>100</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29; Quoted in Norman, p.182.

<sup>101</sup> Denis.G.Paz, *Popular Anti-Catholicism in Mid-Victorian England* (Stanford, Ca: Stanford University Press, 1992), pp.23-33.

<sup>102</sup> *Ibid.*, p.26.

<sup>103</sup> *English Presbyterian Messenger*, January 1848, p.29. Quoted in Paz, p.55.



Catholic priests, in particular, frequently drew the ire of religious publications like *The Bulwark*, an organ of the Scottish Reformation Society. One venomous piece declared:

There are two classes of Romish priest...There is your sleek, oily, rollicking, leering capon-lined emissary of Babylon, whose priestcraft is a mere trade; and there is your lean, intellectual, intense, credulous devotee.<sup>104</sup>

Paz has surveyed literature available to the working classes in the 1840s and 50s and has concluded that while a benign view of Roman Catholicism was presented, this coexisted with more sensationalist work which offered a lurid picture of Roman Catholic doctrine, discipline and worship.<sup>105</sup>

Negative images of Catholicism were also to be found in volumes which would have shared shelf space with Trollope's writings. Charles Kingsley's *Yeast*, for example, which was published in 1848, aimed to dissuade young people from conversion to emasculating Roman Catholicism.<sup>106</sup> It is interesting that although the two novelists shared some preferences in terms of how they liked their religion – relevant, practical, 'human',<sup>107</sup> - they reached very different conclusions about Catholicism. In *Yeast*, Kingsley's attitude is played out in the conversion to Catholicism of Luke, the cousin of the main protagonist Lancelot Smith. The new convert is repeatedly referred to as 'poor Luke' and presented as a lost soul.<sup>108</sup> He is seen to be under the influence of a sinister foreign Padre Bugiardo who is 'cunning-eyed' and obsequious and Luke's apparent happiness is based on a deluded belief that the 'True Church' can keep his conscience for him.<sup>109</sup> The *Dublin Review* which would later find so much to admire in Trollope's Irish Catholic priests, in 1846 published a lengthy

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<sup>104</sup> Paz, p.55.

<sup>105</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 59-66.

<sup>106</sup> Charles Kingsley, *Yeast* (London, 1848; Rev. edn., Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1994), Preface, p.xi.

<sup>107</sup> Kevin.L.Morris, 'John Bull and the Scarlet Woman: Charles Kingsley and Anti-Catholicism in Victorian Literature', *Recusant History*, 23 (1996), pp.190-218 (p.200).

<sup>108</sup> Kingsley, *Yeast*, p.116.

<sup>109</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.116-7.

denunciation of Charles Dickens's hostile portrayal of Roman Catholicism in his travel book *Pictures From Italy*.<sup>110</sup>

Trollope was aware of the demonization of Catholicism in contemporary literature and used this brilliantly in *The Warden* to simultaneously disdain the practice and attack what he saw as a much more dangerous social and moral threat – the power of the press. Summoning up negative characteristics which were commonly associated with the papacy – autocracy, conspiracy, subversion – he neatly diverts them not to their expected target but to the ‘infallible’ Tom Towers editor of *The Jupiter*.<sup>111</sup> It is he who “reigns a pope, self-nominated, self-consecrated – ay, and much stranger too – self-believing! – a pope whom, if you cannot believe him, I would advise you to disobey as silently as possible; a pope hitherto afraid of no Luther; a pope who manages his own inquisition, who punishes unbelievers as no most skilful inquisitor of Spain ever dreamt of doing – one who can excommunicate thoroughly, fearfully, radically; put you beyond the pale of men’s charity; make you odious to your dearest friends, and turn you into a monster to be pointed at by the finger.”<sup>112</sup>

Just as relevant to this study as the climate in England is the religious landscape in Ireland during the period. In the census of Ireland in 1861, only 146 persons returned themselves as deists, atheists, free thinkers or persons of no religion.<sup>113</sup> However nominal, therefore, their affiliations might have been, the Irish perceived themselves to be believers and the faith to which they overwhelmingly subscribed was Catholicism. In 1835, that is in the pre-famine Ireland Trollope tried to recreate in *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*, 81% of the Irish population was Catholic with the remainder split more or less equally between various types of Presbyterianism and Anglicanism.<sup>114</sup> Regional

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<sup>110</sup> Charles Dickens, *Pictures From Italy* (London, 1846; Rev. edn., *American Notes and Pictures from Italy*, London: Oxford University Press, 1957), pp.255-433.

<sup>111</sup> *The Warden*, p.118.

<sup>112</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>113</sup> S.J. Connolly, *Priests and People in Pre-Famine Ireland, 1780-1845* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1982), p.74.

<sup>114</sup> K.Theodore Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation, 1846-1886* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1998) p.562.

differences existed which meant that while in three of the dioceses in Ulster Catholics were in the minority, in the western Provinces of Tuam and Cashel where Trollope primarily set his novels, the concentration of Catholics was as high as 96%.<sup>115</sup> The pervasiveness of a religion other than that of the established church struck Trollope's friend William Makepeace Thackeray on his tour around Ireland in 1842. Perusing the Dublin papers he observed:

In the *Morning Register* the Englishman will find something to the full as curious and startling to him – you read gravely in the English language how the Bishop of Aureliopolis has just been consecrated; and the distinction has been conferred upon him by - the Holy Pontiff! – the Pope of Rome, by all that is holy! Such an announcement sounds quite strange in English, and in your own country, as it were, or isn't it your own country?<sup>116</sup>

For all its facetiousness this observation provides an interesting insight into the paradoxical consequence of the Union which, in attempting to absorb Ireland, actually served to highlight those characteristics which were Irish and alien. Thackeray is struck by the 'startling' nature of the unfamiliar amidst so much that is, or should be, familiar. More importantly for this study, Thackeray's reaction supplies a measure of how far Trollope was able to move beyond discomfort at a pervasive Catholicism to a point where he even preferred the south of Ireland to the more Protestant north east.<sup>117</sup>

Whilst the predominance of Catholicism on the religious landscape of nineteenth-century Ireland, at least in numerical terms, is undisputed, other issues are more contentious. However, if the historiography of the Catholic Church in Ireland debates the origins, pace and degree of change in ecclesiastical organization and religious belief and practice during this time, it

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<sup>115</sup> Connolly, *Priests and People*, p.25.

<sup>116</sup> W.M.Thackeray, *The Irish Sketch Book* (London, 1843; Rev. edn., Gloucester: Alan Sutton Publishing, 1990), pp.8-9.

<sup>117</sup> Anthony Trollope to T.T. Walton, November 1854, in N. John Hall (ed.), *The Letters of Anthony Trollope* (Stanford Ca.: Stanford University Press, 1983), p.39.

also affirms that significant changes did take place.<sup>118</sup> These centred on the reform and modernization of church resources, organization and discipline, and the regularization of religious belief and practice. The Catholic Church at the time of Trollope's arrival in Ireland had already set about correcting a general laxity of internal discipline, imposing more effective control from above and encouraging religious zeal among its clerics. Reforming Bishops like James Warren Doyle in Kildare and Leighlin had begun a programme which attempted to ensure that the clergy gave their conscientious attention to preaching, catechising and other routine pastoral duties.<sup>119</sup> He also set about devising a fixed table of clerical fees, insisting on distinctive clerical dress and organizing regular theological conferences and spiritual retreats.<sup>120</sup> Increased efforts were made, as the number of church buildings increased, to bring religious practices inside their walls.<sup>121</sup> The practice, for example, of holding stations, that is celebrations of mass inside private houses, was discouraged.<sup>122</sup>

The Synod of Thurles which took place in 1850 was the first national synod of the Irish Catholic Church for almost seven hundred years, reflecting a climate of increased, though by no means consistent or universal, toleration of the Catholic Church in Ireland. It consolidated the reforms and reorganizations of the previous fifty years but, as Sean Connelly and K.T.Hoppen have pointed out, the progress of internal reform was gradual and uneven. In some areas old practices and attitudes persisted into the second half of the nineteenth century.<sup>123</sup> In the west of Ireland, for example, which was also distinctive economically and socially, as late as 1878 accounts appeared of clerical nepotism, neglect of preaching and supervision of schools.<sup>124</sup>

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<sup>118</sup> Donal A.Kerr, *Peel, Priests and Politics* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1982), pp. 44-5. Here in just one example of differing conclusions, Kerr argues against Emmet Larkin's assertion in 'The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-1875', *American Historical Review*, 77 (1972), pp. 625-52 (p.651), that the pre-Famine Irish were largely non-practising Catholics.

<sup>119</sup> Connolly, *Priests and People* pp. 65-6.

<sup>120</sup> *Ibid.*, p.70.

<sup>121</sup> Kerr, pp. 52-3.

<sup>122</sup> Connolly, *Priests and People*, p.67; Joseph Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society, 1848-1918* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1973), p.45

<sup>123</sup> Connelly, *Priests and People*, pp.72-3; Hoppen, pp.562-3.

<sup>124</sup> Connolly, *Priests and People*, p.73.

In tandem with the reform and modernization described above, the Catholic Church was also anxious to eradicate, or at to least modify, non-Christian beliefs and practices. Especially in pre-Famine Ireland, Catholicism existed alongside a variety of other beliefs and practices. Some of these were the remnants of earlier religious traditions, some had a superstitious or magical basis.<sup>125</sup> While the church authorities sought to prohibit such activities, some remained untouched, others though largely unchanged, acquired Christian labels, and some were interwoven with Christian equivalents or adopted aspects of Christian practice or symbolism.<sup>126</sup> The observances which attracted most energetic church opposition were the traditional festive wake which involved drinking, dancing, keening and bawdy and irreverent games, and the pattern, a ritualized gathering on a fixed day at a sacred site which was generally followed by drinking and dancing. Objection to these practices arose not only from the spiritual danger presented by their non-Christian origins, but also because of the opportunity such events were perceived to afford for immoral behaviour – violence, drunkenness and sexual misdemeanours. Connolly has discerned some modification and ‘christianising’ of wakes although the practice remained widespread.<sup>127</sup> He has detected a more marked decline in the observance of patterns in the twenty or thirty years after the Famine during the completion of what Emmet Larkin has dubbed the ‘devotional revolution’.<sup>128</sup> However, both Connolly and K.T. Hoppen have recognized the rôle played in this by the economic, demographic and social changes occasioned by the famine which coincided with the efforts of the church, not least those made by Archbishop Paul Cullen.<sup>129</sup>

A major problem facing the Irish Catholic Church in the early nineteenth century was similarly, if tragically, eased by the death and immigration caused by the Famine. This was the difficulty of providing priests for a rapidly growing population. Whilst between 1800 and 1840 clerical numbers increased by 35%

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<sup>125</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.100-8.

<sup>126</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.108-14.

<sup>127</sup> *Ibid.*, p.164.

<sup>128</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.276-7; Larkin, ‘Devotional Revolution.’

<sup>129</sup> Connolly, *Priests and People* p.271; Hoppen, *Mid-Victorian Generation*, pp.581-2

to 2,996, the population increased by 51%. Even with St.Patrick's College, Maynooth fully operational, or as fully operational as it could be on available finances, and places accessible at continental colleges at the end of the Napoleonic Wars, training was still insufficient to meet the demand for priests.<sup>130</sup> The fact that this increased population was concentrated among the poorer classes left the church with less money to finance expansion.<sup>131</sup> In 1845 Peel, in the face of considerable opposition, tripled the grant to Maynooth in the hope of providing not only more but also more loyal priests. It was the demographically disproportionate losses in the Famine which ensured that these trainees would minister to a smaller and more affluent population.

The anomalous position of the established church in Ireland was a fiercely contentious issue. The tithe system was a focus for bitter resentment in requiring Catholics to contribute to the upkeep of an alien church. During the 1830s in particular large areas of the country were involved in a tithe war which reduced some established clergy to poverty.<sup>132</sup> Given the prevailing conditions, even in quieter times the Anglican minister's experience in Ireland must have been very different from that of his brother cleric in England. Some parishes had tiny congregations. The first step taken by Gladstone in 1869 in his mission to pacify Ireland was to disestablish and disendow the Anglican Church in Ireland.<sup>133</sup>

One of a number of characteristics shared by the Catholic, Anglican and Presbyterian churches in Ireland, and indeed England, in the nineteenth century was an emphatic Evangelical element.<sup>134</sup> With its emphasis on conversion, activism and rigour, Evangelicalism, according to K.T.Hoppen, 'proved in Ireland to be almost as much a Catholic as a Protestant phenomenon.'<sup>135</sup> When Protestant missionary zeal was combined with the conviction that Ireland's Catholicism was to blame for all its ills, organizations

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<sup>130</sup> Connolly, *Priests and People*, p.33-5

<sup>131</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 34-5.

<sup>132</sup> J.C.Beckett, *A Short History of Ireland* (London: Hutchinson, 1973), p.139.

<sup>133</sup> *Ibid.*, p.149.

<sup>134</sup> Hoppen, *Mid-Victorian Generation*, p.559.

<sup>135</sup> *Ibid.*, p.562.

like The Society for Promoting the Religious Principles of the Reformation, founded in the 1820s and later renamed The Protestant Reformation Society, aggressively crusaded in Ireland.<sup>136</sup> It concentrated on areas in the west like Kerry and Connemara where the resources of the Catholic Church were most stretched and the economical and social conditions were harsh.<sup>137</sup> By the 1840s some colonies of converts were established, but the number of conversions perhaps had less impact than the bitterness and hostility they incited even amongst some local fellow Protestant ministers who saw such organisations as disruptive intruders.<sup>138</sup> Connolly has concluded that any gains made were largely wiped out in the 1850s by Catholic Redemptorist missionaries.<sup>139</sup>

When Trollope arrived in Ireland it was certainly not with any notion of winning the Irish for Protestantism but, as evidenced by the short story 'Father Giles of Ballymoy', it was with a set of preconceptions about the country and its people. The correction of these has an important influence on his portrayal of Catholicism. Trollope's fictional counterpart, Archibald Green, the rather brusque, nervous young Englishman, comes to what he anticipates will be an alien hostile country. The part played by the Catholicism of the Irish in Green's expectations of strangeness and hostility is noteworthy. He recalls that:

On this my first visit into Connaught, I own that I was somewhat scared lest I should be made a victim of the wild lawlessness and general savagery of the people; and I fancied, as in the wet, windy gloom of the night, I could see the crowd of natives standing around the doors of the inn, and just discern their hacked legs and old battered hats, that Ballymoy was probably one of those places so far removed from civilization and law, as to be an unsafe residence for an English Protestant.<sup>140</sup>

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<sup>136</sup> Paz, p.35.

<sup>137</sup> Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 75.

<sup>138</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.75-6.

<sup>139</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>140</sup> 'Father Giles of Ballymoy', in *Novels and Stories*, p.399.

Green feels unsafe as an English Protestant who equates Protestantism with 'civilization' and 'law', and Catholicism with savagery and lawlessness. His fear is based not on first-hand knowledge but hearsay and popular images. Panicked by his own prejudices, he fails to understand that Father Giles has kindly agreed to let him have the second bed in his hotel room, so the maid's insistence that the priest will waken him the next morning sends his thoughts flying to alarming images of conniving and coercive priests:

I begged that Father Giles might be instructed to do no such thing. The girl, however, insisted that he would and then left me. Could it be that in this savage place, it was considered to be the duty of the parish priest to go round, with matins perhaps, or some other abominable papist ceremony, to the beds of all strangers? My mother, who was a strict woman, had warned me vehemently against the machinations of the Irish priest, and I, in truth, had been disposed to ridicule her. Could it be that there were such machinations? Was it possible that my trousers might be refused me till I had taken mass? Or that force would be put upon me in some other shape, perhaps equally disagreeable?<sup>141</sup>

As we have already seen, later that night, befuddled by exhaustion, confusion and prejudice, Green concludes that Father Giles, who is innocently trying to reach his own bed, is about to climb into bed with him and pushes him down the stairs. The traveller is threatened by the local populace for this unprovoked attack on their beloved priest but importantly in the end all is well. Green realizes his mistake and the folly of his behaviour and is delighted by the priest's warm and forgiving nature. Their differences are resolved and the Englishman's prejudices dispelled – he, after all, has proved more uncivilized and lawless than the 'abominable papist.'<sup>142</sup> The two become firm friends and the English Protestant describes Father Giles as 'one of the honestest fellows and best Christians whom it has been my good fortune to know.'<sup>143</sup>

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<sup>141</sup> *Ibid.*, p.400.

<sup>142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>143</sup> *Ibid.*, p.397.



As I have already indicated, there is enough in this story, the manner of its telling and Trollope's comments on its origins to suggest a basis in personal experience and therefore perhaps a friendship between Trollope and a Catholic priest. This would go some way to explaining the detailed and affectionate nature of the portraits of his most prominent Irish clergy. Owen Dudley Edwards, in an introduction to *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*, has made extravagant claims for Trollope's portrayal of Father John McGrath:

[W]hat *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* does is in its way virtually unique. It brings to life the world of an Irish parish priest with a detailed knowledge and understanding shown by no other English Protestant writer, deployed with a sympathetic social frankness exhibited by no Irish Catholic writer. Trollope had crossed the frontier and got inside the mind and behaviour of clerical Catholic Ireland.<sup>144</sup>

He has concluded that while the available evidence does not absolutely confirm a real-life model for Father Giles and Trollope's other admirable Irish Catholic clerics, the inside knowledge he possessed – of how, for example, priests manage the collection of fees - can be explained in no other way.<sup>145</sup> Although his authenticity is contested by R.H.Super and R.C.Terry, Owen Dudley Edwards has asserted that another priest whom Trollope met and who claimed to have attended a convicted murderer on the scaffold, was genuine.<sup>146</sup> Such a meeting could of course have informed Trollope's account of Father John's ministrations to the condemned Thady, just as the murder itself (of Ellen Hanley) had inspired Gerald Griffin's *The Collegians*<sup>147</sup>. Certainly a letter to Mary Holmes, a Catholic governess who had also corresponded with Thackeray, confirms Trollope's willingness to befriend priests and use the experience as a source. Of Father John he explained he had 'drawn as

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<sup>144</sup> Owen Dudley Edwards, Introduction to The Folio Society's edition of *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* (London: Newby, 1847; Rev. edn., London: The Folio Society, 1991), pp.vii-xlvii (p.xxi).

<sup>145</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.xxxiii-xxxiv.

<sup>146</sup> Edwards, Introduction to *The Macdermots*, p.xxvii.

<sup>147</sup> *Ibid.*

thoroughly good and fine a man as I know how to depict.<sup>148</sup> He went on to suggest that a later portrayal of Father John Barham, an incorrigible proselytizer in *The Way We Live Now*, owed something to personal experience of a priest, 'a thoroughly conscientious man, an Oxford man, what we call a pervert and you a convert, and a perfect gentleman...I and my wife were as good to him as we knew how to be.' Trollope explains, however, that he and Rose were forced to 'drop' him when his ridicule and 'opprobrium' of their religion made him 'absolutely unbearable.'<sup>149</sup>

It is also key to the understanding of his representation of religion in Ireland to remember that whatever his experiences there, the twenty-six year old Trollope was not a completely blank canvas. Events and relationships up to that point played their part in predisposing him to tolerant and latitudinarian religious belief and practice. It is one of a number of anomalies in *An Autobiography* that Trollope claims 'I may as well declare at once that no one at the commencement could have had less reason than myself to presume himself to be able to write about clergymen...I have never lived in any Cathedral city, - except London, never knew anything of any Close, and at that time had enjoyed no peculiar intimacy with any clergyman.'<sup>150</sup> However, as R.H.Super has pointed out, Trollope's time at Winchester would have entailed attendance at the cathedral as well as at the college chapel. Moreover, he was taught by clerics at Harrow and both his grandfathers were clergymen.<sup>151</sup> Set beside the characteristics of those of his fictional clerics who win their author's approval, N.J.Hall's suggestion that Trollope's maternal grandfather, the Revd. William Milton, provided a model for his most affectionately portrayed clerics seems well based. The vicar was an amateur scientist, inventor and mathematician – a worldly clergyman and, according to Anthony's brother, kindly, charming, liberal, and gentlemanly.<sup>152</sup> These qualities shine out as

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<sup>148</sup> Anthony Trollope to Mary Holmes, in Hall (ed.), *Letters*, p.645.

<sup>149</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>150</sup> *Autobiography*, p.63.

<sup>151</sup> R.H.Super, 'Truth and Fiction in Trollope's *Autobiography*', *Nineteenth Century Literature*, 48 (1993), pp. 74-88 (p.76).

<sup>152</sup> Hall, *Trollope*, p.6.

brightly from the likes of Father John, Father Marty and Father Giles as they do from Septimus Harding and Bishop Grantly.

Trollope's life before Ireland also furnished an encounter with the type of narrow-minded Evangelicalism he grew to detest. Trollope received some of his early lessons in religion in Harrow from the Revd. John William Cunningham, author of *The Velvet Cushion* – a history of the Church of England but one of such excessive piety and prejudice that some reviewers actually suspected it of being a satirical attack. Cunningham disapproved of Frances Trollope allowing gatherings at her house at which young ladies played unsuitable games like charades. When she challenged Cunningham on the grounds that he allowed his daughters to play the piano at evening parties, he countered, much to her amusement, with the distinction that they did so with their backs to the audience - his precaution presumably guarding their virtue. Mrs Trollope's fictional the Revd. W.Jacob Cartwright in *The Vicar of Wrexhill* is, according to Hall, almost certainly a savage caricature of Cunningham.<sup>153</sup> With this background, the particular religious climate in Ireland then seems to have provided Trollope with a plentiful supply of fervent Evangelicals on which to base characters like the Revd. O'Joscelyn in *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* and Letty Fitzgerald in *Castle Richmond* who predate English equivalents like Obadiah Slope and Mrs. Proudie.<sup>154</sup>

Such early experiences can be seen to form some of the pillars on which Trollope built his personal faith. He held that religious belief should be generous and tolerant, not narrow and judgmental, and a private matter of quiet, practical, comforting faith not one of ostentation, intellectual debate and evangelism. In *The New Zealander*, his condition of England treatise written in 1855-1856 but not published until 1972, he emphasizes ecumenism – 'By the word Church we would include all who believe, or think that they believe, or

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<sup>153</sup> Arthur Pollard, 'Trollope and the Evangelicals', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 37 (1982), pp.272-92 (pp.329-30); Hall, *Trollope*, pp.15-17.

<sup>154</sup> *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*, pp.484-94; *Castle Richmond*, pp.52-3; *Barchester Towers*, pp.28-9; pp.23-4.

even say that they believe in our Saviour.'<sup>155</sup> And he condemns exclusion and division – 'Who here below, shall dare to say that among all the systems of Christ's worship now prevalent his and his alone is such as to conciliate the God whom he adores?'<sup>156</sup> Forms and ceremonies are to him of secondary importance and the tests of a religion are the comfort it provides – 'Comfort! Oh yes, whatever our Sundays be, let them be a comfort to us; a comfort to such as be rich; but a comfort especially to such as be poor', and its practicality – 'Is it a working religion and do we make workman's use of it?'<sup>157</sup> In his Irish fiction it is the type of religious faith to be found more often in his Catholic priests than in his Protestant parsons.

The most powerful means by which Trollope depicts Catholicism as a positive force for good is in his portrayal of Catholic priests. Father John McGrath in *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* and Father Marty in *An Eye for an Eye* fulfill vital functions at the emotional and moral cores of these novels. Writing in *The Landleaguers*, Trollope describes:

two distinct sorts of priests; of whom the elder, who had probably been abroad, was the better educated; whereas the younger, who was home-nurtured, has less to say for himself on general topics. He was generally the more zealous in his religious duties, but the elder was the better read in doctrinal theology.<sup>158</sup>

Versions of both of these types exist in Trollope's Irish writing but it is certainly the former more moderate, better-educated priest who predominates. Father John McGrath's education in France has brought him not only learning but also polish and finesse.<sup>159</sup> He has the gifts of 'natural "bonhomie" and perpetual good temper.'<sup>160</sup> He is hospitable, reassuringly 'temperate' but, in keeping with Trollope's liberalism, 'he [has] as much pleasure in seeing another man drink a

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<sup>155</sup> Anthony Trollope, *The New Zealander*, N. John Hall (ed.) (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1972), p.88.

<sup>156</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>157</sup> *Ibid.*, p.92; *Ibid.*, pp.100-101.

<sup>158</sup> *The Landleaguers*, p.23.

<sup>159</sup> *The Macdermots*, p.40.

<sup>160</sup> *Ibid.*, p.41

tumbler of punch, as any one else would in drinking it himself.'<sup>161</sup> Reassuringly too for all those sharing Trollope's conservative tendencies, Father John is 'a man of good family', well dressed, well read and eloquent.<sup>162</sup> He is, in short, a gentleman, a requirement Trollope had for all his worthiest clergymen, Catholic or Protestant, Irish or English.<sup>163</sup> The priest is saved from impossible saintliness by his shortcomings as a housekeeper and his less than heroic appearance – he is short, fat and neckless, but no other flaws mar the portrait and as the tragedy unfolds Trollope draws the reader to this conscientious, altruistic priest.<sup>164</sup>

Father John has an affectionate, teasing relationship with his ordinary parishioners and he is a steadfast confessor, friend and practical supporter to the doomed Thady Macdermot.<sup>165</sup> An impoverished Catholic landlord of noble Irish blood, Thady is beset by financial and family disasters. He kills Myles Ussher, his sister's lover, an Ulster Protestant and revenue man, in the mistaken belief that he is abducting her. Thady eventually hangs for his crime and Trollope's depiction of the rôle played by his priest and his Catholic faith in the condemned man's preparations for death is poignant and respectful. The eve of his execution he spent:

in the performance of his religious duties, and made continual efforts to fix his mind on those subjects to which it was directed by the priest; and at last he received from him final absolution for his sins, with a full assurance in its efficacy. And if true, and deep repentance can make absolution available, the priest's assurance was not ill-grounded.<sup>166</sup>

If Father John is powerless to save Thady's earthly being from extinction, he can bring him the comfort Trollope so valued and assist his spiritual salvation.

On the day of the execution:

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<sup>161</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.41-2.

<sup>162</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.40-3.

<sup>163</sup> In *The Clergymen of the Church of England* Trollope expresses a fear that the English theological colleges were producing men who were 'less attractive, less urbane, less genial – in one significant word, less of a gentleman.' Anthony Trollope, *Clergymen of the Church of England* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1866), pp.59-60. Quoted in Pollard 'The Evangelicals', p.333.

<sup>164</sup> *The Macdermots*, p.41 ; *Ibid.*, p.43.

<sup>165</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.45-55

<sup>166</sup> *Ibid.*, p.621.

Eight was the hour fixed for the execution and though it seemed cruel to rob him of his last human comfort, still as so few minutes of life remained, the priest thought it better to rouse him. He laid his hand on his shoulder and calling out his Christian name, gently shook him. It was wonderful how soundly the poor fellow slept; and at last he jumped up with a smile on his wan face, uttering those confused words of acknowledgement which so readily come to the lips of any one conscious of being caught sleeping too late, to the neglect of his worldly duties. He had been dreaming - and in his dreams he was again at Ballycloran - again sitting over the warm turf fire, talking with his father after his hard day's work, of their lands, and their difficulties. Father John's presence - the cold white wall and his own memory soon made him again conscious of the truth; and as he pressed his hands to his forehead, remembering that he should never again feel the luxury of sleep, the expression of his face was dreadful to be seen. There is nothing further to relate respecting him. As the clock struck eight he was standing on the iron gate over the front entrance to Carrick gaol. He had supported himself firmly - though evidently with difficulty. The cap was over his face - his hands were tied behind his back - and the rope round his neck. The last sound that met his ear was the final prayer which Father John sobbed forth that God would receive him into his mercy; the bolt was drawn - and Thady Macdermot was no more.<sup>167</sup>

This compassionate, supportive priest is far removed from the corrupt and corrupting priest of the most negative stereotypes. The awfulness of Thady's fate is brilliantly evoked by his horror at realising that he has experienced for the last time something as mundane and yet precious as sleep. It is his faith and his priest which give him the strength to face the scaffold. Father John's sobs are testament both to his human frailty and his vocation. He cries for the bodily suffering of his friend while he commends the soul of his parishioner to God. Trollope understands and recreates the priest's primary concern for the

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<sup>167</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.621-2.

spiritual salvation of his flock.<sup>168</sup> Moreover, at a time when the influence of the Catholic priest was viewed by some with suspicion, even open hostility, Trollope is not tempted to recommend Father John to his reader by robbing him entirely of influence. To save Thady the additional anguish of an audience at the execution, Father John and the other priests request the local people to stay away, and they comply. Though the reader knows too much about the men in question to assume a permanent change of heart, the clergy even manage to enlist the services of two of the more militant and murderous agitators of the piece to peacefully and respectfully ensure compliance.<sup>169</sup> Thus Trollope emphasises the potential of the parish priest as a positive force for good and a moderator of behaviour. Father John believes firmly in obedience to the law so that when Thady kills Ussher, Father John chides him for not giving himself up. Why, he enquires, did Thady not 'with an honest face at once' place himself in the hands of the police?<sup>170</sup> He encourages responsible behaviour in his parishioners through respect for both his office and his personal integrity.

Father Marty in *An Eye for an Eye* performs a similarly central rôle and shares many of Father John's characteristics. He too has had a French education and is not strongly political.<sup>171</sup> He acts as a true friend and counsellor to Mrs O'Hara and her daughter Kate whom he has brought from France to escape personal and financial difficulties.<sup>172</sup> He is warm and life-embracing, balking just as much at the idea of locking up pretty young women in convents as at the idea of their living, as Kate O'Hara does, pining away on an Irish cliff top when she could be a wife and mother.<sup>173</sup> His personal integrity and the affection he excites allow him to act as a conscience to others, even Fred, the main protagonist, an English Protestant who spends much of the

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<sup>168</sup> For an account of how modern historiography has underestimated and misinterpreted priestly vocation see Sheridan Gilley, 'Roman Catholicism and the Irish in England', *Immigrants and Minorities*, 18, 2 & 3 (1999), pp.147-165 (pp.147-8).

<sup>169</sup> *The Macdermots*, pp.622-3.

<sup>170</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.435-436.

<sup>171</sup> *An Eye for an Eye*, p.37, p.52.

<sup>172</sup> *Ibid.*, p.37.

<sup>173</sup> *Ibid.*, p.51.

novel trying to reconcile the two mutually exclusive promises he has made to Kate O'Hara and the uncle who has made him his heir. And, as a law-abiding citizen, it is Father Marty who sends for the police when Mrs O'Hara, driven insane by Fred's betrayal of her pregnant daughter, pushes him to his death.<sup>174</sup>

Such is Trollope's faith in the success of his favourable portrayal of this parish priest that he allows some doubts about Father Marty's motivation in stage-managing the fateful meeting between the young English nobleman and the Catholic Irish girl. Fred had befriended Father Marty and 'the priest, perhaps innocently, had taken him up on the cliffs. There he had met the two ladies and our hero had been introduced to Kate O'Hara.'<sup>175</sup> Moreover, Trollope tells us that while Father Marty may be 'no great politician', he is prepared to win 'justice for Ireland in the guise of wealthy English husbands for pretty Irish girls' and Trollope sees how such behaviour could be interpreted as 'unscrupulous' and 'ruffianly'.<sup>176</sup> However, since this is the interpretation of Fred's uncle and aunt who have previously been shown in a none too favourable light, it does not carry much weight. What is more, Trollope offers a defence of Father Marty in terms of qualities which the author himself so patently values - humanity, selflessness and pragmatism:

His philosophy was perhaps at fault and it may be that his humanity was unrefined. But he was human to the core - and at any rate unselfish. ...He had considered it all, though the reader may perhaps think that as a minister of the gospel he had come to a strange conclusion. He himself, in his own defence would have said that having served many years in the ministry he had learned to know the nature of men and women.<sup>177</sup>

Like the short story 'Father Giles of Ballymoy,' *An Eye for an Eye* offers an emphatic demonstration of the contrast between Ireland's image and its reality, and Father Marty has a central rôle to play in the dramatic representation of

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<sup>174</sup> *Ibid.*, p.197.

<sup>175</sup> *Ibid.*, p.44.

<sup>176</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52.

<sup>177</sup> *Ibid.*, p.53.



this contrast. Fred Neville's romantic idea of Ireland is influential in his decision to go there to enjoy a final few months of freedom and irresponsibility before he takes up his duties as heir-apparent at Scroope Manor. He wants to indulge his 'spirit of adventure':

And it seemed to him that in dining and sleeping at an Irish priest's house on the shores of the Atlantic, with the prospect of seal shooting and seeing a very pretty girl on the following morning, he was indulging that spirit properly.<sup>178</sup>

For Fred, therefore, the Irish priest is initially very much part of a romantic, fictional version of Ireland:

He had not yet escaped from the idea that because Father Marty was a Roman Catholic priest, living in a village in the extreme west of Ireland, listening night and day to the roll of the Atlantic and drinking whisky punch, therefore he would be found to be romantic, semi-barbarous, and perhaps more than semi-lawless in his views of life. Irish priests have been made by chroniclers of Irish story to do marvellous things; and Fred Neville thought that this priest, if only the matter could be properly introduced, might be persuaded to do for him something romantic, something marvellous, perhaps something almost lawless.<sup>179</sup>

Significantly, however, it is Father Marty who begins to bring home to him that the real Ireland is a very different place inhabited by real people who suffer from his actions. Fred wants Father Marty to help him keep his promise to his uncle that he will not marry a Catholic, while still keeping faith with Kate, by organizing some sort of irregular marriage ceremony. The good Father Marty, of course, refuses and he unceremoniously points out to him that if he complied Fred's children would be 'bastards'.<sup>180</sup> Trollope neatly observes, 'The romance seemed to vanish when the matter was submitted to him in this very prosaic manner.'<sup>181</sup> The illusory Ireland in which Fred saw himself as a fine young

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<sup>178</sup> *Ibid.*, p.56.

<sup>179</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.118-9.

<sup>180</sup> *Ibid.*, p.119.

<sup>181</sup> *Ibid.*

adventurous lover begins to slip away to be replaced by one in which he is an untrustworthy rogue. It is not to his liking. When the conversation ends he is already 'beginning to hate the coast of Ireland'.<sup>182</sup> Alongside Fred's increasing distaste for the country, Trollope traces an interesting pathology of religious bigotry as a response to personal failure. The dignified and silent integrity of Father Marty when Fred cannot look him in the eye as he mumbles ill-formed excuses for not making Kate Countess Scroope, emphasizes to him and the reader the despicable nature of his conduct. When the priest angrily curses him he takes refuge in his title, and in condemnation of the priest he had held so dear, and the priest's religion, declaring that 'The curses were the result of the man's barbarous religion. He remembered that he was the Earl of Scroope, and so remembering summoned up his courage as he walked on to the cottage.'<sup>183</sup>

Trollope, in most of his Irish fiction, did draw two distinct types of Catholic priest, but the less favoured are much less prominent and so obviously made to suffer by comparison with their worthier counterparts that, while they contribute to a broader picture of Catholicism in Ireland, they do not counteract its overwhelmingly positive nature. In *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*, for example, Father John is juxtaposed with his curate Father Cullen, 'unlike him in everything but his zeal for the church.'<sup>184</sup> Cullen is of lowlier birth, Maynooth educated, unkempt, uncouth, impatient, ungrammatical, illiterate, fiercely Evangelical and a Repealer.<sup>185</sup> In some of this there is evidence of the author's inherent snobbery at work, equating breeding with worth and assuming that this will encourage disapproval for Cullen from his readers. Like the oleaginous Obadiah Slope in the Barsetshire novels, Trollope makes Cullen physically repulsive.<sup>186</sup> Paying some lip service to Trollope's insistence on balanced characterization, Cullen is allowed the redeeming feature of earnestness, but even this is turned against him since his earnestness is so complete as to rob

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<sup>182</sup> *Ibid.*, p.121.

<sup>183</sup> *Ibid.*, p.179.

<sup>184</sup> *Macdermots*, p. 44.

<sup>185</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>186</sup> *Ibid.*, p.88; *Barchester Towers*, p.29.

him of a sense of humour.<sup>187</sup> Trollope defuses his threatening potential by subjecting him and his humourless and excessive devotion to Father John's gentle derision. When the parish priest jokingly remarks that the curate would make a fine martyr, 'Cullen, who took everything in downright earnest, clasped his dirty hands and exclaimed, "If the church required it, and it was God's will, I hope I would."' To this, Father John responds deflatingly: "Well, well, but it'll be just at present much more comfortable for all parties if you should square round a little, and take your punch."<sup>188</sup>

Trollope's representation of Catholic priests, like so much else in connection with Ireland, is different in *The Landleaguers*. One reason for his change in attitude is suggested in his explanation that his earlier assessment of the two types of priest was governed by the thought that 'It was natural that they should be opposed to the Government, as long as the Protestant Church claimed an ascendancy over them.'<sup>189</sup> Trollope was an enthusiastic advocate of the disestablishment of the Church in Ireland and spoke in favour of it in Beverly when he stood for election as a Liberal candidate in 1868.<sup>190</sup> To Trollope's mind, opposition among Roman Catholic clergy to the British Government was understandable on the grounds of religious freedom but unthinkable for any other reason.<sup>191</sup> In *The Landleaguers* he complained of the new breed of clergy, 'Now a set of men has risen up with whom opposition to the rulers of the country is connected chiefly with political ideas.'<sup>192</sup> He does still draw a distinction between older more moderate, more law-abiding priests and their younger more political and rebellious colleagues, but the image of Catholicism which emerges from *The Landleaguers* is a less positive one. Trollope opens the novel with a condemnatory account of how things have gone to the bad in Ireland, and not least because the people have 'in part

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<sup>187</sup> *The Macdermots*, p.45.

<sup>188</sup> *Ibid.*, p.93.

<sup>189</sup> *The Land leaguers*, p.23.

<sup>190</sup> Hall, *Trollope*, p.324; Arthur Pollard, 'Trollope's Political Novels': An inaugural lecture delivered in the University of Hull on 30<sup>th</sup> April 1968 (Hull: University of Hull, 1968), p.7.

<sup>191</sup> *Phineas Finn*, Vol 2, p.181.

<sup>192</sup> *The Landleaguers*, p.23.

repudiated the power of the priest as to their souls.<sup>193</sup> This said, however, Trollope preserves more balance in his treatment of this theme in the novel than that of Irish nationalism. He offers three different priests and even with the most disagreeable of them he does not recreate the diabolical clergy of the period's most venomous portraits.

While he certainly condemns Father Brosnan's Republicanism, Trollope, never quite descends to the level of negative stereotype in terms of Brosnan as a Catholic priest. When, rather unconvincingly, the landlord's ten-year-old son Florian converts to Catholicism, Father Brosnan is not cast in the rôle of ruthless predator. Trollope tells the reader that 'If the conversion of Florian Jones was to be attributed to any clerical influence, Father Brosnan was entitled to claim the good or the evil done; but in truth very few polemical arguments had been used on the occasion.'<sup>194</sup> Brosnan even refers the boy to his superior, Father Malachi, who sends him back to his father.<sup>195</sup> Moreover, although Florian's conversion in its betrayal of the deepest bonds between father and son does reinforce negative images of Catholicism, Trollope does not use this as an opportunity to condemn Catholicism *per se*. Edith Jones, the more intelligent and sensible of Florian's sisters and a character favoured by the author, insists that the main objections to Florian's conversion are that he is young and acting out of misplaced loyalty. She points out that:

It may be quite right that a person should be a Roman Catholic - or that he should be a Protestant, but before one turns from one to the other, one should be old enough to know something about it. It is very vexatious; but with Flory there is I think, some idea of an idea. He has got it into his head that the Catholics are a downtrodden people, and therefore he will be one of them.<sup>196</sup>

During his time in Ireland, therefore, Anthony Trollope grew to appreciate what he saw as the social and personal benefits bestowed on that country and its

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<sup>193</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>194</sup> *Ibid.*, p.25.

<sup>195</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>196</sup> *Ibid.*, p.101.

people by their Catholic faith. In his Irish novels he set about chronicling this and countering negative images of Catholicism. Given the contrast it provides to other literary representations, it is not surprising that Trollope's portrayal of Irish priests drew comment from contemporary critics. Generally the verdict was congratulatory. The *Dublin Review* in 1869, for example, welcomed the contrast, praising Trollope for his avoidance of the sort of 'preposterous priests' to be found in the novels of Charles Lever.<sup>197</sup> Interestingly, a reviewer in *John Bull* of *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* reveals a very English perspective which has an edge of nervousness. Father John he describes as 'an admirably conceived and admirably sustained character,' but adds, 'happy would it be for Ireland if she had many such parish Priests.'<sup>198</sup> While this reviewer is clearly only hoping that Trollope's portrayal is authentic, a later piece in the *Dublin Review* from an Irish and Catholic viewpoint confirms its authenticity and enthusiastically praises Trollope's faithful delineation of Ireland. Although he refers to him as Maguire rather than McGrath, he insists that Father John is an 'exemplary priest, who is an easily recognized type by all who knew what the priest is to the people in the remote Irish parishes.' He is convinced by his 'homely truthfulness', his relationship with his flock, his conscientiousness, patience, and dignified authority and, above all, finds it remarkable that Trollope is able to appreciate and portray the priest's vocation.<sup>199</sup>

Set beside Trollope's Irish Catholic clergy, his Irish Protestants, both clerical and lay, are an unsavoury collection. Some meagre and unadvertised balance is available in those Irish Protestants whose religion goes unremarked, but for those Irish who are conspicuously Protestant, Trollope has few words of praise. This is largely because they owe their prominence to his energetic disapproval of their ultra-Protestant tendencies. He is not, of course, opposed to Protestantism *per se* but rather to some of what he perceives to be its more abhorrent distortions.

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<sup>197</sup> Unsigned essay, 'Trollope's Irish novels', *Dublin Review*, 65 (1869), pp. 361-367, in Smalley, p.320.

<sup>198</sup> Unsigned notice, *John Bull*, 27 (1847), p. 327, in Smalley, p.549.

<sup>199</sup> Unsigned essay, 'The Novels of Mr. Anthony Trollope', *Dublin Review*, 71 (1872), pp.361-367, in Smalley, p.320.

In January 1866 an essay by Trollope entitled 'The Irish Beneficed Clergyman' appeared in the *Pall Mall Gazette* as part of his series on 'Clergymen of the Church of England'. This provides a useful non-fictional account of his opinion of Irish Anglicans. It opens with the sharp contrast he discerns between the Irish and the English parson which he reckoned to be:

greater perhaps, than that which exists between Irishmen and Englishmen of any other denomination, and is of a nature exactly contrary to that which generally marks the distinctive character of the Milesian and the John Bull... The normal Irishman is a jolly fellow; but the normal Irish Protestant clergyman is a severe, sombre man, one who speaks of life in sad, subdued tones.<sup>200</sup>

Trollope, who preferred his religion to be generous and life affirming, of course found little to approve of in this severity and grimness and these and other shortcomings he attacked with obvious relish. As someone who valued religious privacy and tolerance, the Irish Protestant clergyman who is always preaching, proselytising and encouraging religious hatred invites rebuke and ridicule. Everything about him, Trollope explains, preaches – his walk, his tone of voice, his actions. In fact, 'Find him asleep, and you will find him preaching with a long-protracted, indignant, low-church, Protestant snore, very eloquent as to the scarlet woman.'<sup>201</sup> Even civil gestures are devalued by his evangelising: 'An Irish clergyman does not shake hands with you without leaving a text or two in your palm, - with his own special comments on their tenor as regards the Pope.'<sup>202</sup> Trollope's analysis is that it is the peculiar position of the Protestant clergyman in Ireland which has produced this deformed and debased religious outlook. Surrounded by Roman Catholics who oppose the anomalous position of his church:

He is always in a state of feud, - in a state of feud not only against the devil, as should be the case with all of us...but against Antichrist on the

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<sup>200</sup> Anthony Trollope, *Clergymen of the Church of England* (London: *Pall Mall Gazette*, 1865-66; Rev. edn., Leicester: Leicester University Press, 1974), p.105.

<sup>201</sup> *Ibid.*, p.106.

<sup>202</sup> *Ibid.*

Seven Hills, against the scarlet woman who goes about devouring, against the Pope who is to him a ravenous old woman... against a creed which has for him none of the attractions of Christianity, - in which he sees only the small points of divergence from his own, and which is therefore worse to him than the creed of Mussulman or of Jew.<sup>203</sup>

Small congregations leave the Irish Anglican clergyman with insufficient constructive activity so that he becomes disappointed and sometimes over-indulgent.<sup>204</sup> Trollope does allow that he has sincerity and strength of conviction but, like the curate Cullen's earnestness, these turn to vices in their extreme form and in his besieged state serve only to leave him more determined and certain in his anti-Catholicism.<sup>205</sup> Trollope's complaints against the education received by these clergymen reveal the same criteria at work in his assessment of Catholic and Protestant clergy. Just as he supported the grant to St.Patrick's College, Maynooth in the hope that it would enable a broader and more enlightened education which would in turn produce broader, more enlightened priests, so he complains of the narrow, incestuous education provided for Irish Anglican clergy.<sup>206</sup> Trinity College, Dublin, he observes, indoctrinates men already 'inoculated' with 'high Protestant principles' which they have sucked with their mother's milk.<sup>207</sup> In their case high birth is no guarantee of worth. They live and are educated with like-minded co-religionists who neither test their beliefs nor provide alternatives, so that their insularity continues.<sup>208</sup> After a comprehensive condemnation, Trollope does offer some sympathy for these men as victims of their church's anomalous position in Ireland. With more than a hint of the author remembering his own low self-esteem before his arrival in Ireland, he insists that the Irish benefited

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<sup>203</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.106-7.

<sup>204</sup> *Ibid.*, p.108.

<sup>205</sup> *Ibid.*, p.109.

<sup>206</sup> In a chapter included in the original 1847 edition of *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* but omitted from the 1860 edition, Trollope complains of the folly of preferring untaught or poorly taught clergymen 'among the poor' rather than men, who 'by having their minds opened by the process of a more liberal education, will enter on their duties with abated prejudices, and enlightened feelings.' *The Macdermots*, Appendix, p.643.

<sup>207</sup> *Clergymen*, p.110.

<sup>208</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.110-11.

clergyman must be, 'feeling that prayers said and sermons preached to his own family, to three policemen and his clerk, cannot be said to have been preached to much effect.'<sup>209</sup> Trollope adds, 'there is nothing more depressing to his feelings, than a doubt whether or no he truly earns the bread which he eats.'<sup>210</sup> What is worse, this possibly unearned bread sometimes proves insufficient.<sup>211</sup> Trollope's most vilified and ridiculed fictional Irish Protestants are those who display the grimness, illiberality, relentless evangelism and bigotry of these Irish beneficed clergymen. He is critical too of those who claim to be Protestant but show no sign of its spiritual or moral influence in their lives.

In *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* no strong and admirable Protestant clergyman is offered to sit beside Father John McGrath. Some minor characters who are Protestant are seen to be largely honourable. Counsellor Webb, for example, does not allow religious difference to cloud his judgement or lead to division.<sup>212</sup> But Protestantism is not obviously offered as a moral or spiritual force for good in the lives of its adherents. Certainly the Browns of Brown Hall seem to be finding neither comfort nor guidance from it. The father is 'an irritable, overbearing magistrate, a greedy landlord, and an unprincipled father.'<sup>213</sup> His sons have 'both been brought up to consider sport their only business', and, more shocking still, the daughter of the house is rumoured to be developing alarming habits.<sup>214</sup> Moreover, those characters whose Protestantism, unlike that of Counsellor Webb and the Browns, is emphasized in this novel are not good ambassadors for their religion and meet with unpleasant fates. Myles Ussher, who, as Richard Mullen has pointed out, shares his surname with the best-remembered bishop of the Church of Ireland, seduces Feemy Macdermot and is murdered by her brother Thady.<sup>215</sup> He is an over-assiduous sub-inspector in the revenue police – a lucrative position in 'a

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<sup>209</sup> *Ibid.*, p.115.

<sup>210</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.115-16.

<sup>211</sup> *Ibid.*, p.117.

<sup>212</sup> *The Macdermots*, p.458.

<sup>213</sup> *Ibid.*, p.333.

<sup>214</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.334-5.

<sup>215</sup> Richard Mullen with James Munsen, *The Penguin Companion to Trollope* (London: Penguin, 1996), p.300.



wild lawless district' but one which inevitably wins him few friends.<sup>216</sup> He is not unrelievedly villainous or unattractive. He is 'tolerably well educated', has 'natural abilities somewhat above par', is good-looking and strongly made, and the son of a gentleman of large property though, perhaps significantly, the illegitimate son.<sup>217</sup> Until Ussher's dishonourable intentions towards Feemy are confirmed, the venerable Father John likes him and, with few educated men with whom he can converse, the priest enjoys his company.<sup>218</sup> Ussher has sufficient 'manly feeling' to try to save Thady from the clutches of the Ribbonmen.<sup>219</sup> He is courageous but here his virtues end, for his courage, it is emphasized, is of an instinctive untried kind and, moreover, he has 'an overwhelming contempt for the poor.'<sup>220</sup> These qualities make him an enthusiastic but ultimately ineffective government official who incites hostility rather than compliance among those he polices.<sup>221</sup>

Trollope chooses to make this representative of British government 'a Protestant, from the County Antrim in the north of Ireland,' and in so doing highlights some of the intra-Irish complexities of religious animosity.<sup>222</sup> Ussher's religion, as well as his northerness, mean that he is Irish but alien, not quite one of them in a way that is somehow more objectionable than unalloyed otherness and which leads to an easy association of 'black' with 'Protestant'.<sup>223</sup> Significantly Trollope has the tolerant and pragmatic Father John speak against Thady's talk of Ussher as 'a black ruffian' and 'a black Protestant'.<sup>224</sup> The priest insists 'He may be Protestant...and yet not black. I'm not saying I wouldn't rather see Feemy marry a good Catholic: but if she's set her heart on a Protestant, I wouldn't have you be against him for that; that's not the way to show your religion; its only nursing your pride.'<sup>225</sup>

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<sup>216</sup> *The Macdermots*, p.26.

<sup>217</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27.

<sup>218</sup> *Ibid.*, p.96.

<sup>219</sup> *Ibid.*, p.188.

<sup>220</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28.

<sup>221</sup> *Ibid.*, p.139-40.

<sup>222</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27.

<sup>223</sup> *Ibid.*, p.137.

<sup>224</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.56-7.

<sup>225</sup> *Ibid.*, p.57.

Moreover, objections to Ussher's Protestantism are not made by Ballycloran's residents on the grounds that he is zealously religious. Exchanges he has on the subject are not about spiritual or moral ideology or behaviour. They are about membership, and Catholicism or Protestantism as badges of membership. He teases the earnestly evangelistic Cullen, for example, about the solicitor Hyacinth Keegan's conversion to Protestantism but admits no truly religious aspect to the issue, only partly in jest deeming Cullen altogether too particular for insisting his flock be Christian. "We are glad to get them whether they are Christians or not, so long as they are good Protestants."<sup>226</sup> For Ussher his faith is simply a matter of birth not conscientious choice.

The other conspicuous Protestant in *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*, Hyacinth Keegan, the attorney who aims to remove the Macdermots from Ballycloran, has, the author tells us, only one redeeming feature – he is hard working.<sup>227</sup> He is also ruthlessly ambitious, has conveniently flexible principles and is suspected of marital infidelities.<sup>228</sup> If this is not enough, he has 'a soft oily face; on which there was generally a smile; and well for him that there was, for though his smile was not prepossessing, and carried the genuine stamp of deceit, it concealed the malice, treachery, and selfishness which his face so plainly bore without it.'<sup>229</sup> Even when his foot is brutally hacked off and the reader treated to graphic descriptions of each bone-crunching blow (which seem to owe a debt to Trollope's reading of Carleton stories like 'Wildgoose Lodge'), he excites little sympathy.<sup>230</sup> Keegan's conversion to Protestantism seems to have little or nothing to do with religious conviction and everything to do with social climbing, and it is this that Trollope is condemning in this portrait rather than either Protestantism itself or religious conversion.<sup>231</sup> He attacks Keegan's abuse and distortion of religion just as he disapproves of Ussher's

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<sup>226</sup> *Ibid.*, p.99.

<sup>227</sup> *Ibid.*, p.147.

<sup>228</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.147-9.

<sup>229</sup> *Ibid.*, p.148.

<sup>230</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.448-9.

<sup>231</sup> *Ibid.*, p.147.

unthinking affiliation, and employs the anti-Protestantism they excite to condemn religious bigotry. In a novel in which even the most active Ribbonmen can be influenced by their priest, no such spiritual influence is at work in the lives of Ussher and Keegan.<sup>232</sup> No strong and positive image of Protestantism emerges to accompany Trollope's positive representation of Catholicism.

In *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*, although influential and valued members of society, the Catholic priests Father Geoghegan and Father Pat Connel are much less prominent than Father John in the earlier novel.<sup>233</sup> The rector of Ballindine, the Revd. Joseph Armstrong, though not the central character, is a significant one and the only prominent Anglican clergyman in Trollope's Irish novels who is largely worthy and admirable. He may have rather too many children for his modest income, be less than industrious, a little slovenly and rather fond of drink, but these vices are outweighed by his virtues and, most importantly, he has not succumbed to the bigotry, severity and relentless proselytism that Trollope felt all too often characterized the Irish beneficed clergyman.<sup>234</sup> Even though his congregation in Co. Mayo consists only of the Hon. Mrs O'Kelly, her daughter and his own family, he is seen to sensibly reject the successful conversion of his neighbours as a possibility since 'even St. Paul had never had to deal with the obstinacy of an Irish Roman Catholic.'<sup>235</sup> Instead, in his sociable, good-natured way he sets about befriending them and is 'intimate with everyone that dwelt within ten miles of him, priest and parson, lord and commoner.'<sup>236</sup> Moreover, he proves his practical worth when he uses his 'worldly tact' and the respect merited by his position to act as an effective ambassador for Frank O'Kelly, Lord Ballindine, who wishes to reform his profligate ways and be re-united with his beloved Fanny Wyndham.<sup>237</sup>

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<sup>232</sup> *Ibid.*, p.623.

<sup>233</sup> *The Kellys*, p.53.

<sup>234</sup> *Ibid.*, p.265.

<sup>235</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>236</sup> *Ibid.*, p.266.

<sup>237</sup> *Ibid.*, p.322.

Armstrong also proves to be a brave and clever adversary for the villainous Barry Lynch.

Lynch, like the more favoured Phineas Finn, is the son of a mixed marriage who has followed the tradition of adopting his father's religion. In this case, however, this means that he becomes a Protestant while his sister Anty is a Catholic.<sup>238</sup> He is a murderous drunk prepared to incarcerate his sister in a convent and even threaten her life, in order to appropriate her inheritance.<sup>239</sup> The depths of Lynch's depravity are measured by his willingness to debase his Protestantism by trying to use it to persuade Armstrong to side with him against his Catholic sister.<sup>240</sup> In the end Armstrong's pertinacity wins the day and in his affirmation of the minister's efficacious intervention, Trollope characterizes this as a victory for a utilitarian religiosity which incorporates pragmatic justice and common sense.<sup>241</sup>

In a well-observed and carefully crafted passage, Trollope sets Armstrong against the Revd. O'Joscelyn and brilliantly demonstrates the folly, destructiveness and relentlessness of religious bigotry and excessive evangelism. With O'Joscelyn's name Trollope makes a topical allusion to Lord Jocelyn, a leading anti-Catholic of the day and a major figure in the Protestant Reformation Society which in the 1820s had set its sights on converting Ireland to Protestantism.<sup>242</sup> Trollope's Hibernicised version is 'a most ultra and even furious Protestant'<sup>243</sup> – furious in his passion for his own religion and even more furious in the avenging rage he feels towards Roman Catholicism. He is charitable, at least by principle, and does not generally have a bad opinion of human nature but his charity and good opinion do not extend to his Roman Catholic neighbours for, 'he hated popery, and he carried the feeling to such a length that he almost hated Papists [and] would not have considered his life or

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<sup>238</sup> *Ibid.*, p.22.

<sup>239</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.335-6

<sup>240</sup> *Ibid.*, p.459.

<sup>241</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.466-7.

<sup>242</sup> Mullen with Munsen, p.258 ; Paz, p.34.

<sup>243</sup> *The Kellys*, p.486.

property safe in the hands of any Catholic."<sup>244</sup> Predictably, O'Joscelyn is amazed and appalled at the Rev. Mr Armstrong's attitude to his neighbours. He had expected that a 'beneficed clergyman from the most benighted, that is, most Papistical portion of Connaught, would be sure...to have fellow-feeling with him; to sympathise with his wailings, and to have similar woes to communicate.'<sup>245</sup> He is, therefore, struck dumb at Armstrong's cheerful revelation that if he wanted to boost the numbers in his congregation during an Episcopal visit, neighbouring Roman Catholics would 'flock in crowds ...and the priest would show them the way.'<sup>246</sup>

Trollope captures adeptly the venomous extravagance of the pseudo-biblical language which O'Joscelyn employs to describe the Church of Rome which he 'execrated, abhorred, and abominated.'<sup>247</sup> Each of its priests to him is a 'child of Satan', a 'worker of iniquity', a 'ravenous wolf'.<sup>248</sup> His obsessive and insensitive evangelism, Trollope tells us, is not just ineffective but counterproductive, making 'many enemies, but few converts.'<sup>249</sup>

In juxtaposing O'Joscelyn's hysterical rantings with Armstrong's common sense, even wry amusement, Trollope underlines the paranoia and unreason which characterizes religious hatred. Thus O'Joscelyn persists with his theory of a Catholic conspiracy to explain the acquittal of a priest tried with Daniel O'Connell even in the face of the much more likely explanation that he was simply innocent.<sup>250</sup> He raves against Romish practices and ornamentations in the churches of England and apostate clergy who have 'red-lettered prayer books' and crucifixes in their private oratories, yet when Armstrong asks if he has actually seen such things, he is horrified at the idea that he would go anywhere where he might be subjected to such sightings.<sup>251</sup> He is, in other words, a determined and wilful, bigot, insistent on hugging to

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<sup>244</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>245</sup> *Ibid.*, p.487.

<sup>246</sup> *Ibid.*, p.488.

<sup>247</sup> *Ibid.*, p.486

<sup>248</sup> *Ibid.*.

<sup>249</sup> *Ibid.*, p.487.

<sup>250</sup> *Ibid.*, p.490.

<sup>251</sup> *Ibid.*

himself the ignorance which supports his bigotry, rather than reaching for the knowledge that would challenge it.

Ultimately O'Joscelyn's bigotry is seen to be imprisoning him literally and metaphorically. He has spent the previous week in the parsonage with his family in a state of siege. They waited armed against an anticipated attack from the local Catholic population angry at O'Connell's imprisonment and celebrating Father Tyrrel's release.<sup>252</sup> Armstrong's quiet but persistent questioning skilfully reveals that there was no actual evidence to justify the minister's alarm and that, indeed, the onslaught never came.<sup>253</sup> The reader is left with the vivid image of the embattled and sleepless O'Joscelyns, prisoners not of the assembled crowd who seem to have been oblivious to them, but of their own blind and paranoid bigotry. It is a dramatic representation of how the victims of such distortions of true religiosity are the bigots themselves. The tolerant Revd. Mr Armstrong's final word on O'Joscelyn has the emphatic ring of authorial approval: "I'd sooner by half be a Roman myself, than think so badly of my neighbours as he does."<sup>254</sup>

*Castle Richmond* contains another rather gleeful portrayal of religious bigotry in the person of Letty Fitzgerald, the unmarried sister of Sir Thomas Fitzgerald, the head of the family whose fate forms the central interest of the novel. Though by no means completely lacking in compassion or loyalty – she is prepared, for example, to go into exile with a sister-in-law threatened by the shame of an apparently bigamous marriage – she is embittered and terrorized by her hatred of Catholicism and Puseyism.<sup>255</sup> As with Anglican clergy in Ireland, Trollope attributed an extreme religious prejudice in laywomen to the effects of holding a minority religion. Puseyism, he notes:

means much with some ladies in England; but with most ladies of the Protestant religion in Ireland, it means, one may almost say, the very Father of Mischief himself. In their minds, the pope, with his lady of

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<sup>252</sup> *Ibid.*, p.491.

<sup>253</sup> *Ibid.*, p.494.

<sup>254</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>255</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p. 359.

Babylon, his college of cardinals, and all his community of pinchbeck saints, holds a sort of second headquarters of his own at Oxford.<sup>256</sup>

In her besieged paranoid state she sees signs of popishness and Puseyism everywhere – even in her beloved, but English-educated, nephew Herbert.<sup>257</sup> Believing, as Conor Johnston has observed, that her own dedication to the cause ‘is purer than that of [her] co-religionists in the mother country’, she reaches the paradoxical conclusion that if he wishes to enter the church he should:

get himself ordained as quickly as possible, not in England, where there might be danger even in ordination, but in good, wholesome, Protestant Ireland, where a Church of England clergyman was a clergyman of the church of England, and not a priest, slipping about in the mud half way between England and Rome.<sup>258</sup>

The combination of colonial arrogance and a total absence of ironic appreciation is brilliantly and amusingly captured here but Trollope also uses this character to make a more sober analysis of the effects of religious prejudice on those who suffer it and on the prejudiced themselves. Rather than pitting Aunt Letty against a truly virtuous opponent, Trollope achieves more by attacking her religious stance through Owen Fitzgerald, an attractive but rather wayward young bachelor. When Letty takes it upon herself to chide him for his ‘doings’ and the ‘fine house’ he’s keeping, he invites her to join one of his gatherings, adding the barbed comment that “‘With us you’d only drink and play cards, and perhaps hear a little strong language now and again. But what is that to slander, and calumny, and bearing false witness against one’s neighbour?’”<sup>259</sup> That her religious shortcomings can be so accurately detected by this young rogue and thrown back at her in the sort of language she herself is accustomed to use, underlines her hypocrisy and the way in which prejudice can turn religious intent to destructive ends.

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<sup>256</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45.

<sup>257</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>258</sup> Conor Johnston, ‘Parsons, Priests and Politics: Anthony Trollope’s Irish Clergy’, *Eire-Ireland*, 25,1 (1990), pp. 80-97 (p.85); *Castle Richmond*, p. 355.

<sup>259</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.19-20.

Even more telling is Trollope's description of how Aunt Letty's charitable acts are soured and diminished when they are delivered with a religious lecture, how she 'always clogged the flannel petticoat with some Protestant teaching or burdened the little coat and trousers with the pains and penalties of idolatry.'<sup>260</sup> The poignant image of the gift of that little coat and trousers, intended as an act of uplifting kindness, being weighed down and sullied by Aunt Letty's anti-Catholicism is a very effective one. Letty is buoyed in her bigotry by the Rev. Aeneas Townsend whose acts of charity during the Famine also come with strings. 'If he could find hungry Papists and convert them into well-fed Protestants by one and the same process, he must be doing a double good, he argued; - could by no possibility be doing an evil.'<sup>261</sup>

Trollope, ever mindful of presenting an accurate and, where possible, a positive version of Ireland, is careful to point out that religious division was not universal. Townsend's greatest foe is the local parish priest the Rev. Bernard McCarthy and the enmity is reciprocated.<sup>262</sup> Father Bernard, one of Trollope's middling type of priests, 'was as firmly convinced of the inward, heart-destroying iniquity of the parson as the parson was of that of the priest.'<sup>263</sup> Trollope concluded that one of the ameliorating effects of the Famine was a reduction of religious hostility between the clergy who had to come together, however reluctantly, on Relief Committees. Personal contact diminished ignorant prejudice. 'How often does it happen,' Trollope inquires, 'that when we have come across those whom we have hated and avoided all our lives, we find that they are not quite so bad as we had thought?'<sup>264</sup>

Trollope, having attacked Protestant bigotry, hypocrisy and false charity, leaves only Herbert Fitzgerald to represent a more positive Protestantism in this novel. This emerges primarily from his tolerant attitude to Catholicism and his insistence on the virtues of a utilitarian religion. On the day that he believes himself to be disinherited and leaving Castle Richmond for the last time he

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<sup>260</sup> *Ibid.*, p.53.

<sup>261</sup> *Ibid.*, p.103.

<sup>262</sup> *Ibid.*, p.104.

<sup>263</sup> *Ibid.*, p.103.

<sup>264</sup> *Ibid.*, p.211.



makes his last farewell not only at the parsonage but also with Father Barney at Kanturk and 'had even shaken hands with the Rev. Mr Creagh', one of Trollope's troublesome Catholic curates.<sup>265</sup> Nor does Herbert allow religious difference to interfere with the important business of the relief committee.<sup>266</sup> Although his Aunt's fears that he has become a Puseyite are unfounded, Herbert is certainly not of an Evangelical bent. Since he, and more prominently, the Rev. Armstrong in *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* are the two characters who emerge as representatives of a constructive Protestantism and neither of them is Evangelical, it is apparent that if any religious group can complain of unrelieved vilification in Trollope's Irish novels it is the Evangelicals. It should be noted, however, that, as the chapter below demonstrates, the validity of even Herbert's tolerant, pragmatic faith is made to look questionable by his author's blinkered depiction of the Famine.<sup>267</sup>

By contrast in *An Eye for an Eye* a much more insightful Trollope offers an intriguing and potentially subversive reading of the Established Church's rôle as an institution of the state, and again raises questions of the nature of true and valuable religiosity. Although Trollope has not often been thought of as a writer who employs symbolism, it is impossible to resist this reading of the very specific location of the cottage of the ostracized and doomed O'Haras on the Cliffs of Moher – the perilous edge of Ireland, the edge of the British Isles, the edge, therefore, of the civilized world.<sup>268</sup> The metaphorical potential of Fred Neville, the English nobleman, seducing a young Irish girl, then refusing to marry her and being pushed to his death from the cliffs by her mad mother is equally irresistible. Therefore when Trollope makes a point of carefully describing the Dorset village of Scroope as having the Manor house at one end and the church and parsonage at the other it is difficult not to read this as symbolic of the twin powers of state – the nobility and the church.<sup>269</sup> Given

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<sup>265</sup> *Ibid.*, p.365.

<sup>266</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.205-6.

<sup>267</sup> See Chapter Four below.

<sup>268</sup> James R. Kincaid, 'Trollope's Narrator', in Hall, *The Trollope Critics*, (London: Macmillan, 1981), pp.196-209 (p.196).

<sup>269</sup> *An Eye*, p. 1.

this, the version he offers of that church, the nobility, and their relationship to Irish Catholicism is important. Fred's uncle, the Earl, is scrupulously religious. He only leaves his domain to go to church and that twice every Sunday and those employed by him 'were or called themselves members of the Church Establishment.'<sup>270</sup> This suspicion of nominality is important because it extends to the Earl himself. Although essentially a well-meaning urbane man, life has dealt him cruel blows – the deaths of his first wife and daughter, his son's unsuitable marriage to 'a wretched painted prostitute from France' before he too died – and the Earl's response is largely to withdraw from the world. Just as he goes through the motions of church attendance, so he mimics running the estate but he is as ineffective and remote as Scroope Manor is outmoded and obsolete.<sup>271</sup> Trollope explains that 'what he did do was good, but since 'few men perhaps did less', his influence is necessarily limited.'<sup>272</sup> Importantly there is no evidence of his religious faith bringing him the comfort and support that Trollope saw as essential. If he reads the bible daily, he also 'would have the newspaper in his hands for a while.'<sup>273</sup>

Trollope does not suggest that English nobility is a doomed institution but does imply weaknesses associated with distortions of true religiosity. Lady Scroope, the reader is told, is self-denying and religious but 'Whether she could be called good the reader may say when he has finished this story.'<sup>274</sup> What 'this story' reveals is not an amoral manipulator but a woman with strong religious principles and a conscience, which makes it all the more significant when she compromises these in favour of the security of the Protestant state or, more accurately, what she understands as being necessary for that security. Although she certainly objects to Kate O'Hara's Irishness – the epithet 'horrid' is repeatedly shown to be associated in her mind with Ireland – Kate's lowly origins and religion also rule her out as a potential Countess of Scroope since 'it was imperative that [Fred] should marry at least a lady and at

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<sup>270</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>271</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.5-6 ; *Ibid.*, pp.2-3.

<sup>272</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>273</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>274</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

least a Protestant.<sup>275</sup> To allow Kate as a Roman Catholic to become an English Countess would be to invite treason and subversion into the heart of the English state. So even though she understands the religious imperative for Fred to marry the wronged Kate, understands that he has committed a sin and endangered his soul, and despite the possibility that he could still make reparation, his aunt persuades him against the marriage for the sake of the noble line.<sup>276</sup> When Fred is killed by Mrs O'Hara, Trollope has Lady Scroope end her days in sorrow and regret at her decision.<sup>277</sup>

Here then is Trollope again emphasising the importance of religious faith as a guide for living, and one that holds a higher place than loyalty to the establishment, or at least than misguided loyalty. Trollope has Father Marty angrily point out to Fred that his Protestant impudence in rejecting Kate as fit to be a Countess has blinded him to the fact that many more Catholics than Protestants have held that title, and Trollope questions the worth of a state religion which is so fearful of its fellow Christians and perhaps particularly its Irish ones.<sup>278</sup> There is a tragic inevitability in the novel and no strong suggestion that Fred ever could have brought his Irish Catholic wife to be Countess of Scroope, but the suspicion that Trollope allows is that the state religion that could countenance this would be a more vital and virtuous one.

If Trollope's final novel, *The Landleaguers*, offers a more negative evaluation of Catholicism, there is no corresponding improvement in his assessment of Irish Protestantism. The local Protestant minister is a bigot who holds it as 'an established fact that a Roman Catholic must necessarily go to the devil.'<sup>279</sup> With the same clodhopping evangelistic finesse as Aunt Letty and the Rev. Mr Townsend, he attempts to convert the Catholic poor by offering them meat on Friday, and he is of no real assistance in dealing with the ten-year -old Florian Jones's conversion to Catholicism.<sup>280</sup>

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<sup>275</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27; *Ibid.*, p.19.

<sup>276</sup> *Ibid.*, p.164.

<sup>277</sup> *Ibid.*, p.200.

<sup>278</sup> *ibid.*, p.118.

<sup>279</sup> *Landleaguers*, pp.104-5.

<sup>280</sup> *Ibid.*, p.105.

Trollope uses Black Tom Daly, a man of mysterious origins and master of the Galway hounds, to voice some of his own sadnesses and concerns about the activities of the Land League, Gladstone's Irish policy and the disruption of fox hunting but Daly is also a more extreme example of Protestants like Myles Ussher who are unthinkingly Protestant, instinctively and by birth.<sup>281</sup> With Daly it is not a matter of religious belief at all. 'He was a Protestant - as opposed to a Roman Catholic. No one had ever known him to go to church, or speak a word in reference to religion.'<sup>282</sup> It is, nevertheless, an affiliation which perpetuates enmity and division for 'he had in his heart a thorough conviction that all Roman Catholics ought to be regarded as enemies by all Protestants, and that the feeling was one entirely independent of faith and prayer books, or crosses and masses.'<sup>283</sup>

Contemporary critics made little comment on Trollope's representation of Irish Protestantism. A lengthy critique of all his work in the *Dublin Review* in October 1872 does, however, record appreciation of the entertainment and social accuracy of his portrayals of Letty Fitzgerald and Mrs Townsend, the rector's wife, in *Castle Richmond*. It extols the 'mixture of theoretical bigotry and practical benevolence exhibited by Miss Letty Fitzgerald' as 'one of the pleasantest of his sketches' and the admirable amplification of 'the bigotry, without the benevolence, in the coarse, vulgar wife of the rector of Drumbarrow.'<sup>284</sup> This Irish reviewer is anxious to emphasise to 'purely English readers of the higher classes' that the nature of religious bigotry that Trollope records is true to life in Ireland where 'the ordinary laws of charity, the commonest rules of politeness, are habitually disregarded by persons of birth and breeding, where the bigotry of Irish Protestantism is aroused.'<sup>285</sup>

The author of this review had the advantage of being able to make an assessment of the accuracy of Trollope's representation of religion in Victorian

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<sup>281</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.74-5; *Ibid.*, p.379.

<sup>282</sup> *Ibid.*, p.80.

<sup>283</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>284</sup> Unsigned essay, 'The Novels of Mr. Anthony Trollope,' *Dublin Review*, 71 (1872), pp.393-430, in Smalley, p.370.

<sup>285</sup> *Ibid.*

Ireland from personal experience. Those of us who rise to the same challenge today obviously do not have this advantage. Moreover, it is a representation which is not entirely amenable to exact measurement against the historiographical evidence which is available. How, for instance, can one assess how comfort which the Irish found in their Catholicism? How, as Donal Kerr has pointed out, can adequate generalisations be made about the nature and behaviour of the priests of an entire nation?<sup>286</sup> Furthermore, as Sean Connolly has observed, the available sources are often limited and over-representative of one view.<sup>287</sup> He has urged caution in drawing wide-ranging conclusions, for example, about pre-Famine clerical attitudes to supernatural practices, since studies of this aspect of Catholicism must of necessity rely heavily on official church sources - pastoral letters, diocesan statutes, correspondence in episcopal archives - which emphasise the views of senior churchmen rather than the clergy as a whole.<sup>288</sup> Despite these difficulties and limitations, trying to ascertain the accuracy of Trollope's representation is still an important exercise. Trollope's use of the names of well-known contemporaries associated with particular aspects of religious life invites the connection with actual people, beliefs and practices. Knowing whether Trollope's version is a straightforward account of the religious landscape in Ireland at the time or is at variance with what can be established of the reality, is an essential step towards reaching conclusions about the nature of that representation, the influences on it and the motivations behind it. In an attempt to overcome some of the problems associated with the historiography, this assessment also makes use of the contemporary accounts of William Makepeace Thackeray and Alexis de Tocqueville.

Owen Dudley Edwards is in no doubt as to the authenticity of Trollope's representation of the degree and nature of Catholic devotion and priestly influence in pre-Famine Ireland. He even recommends *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* to historians as a valuable source, a suggestion which throws some

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<sup>286</sup> Kerr, p. 28.

<sup>287</sup> Connolly, *Priests and People*, p.268.

<sup>288</sup> *Ibid.*

light on the subject of what initially seems to be a glaring omission on the novelist's part.<sup>289</sup> Where the historiography of the period relating to the Catholic Church is dominated by church reforms and modernization, this draws barely a mention from Trollope. Since it seems reasonable that so much effort would not have been made to enact unnecessary reforms, this must suggest that Trollope was ignoring at least some negative aspects of Catholicism. However, this is not a case of simple omission. Whilst he does deal with some of the social aspects of religion, Trollope is also in a sense writing a different history - albeit a very subjective one - of an area less accessible to the orthodox historian - personal faith at work in people's lives. Trollope's omission of church reform in his portrayal of Catholicism can also be explained by the predominance in his Irish novels of the positive opinion of that religion and its priests which he formed in his early years in Ireland and primarily the west and south west, that is at a time and in a place where the effects of reform were perhaps least felt.<sup>290</sup> In any case many aspects of the simplicity of pre-Famine faith met with his approval and did not to his mind require reform or modernization.<sup>291</sup> Equally there is no hymn of praise in *The Landleaguers* to the modernized and efficient Irish Roman Catholic Church of the 1880s because, as far as Trollope was concerned, it was largely failing in its most important duties in a way that the pre-Famine church had not.

This picture is in keeping with the pattern that emerges from a measurement of Trollope's representation of religion in Ireland as a whole, against the historiography and contemporary accounts. It is not one of Trollope inventing versions of Catholicism and Protestantism which did not exist in Ireland at the time, but rather selecting and then emphasising or understating aspects of what he found there.

In terms of his most favoured Catholic priest - Father John, for example, - Donal Kerr's description of the close relationship that existed between the pre-Famine priest and his flock supports Trollope's literary account. Bonds, he

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<sup>289</sup> Edwards, Introduction to *The Macdermots*, p.xxxiv.

<sup>290</sup> Connolly, *Priests and People*, p.90

<sup>291</sup> *The Macdermots*, Appendix, p.652.

has explained which were forged in the shared struggle of penal times were strengthened by agitation for Emancipation.<sup>292</sup> In keeping with Catholic theology the priest was accorded great respect as 'the Lord's anointed' and his celibacy and the celebration of mass, the last rites and confession enhanced this.<sup>293</sup> The fact that he was often the only educated Catholic in the community also increased his prestige and cast him in the rôles of spokesman and intermediary.<sup>294</sup> There is support, too, for Trollope's representation of the enhanced importance of the parish priest in a Catholicism which was at that time and, especially in the west of Ireland, not primarily church-based. In contrast with the more lavish and ostentatious display that would become a feature of Catholic worship in the second half of the nineteenth century, inadequate vestments and altar equipment in what was little more than a mass house were not uncommon.<sup>295</sup> The church building itself was much less a centre of parochial religious life with private houses or the priest's home being used for baptisms and marriages.<sup>296</sup> To a greater extent, therefore, the church was the parish priest and his relationship with his people and Catholicism succeeded or failed on the success or failure of this relationship.

Father John's insistence on obedience to the law of the land and on a basis of spiritual as well as physical safety is also supported in the historiography. Connolly has described Catholic churchmen in the eighteenth century preaching the religious obligation of obedience to temporal rulers regardless of religious differences between ruler and ruled and citing Christ, the Apostles and early Christians as examples of unquestioning obedience.<sup>297</sup> Since religious doctrine extends its influence to the span of the lives of those who have been exposed to it, it seems plausible that Father John would be familiar with such teachings. Furthermore, while this doctrine of total passivity to temporal authority has been judged to have been largely left behind by the

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<sup>292</sup> Kerr, p.37.

<sup>293</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.37-8.

<sup>294</sup> *Ibid.*, p.38.

<sup>295</sup> Connolly, *Priests and People*, pp.94-6.

<sup>296</sup> *Ibid.*, p.96; *The Macdermots*, p.40.

<sup>297</sup> *Ibid.*, p.221.

end of the 1820s, the church was still opposed to agrarian and other secret societies and pastoral letters underlined the sinfulness of unlawful oaths, the destruction of property and other violent actions.<sup>298</sup> Connolly has concluded too that as late as the 1830s, the period in which *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* is set, some parish priests had a substantial involvement in the formal and informal policing of their districts.<sup>299</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville also records an instance in the early 1830s of a priest reproaching a gang of Whitefeet.<sup>300</sup>

The possibility of Father John's high birth, although Trollope suggests it is unusual, has a basis in the historiography. The social origins of Irish Catholic priests were a fraught issue during the 1840s. Those who were fearful of the priesthood were troubled by concerns about what harm lower-class clerics might wreak, while some, who wanted a positively influential clerical body, believed this more likely with well-born priests. Sean Connolly has concluded that, despite contemporary concerns and perceptions, what was taking place was the gradual diminution of the most elite group of churchmen from aristocracy or gentry rather than a dramatic change in the character of the clerical body as a whole or an invasion of the lower orders.<sup>301</sup> Father McGrath's origins in a 'good family' might therefore be 'unusual' but not impossible. Moreover, Trollope also suggests that the source of Father John's gentlemanliness is not solely his birth but the broadening and civilizing effects of his education and work in France, and the issue of whether or not he is a gentleman seems to be the primary one, not only for Trollope, but also in the debate of the day.<sup>302</sup>

Alexis de Tocqueville, who travelled around Ireland in 1835, did not share Trollope's approval of British rule of Ireland but displays a similar awareness of the issue of the social origins of Catholic priests. He felt it

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<sup>298</sup> *Ibid.*, p.225; *Ibid.*

<sup>299</sup> *Ibid.*, p.236.

<sup>300</sup> Alexis de Tocqueville, *Journeys in England and Ireland* (1835), Translated by G. Lawrence and K.P. Mayer, J.P.Mayer (ed.) (London: Faber and Faber, 1958), p.132.

<sup>301</sup> Connolly, *Priests and People*, pp.39-40.

<sup>302</sup> *The Macdermots*, pp.40-1.



necessary, for example, to report to his readers that the Archbishop, four bishops and several priests he dined with in Carlow 'all appeared to be gentlemen.'<sup>303</sup> He also describes his meetings with priests who display some remarkable similarities to Father John. Thus the Catholic priest of an impoverished village in Connaught makes himself available to his parishioners, is hospitable to travellers, and is respectfully treated by the villagers. He has a word of encouragement or correction for everyone and offers both religious comfort and practical help to a dying man.<sup>304</sup>

Donal Kerr's descriptions of the most senior clerics of the day also provide possible real-life models for both Trollope's favoured priests and those of whom he disapproved. Dr. Daniel Murray, Archbishop of Dublin from 1823-1852, who trained in pre-Revolutionary Spain, was a mild conservative man who worked easily with a succession of Lords-lieutenant and was praised in the House of Commons for his moderate opinions by Lord John Russell. Whilst Daniel O'Connell was concerned that Murray was over-trusting in his dealings with the government, he did make significant achievements in church building and education.<sup>305</sup> Similarly another Archbishop, John MacHale of Tuam, embodies some of those characteristics of Irish clerics which Trollope represented in curates like Cullen and Brosnan. MacHale was often in conflict with Murray over the latter's willingness to work with the Irish administration. He was fiercely nationalistic, and Maynooth-educated; in fact he was the first Irish prelate since the Reformation to be wholly educated in Ireland.<sup>306</sup>

This description of MacHale includes two examples of controversial issues - clerical politicisation and the 'negative' effects of a Maynooth education - which Trollope selected for his fictional representation and which, when measured against the available evidence, he probably understated in the case of the former and exaggerated in the case of the latter. By containing it in the less prominent and less attractive clerics like Cullen and Brosnan, Trollope

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<sup>303</sup> De Tocqueville, p.130.

<sup>304</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.161-73.

<sup>305</sup> Kerr, pp.16-27.

<sup>306</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.21-7.

does at once underplay and condemn the degree of political involvement among the Catholic clergy. O'Connell won significant assistance from Catholic clergy in rallying popular support which helped to secure Emancipation, and Donal Kerr has concluded that support amongst the clergy for the Repeal movement was widespread.<sup>307</sup> Moreover, by the time of Trollope's final novel, the Land League was attracting substantial clerical backing partly because it employed methods of agitation such as boycotting and rent withholding which were deemed acceptable and partly because the movement was legitimised by having a parliamentary dimension.<sup>308</sup> Whilst Trollope does to some extent reflect this increased involvement, it is in order to denounce and dismiss it.<sup>309</sup>

Although Trollope was certainly not alone in attacking the pre-Famine education offered at Maynooth - his friend Thackeray, for example, found the college disgustingly filthy, squalid and complained that it produced only scowling, downcast priests - his analysis, particularly in the case of Cullen, is unjustifiably negative.<sup>310</sup> As Conor Johnston has pointed out, he could not have been 'perfectly illiterate' as this would have barred him from ordination.<sup>311</sup> Furthermore, Sean Connolly has concluded that, unlike the picture painted of the unkempt and uncouth Cullen, the majority of students at the college must have been the sons of men of substance in their own community, that the 'contrary observations of contemporaries must be seen as the result, partly of bias, and partly of a failure to appreciate that the social gradations of Irish society did not end with the simple distinction between gentlemen and others.'<sup>312</sup> Whilst Trollope's appreciation of the gradations of Irish society is generally acute, in this case his self-confessed preference for gentility and his unionism outweighed this.<sup>313</sup> Trollope also understates clerical drunkenness, a prominent and persistent problem. A class of suspended priests existed,

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<sup>307</sup> *Ibid.*, p.85.

<sup>308</sup> Connolly, *Priests and People*, p.262.

<sup>309</sup> See below pp.273-5

<sup>310</sup> Thackeray, *Sketch Book*, p.358.

<sup>311</sup> Johnston, 'Parsons, Priests and Politics', p.94.

<sup>312</sup> Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 40.

<sup>313</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 30.

commonly known as Father Tackems who gained a living, partly at least, from celebrating runaway marriages.<sup>314</sup> Trollope's Catholic priests, in being conspicuously sober, do not reflect this.

There are indications which support the authenticity of wider aspects of Trollope's depiction of Catholicism. The overarching importance of marriage, socially and religiously, is confirmed by the historiography and contemporary accounts. The Catholic Church encouraged marriage by naming and punishing those who were known to have had sexual relationships outside it.<sup>315</sup> It also encouraged repentance, reparation and subsequent marriage of these individuals by way of righting the wrong.<sup>316</sup> Unmarried mothers faced severe social sanctions. They could be disowned by their family, refused employment, driven to beggary or prostitution and socially ostracised.<sup>317</sup> One Bishop interviewed by Alexis de Tocqueville even suggested that public opinion on the subject of extra marital relations had grown too harsh, since a woman could be 'lost her whole life' if she was even suspected of wrongdoing.<sup>318</sup> In this context Father John's interference to secure Feemy's marriage and Father Marty's outrage at Fred's dishonourable intentions towards Kate are understandable, and the primary importance of marriage at all costs goes some way to explain the willingness of both priests to accept a mixed marriage.

Thackeray, in one of a number of descriptions of incomplete chapels - testament to a pre-Famine building programme - substantiates Trollope's assessment of Catholicism as a simple but powerful influence in the lives of the Irish:

a much finer ornament to the church than any of the questionable gewgaws which adorned the ceiling was the piety, stern, simple and

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<sup>314</sup> *Ibid.*, p.66 ; Desmond J. Keenan, *The Catholic Church in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: A Sociological Study* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1983), pp.67-8

<sup>315</sup> Connolly, *Priests and People*, pp.180-1

<sup>316</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.180-2.

<sup>317</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.188-9.

<sup>318</sup> De Tocqueville, *Journeys*, p.142.

unaffected of the people within. Their whole soul seemed to be in their prayers, as rich and poor knelt indifferently on the flags.<sup>319</sup>

In relation to Trollope's representation of Protestantism, Owen Chadwick's account of the Church of Ireland in the first half of the century suggests a basis for both Trollope's moderate and tolerant Revd. Mr. Armstrong and the furiously Evangelical O'Joscelyn. 'The established Church of Ireland,' he has explained, 'was not minded to missionary endeavour. Rich in proportion to its population, it was quiet, reasonable, instructed and expected in time the Roman Catholics would be converted by reason and by education. Its old fashioned members frowned on enthusiastic attempts to evangelise the Roman Catholics.'<sup>320</sup> But attempts to evangelise grew: 'Societies distributed Bibles and tracts among the people, founded Sunday Schools to educate their children and had no belief whatever in the gradual power of reason.'<sup>321</sup>

Alexis de Tocqueville also gives an account of an Anglican sermon which is redolent with the narrow, uncharitable and bigoted religious view which Trollope represents in besieged Irish Protestants. A collection having been taken, the preacher ends by assuring the congregation that the money will not go to relieve the wretchedness of Catholics. Whilst acknowledging that all misery should concern the Christian, he advises the relief of their own suffering before that of 'strangers', adding 'And is not the moral of this especially applicable to a small community, such as the Protestants of Galway, who must remain united as a living witness of the true religion, without the support of numbers.'<sup>322</sup> Thackeray too reports sightings of the sort of extreme proselytising Protestantism which Trollope decried and especially among Irish women in the north. In Armagh he observes 'more decided signs that Protestantism was there in the ascendant. I saw no less than three different ladies on the prowl, dropping religious tracts at various doors.'<sup>323</sup> In a

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<sup>319</sup> Thackeray, *Sketch Book*, pp.48-50.

<sup>320</sup> Owen Chadwick, *An Ecclesiastical History of England: The Victorian Church* (London: A. and C. Black, 1966), p.48.

<sup>321</sup> *Ibid.*, p.49.

<sup>322</sup> De Tocqueville, *Journeys*, p.181.

<sup>323</sup> Thackeray, *Sketch Book*, p.302.

Coleraine hotel room complete with its own testament he complains, 'the Protestant of the north is as much priest-ridden as the Catholic of the south; - priest and old woman-ridden, for there are certain expounders of doctrine in our church, who are not, I believe, to be found in the church of Rome.'<sup>324</sup>

The question raised, therefore, in connection with Trollope's representation of religion in Ireland, when set against the historiography and contemporary accounts, is not so much of the origin of sources for his Catholicism and Protestantism, for they existed around him, but rather why he chose to select and then emphasise or underplay aspects of them as he did. This is one of the questions addressed in the final section of this chapter which seeks to identify the major influences and motivations which formed and informed Trollope's version of religion in Ireland, and to draw some conclusions.

Trollope arrived in Ireland with certain pre-conceived notions, however vague, as to the nature of that country and its religious landscape.<sup>325</sup> During his time there he became convinced of the positive potential of Catholicism for both social stability and personal salvation:

In Europe there is no country where the religion of Rome is so sincerely trusted to, and acted upon as in Ireland. ...In Italy, even in the Papal States, it is considered rather as a gorgeous pageantry than as a religion sent from God for the guidance of mankind. In Flanders it bears the nearest resemblance to the warm fidelity of Ireland – but even there it is among the women that its strong influence is to be found. Rarely in either of these countries one finds men of education believing in, submitting to, and guided by the religion which they possess, and allowing by that only can they regulate their conduct in this world, and hope to meet salvation in the next.<sup>326</sup>

Indeed so strong was this early impression of Catholicism that it is the one that persists in his Irish fiction. Even in *The Landleaguers*, Catholicism is allowed to

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<sup>324</sup> *Ibid.*, p.330.

<sup>325</sup> 'Father Giles of Ballymoy', p.399.

<sup>326</sup> *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*, Appendix, p.652.

escape the sort of vilification visited on other aspects of Irish life. The positive nature of Catholicism is most powerfully shown in the characters of Father John and Father Marty. That Trollope had to sing its praises very loudly to counter a contemporary chorus of disapproval, goes some way to accounting for his emphasis on the worthiness of the best priests and his corresponding devaluation of those he finds less worthy.<sup>327</sup>

Also, Trollope was ever mindful of his English audience. He took upon himself the rôle of interpreting Ireland to the English, partly because he believed he knew well and understood that country, partly because he was frustrated and irate at misrepresentations of it.<sup>328</sup> To win his English readership over to his view of Ireland, he had to portray it not only in a positive manner but in a manner that contained characteristics which he believed would find ready approval. Father John, therefore, is genteel, sober, conscientious and apolitical not only because Trollope seems to have known and approved of such priests but also because he expected this to win sympathy from his English readers.

As part of his mission to correct misconceptions, Trollope set about exploding the stereotypical images that abounded by introducing representations of the complexities of Irish religious life. Thus, as Robert Tracy has observed, in his first novel he deliberately turns away from the Protestant Anglo-Irish gentry of the works of Edgeworth and Lever and focuses on the more obscure Irish Catholic gentry 'trapped in the ironies and anomalies of their position.'<sup>329</sup> This allows the author to depict Catholicism as both a bond between the Macdermot family and the tenants from whom they are nonetheless separated by class, and at the same time something which isolates the Macdermots from their fellow landlords.<sup>330</sup> Similarly, whilst condemning the division resulting from religious difference which certainly existed in Ireland, he is careful to offer examples of exceptions. In the early

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<sup>327</sup> Norman, p.13.

<sup>328</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.2.

<sup>329</sup> Robert Tracy, Introduction to *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989) pp. xii-xiv.

<sup>330</sup> *The Macdermots*, p.138

part of *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*, Trollope points out that the O'Connellite Tom Steele is a Protestant.<sup>331</sup> And again in *Castle Richmond*, he describes the almost instinctive animosity between Father Bernard McCarthy and the Rev. Mr Townsend, but hastily adds: 'I do not wish it to be understood that this sort of feeling always prevailed in Irish parishes between the Priest and the parson even before the days of the famine'.<sup>332</sup>

Whereas Trollope assumed a certain hostility in his readers towards Catholicism, his account of Protestantism in Ireland assumes a degree of approval – an opinion which he seeks to challenge and inform. His message is that while life as a member of the minority religion can produce enlightened, tolerant ministers like Armstrong, it more often leads to divisive and self-defeating bigotry and spiritual paralysis. Nor is the Protestant church encouraging a living faith in its adherents.

Trollope's artistic principles can be seen at work in the formation of his representation of religion in Ireland. Although, not blind to the degree of artfulness involved in his recreation in fiction of what J.R.Kincaid has called a "seeming-to-be-real" realism', presenting characters and situations convincing in their life-likeness was important to Trollope.<sup>333</sup> In his depiction of religion in Ireland this encouraged a factual fidelity evident in the historiographical support for his fictional creations and his avoidance of 'unrealistic' 'gods or demons'.<sup>334</sup> Thus even the near-saintly Father John has his faults, just as the Republican Brosnan retains some of his integrity as a priest.<sup>335</sup>

Trollope realized both the influential nature of the novel and the novelist's moral responsibility.<sup>336</sup> Moreover, he was consciously didactic.<sup>337</sup> Therefore, the playing out of religious belief in the lives of Trollope's Irish men and women can be read as containing lessons. In this context his portraits of Protestants like O'Joscelyn and Letty Fitzgerald, entertaining as they are, are

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<sup>331</sup> *The Kellys*, p.10.

<sup>332</sup> *Castle Richmond*, pp.103-4.

<sup>333</sup> James R.Kincaid, *The Novels of Anthony Trollope*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1977), p.47.

<sup>334</sup> *Autobiography*, p.84, p.96.

<sup>335</sup> *The Macdermots*, pp.41-3; *The Landleaguers*, p.24.

<sup>336</sup> *Autobiography*, pp.141-2.

<sup>337</sup> *Ibid.*, p.96.

consciously designed to underscore the consequences of religious hatred and relentless evangelising. This is not to say that the diverting nature of their presentation is incidental. 'A novel,' Trollope insisted, 'should give a picture of common life enlivened by humour, and sweetened by pathos.'<sup>338</sup> The enlivening humour helps to convey the moral lesson and Trollope's obvious delight in their creation perhaps accounts for the number of ultra-Protestants he presents.

Trollope's struggle for commercial success is reflected in his interruption, though not abandonment, of his Irish clerics for those of Barsetshire. Although he complained of the English reading public's resistance to Irish novels he could not entirely ignore it.<sup>339</sup>

Trollope's own preference for a religion which is generous, tolerant, comforting and practical has an obvious effect. With an Evangelical Anglicanism which, as he saw it, had become distorted by a siege mentality, it was Catholicism which more completely fulfilled his requirements for an effective religion and his Irish fiction reflects this.

In political terms Trollope described himself as 'an advanced but still a conservative Liberal' which despite its apparent contradictions he regarded as 'not only ... a possible but a rational and consistent phase of political existence,' and this largely because while 'inequality is the work of God' the diminution of that inequality is 'equally divine.'<sup>340</sup> Trollope's political ambition, therefore, is for gradual, rather than precipitate, progress towards equality. He also favoured the maintenance of the Union.<sup>341</sup> In his representation of religion in his Irish fiction, the effects of these political stances are most apparent in his emphasis on the more conservative, law-abiding priests who do not excite their flock to action on agrarian or nationalist causes. Whilst, therefore, as Conor Johnston suggests, the dispensing of Trollope's affection 'was not unrelated to the priest's political tendencies,' his insistence on considering Trollope's

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<sup>338</sup> *Ibid*, p.94.

<sup>339</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.1

<sup>340</sup> *Autobiography*, pp. 186-7.

<sup>341</sup> *Ibid.*, p.51.



political convictions as the principal influence on his portrayal of Irish priests and parsons, leads him to underestimate the dominance of negative impressions of Irish Anglicanism and also to ignore other formative factors.<sup>342</sup> Even in the very one-sided *Landleaguers*, Trollope offers a variety of priests, not a single negative image.<sup>343</sup> Moreover, the strongest impressions which emerge from Trollope's Irish fiction are of an upright Catholicism against a debased and distorted Protestantism. Johnston's failure to recognize the importance of influences and motivations outside the political sphere is exemplified by his critique of Father John's rôle in Thady's fate. He interprets the priest purely as part of 'a countermovement' to prevent the 'gestation' of a radical.<sup>344</sup> This entirely ignores Father John's concern for Thady's spiritual salvation. The priest's interpretation of doctrine in relation to submission to temporal authority can be seen as wrong-headed, but it is a doctrine in which both he and Trollope sincerely believed. When Father John encourages Thady to confess his guilt and surrender to the law, it is, at least in part, because he sees this as spiritually necessary. Where Trollope's political stance, therefore, certainly affects his representation of religion, this must be seen, with other influences, as part of a complex interaction.

Primarily through characterization and to a lesser degree plot, Trollope's Irish fiction presents a picture which emphasizes a Catholic religion which through its best priests provides comfort and practical guidance and which encourages social stability. The anomalous position of Irish Protestants, however, is shown to have a detrimental effect on the most extreme Evangelical Anglicans. Trollope uses them to attack narrowness, intolerance and proselytism, though he also objects to Catholic examples of these religious distortions. Such religious characteristics he identifies too as the cause of religious antagonism and division in Ireland and in *An Eye for an Eye* he offers a consideration of the validity of the Catholic threat to the British state.

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<sup>342</sup> Johnston, 'Parsons, Priests and Politics', p.82.

<sup>343</sup> *The Landleaguers*, pp.23-6.

<sup>344</sup> Conor Johnston, 'The Macdermots of Ballycloran: Trollope as Conservative-Liberal', *Eire-Ireland*, 16 (Summer 1981), pp.71-92 ( p.88).

Trollope based his representation on beliefs and attitudes developed in his early years as well as his experiences and relationships in Ireland. He strove for factual fidelity and the historiography, contemporary accounts and contemporary criticism support the authenticity of aspects of his portrayal. What he chose to emphasise or understate from the Irish religious landscape was then also dictated and moulded by the varied, and sometimes competing, influences. These included his affection for Ireland and determination to correct misconceptions about the country and its people, prevailing attitudes to Catholicism, his political faith in British rule and the correctness of gradual change, his religious principles and his attempt to write moral, artistically and commercially successful fiction. When Trollope is at his best - in the poignancy of Thady's execution, the incisive satire of the besieged O'Joscelyns, the thoughtful objection to a Catholic Irish girl as a threat to the Protestant state - this complex combination of factors come together to form an entertaining, perceptive, and challenging representation of religion in Ireland.

## CHAPTER TWO

# WOMEN

Like the issue of religion, 'the rights of women' was 'a very favourite subject' for debate during Trollope's lifetime, and while he is most readily associated with depictions of the traditionally male worlds of the church and politics, female characters, nonetheless, figure amongst his most accomplished creations.<sup>345</sup> His first fictional female is Irish - Feemy Macdermot in *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* – and leads a varied parade of characters who reflect many aspects of life as a woman in the Victorian era and features of the contemporary debate on a woman's true nature and proper place. This is not to argue that Trollope dedicated his novels to making an unqualified plea for increased powers and rights for women. As with other issues, and particularly those in which he perceived the rights of the individual competing with the good of society, the fictional representation which emerges is an ambivalent one. This chapter examines Trollope's portrayal of women in his Irish fiction with an eye to this ambivalence and asks whether it is sustained or modified in the Irish context. The Irish American Rachel O'Mahony and the numerous English women who appear in his Irish work will also be discussed to provide a context and points of comparison.

Deborah Morse begins her study of women in the Palliser novels with two mid-twentieth century critical assessments which serve to graphically demonstrate the competing elements of Trollope's representation of women.<sup>346</sup> She explains that while Patricia Thomson affirmed in 1956 that 'it was on reading Trollope that Victorians must have felt their ideal of wifely submission was in its finest hour', Rebecca West a year later felt able to claim that

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<sup>345</sup> Anthony Trollope, *North America* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1862; Rev.edn., New York: Knopf, 1951). p.256.

<sup>346</sup> Deborah Deneholz Morse, *Women in Trollope's Palliser Novels* (Michigan: UMI Research Press, 1987), p.1.

'Trollope was a feminist.'<sup>347</sup> Both are simplistic overstatements. On the one hand Thomson ignores Trollope's sympathetic portrayals of women who find themselves unhappily married or, who, in one way or another, not only fall short of the ideal, but also fall victim to the whole business of the Victorian idealization of women.<sup>348</sup> On the other hand, it is not easy to reconcile West's conclusion with Trollopian pronouncements such as, 'The best right a woman has is the right to a good husband.'<sup>349</sup>

That critics have continued to debate the degree of conventionality of Trollope's representation of women is a measure of its ambivalence. Terry Eagleton has come down emphatically on the side of those who view Trollope as the voice of Victorian orthodoxy which offers a 'naively representational 'realism' that is merely a reflex of commonplace bourgeois empiricism.'<sup>350</sup> George Levine, on the other hand, while sharing some of Eagleton's conclusions about Trollope's novels as 'comforting, conservative documents', has also commented on 'impressive elements of moral subversion' contained within them, and has affirmed that in *Can You Forgive Her?* 'Trollope allows a much greater sympathy with wilful women than almost any other male Victorian but Meredith and Hardy.'<sup>351</sup>

Bill Overton has cited Trollope's portrayal of women as a clear example of the sharp discrepancy between some of the novelist's official beliefs and unofficial messages which emerge from his writing. Trollope, he has claimed, 'could vividly imagine, and realise in his writing, what the position of a woman entailed, yet he had no ear for the conclusion crying out to be drawn: that

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<sup>347</sup> Patricia Thomson, *The Victorian Heroine: A Changing Ideal, 1837-1873* (London: Oxford University Press, 1956), p.111; Rebecca West, *The Court and the Castle* (Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1957), p.167. Quoted in Morse, p.1.

<sup>348</sup> The marriage, for example, of Laura and Robert Kennedy in *Phineas Finn* exposes the misery which can result from an excessively puritanical husband exercising his marital rights. Also, in *The Vicar of Bullhampton* (1870) Trollope pleads for sympathy and forgiveness for a 'fallen woman' Carry Brattle.

<sup>349</sup> *North America*, p.265.

<sup>350</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Criticism and Ideology: A Study in Marxist Literary Theory* (London: New Left Books, 1976), p.181. Quoted in Bill Overton, *The Unofficial Trollope* (Sussex: The Harvester Press, 1982), p.1.

<sup>351</sup> George Levine, 'Can You Forgive Him? Trollope's *Can You Forgive Her?* and the Myth of Realism.', *Victorian Studies* 18,1 (1974), pp.5-30 (p.10).

women might have abilities which only a career could fulfil.<sup>352</sup> Jane Nardin, in her detailed study of the independent woman in Trollope's novels, describes a similar tension but ascribes it to a more conscious act on Trollope's part, an experimentation with formal technique in order to conceal an unorthodox subtext beneath the conventional surface of his novels.<sup>353</sup> She has also concluded that around 1860, his interest in women's grievances grew and became more sympathetic.<sup>354</sup>

Margaret Markwick has similarly detected a 'primary story line [which] supports the status quo' while 'a strong sub-text...urges reform for the traps that his women find themselves in.'<sup>355</sup> She has noted that Trollope 'can demonstrate a deep and subtle understanding about how relationships between the sexes operated' but has observed too that he has lapses in self-knowledge which contribute to the ambiguous nature of his representation. She has explained that In *The Vicar of Bullhampton*, for example, while Trollope 'thinks he has seen through the mixed messages of the age...In this he deceives himself.'<sup>356</sup> He is prepared with his characterisation of Carrie Brattle to confront public opinion on the rehabilitation of fallen women but with his harsh judgement of Mary Lowther, who chooses to marry the man she loves and not the suitor preferred by her friends (and the author), Markwick contends that Trollope unwittingly reinforces the double standards he seems to condemn.<sup>357</sup>

Deborah Morse has discerned a duality and conflict in Trollope's vision of Victorian womanhood arising out of his disquiet with cultural assumptions about woman's nature and rôle. She perceives it manifesting itself in a disruption of the traditional narrative structure, in ambiguous characterization,

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<sup>352</sup> Overton, p.8.

<sup>353</sup> Jane Nardin, *He Knew She Was Right: The Independent Woman in the Novels of Anthony Trollope*, (Carbondale: Southern Illinois University Press, 1989), p.xviii.

<sup>354</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1

<sup>355</sup> Margaret Markwick, *Trollope and Women* (London: Hambledon Press, 1997), p.7.

<sup>356</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.47-8.

<sup>357</sup> *Ibid.*

in tensions between narrative intent and resolution, between characterization and the narrator's commentary, between text and illustration.<sup>358</sup>

Interestingly, Richard Barickman, Susan MacDonald and Myra Stark have concluded that Trollope was not alone among Victorian novelists in producing ambiguous works which both assert and negate the contemporary system of sexual relationships. They have posited that the works of Charles Dickens, William Makepeace Thackeray, and Wilkie Collins also contain a perception of the failure of the system alongside a strenuous insistence on traditional values.<sup>359</sup>

Absent from the literary criticism is an extensive, wide-ranging consideration of women in Trollope's Irish fiction. Women find their way into some gender-focused studies where, however, the issue of nationality is generally left unexplored. Deborah Morse, for example, comments on how, by choosing Mary Flood Jones, Phineas Finn chooses the most conventional and submissive of females to be his wife. Morse does not, however, investigate the significance of Mary's Irishness.<sup>360</sup>

A recent flurry of post-colonial allegorical interpretations has included the women of Trollope's Irish fiction but has tended to focus less on what their portrayal has to say about the nature and rôle of women in Ireland at the time, and more on what it conveys about the Union.<sup>361</sup> This approach can result in over-politicised readings. Laura M. Berol, for example, in her construal of the abusive relationship between Barry and Anty Lynch in *The Kellys* as figuring Anglo-Irish oppression of the native Catholic Irish, ignores the more generalized apolitical themes of the responsible treatment of women, and their

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<sup>358</sup> Morse, *Women*, p.2.

<sup>359</sup> Richard Barickman, Susan Macdonald .Myra Stark, *Corrupt Relations: Dickens, Thackeray, Trollope, Collins and the Victorian Sexual System* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1982), p.viii.

<sup>360</sup> Morse, p.40.

<sup>361</sup> Laura M. Berol, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 32/1 (2004), pp.103-16; Bridget Matthews-Kane, in *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 32/1 (2004), pp.117-132.

financial and social vulnerability which are explored in these characterisations and others in this novel.<sup>362</sup>

Since the metaphorical construct of the national marriage between Britain and Ireland involves a recognition of contemporary interpretations of femininity and masculinity, allegorical interpretations do occasionally include oblique assessments of Trollope's deployment of these. Thus Jane Elizabeth Dougherty has concluded that Trollope's portrayal of Phineas Finn is affected by a need to make this Irish MP less threatening and that this is achieved by feminising him.<sup>363</sup> Such a conclusion, however, misses the complication of the value Trollope generally attaches to a degree of 'femininity' in his most mature and civilized men. Septimus Harding in *The Warden*, for example, obviously wins authorial approval for his mildness and self-effacement where Robert Kennedy's 'masculine' forcefulness in *Phineas Finn* draws criticism.<sup>364</sup> Further, the explicit definition of manliness offered in *Phineas Redux* includes attributes such as being 'kindly', 'tender-hearted' and 'gentle' which are more readily associated with women.<sup>365</sup>

These gender-based and post-colonial approaches ultimately prove unsatisfactory.<sup>366</sup> By their very focus they tend to underestimate the formative influence of Trollope's moral, social and artistic agendas. Furthermore, it would seem that now that the possibility has been allowed of Trollope employing symbolism, there is an unwarranted tendency to perceive figurative significance

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<sup>362</sup> Berol, p.113. Lord Cashel's unprincipled behaviour towards his niece and ward Fanny Wyndham in *The Kellys*, for example, also dramatises these themes but since both are members of the Protestant Ascendancy the focus is on gender and morality, rather than politics. In a novel of parallel plots designed to show the working out of similar situations and issues in different social and familial contexts, the Barry and Anty Lynch relationship primarily plays out the issue of female vulnerability and male responsibility between siblings from a *nouveau riche* family. Moreover, Barry's Protestantism, rather than simply having political significance, forms part of Trollope's moral and religious critique. See this study p. ????????

<sup>363</sup> Jane Elizabeth Dougherty, 'A Man in the House: Phineas Finn and the Quest for Irish Membership', in McCaw, pp.158-72 (p.159).

<sup>364</sup> See Trollope, *The Warden* (London: Penguin, 1986) especially chapters 18 and 19 which describe the process by which he reaches his principled decision to resign the wardenship of Hiram's hospital.

<sup>365</sup> Anthony Trollope, *Phineas Redux* (London: *Graphic*, 1873-4; Rev. edn., London: Penguin, 1993), p.303.

<sup>366</sup> Although she strangely omits Trollope from consideration, see Vera Kreilkamp, 'Fiction and Empire: The Irish Novel', in Kevin Kenny (ed.), *Ireland and the British Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004), pp.154-187, for a discussion of how Irish fiction generally resists incorporation into the standard binaries of post-colonial theory.

in every line of his work. He would surely have been amazed to find his subtitle for *Phineas Finn - the Irish Member* - being interpreted as implying 'the achievement of (phallic) masculinity.'<sup>367</sup> By reading it in its historical, literary and biographical contexts, and by considering issues of both gender and nationality, this chapter provides a much-needed, multi-faceted assessment of the representation of women in Trollope's Irish fiction.

An appreciation of the expectations and constraints which operated on the lives of women at the time is crucial to a full understanding of Trollope's portrayal of women. While the Victorian period was one in which women gained more control over their lives in a number of important areas – access to education and employment; increased rights of guardianship of their children; availability of divorce and control of property - the benefits were limited and neither uniformly nor universally enjoyed across the female population.<sup>368</sup> Moreover, they did not emerge from a harmonious consensus about sexual equality. Two key publications, John Stuart Mill's 'The Subjection of Women' and John Ruskin's 'Of Queen's Gardens' indicate the strength of argument and degree of difference on the 'Woman Question'.

In his essay Mill argues forcefully that:

the principle which regulates the existing social relations between the two sexes – the legal subordination of one sex to the other – is wrong in itself, and now one of the chief hindrances to human improvement: and that it ought to be replaced by a principle of perfect equality, admitting no power or privilege on the one side, nor disability on the other.<sup>369</sup>

Countering current assumptions, he insists that there is no objective evidence for the existence of 'natural' differences between the sexes which justifies the subjugation of women.<sup>370</sup> In emotive terms, he describes the position of married women in the 1860s, repeatedly associating it with slavery.

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<sup>367</sup> Dougherty, in McCaw, p.158.

<sup>368</sup> Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, pp.200, 320, 333; J.F.C.Harrison, *Late Victorian Britain, 1875-1901* (London: Fontana Press, 1990), pp.167-73.

<sup>369</sup> J.S.Mill, 'The Subjection of Women', in A.Ryan (ed.) *Mill: Texts, Commentaries* (New York: W.W.Norton, 1997), pp.133-216 ( p.135).

<sup>370</sup> *Ibid.*, p.148.



Legislation, he believes, has not gone nearly far enough to protect women from brutish husbands since: 'it is contrary to reason and experience to suppose that there can be any real check to brutality, consistent with leaving the victim still in the power of the executioner.'<sup>371</sup> Given this and similar views, his curt statement that the 'question of divorce, in the sense involving liberty of remarriage, is one into which it is foreign to my purpose to enter', seems curiously evasive.<sup>372</sup> In the context, however, of his broader vision of the modern, civilized society with the family at its centre, it perhaps becomes more explicable. Mill energetically promotes the right of a woman to choose a life outside the home, but with the condition that if she decides to be a wife and mother, the all-important survival of the family demands that, 'she renounces, not all other objects and occupations, but all which are not consistent with the requirements of this.'<sup>373</sup>

Given the vital rôle John Ruskin also ascribes to marriage and family in 'Of Queens' Gardens', these two men might seem to inhabit the same ground, but Ruskin's enthusiastic espousal of the doctrine of natural difference between the sexes takes him to a very different ideological location. He seems to insist on a complementary equality:

We are foolish, and without excuse foolish, in speaking of the 'superiority' of one sex to the other, as if they could be compared in similar things. Each has what the other has not, each completes the other, and is completed by the other: they are nothing alike, and the happiness and perfection of both depends on each asking and receiving from the other what the other only can give.<sup>374</sup>

However, it transpires that in Ruskin's vision, innate qualities dictate not only different, but unequal rôles - an active, public rôle for the man and a passive, domestic one for the woman. Thus, 'Man's power is active, progressive, defensive. He is eminently the doer, the creator, the discoverer, the defender.

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<sup>371</sup> *Ibid.*, p.161.

<sup>372</sup> *Ibid.*, p.159.

<sup>373</sup> *Ibid.*, p.171.

<sup>374</sup> John Ruskin, 'Of Queens' Gardens', in *Sesame and Lilies, Three Lectures by John Ruskin* (London: George Allen & Sons, 1908), pp.48-79 (p.107).

His intellect is for speculation and invention; his energy for adventure, for war, and for conquest.<sup>375</sup> The woman by contrast has an intellect suited not to invention or creation but 'sweet ordering' and 'arrangement'.<sup>376</sup> The home which her man guards is her 'true place and power'.<sup>377</sup> If she is superior in terms of morality and wisdom, she must dedicate these advantages to his service. She must be:

...enduringly, incorruptibly good; instinctively, infallibly wise – wise not for self-development, but for self-renunciation: wise, not that she may set herself above her husband, but that she may never fall from his side: wise, not with the narrowness of insolent and loveless pride but with the passionate gentleness of an infinitely variable...modesty of service.<sup>378</sup>

As Martha Vicinus has observed, in the context of the period it was Mill's vision which was the aberrant one, Ruskin's which was more in keeping with the cultural stereotype which had such a tremendous hold on the collective imagination.<sup>379</sup> It did not go unchallenged and it changed over time but it is nonetheless possible to discern what might be held to constitute the conventional Victorian view of women.

This orthodoxy maintained that men and women were different physically, morally and intellectually, and these differences were seen as having a natural basis, whether Divinely ordained or biologically-dictated. For many Victorians, therefore, such differences were not amenable to change by human agency. The inferiority of women was signalled by physical weakness, and, along with the 'disabling' effects of menstruation and pregnancy, this was held to render them less fit to play an active rôle in the public sphere and thus provided a pragmatic argument for reliance on men and the efficacy of marriage. Different intellectual powers were also discerned in men and

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<sup>375</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>376</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>377</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.108-9.

<sup>378</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.109-10.

<sup>379</sup> Martha Vicinus (ed.), *Suffer and be Still, Women in the Victorian Age* (Bloomington: Indiana University Press, 1972), p.x. For the prevalence of this view of women see Robin Gilmour, *The Victorian Period: The Intellectual and Cultural Context of English Literature 1830-1890* (Harlow: Longman, 1993), p.189 and Nardin, p.2.

women. Women, in keeping with their emotional nature, were intuitive but less capable of higher order thought processes like logical reasoning, suggesting again their fitness for a dependent and domestic existence. Women were held to be morally superior - purity, piety and altruism making up their 'natural' feminine qualities. It was a superiority, however, which was paradoxically viewed as reinforcing the case for female submission. Only a woman's selfless dedication could ensure a man's moral safety. Moreover, a high price was exacted from women who were seen to fall short of this moral ideal.<sup>380</sup>

Ireland was neither excluded from current debate, nor isolated from prevailing ideologies relating to women in this period in the kingdom as a whole. John Stuart Mill's 1866 petition to the House of Commons for female suffrage had twenty-five Irish women among its signatories.<sup>381</sup> Moreover, Maria Luddy's description of the orthodox view which prevailed in Ireland with regard to the nature and rôle of women echoes the one outlined above. It held that 'the perfect wife/mother was gentle, kind, patient, moral and spiritual.'<sup>382</sup> It decreed 'a place for women in society based on the exercise of domestic duties, to which a woman was considered particularly suited because of her physical and mental abilities. Women's rôle in society was generally seen as one of submissive passivity.'<sup>383</sup>

Marriage, or indeed the failure to marry, dominated the lives of women in nineteenth-century Ireland. As Maria Luddy has explained, the prevailing ideological view of woman's nature and rôle awarded a central position to wives and mothers, women who existed for the benefit of their families, who were 'gentle, kind, patient, moral and spiritual' and submissive.<sup>384</sup> Economic, social, religious and familial enticements and imperatives also encouraged women to look to marriage as a desirable state.

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<sup>380</sup> Nardin, pp.2-4.

<sup>381</sup> Rosemary Cullen Owens, from 'Votes for Women,' *Labour History News*, 9 ( Summer 1993) , pp . 15-19 in Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart (eds.), *The Irish Women's History Reader* (London: Routledge, 2001), pp. 37-43 (p.38); Maria Luddy, *Women in Ireland, 1800-1918: A Documentary History* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1995), p.3.

<sup>382</sup> Luddy, *Women in Ireland*, p.3.

<sup>383</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>384</sup> *Ibid.*

An economic vulnerability, confirmed by the overrepresentation of women amongst those seeking aid in the workhouse and charitable institutions, encouraged the search for a reliable husband and breadwinner. Luddy has concluded that for the poorest women who could not find work, it provided an escape from utter destitution.<sup>385</sup> For those above the level of subsistence farmer, cottier or labourer, a system of arranged marriage was established which was increasingly dominated by the financial considerations of inheritance and dowry.<sup>386</sup>

Prevailing attitudes rewarded women who married with both social approval and status. Caoimhin O'Danachair has commented how it was not on reaching the age of majority, but on becoming a wife that a woman obtained the rights and privileges of a full member of the community, while her fifty year old unmarried aunt could still be perceived as a 'girl'.<sup>387</sup> Indeed those women who failed to marry could find themselves the objects of scorn and pity.<sup>388</sup>

The Catholic Church promoted marriage on both pragmatic and doctrinal grounds. The family operated as a positive social force, regularising sexual activity and providing financially for women and children. With the Holy Family as the model, the wife and mother found her 'domestic hegemony' both 'reinforced' and 'sanctified' by the church.<sup>389</sup>

Women found themselves under pressure from family members to make a suitable and remunerative match. Having a sufficient dowry to attract a worthy and financially sound husband reflected well on the family and ended her dependency on them.<sup>390</sup>

Finally, marriage could be a means to a woman establishing her own domain and area of influence. If she was fortunate in her choice of husband, it

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<sup>385</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5

<sup>386</sup> Art Cosgrove (ed.), *Marriage in Ireland* (Dublin: College Press, 1985), p.3.

<sup>387</sup> Caoimhin O'Danachair, 'Marriage in Irish Folk Tradition' in Cosgrove, pp.99-115 (p.99-100).

<sup>388</sup> Kerby A. Miller with David N. Doyle and Patricia Kelleher in O'Sullivan, *Irish Women*, pp. 41-65 (p..51).

<sup>389</sup> Miller, Doyle and Kelleher in O'Sullivan, *Irish Women*, pp.49-50.

<sup>390</sup> S.J.Connolly, 'Marriage in Pre-Famine Ireland,' in Cosgrove, *Marriage in Ireland*, pp.81-84.

also provided the only sanctioned means of finding love and companionship with a member of the opposite sex.<sup>391</sup>

This is not to say, however, that marriage inevitably bestowed blessings, or that there were not concomitant drawbacks. Most historians agree that after the Famine the 'match' and dowry system became both increasingly prevalent and restrictive, leaving fewer women with the opportunity of meeting the ideal of becoming a wife and mother and less choice over whom they married.<sup>392</sup> Those who found themselves in unhappy or abusive marriages could not look hopefully to legislation for release or protection. The Act for the Better Prevention and Punishment of Aggravated Assaults of 1853 was not extended to Ireland, nor was the Divorce and Matrimonial Causes Act 1857.<sup>393</sup> Moreover, motherhood might confer status but it also brought physical suffering and danger as well as financial hardship.<sup>394</sup>

Arguably, however, those who remained outside marriage suffered even more. The primacy of family, for example, was evident in the treatment of unmarried mothers. That many were left wretched and destitute, after rejection by their family and community, demonstrates that it was not motherhood *per se* which was held in such high esteem.<sup>395</sup> Significantly, single women lacking a dowry, or unable to find employment, or unwilling to face life as a dependent in someone else's house, or simply looking for an opportunity to make a freer choice of career and husband, chose to emigrate in increasing numbers.<sup>396</sup>

With regard to the education of women, one story to be told is of increased access and literacy levels. As John Logan has pointed out, during the century, largely because of the introduction of the national school system in the 1830s, schooling went from being the experience of only a small minority to

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<sup>391</sup> Joanna Bourke, from 'The Best of All Home Rulers', in Hayes and Urquhart, pp.203-208 (pp.204-205); Connolly in Cosgrove, p.126.

<sup>392</sup> Connolly in Cosgrove, pp.121-3;

<sup>393</sup> David Fitzpatrick, 'Divorce and Separation in Modern Irish History', *Past and Present* 114 (1987), pp. 172-96 (pp.172-3); Steiner Scott, in Valiulis and O'Dowd, pp.126-7.

<sup>394</sup> Luddy, *Women in Ireland*, pp.6-7.

<sup>395</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>396</sup> Hayes and Urquhart, p.159.

the point where it was part of the upbringing of most people.<sup>397</sup> Moreover, a huge gulf apparent in 1821 in the opportunity for females, as opposed to males, to participate in elementary schooling had all but disappeared by 1900.<sup>398</sup> Also by this time, literacy rates among females began to overtake those of males and, increasingly, as labour requirements changed in America, women were able to use education to prepare for emigration.<sup>399</sup>

From the 1860s the issue of secondary and university education for women was vigorously debated. Women initiated campaigns and founded schools and colleges.<sup>400</sup> A significant breakthrough came with the Intermediate Education Act of 1878 which allowed girls to be examined and awarded prizes and grants on the same basis as boys. The following year the Royal University Act made degrees available to women.<sup>401</sup> Education pioneers like Anne Jellicoe at Alexandra College, Dublin and Margaret Byers at Victoria College, Belfast led the way for increasing numbers of women to become teachers.<sup>402</sup>

Another narrative which emerges, however, in relation to women and education in Ireland in the nineteenth century counters this tale of expanding opportunities and broadening horizons. As numerous scholars have pointed out, aspects of the education offered to women served to restrict their lives. The national school system sought not merely to purvey numeracy, literacy and marketable skills; it also promoted a particular world-view. One, as John Logan has noted, which 'emphasised deference to hierarchy, the justness of a divinely sanctioned social structure and the appropriateness of the modest rewards that accrued to honest labour.'<sup>403</sup> Included in this as a matter of course was the doctrine of separate spheres with a domestic and subordinate rôle for

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<sup>397</sup> John Logan, 'The Dimensions of Gender in Nineteenth-Century Schooling', in Margaret Kelleher and James H. Murphy (eds.), *Gender Perspectives in Nineteenth-Century Ireland Public and Private Sphere* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1997), pp. 36-49 (p.36).

<sup>398</sup> *Ibid.*, p.38.

<sup>399</sup> *Ibid.*, p.40; David Fitzpatrick, 'The Modernisation of the Irish Female', in Patrick O'Flanagan, Paul Ferguson, and Kevin Whelan, *Rural Ireland 1600-1900: Modernisation and Change* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1987), pp.162-80 (p.176).

<sup>400</sup> Luddy, *Women in Ireland*, p.90.

<sup>401</sup> *Ibid.*, p.92; Cullen Owens, in Hayes and Urquhart, p.39.

<sup>402</sup> Luddy, *Women in Ireland*, p.90; Logan, pp.47-8.

<sup>403</sup> Logan in Kelleher and Murphy, p.45.

women.<sup>404</sup> Readers were prepared for use in the schools. As early as 1850 some forty-one were in existence. One 1846 example had the clearly declared aim of teaching the female 'to know her place and her function; to make her content with one and willing to fulfil the other... to render her more useful, more humble, and more happy.'<sup>405</sup> The curriculum correspondingly tended to reinforce traditional gender rôles.<sup>406</sup>

It has been argued also that the enthusiastic involvement of the Catholic Church in national schools, convent schools and teacher training establishments further promoted adherence to the prevailing orthodoxy regarding a woman's place. J.J.Lee has concluded that 'Dutiful women teachers, including many dedicated nuns, taught girls obedience, docility and resignation to the rôle assigned to them by a male providence.'<sup>407</sup>

Furthermore, improvements in the education of women had their limits and inequalities. Only middle and upper-class girls and women could anticipate secondary and university education, and, especially in the case of higher education, not many of those.<sup>408</sup> And while the expansion of education did provide employment for women teachers, their status and pay were lower than that of their male colleagues.<sup>409</sup>

This apparent paradox of simultaneous expansion and restriction of women's lives seems to be repeated in the area of religious life. Recent studies have revealed the unique and novel opportunity provided by the increase in the number of congregations for women as nuns to exercise and demonstrate administrative, educational and nursing skills.<sup>410</sup> Similarly, it has

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<sup>404</sup> *Ibid.*; Kelleher, Introduction to Kelleher and Murphy, p.13.

<sup>405</sup> Logan in Kelleher and Murphy, p.45.

<sup>406</sup> *Ibid.* pp.43-5; Luddy, *Women in Ireland*, p.90.

<sup>407</sup> J.J.Lee, from 'Women and the Church Since the Famine', in Margaret MacCurtain and Donnchadh O'Corrain (eds) *Women in Irish Society: The Historical Dimension* (Dublin, 1978) pp.37-45, in Hayes and Urquhart, pp, 133-8 ( p.136). See also Hayes and Urquhart, Introduction, p.117.

<sup>408</sup> Luddy, *Women in Ireland*, p.90; Eibhlin Breathnach, from 'Women and Higher Education in Ireland, 1879-1914', *The Crane Bag*, 4 (1980), pp.47-54, in Hayes and Urquhart, pp. 44-45.

<sup>409</sup> Logan in Kelleher and Murphy, p.48.

<sup>410</sup> Luddy, *Women in Ireland*, p.10; Marie O'Connell, 'The Genesis of Convent Foundations and Their Institutions in Ulster 1840-1920,' in J.Holmes and D.Urquhart (eds.), *Coming into the Light: the Work, Politics and Religion of Women in Ulster, 1840-1940* (The Institute of Irish Studies, The Queen's University of Belfast: Belfast, 1994), pp.179-206 (p.199).

been argued that among Protestant women in Ulster that by permitting opportunities for social, administrative, educational and fundraising work, 'evangelical religion was more important than feminism in enlarging women's sphere of action during the nineteenth century.'<sup>411</sup>

However, both Catholic and Protestant churches imposed personal and social restraints on women. Alan Hayes and Diane Urquhart, for example, have explained how from an early age Irish Catholic girls were taught to be 'chaste, obedient, respectable and docile.'<sup>412</sup> Maria Luddy has even gone so far as to suggest that nuns actually damaged the position of women in society by undertaking work based on vocation, rather than the committed desire to alter the position of women in society. In so doing, she has argued, they 'exemplified the ideal image of women' as devotedly and uncomplainingly dedicated to others.<sup>413</sup> Luddy also contends that the fact that in the Catholic community nuns made philanthropic work almost their sole preserve, inhibited the participation of Catholic lay women, who were also underrepresented in educational and suffrage activities.<sup>414</sup>

Evangelical Protestant women also operated in an environment which prized women for their domestic virtues and sexual purity.<sup>415</sup> Moreover, if religious belief provided the motivation and religious organisations the means for women to broaden their fields of activity and experience, religious affiliation in sectarian nineteenth-century Ireland was also a divisive force. Maria Luddy has concluded that it prevented women from uniting to create larger, more extensive and, perhaps, more efficient organisations.<sup>416</sup>

Although it would be 1918 before Irish women would be given the vote in national elections, some progress was made before the end of the century. In 1896 it became possible for them to act as Poor Law guardians and they were

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<sup>411</sup> David Hempton and Myrtle Hill, from "'Born to Serve": Women and Evangelical Religion,' (London and New York, 1992), pp.129-42, in Hayes and Urquhart, pp.119-125 (p.119).

<sup>412</sup> Hayes and Urquhart, Introduction to Part Four: Religion, p.117.

<sup>413</sup> Maria Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1995), p.216.

<sup>414</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.215-8

<sup>415</sup> Hempton and Hill, in Hayes and Urquhart, p.119.

<sup>416</sup> Luddy, *Women and Philanthropy*, p. 215.



granted the vote in local elections and in 1898. Prior to this, however, Irish women were neither inactive nor apolitical. K.T.Hoppen has described a female involvement in election riots which was both prominent and vigorous.<sup>417</sup> He has noted, too, individual women who became politically influential in their locality and found evidence of wives exercising influence over the way their husbands voted.<sup>418</sup> Middle and upper-class Irish women could use wealth, patronage and social prominence to political ends.<sup>419</sup>

Women also made a more formal contribution to political life. From the 1830s Quaker women organised anti-slavery societies.<sup>420</sup> During the 1840s women, among them Mary Eva Kelly, Ellen Downing and Jane Francesca Elgee (later Lady Wilde) wrote for the *Nation* and the *United Irishman*, promoting the nationalist cause and helping to define its ideological, cultural and political basis.<sup>421</sup> As debates took place in Ireland in the 1860s on the issues of women's rights, women began to campaign for change. The Irish branch of the Ladies National Association for the Repeal of the Contagious Diseases Acts was established in 1870.<sup>422</sup> When the suffrage issue became prominent in the 1870s, activists from earlier campaigns became involved. Isabella Tod who was already known for her work in education and the L.N.A., organized a suffrage society in Belfast. Anna Haslam, with a similar history as a campaigner for women's rights, established the Dublin Women's Suffrage Association in 1876.

Women moved into the foreground of nationalist politics with the formation of the Ladies Land League in 1881. Set up to run the Land War in the event of male leaders being jailed, they held public meetings, distributed publications, resisted evictions and provided accommodation for evicted

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<sup>417</sup> K.Theodore .Hoppen, *Elections, Politics, and Society in Ireland, 1832-1885* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), pp. 406-7.

<sup>418</sup> *Ibid.*, p.406.

<sup>419</sup> Luddy, *Women's in Ireland*, p. 239.

<sup>420</sup> *Ibid.*, p.240 and pp. 251-2; Maria Luddy 'Women and Politics in Nineteenth-Century Ireland', in Maryann Gialanella Valiulis and Mary O'Dowd (eds.), *Women in Irish History* (Dublin: Wolfhound, 1997), pp. 89-108 (p.99).

<sup>421</sup> Luddy, in Valiulis and O'Dowd, p. 96; Brigitte Anton, 'Northern Voices: Ulster Women in the Young Ireland Movement', in Holmes and Urquhart, pp. 60-92.

<sup>422</sup> Luddy, *Women in Ireland*, p.240.

tenants.<sup>423</sup> It is, however, yet another indication of the pervasiveness of conservative attitudes to women in the public sphere that the Ladies' Land League, like Unionist women's groups, was conceived and perceived as an auxiliary and subordinate organisation.<sup>424</sup> Moreover, as Maria Luddy has pointed out, if radicals like Anna Parnell were discontent with this state of affairs, many others accepted it as part of the natural order.<sup>425</sup>

Textile production, agriculture and domestic service were the major employers of women in nineteenth-century Ireland.<sup>426</sup> As the century progressed, proportionately fewer women were in waged work.<sup>427</sup> Some new employment opportunities did arise. Nursing, teaching and clerical work, for example, became increasingly acceptable and professionalized but generally the trend was towards the majority of women being occupied with unpaid work in the home.<sup>428</sup> The industrialisation of the textile industry affected women in Ireland disproportionately. The loss of valuable paid work at home was not compensated by factory jobs since apart from the northeast, Ireland remained relatively unindustrialised.<sup>429</sup> Changes in agricultural practices and conditions – a move from tillage to dairying; mechanisation of the dairy industry - reduced opportunities for women to work in the field and in the production of butter and cheese. In this, as in so many areas of life in Ireland, the Famine is seen as forming a watershed.<sup>430</sup>

How exactly this 'retreat' from waged employment affected the status of Irish women in the nineteenth century is an issue still being debated. This debate is one which exposes the relative youth and potentially factional nature

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<sup>423</sup> Jane Côte and Dana Hearne, 'Anna Parnell', in Mary Cullen and Maria Luddy (eds.), *Women, Power and Consciousness in Nineteenth Century Ireland* (Attic Press: Dublin, 1995), pp.263-294.

<sup>424</sup> Luddy, in Valiulis and O'Dowd, p.31.

<sup>425</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>426</sup> Hayes and Urquhart, p. 189.

<sup>427</sup> Fitzpatrick in O'Flanagan, Ferguson and Whelan, *Rural Ireland*, p.48; Miller, Doyle and Kelleher, in O'Sullivan, *Irish Women*, p.42; Mary E.Daly, from 'Women in the Irish Workforce from Pre-Industrial to Modern Times', *Saothar*, 7 (1981), pp.74-82, in Hayes and Urquhart, pp.192-8 (pp.193-4); Bourke, in Hayes and Urquhart, p.203.

<sup>428</sup> Mary Daly mentions shoe making and bookbinding as employment opened up to women by industrialisation, in Hayes and Urquhart p.193; Luddy, *Women in Ireland*, pp.158-61.

<sup>429</sup> Daly, in Hayes and Urquhart, p.193; Luddy, *Women in Ireland*, p. 158.

<sup>430</sup> Luddy, *Women in Ireland*, p.158; Fitzpatrick, in O'Flanagan, Ferguson and Whelan, p.167.

of the historiography of women in nineteenth-century Ireland. Those historians, who assess status primarily by economic measures, tend to conclude that Irish women's status was drastically reduced when they lost the possibility of making a direct cash contribution to the family income. Those who locate status in other areas, generally estimate the pre-Famine status of women as being lower and their post-Famine position as being more powerful. Thus J.J.Lee has concluded that 'Economic circumstances...conspired to make Ireland an increasingly male-dominated society after the Famine.'<sup>431</sup> Joanna Bourke, on the other hand, demotes the importance of cash contributions as a measure of power. She points instead to the greater value being placed on skilled and efficient housekeeping, the housewife's ability to control her own time, and the household income as conferring higher status.<sup>432</sup> Similarly, Miller, Doyle and Kelleher have concluded that contemporary accounts of women in the pre-Famine period forced by poverty, ineffectual husbands and inequality to slave at backbreaking work did not win high status with the few coppers they earned. They have also argued that Irish housewives in the second half of the century enjoyed the double blessing of society and the Catholic Church by fulfilling contemporary ideals of womanhood.<sup>433</sup>

The story, therefore, as it emerges from the historiography, of women's lives in nineteenth-century Ireland, is a complex one of both opportunity and restriction. Women had increased access to education, took active rôles in religious, philanthropic and political organisations, pushed open doors to new employment possibilities and were highly valued as wives and mothers. Other forces, however, operated to place constraints on women's lives. The state and the Catholic and Protestant churches embraced and promoted the ideology of separate spheres with its concomitant inequalities and strict sexual code. This was further encouraged by the demographic and economic changes brought about by the Famine. The landless suffered disproportionately so that that section of the community in which 'match' and

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<sup>431</sup> J.J.Lee, in Hayes and Urquhart, p.135.

<sup>432</sup> Bourke, in Hayes and Urquhart, pp.203-7.

<sup>433</sup> Miller, Doyle and Kelleher, in O'Sullivan, *Irish Women*, pp.45-50.

dowry dominated marriage arrangements became proportionately greater. Moreover, when this combined with changes in agricultural practice, farm consolidation and the move from partible to impartible inheritance, those who did marry chose from a more restricted pool of partners and with increased familial supervision. Significant numbers of women (and men) in a nineteenth-century Ireland which treasured the institution of marriage remained celibate. Others arrived at a conclusion, shared by David Fitzpatrick, that the only way to achieve broadening horizons and new opportunities was to seek them elsewhere. Thus 'The Irish female was "modernised" in the sense that she grew increasingly conscious of making a practical choice between remaining "Irish" and becoming "modern"'.<sup>434</sup> One purpose of this chapter will be to examine whether this complex pattern of change in the lives of Irish women is represented in Anthony Trollope's Irish fiction.

Significant personal relationships with women undoubtedly influenced Trollope's attitude to contemporary debates regarding woman's nature and rôle, and informed the representation of women in his novels. That his mother Frances managed to be a wife, a mother, an energetic career woman and traveller, must have caused him early in life to interrogate conventional expectations.

Fanny Trollope published her first book, *Domestic Manners of the Americans*, in 1832. Its genesis was primarily in the financial necessity of providing for herself and her family. Her husband's difficult temperament and disastrous business acumen had left the Trollope's in dire financial straits. An ill-starred venture to establish a 'bazaar' - a sort of cultural centre cum emporium - in Cincinnati had failed but had given her the experience which formed the basis for her book about America.<sup>435</sup> In this she courted controversy by declaiming on the uncouth habits and unsophisticated attitudes of Americans. It won her opprobrium as well as praise but most importantly it

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<sup>434</sup> Fitzpatrick in O'Flanagan, Ferguson and Whelan, p.163.

<sup>435</sup> Fanny Trollope, *Domestic Manners of the Americans* (1832). Biographical note by Alan Sutton in Pocket Classics Edition (Gloucester: Alan Sutton, 1993), pp.v-xii. ; Hall, *Trollope*, pp.27-9.

brought instant celebrity and financial remuneration. Her career as a writer had begun.<sup>436</sup>

In *An Autobiography* Trollope comments admiringly on his mother's ability at the age of 53 to throw herself into this new rôle, and with such notable discipline and dedication under the most tragic of circumstances. In 1834, having fled to Belgium to avoid the bailiffs, her literary earnings not yet being sufficient to clear all of the family's debts, she, 'was left alone in a big house outside the town, with two Belgian women servants, to nurse three dying patients – the patients being her husband and children, - and to write novels for the sustenance of the family!'<sup>437</sup> Awed, her son comments, 'Her power of dividing herself into two parts, and keeping her intellect by itself, clear from the troubles of the world and fit for the duty it had to do, I never saw equalled.'<sup>438</sup> Her practice of rising early to write before she began her other duties was one which he emulated when he followed her lead and became a writer.<sup>439</sup> Moreover, at the time, the money which she earned helped to provide him with some respite from the bleakest aspects of his bachelor life in London.<sup>440</sup> The benefits, therefore, of a woman adopting a career must have been obvious.

However, it would not be surprising if the experience of having a successful self-sufficient mother did not simply transform Trollope into an advocate for women's rights. To begin with, it was associated with the embarrassment of having an inadequate father, one of the major sources of his misery at school. Moreover, Mrs Trollope's frequent trips abroad left him effectively motherless for prolonged periods. An added attraction to her of her American trip was the opportunity it provided to escape from her increasingly difficult husband. Yet this left Anthony, who was twelve when she left and sixteen when she returned, alone to deal with his father during school holidays. When his father joined his wife in America, Anthony was the only member of his family in the country. A student at Winchester, he suffered the physical and

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<sup>436</sup> Sutton, p.v; Hall, *Trollope*, pp.38-42.

<sup>437</sup> *Autobiography*, p.25.

<sup>438</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24.

<sup>439</sup> *Ibid.*, p.253n

<sup>440</sup> Hall, *Trollope*, p.64.

emotional consequences of his college bills going unpaid and no provision being made for him to have access to funds.<sup>441</sup> That some readers were scandalized by her American book cannot have been comfortable for the already tortured and ostracised Anthony, especially when its publication allowed imputations about her relationship with a young French male companion to find their way into print.<sup>442</sup> The young Anthony might well have longed for the anonymous security of life with an inconspicuous mother who kept to the confines of her domestic realm.

Significantly, Trollope did not have the highest opinion of his mother's writing. In his autobiography he acknowledged that her volumes were 'very clever, and they saved the family from ruin.'<sup>443</sup> However, he complained in disdainful terms which draw on conventional views of sexual difference that, 'Whatever she saw she judged, as most women do, from her own standpoint.'<sup>444</sup> When he began his own travel book, *North America*, he explained in the introduction that it was partly with the aim of examining the 'masculine' area of politics which, as a woman, his mother had failed to consider.<sup>445</sup>

Given his reliance as a novelist on his readers' curiosity about the private lives of others, it is difficult to imagine that Trollope really expected the readers of his autobiography to believe in the sincerity of his remark that, 'My marriage was like the marriage of other people and of no special interest to any one except my wife and me.'<sup>446</sup> This said, Rose Trollope remains largely screened from public view. As his biographer Hall has observed, she is 'the great unknown in Trollope's life.'<sup>447</sup> Trollope does imply that his marriage to her had a steadying and regulating influence on him which speeded the

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<sup>441</sup> Hall, *Trollope, A Biography*, pp.28-30; *Autobiography*, pp.11-16.

<sup>442</sup> Hall, *Trollope, A Biography*, p.41.

<sup>443</sup> *Autobiography*, p.20.

<sup>444</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>445</sup> *North America* (1862) in G.Handley (ed.), *Trollope The Traveller, Selections from Anthony Trollope's Travel Writings* (Chicago: Ivan R.Dee, 1995), pp..53-4.

<sup>446</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 50.

<sup>447</sup> Hall, *Trollope, A Biography*, p. 87.

completion of his first novel.<sup>448</sup> She was a partner in his literary career in as much as she read his works in manuscript form and gave her opinion which he claimed was to his, 'very great advantage in matters of taste.'<sup>449</sup> She also sometimes made fair copies of his work and acted as intermediary between Trollope and his publishers.<sup>450</sup> Rose accompanied her husband on many trips and to places as far-flung as America and Australia. An incident in *North America* gives an intriguing insight into a forty-one year old Rose refusing to be limited by either her age or her gender. On being told that she had better not attempt a particular climb since even young women rarely did so, Trollope reports, 'After that my wife resolved that she would see the top of the Owl's Head, or die in the attempt, and so we started.'<sup>451</sup> If Trollope enjoys his wife's spirited resolve in this instance there was also generally an assumption that, as he explained to Kate Field, Rose's primary responsibility was to home and family.<sup>452</sup> His was, in many ways, both a more conventional and a more successful marriage than that of his parents. Moreover, it brought him happiness. To George Henry Lewes he wrote marvelling at his luck:

I have daily to wonder at the continued run of domestic & worldly happiness which has been granted me: - to wonder at it as well as to be thankful for it...no pain or misery has as yet come to me since the day I married; & if any man should speak well of the married state, I should do so.<sup>453</sup>

The relationship between Trollope, Lewes and George Eliot is testament to the author's warm, pragmatic ability to differentiate between actual, complex, individual cases, and general principles. For Trollope, the couple's irregular union proved no bar to friendship. In *An Autobiography* he writes of Lewes and Eliot as being among his 'dearest friends'.<sup>454</sup> That he refers to Eliot without

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<sup>448</sup> *Autobiography*, pp. 48-51.

<sup>449</sup> *Ibid.*, p.51.

<sup>450</sup> A.T. to Rose Trollope, 2 February 1858, in B.A.Booth (ed.), *The Letters of Anthony Trollope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1955),pp.39-40.

<sup>451</sup> *North America*, in Handley, p. 66.

<sup>452</sup> A.T. to Kate Field, Nov.1861, in Booth, pp.95-6.

<sup>453</sup> A.T. to George Henry Lewes, April 7 1861, in Booth, pp.88.

<sup>454</sup> *Autobiography*, p.100.

qualification as Lewes's 'wife', is no doubt intended as a validation of their union, but also reveals that for Trollope such validation is achieved by bringing the couple into the fold of the prevailing orthodoxy.<sup>455</sup>

In one of the most emotionally-charged passages in his autobiography, Trollope pays tribute to a young American woman, 'of whom not to speak in a work purporting to be a memoir of my own life, would be to omit all allusion to one of the chief pleasures which has graced my later years.'<sup>456</sup> The young woman in question was Kate Field, feminist, actress, journalist and lecturer and more than twenty years his junior. She was introduced to both Rose and Anthony at his brother's house in Florence in 1860 and a friendship began which would last until Trollope's death. His letters to her are a mix of the avuncular and the flirtatious with no proof of any significant impropriety, but as his tribute to her testifies, this was for him an important relationship and one which demonstrates that any aversion he might have had to overt campaigning for women's rights did not preclude friendship with individual attractive young campaigners. He did not pretend wholehearted approval for Kate's beliefs and activities, urging her, for example, to marry and reiterating his belief in sexual difference. In one letter to her he responds to a paper on the subject of women lecturing which she has sent for his appraisal by characterising feminism as an overreaction to imagined male monstrosity. He urges her to appreciate that, 'oratory is connected deeply with forensic, parliamentary, and pulpit pursuits for which women are unfitted because they are wanted elsewhere; because in such pursuits a man is taken from home, and because she is wanted at home.'<sup>457</sup>

Turning from the context to begin an analysis of the women in Trollope's Irish texts, this examination will be conducted in sections which employ titles denoting the marital and familial status of women: daughter, sister, single woman, lover, wife, mother and widow. This is done with an awareness of the danger of the unthinking adoption, and perhaps even reinforcement, of images

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<sup>455</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>456</sup> *Ibid.*, p.201.

<sup>457</sup> A.T. to Kate Field, 8 Feb 1877, in Booth, pp.362-3.



of women in traditional and restrictive rôles, but with the thought that the use is justified in this case since one purpose of this chapter is to examine how far Trollope's representation supports an orthodox view. It is an issue raised implicitly and explicitly in the novels. Trollope himself through plot and character examines such questions as: How should a 'good' daughter behave? What rôle does a brother have in the protection of his sister? Can a single woman lead a fulfilled life? How just are the standards used to judge male and female sexual behaviour, and the expectations placed on women who become wives and mothers? Does widowhood signal the end of a woman's useful life?

Feemy Macdermot in *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*, Trollope's first portrayal of a woman in his Irish (and therefore in any) fiction, leads a line of young women who have absent or inadequate parents. It is a device which significantly influences the nature of his representation of women as daughters and also reveals something of Trollope's own stance. Just as Dickens orphaned David Copperfield and Pip, thus exposing them to life's dangers and challenges, Trollope uses parental absence or inattention as a literary device to drive plots and to air issues. While this allows questions to be raised about the treatment and rôle of women, it is based, in Trollope's case, on an essentially orthodox view of a woman's nature and place. Dickens's characters win sympathy and generate anxiety about their safety because, initially at least, they are vulnerable orphaned children. Trollope's fictional daughters, however, are women of marriageable age. The implication is that in the best regulated families responsible mothers and fathers must provide protection and guidance for these women. Without this they are seen to be imperilled.

Feemy's mother has died and her father has responded to changing times and reduced circumstances by retreating into alcohol and apathy.<sup>458</sup> Through his portrayal of her Trollope is able to raise the issue of the emotional and moral vulnerability of young women left exposed in this way. He offers it as an important factor in Feemy's fall. Myles Ussher, revenue man and northern Irish Protestant, is seen to find it easier to seduce Feemy because

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<sup>458</sup> *The Macdermots*, p.65.

there is no watchful parental figure to protect or advise her.<sup>459</sup> The necessity of parental care and guidance for young women, particularly with regard to securing suitable husbands, is reinforced by the worthy Father John McGrath's recruitment of the kind and sensible Mrs McKeon as a surrogate mother, although even this fails to save Feemy.<sup>460</sup> In what, in this respect at least, is a pen raised in support of the current orthodoxy, the manner in which Feemy's sexual fall is directly linked to the disintegration of the Macdermot family reinforces notions of female weakness. It is offered as a measure of the family's decline that it cannot even protect the daughter of the house. Myles Ussher, the suitor who in better times would be dismissed as inadequate, must be treated as 'more than a match' for Feemy 'in the present fallen condition of the family'.<sup>461</sup>

In the same novel the cameo of the motherless Miss Julia Brown, although a more light-hearted portrayal, also uses a daughter's waywardness to indicate the moral health of her family. Her mother dead and her father careless, it is shockingly rumoured that Julia could, 'not only ride with her brothers in the morning, but that she was also occasionally not ill inclined to drink with them of an evening.'<sup>462</sup> Indeed, 'there was reason to fear she was coming out a little too fast.'<sup>463</sup> So amid concerns that the family might be shamed and Julia left unmarriageable, a husband is 'bought' for her and she is safely despatched into wedded respectability.<sup>464</sup>

By contrast, Kate O'Hara in *An Eye for an Eye* would initially seem to have the most conscientious of protectors in the form of her mother who certainly harbours no romantic notions of the good intentions of young male suitors. 'Men', Mrs O'Hara extravagantly affirms, 'so often are as ravenous wolves, merciless, rapacious, without hearts, full of greed, full of lust, looking on female beauty as prey, regarding the love of woman and her very life as a

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<sup>459</sup> *Ibid.*, p.58.

<sup>460</sup> *Ibid.*, p.243.

<sup>461</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29.

<sup>462</sup> *Macdermots*, p.334.

<sup>463</sup> *Ibid.*, p.335.

<sup>464</sup> *Ibid.*

toy.<sup>465</sup> But she has been deserted by her husband and forced to make a life for herself and her daughter with whatever comfort and propriety she can muster, on a reduced income.<sup>466</sup> Where they cling to life and respectability in a cottage near the Cliffs of Moher, potential husbands are in short supply.<sup>467</sup> Mrs O'Hara reluctantly concludes that she must risk her daughter with the handsome young English officer, Fred Neville, in the hope that marriage will result.<sup>468</sup> The risk does not pay off and Kate 'gives herself' to Fred who has attained God-like proportions in her starved imagination.<sup>469</sup> When efforts to secure a marriage for the now pregnant Kate fail, her mother pushes Fred off the cliff to his death.<sup>470</sup> The vulnerability of daughters with inadequate parents is further highlighted by the appearance of Kate's father. His criminality is used by Fred as a means of avoiding marriage to Kate.<sup>471</sup> To have such a father reduces her worth and, therefore, the ties which bind him to his promise.

The theme of the effective parent in the daughter-father relationship comes to the fore in Trollope's final unfinished novel *The Landleaguers*. The Irish-American Rachel O'Mahony has a strangely juvenile father. Even allowing for the fact that he is young in years to be the father of a grown woman, Gerald O'Mahony is portrayed as being particularly boyish, naive, and easily dominated by his spirited daughter. Trollope, without any particular disapproval, describes her 'enjoying the badinage of perfect equality with her papa.'<sup>472</sup> When she insists on his accompanying her to London where she is to take up a singing engagement, as defence against the predatory Mr Moss, her manager, it seems to be more out of a belief that she might be shielded by the fact that the world still has the expectation of parental protection, than any real physical assistance he might offer.<sup>473</sup> Indeed, it is Rachel who in the end stops

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<sup>465</sup> *An Eye for an Eye*, p.44.

<sup>466</sup> *Ibid.*, p.37.

<sup>467</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.34-42.

<sup>468</sup> *Ibid.*, p.47.

<sup>469</sup> *Ibid.*, p.109; p.44.

<sup>470</sup> *ibid.*, p.194.

<sup>471</sup> *Ibid.*, p.115.

<sup>472</sup> *The Landleaguers*, p.57.

<sup>473</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.45-6.

Mr Moss's unwanted advances by stabbing him.<sup>474</sup> By providing Rachel with such a 'laissez-faire' parent Trollope enables an exploration of the proprieties and difficulties of an independent young woman making her living as a singer. When this ends in her resort to violence, the message is ultimately a conservative one.

It is important to qualify the orthodoxy of Trollope's depiction, however, by noting that strong cases are made by Trollope for those women who resist the demands of unreasonable or irresponsible parents, guardians or brothers who stand *in loco parentis*. Anty Lynch in *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* is viewed and treated as an encumbrance by her father and brother. She is pressed to become a nun, threatened with committal to an asylum and brutally beaten. Such villainous treatment is condemned and the injustice of her plight is highlighted: 'slighted by her father and the servants, and bullied by her brother [Anty] was only just enabled, by humble, unpresuming disposition, to carry on her tedious life from year to year without grumbling.'<sup>475</sup> Her father, in order to punish his son, writes a will leaving only half of his estate to him and the other half to Anty. This is intended as a gesture but Simeon dies before he can carry out his intention of revoking the will. Anty's quiet and careful actions to protect her inheritance are presented as being justified and reasonable.<sup>476</sup> She employs an agent and takes care not to put herself at her brother's mercy. In response to Barry's 'overtures' about signing property over to him, the reader is told that 'easy and humble as Anty was, she was careful enough to put her name to nothing that could injure her rights.'<sup>477</sup> She also continues a relationship with Martin Kelly against Barry's wishes and is ultimately rewarded when her brother leaves the country and she achieves a happy marriage.<sup>478</sup>

Similarly, Fanny Wyndham in a parallel plot, having initially bowed to her guardian's wish that she dismiss Lord Kilcullen as her suitor, stays calm and resolved in the face of Lord Cashel's cruel determination that she marry his

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<sup>474</sup> *Ibid.*, p.366.

<sup>475</sup> *The Kellys*, p.48.

<sup>476</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28.

<sup>477</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28.

<sup>478</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.510-11.

son. Her guardian's irresponsible treatment of her serves to further underline the theme of the injustice visited upon young women by those charged with their care. Lord Cashel subsumes his conscience and finds a way to justify sacrificing Fanny as wife to his reprobate son in order that his family can benefit from her inheritance. Trollope scornfully pictures him squirming in what must be anything but an 'easy chair' in his book-room, as his desire for honour loses the unequal contest against 'the devil and mammon...half hidden beneath the gloss of parental affection.'<sup>479</sup> Fanny insists on her right to choose her husband having, the reader is told with an air of satisfaction, 'much too strong a mind – much too marked a character of her own, to be made Lady Anything by Lord Anybody.'<sup>480</sup>

However, that Trollope allows such assertions of independence primarily on the grounds of inadequate parenting, rather than on the principle of a woman's right to determine her own fate, reveals an essentially conservative framework. Issues are raised but conventional limits are placed on the discussion. Daughters can be seen to act against parental instruction but this is justified only if that instruction is suspect. Moreover, the nature of such 'rebellions' and, in some cases, the attributes of the 'rebels' serve to defuse, perhaps even to devalue, the defiance of the stance. Thus Anty's protection of herself and her property comes in the face of the most severe provocation but she is no strident feminist. In keeping with the conventional view of feminine propriety she remains 'easy and humble.'<sup>481</sup> She even continues to love her monstrous brother. Moreover, when she succumbs to illness and comes close to death, Trollope disturbingly reports this as, 'more becoming to Anty than health; it gave her a melancholy and beautiful expression of resignation, which, under ordinary circumstances, was wanting to her features, though not to her character.'<sup>482</sup> Such suggestions of the attractiveness of feminine illness,

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<sup>479</sup> *Ibid.*, p.350.

<sup>480</sup> *Ibid.*, p.351.

<sup>481</sup> *Ibid.*, p.28.

<sup>482</sup> *Ibid.*, p.300.

restraint, selfless love and submission sit uncomfortably with affirmations of women's rights.

The sibling relationship which draws greatest consideration in Trollope's Irish fiction is that between sister and brother. From Thady's fatal attempt to protect his sister from apparent abduction in his first novel, to Edith's persuasion of the unfortunate Florian to inform against the Land Leaguers in his final work, Trollope explores the nature and force of this powerful bond.

The tragic inevitability which drives Trollope's first novel, beginning with the narrator viewing the ruins of the Macdermot family home ensures sad ends for siblings Thady and Feemy Macdermot.<sup>483</sup> Trollope's depiction of the well-meaning Thady struggling against a tide of familial, social and national catastrophe is effective and poignant.<sup>484</sup> Thady's murder of his sister's lover, the revenue man Myles Ussher, is neither a political assassination nor an act of mindless brutality. It is the honest, if fatal, mistake of an earnest young man unequal to the task he finds before him.<sup>485</sup> To some extent he, like Feemy, is the victim of inadequate parenting. His increasingly drunken, confused and isolated father only adds to the burdens he has passed on to him.<sup>486</sup> Yet it is significant that an important mitigation of Thady's killing of Ussher is that he is fulfilling his duty as a brother. Indeed so confident is his counsel of the universal acceptance of this as a justification, he even cites it in court during Thady's trial.<sup>487</sup> It is perhaps too much to expect Trollope at this time to be trumpeting Feemy's right to elope with the man of her choice. Moreover, it is possible to read this mitigation of Thady's behaviour as an insistence that men should act morally and responsibly towards women. A brother should not stand by and, at least as he thinks, allow his sister to be carried off against her will. Ussher, in any case has arguably sealed his own fate by his despicable treatment of Feemy. However, these qualifications rely to some extent on an image which infantilises women and assumes them not to be capable and

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<sup>483</sup> *Macdermots*, pp.1-6.

<sup>484</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.10-11, pp.12-13.

<sup>485</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.370-1.

<sup>486</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.12-13.

<sup>487</sup> *Ibid.*, p.572.

active on their own behalf. Moreover, the extent to which Feemy is condemned for her failure as a dutiful sister is puzzling. The worthy Mrs McKeon's spirited defence of Feemy's enduring affection for her dead lover and her bitterness towards the brother who killed him, does not override Father John McGrath's insistence that she is to blame for Thady's predicament.<sup>488</sup> He insists that she must testify on his behalf even if it costs her her life - which it does.<sup>489</sup>

As has already been observed, the equation of moral worth with dutiful and selfless sisterly conduct is continued with Anty Lynch in Trollope's second novel. Even when she thinks she is dying, the near-saintly Anty persists in loving and trying to redeem the brother who has treated her so cruelly. In what she expects will be their final interview, her concerns are not for herself but for the welfare and soul of her brother.<sup>490</sup> Similarly, in *Castle Richmond* one of the redeeming virtues offered in the bigoted Letty Fitzgerald is her love for and loyalty to her brother and his family. This love is allowed active expression in her use of her own income to support them.<sup>491</sup> However, such an expression is also in keeping with orthodox notions of feminine virtues – the subsuming of her own life for others.

The death of their mother and the difference in their ages influences the sibling relationship between Edith and Florian Jones in *The Landleaguers*. Edith adopts a maternal rôle toward her ten-year-old brother. Trollope judiciously balances an absence of physical attractiveness in Edith with a wealth of other traditionally feminine attributes.<sup>492</sup> Therefore it is her instinctive perception that her brother is lying when he claims to know nothing about the Land Leaguers flooding his father's land, and her persuasive handling of him which results in him doing the 'manly' thing and confessing the truth.<sup>493</sup> He is later assassinated to prevent his testifying in court but this is offset by the greater significance attached to the moral redemption in which his sister played

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<sup>488</sup> *Ibid.*, p.588.

<sup>489</sup> *Ibid.*, p.591.

<sup>490</sup> *The Kellys*, pp.303-9.

<sup>491</sup> *Castle Richmond*, pp.359-60.

<sup>492</sup> *The Landleaguers*, p.6.

<sup>493</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.104-9, pp.127-9.

such an influential part.<sup>494</sup> Where this certainly demonstrates a positive feminine force for good, this is expressed and valued in the Ruskinian context of its effect on male morality.

In an article entitled 'Everyday thoughts - old maids' which appeared in *The Irish Monthly* in August 1885, Mrs Frank Pentrill made a plea for:

the old maid looked down upon, forgotten, thrust aside, as if in all this great world there was no place for her. Men have entered into an instinctive conspiracy to agree in saying that no one is so much to be pitied as she who manages to be independent of them.<sup>495</sup>

If she read Trollope's Irish fiction she would have discovered some spirited 'old maids' who would have indicated that he was not part of this alleged male conspiracy.

The oft-cited Letty Fitzgerald, for example, is a single woman who is not easily disregarded or pitied.<sup>496</sup> She is portrayed as being more active and energetic than her brother the baronet in whose house she lives.<sup>497</sup> She is 'as strong as a horse' and 'great at walking.'<sup>498</sup> She does not balk at working among her poor and starving neighbours. She even takes it upon herself to correct the reportedly immoral behaviour of the wild Owen Fitzgerald.<sup>499</sup> Moreover, when her brother dies she is prepared to protect and financially support his family. In all of this Trollope can be read as challenging contemporary images of the unmarried woman as a mere encumbrance, and valuing an active public rôle for women.

Similarly, his portrayal of Aspasia Fitzgibbon in *Phineas Finn* counters the view of the single woman as redundant and dependent. She uses an unexpected inheritance to establish her own household. She attends influential gatherings where she is known by 'everybody' and is not afraid to speak her mind. Like Letty, Aspasia is in a position to offer financial rescue to her

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<sup>494</sup> *Ibid.*, p.168.

<sup>495</sup> Mrs Frank Pentrill, 'Everyday thoughts - old maids', *The Irish Monthly*, 13 August 1885. Quoted in Luddy, *Women In Ireland*, p.45.

<sup>496</sup> See above pp.57-9.

<sup>497</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.18, p. 52.

<sup>498</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52.

<sup>499</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.19-20.



brother. Moreover, she is no dupe and does this in a way which seeks to save him and reform his profligate ways.<sup>500</sup>

What is not present, however, in the portrayals of these strong single women is wholehearted approval of their single life. More than this, there is a coldness and harshness, an absence of physical attraction associated with them. If Letty, for example, is seen to have qualities lacking in her brother, she also has 'more of harsh judgment, and of consequent ill-nature.'<sup>501</sup> Trollope may state that she is 'not ugly' but by adding that 'her nose was long, and had a little bump or excrescence at the end of it,' he scarcely paints a picture of female desirability.<sup>502</sup> In a similar way Aspasia's gift of satirical humour is devalued by its violence and bitterness.<sup>503</sup> Her achievement of an independent life is undercut by the implication that it is a very limited and isolated one:

She was an old maid, over forty, very plain, who having reconciled herself to the fact that she was an old maid, chose to take advantage of such poor privileges as the position gave her. ...She lived in a small house by herself, in one of the smallest streets of Mayfair.<sup>504</sup>

Both Letty and Aspasia do at least receive partial authorial approval. Lady Selina Grey in *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* is more harshly judged and, it would seem, primarily because she has wilfully remained single:

She was plain, red-haired, and in no ways attractive; but she had refused the offer of a respectable country gentleman, because he was only a country gentleman, and then flattered herself that she owned the continuance of her maiden condition to her high station.<sup>505</sup>

This is further elucidated when Trollope contrasts Lady Selina with her cousin Fanny Wyndham. Fanny, as has been demonstrated, is no submissive angel. Admiration for the way she has established and acts upon her sense of her own self-worth is offered in 'feminist' terms:

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<sup>500</sup> *Phineas Finn*, Vol 1, pp.295-6.

<sup>501</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.18.

<sup>502</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52.

<sup>503</sup> *Phineas Finn*, Vol 1, p.36.

<sup>504</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.36-7

<sup>505</sup> *The Kellys*, p.145.

She was proud of her own position; but it was as Fanny Wyndham, not as Lord Cashel's niece, or anybody's daughter. She had been brought out in the fashionable world, and liked, and was liked by, it, but she felt that she owed the character which three years had given her, to herself, and not to those around her.<sup>506</sup>

However, authorial preference for Fanny over Selina is also located in conventional feminine functions: to attract, to serve, to please and ultimately to marry. Trollope explains that:

Lady Selina chilled intruders to a distance; Fanny Wyndham's light burned with so warm a flame, that butterflies were afraid to trust their wings within its reach. She was neither so well read, nor so thoughtful on what she did read, as her friend; but she could turn what she learned to more account, for the benefit of others. The one, in fact, could please, and the other could not.<sup>507</sup>

In even more derogatory terms and, doubtless, well aware of the innuendo, he complains of Selina that:

She was like some old coaches which we remember – very sure, very respectable; but so tedious, so monotonous, so heavy in their motion, that a man with a spark of mercury in his composition would prefer any danger from a faster vehicle to their horrid, weary, murderous, slow security.<sup>508</sup>

Later he has Fanny condemn her cousin's choice of an 'unnatural state':

'No, Selina; it's I that pity you,' said Fanny.....' You, who think more of your position as an earl's daughter – an aristocrat, than of your nature as a woman! Thank Heaven, I'm not a queen, to be driven to have other feelings than those of my sex.<sup>509</sup>

Since his portrayal of Selina pre-dates those of Letty and Aspasia, it could be argued that Trollope became less censorious of the unmarried

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<sup>506</sup> *Ibid.*, p.146.

<sup>507</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>508</sup> *Ibid.*, p.352.

<sup>509</sup> *Ibid.*, p.358.

woman. However, examination of other female characters confirms the central importance in his judgement of whether the woman can be seen to have chosen her unmarried state, rather than an increasingly enlightened view. The English Violet Effingham in *Phineas Finn*, for example, first published in serial form in *Saint Paul's Magazine* from 1867 to 1869, is written of in approving terms for the caution she exercises in choosing a husband but, while she considers the possibility of life as a single woman, and notes the example set by Aspasia, significantly, this attractive, lively and intelligent young woman explicitly rejects it:

It was all very well to talk of disregarding the world and of setting up a house for herself; but she was quite aware that that project could not be used further than for the purpose of scaring her amiable aunt.<sup>510</sup>

Moreover, in *An Eye for an Eye*, which appeared some ten years later, marriage is recommended by the worthy Father Marty as the 'natural' state for young women while Trollope's presentation of the unmarried Lady Mary Quin relies on stereotypical associations with narrow-minded bitterness.<sup>511</sup>

It is notable that the lone-women-as-widow is more generously represented in Trollope's Irish fiction than the lone single woman. His Irish novels are peopled by enterprising widows. Moreover, the manner of their portrayal is suggestive of their author taking some delight in their spirit and industry. Even Mrs Mulready in *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*, who keeps the shebeen frequented by the local band of Ribbonmen, while she is certainly not presented as a model of respectability, is seen to reign unchallenged as the indomitable queen of her disreputable kingdom.<sup>512</sup>

Less controversially the self-reliance and industry of the widowed Mrs Kelly - shopkeeper, innkeeper and mother of six - is treated with unalloyed admiration: 'the widow, instead of making continual use, as her chief support, of that common wail of being a poor, lone woman, had put her shoulders to the

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<sup>510</sup> *Phineas Finn*, Vol 2, p.118.

<sup>511</sup> *An Eye for an Eye*, pp.53, 15-17, 38, 68-9.

<sup>512</sup> *The Macdermots*, pp.129-31.

wheel, and had earned comfortably, by sheer industry, that which so many of her class, when similarly situated, are willing to owe to compassion.<sup>513</sup>

By beginning his literary career with the portrayal of a fallen woman - Feemy Macdermot - Anthony Trollope demonstrated that, when it came to the portrayal of women as lovers, he was not afraid to address the issue of female sexual morality. In an age when the nature and rôle of women was under discussion and when novels were often written with the effect, if not always the purpose, of influencing current debate, the fallen woman inevitably came laden with a weight of significance beyond that of personal tragedy. She was used to carry moral, social and political messages about a woman's true nature, her proper place and the importance of sexual continence to marital, familial, even social, stability.<sup>514</sup> Trollope knew that, even in an English context, he had to strike a balance if he was to win sympathy for the fallen woman without seeming to recommend her behaviour and thereby outraging his readers. Thus, despite his conviction that '[t]he writing of prefaces is, for the most part, work thrown away', he attaches a preface to *The Vicar of Bullhampton*. This novel relates the fall of Carry Brattle, and the author betrays some concern as to how it will be received and interpreted. He is at pains to reassure his reader that while he hopes to win sympathy and understanding for Carry, he knows that '[t]o write in fiction of one so fallen as the noblest of her sex, as one to be rewarded because of her weakness, as one whose life is happy, bright and glorious, is certainly to allure to vice and misery.'<sup>515</sup>

Feemy's story does not form the main plot in the novel, but contributes to Trollope's chronicle of the physical, financial and moral decline of the Catholic landowning family. Feemy's fall, as we have seen, is offered as an indication of the family's disintegration. In not protecting her, it is seen to have failed in an essential function. Parental and fraternal protection are presented as vital for a woman's physical, sexual and social safety. The church too, in the

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<sup>513</sup> *The Kellys*, p.5.

<sup>514</sup> See Nina Auerbach, 'The Rise of the Fallen Woman', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 35,1 (June 1980), pp.29-53.

<sup>515</sup> Anthony Trollope, *The Vicar of Bullhampton* (London: Bradbury & Evans, 1869-70; Rev. edn., Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1924), Preface.

form of the parish priest, is portrayed as having a legitimate function in attempting to regularise Feemy's relationship with Captain Ussher.<sup>516</sup>

In determining culpability the plot certainly punishes the seducer whose behaviour is judged to be reprehensible, since he meets a violent end. However, Feemy is also seen to pay the ultimate price for her waywardness. Indeed Trollope's portrayal of Feemy's complicity in her own fall suggests a complex interaction of formative influences and motivations. On the one hand Feemy's circumstances are cited as making her vulnerable to Ussher's advances. Her father has withdrawn into drink and apathy, and her brother is overwhelmed by responsibility and family debt. Feemy's anomalous position as an impoverished but highborn young woman leaves her handicapped and isolated. She has no dowry to speak of, no education, few constructive pastimes and faces a dearth of local young who could be judged sufficiently genteel to be her husband. Given all of this, if Myles Ussher's occupation and religion do not make him an ideal partner, his social standing and sound financial state make him sufficiently acceptable to merit the Macdermots' consideration.<sup>517</sup> Moreover, when Feemy's social isolation is combined with her addiction to sensationalist fiction, conditions are perfect for her to enthusiastically embrace her 'beau ideal'. Feemy draws on what her romantic novels tell her constitutes a hero and she is bound to fall in love with the dashing Ussher.<sup>518</sup>

Nonetheless, Trollope does not, through Feemy, represent the fallen woman as simply the victim of circumstances. In depicting Feemy's response to her situation, Trollope judges her character and behaviour and allows her some responsibility for her fate, which elevates her above the level of passive victim. Thus it is apparent that Feemy has an active rôle to play when Myles confronts her with a decision. She must either run away with him with no guarantee that he will marry her, or she must lose him. A moral struggle is seen to take place, 'old feelings, principles, religious scruples, the love of

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<sup>516</sup> *The Macdermots*, pp.56-7.

<sup>517</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29.

<sup>518</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.28-9.

honour and fair fame, and the fear of the world's harsh word, were sorely fighting in her bosom.<sup>519</sup> But virtue loses the day. 'He stooped to lift her up, and as he kissed the tears from her face, passion prevailed, and she whispered in his ear that she would go.'<sup>520</sup>

However, Feemy is made to pay a high price for this elevation from passivity, and one which owes something to an adherence to conventional Victorian attitudes to female sexuality. As the novel progresses her fall is increasingly attributed to a dangerous wilfulness and emotionalism on her part. In keeping with prevailing notions of intellectual difference between the sexes, the reader is told that she has, 'strong natural powers and stronger passions,' that, 'her feelings and courage were strong, and they stood to her in the place of mind.'<sup>521</sup> It is explained that in her sad end she is enjoying, 'the wretched fruits of her obstinacy and pride.' Moreover, blame for her lover's death becomes attached to Feemy rather than the brother who struck the blow, when Father John muses 'how much more justly the blood which had been shed was to be attributed to the sister than to the brother.'<sup>522</sup> Ultimately she is sacrificed in the cause of saving Thady. Although she is so enfeebled by grief, illness and her pregnancy that she cannot walk and can barely talk, Father John, insists that she appears in court in Thady's defence.<sup>523</sup> Since he is neither a cruel nor an insensitive man, he seems to be driven by overriding notions of justice and atonement insisting, 'she brought him to this, and she must save him if she can.'<sup>524</sup> The effort proves too much for her, she dies and Thady is convicted and hanged.<sup>525</sup> The elements of this depiction, then, which seem designed to elicit sympathy for Feemy, also infantilise her and are associated with dependence. The one area in which she is emancipated and allowed an active rôle in her own fate not only results in her being seen to make a fatally

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<sup>519</sup> *Ibid.*, p.286.

<sup>520</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>521</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.66, 64.

<sup>522</sup> *Ibid.*, p.387.

<sup>523</sup> *Ibid.*, p.588.

<sup>524</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>525</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.591, 622.

mistaken decision, but also elicits condemnation, and in terms very much in keeping with orthodox views of sexual difference.

Women who, unlike Feemy, conduct their romantic affairs with restraint have happier outcomes. In *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* the theme of the importance of women making judicious choices when it comes to husbands is prominent. Anty Lynch and Fanny Wyndham are active participants in the process and both, as we have seen, resist pressure to reject their chosen partners. In turn they are rewarded with happy marriages.<sup>526</sup> Similarly in *Castle Richmond* Clara Desmond's growing maturity and wisdom are ostensibly marked by her choice of the worthy, earnest Herbert Fitzgerald over his handsome, adventurous cousin Owen.<sup>527</sup> Further, Trollope defends Clara's 'privileges as a creature with a soul and a heart of her own.'<sup>528</sup> This contrasts however, with elements of the novel which suggest a less progressive view of the nature and rôle of women. The novel ends not with an assessment of the sensible Herbert, but with a wistful recollection of the dashing Owen.<sup>529</sup> Indeed throughout the novel, despite explicit approval for the admirable Herbert, the reader is left with the suspicion that Trollope favours his fox-hunting, impetuous cousin - the cousin who thinks of women as prey and who can excite a thrilling willingness to, 'bend' to a 'lord and ruler'.<sup>530</sup>

This is part of a reactionary attitude to sexuality, apparent also in his depiction of Mary Flood Jones in *Phineas Finn*, in which Trollope's insistence on the appeal of feminine softness and submissiveness comes dangerously close to excusing male sexual aggression. It is ultimately Mary's 'sweet, clinging, feminine softness' (as opposed to Violet Effingham's self-command and Lady Laura Standish's 'masculinity') which is seen to confirm her in Phineas's mind as the correct choice as his wife.<sup>531</sup> With her from the beginning he has felt free to snip tresses of her hair which he tucks away to be

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<sup>526</sup> *The Kellys*, pp.508-16.

<sup>527</sup> *Castle Richmond*, pp.180-3; p.324.

<sup>528</sup> *Ibid.*, p.36.

<sup>529</sup> *Ibid.*, p.492.

<sup>530</sup> *Ibid.*, p.182; p.280.

<sup>531</sup> *Phineas Finn*, Vol 1, p.90; pp.32-3; Vol 2, p.382.

brought out later 'for proper acts of erotic worship.'<sup>532</sup> Such apparently playful violations are justified by the narrator because Mary 'was one of those girls, so common in Ireland, whom men, with tastes that way given, feel inclined to take up and devour on the spur of the moment.' The dubious nature of the basis of this justification is compounded by its use of predatory imagery and the projection on to the 'prey' of a desire to be sexually overwhelmed. Mary, the reader is informed, 'when she liked her lion, ... had a look about her which seemed to ask to be devoured.' She is one of those girls 'to abstain from attacking whom is, to a man of any warmth of temperament, quite impossible... No one ever dreams of denying himself when such temptation comes in the way.'<sup>533</sup>

With Kate O'Hara in *An Eye for an Eye*, Trollope returns to the theme of the fallen woman. As with *The Macdermots* the plot is ultimately supportive of a particular vision of a woman's nature and rôle, and the degree of complicitness which is attached to Kate permits some interesting insights. Kate, like Feemy, is seen to have been made vulnerable by circumstances – an absent reprobate father, social isolation, and a disabling combination of poverty and the 'weight of blood.' While their secluded lifestyle is a comfort to the mother who desires only peace and independence away from the world's gaze, it is unbearably dull and melancholy for the daughter:

She would read, till she had nearly learned all their books by heart, and would play such tunes as she knew by the hour together, till the poor instrument, subject to the sea air and away from any tuner's skill, was discordant with its limp strings. But still with all this, her mind would become vacant and weary. "Mother," she would say, "is it always to be like this?"<sup>534</sup>

When, therefore, Lieutenant Neville of the 20<sup>th</sup> Hussars makes his romantic entrance, she is ready not just to welcome but to worship him: 'Dressed in a sailor's jacket and trousers, with a sailor's cap upon his head, with a loose

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<sup>532</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 1, p.19.

<sup>533</sup> *Idid.*, Vol 1, p.29.

<sup>534</sup> *An Eye for an Eye*, p.41.



handkerchief round his neck and his hair blowing in the wind. In the eyes of Kate O'Hara he was an Apollo.<sup>535</sup>

Unlike Feemy, however, Kate has been educated – at an expensive Parisian school – but, while this is seen as admirable, it is allowed to play no part in protecting or empowering her. Trollope employs Kate's erudition to expose Fred's failure to appreciate her true worth as part of the novel's challenge to established notions of Irishness. When she writes to him at Scroope he is reluctant to allow others to see her letter, assuming it will have shortcomings which will betray humble origins. On the contrary, however, as the narrator points out, she has had a more thorough education than her lover, indeed 'could have written her letter quite as well in French as in English.'<sup>536</sup> What is most eloquently exposed is the ignorance of Fred, not Kate. However, while Kate is well-educated - sufficiently well read, indeed, to invoke Tennyson's Mariana to secure a promise of fidelity from Fred - the promise proves worthless.

Again, unlike Feemy, Kate is not blamed for her moral lapse – Fred's prevarication and betrayal, and her circumstances are offered as the causes. It is he who in his violent death pays the heavier price for their sin while Kate is allowed to survive. However, she does suffer the loss of her child, and while she is largely removed from blame, the manner in which it is achieved also deprives her of any power to act on her own behalf. She is blameless but she is also powerless, and this in a novel which portrays with approval Sophie Mellerby's considered strategy for ensuring she chooses the most suitable husband. Where, therefore, Fred's sexual appetite is enthusiastically advertised, the 'pre-fall' Kate is child-like and virginal. She must wait to be sexually awakened. The wise Father Marty is sure that she is 'not only innocent but good...as innocent as a sleeping child, as soft as wax to take impression.'

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<sup>535</sup> *Ibid.*, p.44.

<sup>536</sup> *Ibid.*, p.88.

These ideas are repeated in Trollope's oblique but climatic depiction of Kate's 'fall':

The poor unfortunate one – to whom beauty had been given, and grace, and softness – and beyond all these and finer than these, innocence as unsullied as the whiteness of the plumage on the breast of a dove; but to whom alas, had not been given a protector strong enough to protect her softness, or guardian wise enough to guard her innocence! To her he was godlike, noble, excellent, all but holy. He was the man whom Fortune, more than kind, had sent to her to be the joy of her existence, the fountain of her life, the strong staff for her weakness. Not to believe in him would be the foulest treason! To lose him would be to die! To deny him would be to deny her God! She gave him all – and her pricelessness in his eyes was gone forever.<sup>537</sup>

In a novel which does applaud women as active conscious agents in the matchmaking process, it would seem that for the fallen woman to win sympathy she must be seen to be both innocent and passive.

The forthright independence of Rachel O'Mahony in *The Landleaguers* would appear to distance her from the passive Kate O'Hara. She and her father feature in a disconnected unconvincing subplot which explores the themes of independent women and Irish nationalism. Rachel is staunchly determined to make her own way and to keep her marital options open when Frank Jones is unable to marry her.<sup>538</sup> She robustly dictates the terms of their relationship and continues to refuse his help even in the face of the determined advances of the improbable Mr Mahomet M. Moss.<sup>539</sup> Rachel is seen to do this, however, not simply in a spirit of female emancipation but because Frank is not her husband, not her 'lord and master' although she confesses that she wishes he were.<sup>540</sup> Henry Trollope's postscript to the novel confirms the conventional outcome of marriage for the couple. Moreover, Rachel's much

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<sup>537</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.108-9.

<sup>538</sup> *The Landleaguers*, p.142.

<sup>539</sup> *Ibid.*, p.113.

<sup>540</sup> *Ibid.*, p.51.

emphasised physical fragility - 'very fair, and small and frail', looking 'as though she might be blown away' - counters her less feminine characteristics.<sup>541</sup>

When it comes to the subject of marriage Trollope is unequivocal in the value he represents as being attached to the sexual purity of prospective brides. It is exemplified in Father John McGrath's insistence that the relationship between Feemy and Ussher be regularised or terminated since "it doesn't give a girl a good name through the country, for her to be carrying on with a young man too long, and that all for nothing."<sup>542</sup> Thady is even more forceful in his assessment of the significance of his sister's reputation. In a vain attempt to end the relationship by banishing Ussher from Ballycloran, he tells Feemy it is because he wants to avoid "the worst disgrace that can happen a family to blacken the name of Macdermot."<sup>543</sup> Even the kindly Mrs McKeon, when she realises Feemy is expecting her dead lover's child and anticipates the ignominy this will incur, exclaims "God help her, poor girl; it were almost better she should die."<sup>544</sup>

The importance commonly attached to female virginity is also confirmed in the manner in which Feemy and Kate, once they have been intimate with Ussher and Fred, lose their respect. Ussher feels justified in treating Feemy 'cavalierly' for she is 'to a degree humiliated even in his eyes.' There is no overt rejection of her but something which is perhaps far more cruel - he comes to think of her as a 'poor girl' and a poor girl he no longer intends to marry for 'her fervent love and perfect confidence, though very gratifying to his vanity, did not inspire him with that feeling of respect which any man would wish to have for the girl he was going to marry.'<sup>545</sup> Fred similarly feels that Kate's 'pricelessness [has] vanished away, and [is] a thing utterly lost, even in his eyes.'<sup>546</sup>

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<sup>541</sup> *Ibid.*, p.48.

<sup>542</sup> *The Macdermots*, p.60.

<sup>543</sup> *Ibid.*, p.81.

<sup>544</sup> *Ibid.*, p.503.

<sup>545</sup> *Ibid.*, p.241.

<sup>546</sup> *An Eye for an Eye*, p.108.

There is doubtless an element in his depiction of the fallen woman of the Trollope who is mindful of the novelist's moral responsibility 'to teach wholesome lessons in regard to love' and who is, therefore, dramatising the personal and social consequences of female sexual promiscuity.<sup>547</sup> His devotion to realism in fiction also means that this can be read as a reflection of, although not necessarily as an unproblematic promotion of, contemporary values. Indeed, Trollope's exposure of the double standards at work in this area means that the reflection, while it may be accurate, is not an uncritical one. There is, of course, an obvious and intended hypocrisy entailed in Ussher and Fred feeling morally superior to the women they themselves have seduced. More explicitly, the intelligent and forthright Violet Effingham complains to Lady Laura Standish in *Phineas Finn*:

When I was a child they used to be always telling me to mind myself. It seems to me that a child and a man need not mind themselves. Let them do what they may, they can be set right. Let them fall as they will, you can put them on their feet. But a woman has to mind herself; and very hard work it is when she has a dragon of her own driving her the wrong way.<sup>548</sup>

Through the sexually continent Violet, Trollope is able to provide a perceptive critique of the injustice at work in contemporary standards. His association of men with children economically and brilliantly reveals how lower expectations of male virtue both excuse and infantilise men. Women alone are held to account for their moral conduct as adults. Moreover, Violet can be seen to have to struggle against her propensity to stray to 'the wrong side of the post' in a way that challenges orthodox notions of feminine innocence and virtue. Her frank revelation that she instinctively prefers 'a roué', 'a fast man' to 'a prig' locates her at some distance from the Victorian ideal of John Ruskin.<sup>549</sup>

Trollope is also sensitive to the indignities of the marriage 'market.' He employs the subject as light relief in *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* when

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<sup>547</sup> *Autobiography*, p.144.

<sup>548</sup> *Phineas Finn*, p.89.

<sup>549</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 1, p.96.

Father John McGrath teases Denis McGoverly for ending his engagement to Betsy Cane because the cow offered as a dowry turned out not to be in calf, as her mother had claimed. But he also appreciates how women can find themselves, sometimes with little choice in the matter, effectively paraded for purchase, examined for their appearance, pedigree and the value of their dowry. The reader must be intended to object, for example, to Sophie Mellerby, in *An Eye for an Eye*, having been adjudged suitably well bred, being 'sent to Scroope on purpose to be fallen in love with by the heir.'<sup>550</sup>

When it is observed in relation to Feemy's submission to Ussher that 'A girl should never obey her lover till she is married to him; she may comply with his wishes, but she should not allow herself to be told with authority that this or that should be her line of conduct', Trollope seems to encourage a sense of regret that Feemy has squandered her independence as well as her virtue.<sup>551</sup> If there is a suggestion here, however, of a more enlightened view it is rather undercut by the implication that wifely obedience is an automatic component of marriage.

Indeed it is part of Trollope's case for the necessity of a judicious choice of husband that marriage involves submission to the will of another. Violet Effingham must persuade herself that the 'violent', 'headstrong' Lord Chiltern is sufficiently well intentioned and loving not to be a danger to her if she agrees to be his wife.<sup>552</sup> Even as she accepts his proposal she is so apprehensive at the prospect of being bound to do his bidding that she wonders 'that any girl can ever accept any man.'<sup>553</sup> Marriage, even for a clear-sighted woman, therefore, is seen to involve a leap of faith but significantly Violet's 'honest but long-restrained love' brings the reward of 'a happy motherly life' whereas her friend Lady Laura's 'sale' of herself to buy influence through her loveless match to the cold, autocratic Robert Kennedy, results in a 'wretched marriage.'<sup>554</sup>

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<sup>550</sup> *An Eye for an Eye*, p. 23, p. 30.

<sup>551</sup> *The Macdermots*, p. 74.

<sup>552</sup> *Phineas Finn*, p. 59.

<sup>553</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 2, p. 124.

<sup>554</sup> *Autobiography*, p. 203.

This is not to suggest that when the women in Trollope's Irish fiction do become wives they are transformed into mere dutiful appendages. The redoubtable Mrs McKeon in *The Macdermots* is recruited as an able ally by Father John McGrath in his attempts to save Feemy.<sup>555</sup> One feels the priest's request to Mr McKeon that he be allowed an interview with the 'good woman' that 'owns' him is only half in jest.<sup>556</sup> Violet Effingham makes clear that she intends as a wife to be as forthright as ever, declaring to her fiancé: "I have taken you, and I will stick by you – whether you are right or wrong. But when I think you are wrong, I shall say so." When she eventually becomes Lady Chiltern she is happily dedicated to her spirited husband who has found his calling as a master of hounds, and she is a loving mother.<sup>557</sup> Violet is seen, however, to have lost none of her interest in the world or to be less forceful or jaundiced in her opinions. Contemplating the 'shipwreck' of the Kennedy marriage she can still doubt whether a woman ought to marry at all.<sup>558</sup> "Men," she insists, "are so seldom really good. They are so little sympathetic. What man really thinks of changing himself so as to suit his wife?"<sup>559</sup>

Even Lady Mary Fitzgerald in *Castle Richmond* whose 'pure feminine beauty,...form and outline,...passionless grace, and sweet, gentle, womanly softness' make her the epitome of ideal Victorian womanhood, proves to be more physically and emotionally resilient than her spouse.<sup>560</sup> Sir Thomas Fitzgerald is crushed by the trial of contending with blackmail and a challenge to the legitimacy of their marriage when her first husband, who had been believed dead, reappears. He is reduced to despairing inaction and illness: 'the days of his manhood had gone, and nothing but the tears of a bitter second childhood remained to him. The hot iron had entered into his soul, and shrivelled up the very muscles of his mind's strength.'<sup>561</sup> It is Lady Fitzgerald who ultimately proves to be 'made of more enduring material' by outliving him

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<sup>555</sup> *The Macdermots*, pp. 257-67.

<sup>556</sup> *Ibid.*, p.257.

<sup>557</sup> *Phineas Redux*, pp.18-23.

<sup>558</sup> *Ibid.*, p.35.

<sup>559</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>560</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.52.

<sup>561</sup> *Ibid.*, p.256.

to see their marriage declared legitimate and the rights of the family restored.<sup>562</sup>

The marriages most likely to prosper are those based on a well-judged combination of the practical and the romantic, of prudence and love.<sup>563</sup> Women (and men) are seen as foolhardy if they entirely ignore the more prosaic considerations of finance and status, but equally to concentrate on these to the exclusion of love is to court disaster. Thus when in *Phineas Finn*, '[h]aving put aside all romance as unfitted to her life', Lady Laura Standish marries Robert Kennedy primarily for the influence she believes this will win for her, the union founders.<sup>564</sup> In *An Eye for an Eye* Lady Mary Wycombe's obsession with noble birth reduces her to the level of an unwelcome burden on her brother when she refuses to marry suitors she perceives as inferior.<sup>565</sup> This ends only when his widowhood places the ageing Earl of Scroope in a position to offer her what she sees as a suitable marriage or, as Trollope tellingly phrases it, to ask her 'to share his gloom.'<sup>566</sup> The sterility of the match is underlined - it can bring no expectation of 'light' or 'joy in the old house from the scions of the rising family.'<sup>567</sup> It is when Lady Scroope then visits her obsession with the purity of the bloodline on Fred Neville by objecting to Kate on the grounds of her nationality and faith that she ends her days in guilty widowed seclusion consumed by the realisation of her part in the lovers' tragedy.<sup>568</sup>

In courtship and marriage men as well as women are expected to play a responsible rôle. Just as Lord Chiltern has to convince Violet Effingham that he has sufficiently tamed his wild behaviour to make a suitable husband, so Frank Ballindine in *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* must end his youthful dissipation before he can win the hand of Fanny Wyndham.<sup>569</sup> At its best,

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<sup>562</sup> *Ibid.*, p.305.

<sup>563</sup> *Phineas Finn*, Vol 1, p.177.

<sup>564</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 1, p.201.

<sup>565</sup> *An Eye for an Eye*, p.7.

<sup>566</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8.

<sup>567</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>568</sup> *Ibid.*, p.200.

<sup>569</sup> *Phineas Finn*, Vol. 2, p.124; *The Kellys*, p.130. See also this study ?????

therefore, marriage for men instigates a civilizing and maturing process. Those who, like the dashingly attractive Owen Fitzgerald in *Castle Richmond*, remain single, risk moral peril and developmental stasis. 'A bachelor's pleasures in his own house,' the narrator wryly affirms with reference to Owen,' are always dangerous.'<sup>570</sup> Servants become unruly, too much wine is consumed and too many late-night hands of cards dealt because '[y]oung men among us seldom go quite straight in their course, unless they are, at any rate occasionally, brought under the influence of tea and small talk.'<sup>571</sup> Rejected by Fanny, there is no settling down to the healthy formative demands of family life for Owen who is finally pictured wandering the world alone.<sup>572</sup>

More pointedly, the cruel autocracy of Robert Kennedy's insistence on his marital rights in *Phineas Finn* and *Phineas Redux* implies condemnation of the unfeeling application of the laws which allow this coercion, and the coercion itself. The narrator's first person comment on the timetabled reading list Kennedy imposes on his bride – 'This, I think was tyranny'- sets the tone for judgements passed on him. The observation that Laura began to feel that 'her lord and master was - her lord and master' invites consideration of the phrase's informal and literal definitions, and the responsibility incumbent on husbands for the considerate, even reluctant, deployment of the power given to them by convention and the law. Kennedy's inflexible insistence on his wife's unquestioning obedience is further attacked when its root is seen to lie in weakness, ambition and an unfeeling determination to assert himself regardless of the cost to her.<sup>573</sup> His application for the restitution of his conjugal rights becomes the reprehensible act of a callous man.<sup>574</sup> A pointed comparison in the matter of the masculine ideal is provided in an approving description of Phineas Finn as 'not self-asserting beyond the point at which self-assertion ceases to be a necessity of manliness.'<sup>575</sup>

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<sup>570</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.7.

<sup>571</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>572</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.492-3.

<sup>573</sup> *Phineas Finn*, Vol 2, pp.114-15.

<sup>574</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 2, p.286.

<sup>575</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 2, p.22.



The course of the Kennedy marriage, therefore, is eloquent on the subject of how that institution can blight the lives of women, but women who are wise and fortunate in their selection of husbands, like Violet Effingham and Fanny Wyndham, are among the most blessed of his characters. Similarly, men like Chiltern and Ballindine are seen to benefit from making themselves fit to be husbands. Sensitive to the injustices of demeaning matchmaking processes, the legal rights of husbands over their wives, the double standards in operation, a successful marriage is nonetheless recommended as the surest road to fulfilment, even as part of a natural order.

In those mothers who draw authorial approval in his Irish fiction Trollope complicates rather than dismantles the contemporary ideal. The liberal and pragmatic Father Marty in *An Eye for an Eye* is adjudged 'human' and 'unselfish' in the pain he feels as to see Kate O'Hara 'a young girl, good-looking, healthy, fit to be the mother of children, pine away, unsought for, uncoupled – as it would be a pain to see a fruit grow ripe upon the tree, and then fall and perish for want of plucking.'<sup>576</sup> Motherhood is presented conventionally as a patently natural and desirable condition. Moreover, prominent mothers like Mrs McKeon, Mrs Kelly and Lady Fitzgerald conform to the contemporary ideal in as much as they are dedicated to the welfare of their offspring.

Thus Mrs McKeon might be a 'kind' and 'good' with a strong sense of Christian duty, but it is initially with anger and dismay that she greets the news that Feemy is pregnant because she fears the moral and social threat that this represents to her own daughters.<sup>577</sup> Lady Fitzgerald in *Castle Richmond* in many ways exemplifies the Victorian maternal ideal. The epithets 'kind' and 'good' are repeated in admiration of her mothering skills and she is lauded also for her 'gentleness and soft humility, ... her retiring habits.'<sup>578</sup> Unsurprisingly her daughters are admirable: 'more popular in the neighbourhood than any of their neighbours, well educated, sensible, feminine, and useful,' and, as the

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<sup>576</sup> *An Eye for an Eye*, p.53.

<sup>577</sup> *The Macdermots*, p.258.

<sup>578</sup> *Castle Richmond*, pp.50-1.

ultimate measure of worth, 'fitted to be the wives of good men.'<sup>579</sup> However, even she has a fortitude that enables her to continue as an unfailing mother when her husband is defeated and dies.<sup>580</sup>

Trollope's regard for maternity is high but invested with an appreciation of the real pressures involved. Those mothers, like Mrs O'Hara in *An Eye for an Eye* and the Countess Desmond in *Castle Richmond*, who fail in their maternal rôle are not demonised. Mrs O'Hara is seen to be trying to act in Kate's best interests amidst formidable personal, financial and social constraints.<sup>581</sup> Even with regard to the Countess, who is incapable of sympathizing with her own daughter, Trollope offers a moving re-creation of the stunted life, the lost youth that has engendered her selfishness. It is a re-creation which reveals a remarkable capacity to transcend gender boundaries. He uses the analogy of the narrator as an ageing, heavy man longing to join in a game of rounders being played by some lads on the common, but all too aware that his age and physical shortcomings would make his efforts laughable.<sup>582</sup> If the pain that comes with his realisation that he has played his last game, that life is passing and doors are closing, is great, how much greater is that of the Countess who has never 'played' at all, who was carried off in her youth by 'a horrible old earl with gloating eyes'?<sup>583</sup> How difficult must it be for her to take pleasure in her daughter's romantic happiness when she is agonizingly aware that she has never experienced it herself, and, what is more, never will?

Given the clear-sighted regard he has for motherhood, the manner in which Trollope represents poor Irish mothers during the Famine is telling. Sometimes justifiably wily and combative in defence of their offspring, sometimes, by contrast, defeated and apathetic, there is little in the manner of their portrayal in either case to excite warm sympathy in the reader. While references to ragged, wasting bodies are perhaps inevitable, in his descriptions

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<sup>579</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52.

<sup>580</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>581</sup> *An Eye for an Eye*, pp.41-4.

<sup>582</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.480.

<sup>583</sup> *Ibid.*

Trollope repeatedly and incongruously comments on the comeliness, or otherwise, of these women. Moreover, it is only of Bridget Magrath, who delivers the valedictory to the Fitzgerald women, that it is allowed that she 'would have been comely, if not handsome, had not the famine come upon her.'<sup>584</sup> By contrast, his description of another mother who petitions Clara Desmond and Herbert Fitzgerald for aid, disintegrates into a quasi-anthropological discourse on the ugliness of peasants from Cork and Kerry.<sup>585</sup> Both his inappropriate concentration on the physical appeal of these mothers and his resort to the arm's length approach of anthropological study, testify to Trollope's discomfort as a British official witnessing the Famine horrors in his adopted home.

Trollope's squirming response is all the more disquieting because he values and appreciates motherhood. He represents it as a vital element of the sort of family life which in turn he portrays as personally, socially and morally essential. Thus, in general, the mothers who receive authorial approval operate within conventional bounds but are also influential members of the community. It is widows like Mrs Mulready and Mrs Kelly in Trollope's Irish fiction who are generally the most independently active women in the public sphere, although their public lives do not involve straying too far from the domestic arena, since they live 'above the shop'. However, Trollope also chronicles with some approbation the public work of upper class women providing relief during the Famine and as unpaid teachers in estate schools. In *Castle Richmond* such efforts are seen to be so greatly valued by the tenants on the Fitzgerald estate that they are bereft at the prospect of losing Lady Fitzgerald, her daughters and sister-in-law when her son's right to inherit the estate is in question. When they come to the estate school house to bid their farewells one 'gaunt' mother speaks for all the women and children, bemoaning the loss of the 'raie gentlefolks', 'the only raie friends that we iver had.'<sup>586</sup> Trollope recognizes that refined ladies such as these have their shortcomings,

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<sup>584</sup> *Ibid.*, p.363.

<sup>585</sup> *Ibid.*, p.189.

<sup>586</sup> *Castle Richmond*, pp.363-4.

that they can fail to appreciate practical constraints and possibilities when it comes to providing food relief, but he ultimately applauds their efforts.<sup>587</sup>

Trollope's most extensive portrayal of an independent woman earning her own living is the rather puzzling characterisation of the Irish-American Rachel O'Mahony in *The Landleaguers*, which contains elements of both the orthodoxy identified by Patricia Thomson and the feminism detected by Rebecca West. She embodies Trollope's ambivalent, sometimes contradictory, stance. In her, female independence is both represented with some approval and contained within conventional bounds.

The admirable Mr Jones and his family are seen as reactionary and provincial in their objections to Rachel earning her money as a singer. They are declared 'probably wrong' in maintaining an opposition which resulted from living 'away from London' and conceiving 'that prejudices still existed which had now been banished or nearly banished from the world.'<sup>588</sup> The reader can sense the approval of the author in Mr O'Mahony's proud image of his daughter as 'a rose that has been brought up to stand firm on its own bush.'<sup>589</sup> Trollope perhaps had his own Rose in mind when he devised the metaphor. However, the floral imagery also announces a determination not to stray too far from the traditional view of women. However 'firm', Rachel is still a rose. Indeed the robustness of her intellect and temperament are countered by a carefully delineated physical fragility which reiterates a feminine weakness. Rachel 'looked as though she might be blown away...moved as though she was always on the vanishing point.'<sup>590</sup> 'Her hair was so light that one felt it rather than saw it, as one feels sunlight.'<sup>591</sup>

Also Rachel's determination to be her own woman comes with a vociferous anti-Semitism. Rachel's manager the American Mr Mahomet M. Moss, despite his name, is Jewish. He is sufficiently reprehensible and sexually predatory to merit Rachel's (and the reader's) detestation without

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<sup>587</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.84-6. For a more detailed discussion see below pp.230-1

<sup>588</sup> *The Landleaguers*, p.44.

<sup>589</sup> *Ibid.*, p.46.

<sup>590</sup> *Ibid.*, p.48.

<sup>591</sup> *Ibid.*, p.49.

recourse to prejudice, so it is difficult to discern the purpose of her repeated references to him as a 'greasy Jew.'<sup>592</sup> The modern reader's aversion to this is not simply an anachronistic reaction since Rachel is reprimanded for her abuse by her father.<sup>593</sup> Arguably Trollope intends to suggest with this anti-Semitism that a coarsening results from the stresses of a woman leading an independent life.

Similarly, Rachel is seen to be bold and loud in her own defence but in the end resorts to violence to save her honour by stabbing Moss. The ambiguity of the episode does not allow its straightforward interpretation as a justified act of self-defence, but carries suggestions of the regrettable state to which unprotected females can be reduced. It is perhaps Trollope's mixed admiration and disquiet at the prospect of spirited female determination and enterprise which produces the ridiculously melodramatic manner in which this is played out. Mr Moss is improbably and offensively 'reduced by his eagerness and enthusiasm to his primitive mode of speaking' in which why becomes 'vy', what becomes 'vat.'<sup>594</sup> Rachel refuses his insistent proposal of marriage with the unoriginal declaration that she would rather throw herself "into that river" to which is added, in the unintentional manner of risibly superfluous stage directions, 'pointing down to the Thames.'<sup>595</sup>

Rachel is doggedly determined to be self-sufficient until she marries but anticipates that she will marry. Moreover, while Rachel values her talent and financial emancipation, it is her immature father's profligacy which re-ignites her career rather than simple artistic ambition or the drive for independence. Furthermore, her career ends with the potentially symbolic loss of her voice and she settles down to marry the conventional Frank Jones. At first 'utterly discomfited that her voice was gone from her' she begins to find some consolation in her new situation.<sup>596</sup> Momentarily troubled by the thought that she 'might have been the greatest woman of the day, and now...must be

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<sup>592</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52.

<sup>593</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>594</sup> *Ibid.*, p.364.

<sup>595</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>596</sup> *Ibid.*, p.384.

content to make tea and toast', she nonetheless begins to consider 'whether any girl should be the greatest woman of the day.'<sup>597</sup>

Rachel's Irish Americanness is a relatively rare, and therefore a potentially more significant, instance of nationality as a prominent feature. By and large women of all nationalities in these novels are seen to face similar opportunities and constraints, to have similar ambitions and preoccupations. Their success or failure is seen to be dictated by a combination of these and their personal integrity. If the English Countess Desmond is left to face the prospect of a life wasted, it is because as a young woman she was preyed upon by an older man of rank and was weak enough to make an ill-judged match. If the Irish Mrs Kelly is a respected mother and pillar of society it is because of her enterprise and dedication to her family. The degree to which an analysis of women in his Irish fiction parallels literary critical assessments of his portrayal of women in his fiction in general, also suggests that nationality was not foremost in his formative considerations. A very similar picture emerges from novels set in Ireland and England of a mixture of progressive and conservative attitudes. Rachel's nationality would seem to operate, like her Republican father's, to lessen the threat of more radical beliefs and practices by locating their origins in America, and therefore safely beyond British and Irish shores. Irish women suffragists are thus neatly sidestepped. There is also obviously some thought of the American Kate Field in this portrayal.

The manner in which Feemy Macdermot's Irishness is invoked is also unusual. Elements of her appearance and personality are explicitly attributed to her nationality. The first physical description of her remarks on her 'peculiarly Irish...bold, upright well-poised figure.'<sup>598</sup> She is described as walking 'as if all the blood of the old Irish Princes was in her veins.'<sup>599</sup> However, this Irish Princess displays signs of a degraded bloodline, of a nobility which has been diminished. She is beautiful and has a bright olive complexion 'only the olive was a little too brown, the skin a little too coarse', her

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<sup>597</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.384-5.

<sup>598</sup> *The Macdermots*, p.11.

<sup>599</sup> *Ibid.*

hands are too large and too red.<sup>600</sup> Ominously, Feemy is also ill shod and has holes in her stockings – the sure mark of a girl who will come to no good. The narrator despairs: ‘if the beautiful girls of this poor country knew but half the charms which neatness has, they would not so often appear as poor Feemy too usually appeared.’<sup>601</sup> Unsurprisingly, after she has given ‘all’ she has to Ussher, her dishevelment increases reflecting her descent into moral degradation. Trollope seems to elbow the narrator aside to exasperatedly connect this to Feemy’s Irishness:

Her dress itself was the very picture of untidiness; it looked as though it had never seen a mangle; the sleeves drooped down, hanging despondingly below her elbows; and the tuck of her frock was all ripped and torn – she had trod on it, or someone else had done it for her, and she had not been at the trouble of mending it... Her feet were stuffed into slippers – truth compels me to say they would more properly be called shoes down at heel!... No girls know better how to dress themselves than Irish girls, or can do it with less assistance or less expense; but they are too much given to morning dishevelment.<sup>602</sup>

Trollope resorts to stereotypical notions of Irishness in the same way that he invokes stock perceptions of feminine irrationality - to explain Feemy’s fall. Because Feemy is a woman, she is more emotional than rational; because she is Irish, she is a little closer to the moral precipice.

This can be explained in part, although perhaps ironically given his recourse to stereotypes, by Trollope’s realist intentions. References to the Irish Princess call up thoughts of Lady Morgan’s romanticised Celtic Glorvina which are then debunked by the much more earthy and fallible Trollopian Feemy.<sup>603</sup> Also Trollope the moralist is being careful not to make this knowing and unrepentant fallen woman too appealing and, as on other occasions when he

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<sup>600</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>601</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.11-12.

<sup>602</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.103-5.

<sup>603</sup> Lady Sydney Morgan, *The Wild Irish Girl* (London: Richard Phillips, 1806 ; Rev. edn., London: Pandora, 1986).

juggles competing interests, snatches up some ready Irish stereotypes to sustain the performance.

In *An Eye for an Eye*, Kate O'Hara's Irishness is prominent but in a manner which contrasts strongly with that of Feemy. To begin with, if there can be degrees of nationality, Kate is not as thoroughly Irish as Feemy. While her father is Irish, her mother is English and Kate herself seems to have been born in France. However, her name, paternity, Catholicism and re-location to Ireland seem to make her sufficiently Irish for other characters not to question it. Father Marty certainly claims her as an 'Irish girl.'<sup>604</sup> It is not so much case of Kate being less Irish as being representative of a more complex definition of Irishness which Trollope seems to commend for its diversity and hybridity.

While Kate's dark looks are used to signal her Irishness – the English Fred Neville and Sophie Mellerby are fair – she is offered as a refined, not a coarsened, version of her English mother:

Kate O'Hara was in face very like her mother – strangely like, for in much she was very different. But she had her mother's eyes – though hers were much softer in their lustre...and she had her mother's nose, but without that look of scorn which would come upon her mother's face when the nostrils were inflated... the mouth was smaller, the lips less full and the dimple less exaggerated. It was a fairer face to look upon – fairer, perhaps, than her mother's had ever been.<sup>605</sup>

If Kate's Irishness plays a part in her downfall it is not because it debases her or makes her more morally fallible but because others misconceive the nature of Irishness. From the outset Fred is depicted as being attracted by a romantic and exotic image of Ireland which he extends to Kate and her mother:

Accident, and the spirit of adventure, had thrust these ladies in his path, and no doubt he liked them better because they did not live as other people lived. Their solitude, the close vicinity of the ocean, the feeling

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<sup>604</sup> *An Eye for an Eye*, p.52.

<sup>605</sup> *Ibid.*, p.40.



that in meeting them none of the ordinary conventional usages of society were needed, the wildness and strangeness of the scene, all had charms which he admitted to himself.<sup>606</sup>

He persists in the notion that some sort of irregular Irish ceremony can be arranged to resolve his moral dilemma, and in the end he pays with his life for failing to realise that Ireland is not a romantic stage set for a youthful adventure.

Equally, Fred's aunt's very negative preconceptions of Ireland and the Irish lead her to assume that any woman from 'that horrid country' is bound to be 'a wild Irish girl.' Relying on prejudice and hearsay, prepared to secure the purity of the family bloodline even at the cost of her own Christian principles, she condemns Kate and encourages Fred to abandon her:

Of the injury which was to be done to Miss O'Hara, it may be said with certainty that she thought not at all. In her eyes it would be no injury, but simple justice – no more than a proper punishment for intrigue and wicked ambition. Without having seen the enemy to the family of Scroope...she could feel sure that the girl was bad...she would have no more mercy on such a one as Miss O'Hara, than a farmer's labourer would have on a rat.<sup>607</sup>

Trollope's portrayal of the virtuous, refined, passive Kate provides a refutation of Lady Scroope's assumptions of her barbarism, immorality and predatory nature. Through Kate, therefore, he offers an image of Ireland which challenges prevailing misconceptions and prejudices about that country but in the process he also supports an essentially orthodox vision of femininity.

Just as the nature and intention of the novels in which they appear influence how the nationality of Feemy and Kate is portrayed – the tragic realism of *The Macdermots*, the challenge to prejudice and support of the Union of *An Eye for an Eye* – so the soft submissive Irishness of Mary Flood Jones stems, at least in part, from Trollope's adoption of the *Bildungsroman*

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<sup>606</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.48-9.

<sup>607</sup> *Ibid.*, p.74.

form for *Phineas Finn* and *Phineas Redux*. At the end of *Phineas Finn*, Phineas, less naïve than at the beginning but not yet sufficiently secure and mature to form an equitable relationship with the confident and resourceful Marie Goesler, retreats to the safe territory of 'his dear Irish Mary.'<sup>608</sup> As Robert M. Polhemus has observed, Trollope uses Phineas's 'progress of love' to indicate his development from Mary 'a cute blob of Irish dew...(really only a mirror for male narcissism), to Marie an active, sophisticated woman with independent spiritual and physical needs, a sharp mind, and an erotic history.'<sup>609</sup> Where Marie's obscure foreign origins are used to support an image of exotic and progressive feminine strength and independence, Mary's nationality invokes (and reinforces) notions of Irish obedience, subservience and backwardness.

So long and strong is the cultural tradition of the woman as Erin, Hibernia, Ireland, that this potential for symbolic significance is always present in works of this kind. Trollope, in *Phineas Finn*, makes explicit his awareness of the long-established form of courtship and marriage to represent the relationship between Ireland and England, where he characterises it as a forced marriage which can yet succeed if there is a good understanding 'at bottom'.<sup>610</sup> Such a political function is not often foremost in Trollope's portrayal of Irish women in which gender, moral and social issues are often more predominant. Moreover, where it is foregrounded it does not deploy one simple orthodox model.

More than any other in Trollope's Irish fiction, the relationship between Kate O'Hara and Fred Neville in *An Eye for an Eye* has well-signalled, allegorical significance. Any nineteenth-century novel which portrays the seduction of an Irish girl by an English Earl is bound to invite questions about the efficacy and legitimacy of British rule. However, as has already been suggested, far from using Fred's mistreatment of Kate to recommend an end to

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<sup>608</sup> *Phineas Finn*, Vol. 2, p.271.

<sup>609</sup> Robert M. Polhemus, 'Being in Love in *Phineas Finn/ Phineas Redux* : Desire, Devotion, Consolation', *Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, 37, 3 (1982), pp.383-95 (p.394).

<sup>610</sup> *Phineas Finn*, Vol. 2, p.180.

the Union, the novel calls for a more wholehearted and vital one, a Union which can not only save Ireland but revitalise England. When Fred fails to appreciate Kate's true worth and chooses loyalty to the blood line over his love for her, he is seen to be missing an opportunity to re-invigorate the gloomy and obsolete House of Scroope by bringing home a beautiful, educated Irish Catholic wife.<sup>611</sup>

Trollope makes no overt claims for the relationship between Feemy and Ussher as a political image. Indeed his use of an Irish rather than an English seducer can be read as an avoidance of the issue of the Union. Trollope's choice, however, of an illegitimate, Protestant Ulsterman as the blackguard, deliberately complicates the conventional duality and displays a sharp understanding of internal Irish animosities.

A significant number of marriages between the Irish and the English are depicted in Trollope's Irish fiction. Countess Desmond, Lady Fitzgerald, Mrs O'Hara are all English women married, with varied degrees of success, to Irish men. Although no explicit political message is offered, Trollope through this can be seen to be writing a fictional Union, reducing distance and division, as well as pursuing realist intentions to represent Ireland's diversity.

In representing the lives of Irish and English women as being largely and similarly dictated by gender, Trollope's portrayal is in accord with the historiography which describes a similar ideology prevailing in both countries. While the courtship and marriage device is in any case ubiquitous in nineteenth-century novels, in Trollope's Irish fiction it also accurately reflects the dominance in women's lives of the business of finding or, indeed, not finding, a husband. In showing economic considerations playing a necessary part in the successful match Trollope also concurs with the historiography. Father John and Father Marty promote marriage in the manner attributed to their real-life counterparts, and Trollope's portrayal confirms the contemporary antagonism towards fallen women described by historians even while it challenges its validity. If historians like Joanna Bourke are prepared to accept as evidence the lives of Trollope's fictional Irish women, they will find support

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<sup>611</sup> See above pp.60-62

for the thesis of marriage conferring power and status. Moreover, there lies in the author's mind-set - his equivocation on the 'Woman Question' – a potential explanation for the apparent paradox of the simultaneous expansion and restriction of women's lives described in the historiography.

Perhaps because his unionist agenda generally tends toward underplaying national difference, he does not alert the reader to differences in legislation between England and Ireland. Trollope's portrayal of women's lives offers no clear reflection of the gradual increase in women's rights. The constraints and opportunities they faced remain largely static until Rachel O'Mahony bursts singing onto the stage in his last novel. The intermittent timing of his Irish novels does not, in any case, easily allow for a thoroughly satisfactory measurement of this. It may be, however, that Trollope's relatively liberal outlook found increased female emancipation unremarkable until it appeared in its most extreme form.

A more telling omission is the absence of Irish women's formal involvement in political organisations. That the women of the Ladies Land League are missing from *The Landleaguers* should not automatically be read, however, as arising from a sexist impulse. As will become apparent in the final chapter of this study, Trollope objected to radical and Irish nationalist politics *per se* and sometimes dealt with their advocates by ignoring or marginalizing them. One area where gender does become significant, however, is the degree to which Trollope represents the moral degradation of Ireland in the early 1880s through descriptions of women. Terror is inspired in the 10 year old Florian Jones by the female who approaches him in the dark by the gate to his father's estate threatening eternal damnation if he testifies against the Land League.<sup>612</sup> Similarly, Trollope reports that it is 'the women [who] would ask for fresh murders, and would feel disappointed when none were reported to them, craving, as it were, for blood.'<sup>613</sup> The idea that such a moral decline in Ireland is most effectively represented when women are seen to have lost their

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<sup>612</sup> *The Landleaguers*, p.29.

<sup>613</sup> *Ibid.*, p382.

compassion, to have become brutish and violent is not confined to male English writers. Emily Lawless's eponymous Hurrish, for example, is a much less violent nationalist than his bloodthirsty mother.<sup>614</sup> Such portrayals, however, play a part in reinforcing notions of sexual difference, as well as misrepresenting the nature of the political involvement of women in the period.

In conclusion, when measured against the prevailing nineteenth-century ideology, Trollope's representation of women is seen to have both progressive and conventional elements. Daughters are portrayed with approval as acting against parental instruction but only if that instruction is suspect. Sisters are shown to have a potentially positive influence on brothers but in a manner which essentially promotes orthodox rôles. Single women are not all helpless burdens leading desiccated lives but are active and engaged. Those who have explicitly rejected marriage, however, are less sympathetically treated. Enterprising widows emancipated by marriage and forced out into the world by bereavement are allowed unalloyed approbation. Women are depicted as having an active rôle to play in courtship and sympathy is promoted for the fallen woman but a balance is struck. Even self-assured, able women do not challenge the institution of marriage and the fallen woman must be seen to pay a price for her fall. Trollope confirms rather than promotes the importance of the sexual purity of brides. He appreciates the double standards at work in judging sexuality and the indignities of the marriage market. He questions too the legal rights awarded to husbands but ultimately marriage is promoted and endorsed as beneficial for women and men and society in general. Mothers are not without power and influence and Trollope appreciates their lot but finally they are valued for the degree to which they are dedicated to their families. Female activity in the public sphere is applauded within certain limits and Trollope seems to be both admiring of and disquieted by the advanced version emerging in the latter years of his life.

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<sup>614</sup> Emily Lawless, *Hurrish: A Study* (Edinburgh: Blackwood, 1886; Rev.edn., Belfast: Appletree, 1992), p.25.

This mix of the unorthodox and the conventional emerges from the author's liberal tendencies, empathetic powers, admiration for spirited individuals and sense of justice on one hand, and more constraining forces at work on the other. Progressive views to be made palatable have to come wrapped in more conventional garb so Feemy, if she is allowed to escape some sexist stereotypes in her sexual and moral emancipation, conforms to others and is more stereotypically Irish than most of Trollope's Irish women. Rachel O'Mahony is aggressive and independent but physically fragile and keen to marry. Trollope's strong sense of the writer's moral responsibility encourages a degree of convention and particularly at the level of plot, so that even 'innocent' fallen women like Kate O'Hara have to be seen to suffer for their moral lapses. Although his promotion of the institution of marriage was egalitarian in as much as he saw it as bestowing benefits on both sexes, the prevailing laws and ideologies imposed more constraints on the lives of women than of men. Therefore it has the effect of demanding a degree of restrictive conformity from his female characters. Those like Lady Selina Grey who resist marriage face criticism. Trollope's personal experience as the son of a financially and publicly active woman gave him an insight into the price that might be paid for female emancipation which limited his admiration for enterprising wives and mothers. Suitable work is carried out in or near the home and admirable, responsible women prioritise the needs of their families. His disapproval of radical political movements did not extend to precluding an affectionate friendship with the advocate of women's rights Kate Field but does encourage him to urge more conventional paths for both her and her fictional counterpart Rachel O'Mahony. Enlightened as he was in many ways, these novels also reveal the difficulty of entirely escaping contemporary mores, even those distasteful ones that in his case have the effect of occasionally condoning male sexual aggression.

There is evidence above to confirm Jane Nardin's description of Trollope as a writer who consciously controls form and characterisation to particular effect, but this control is not constant. In keeping with the analyses of Bill

Overton and Margaret Markwick, Trollope's imaginative power sometimes extends beyond his social vision, he is sometimes too ambitious in the number of competing elements he seeks to balance, with the result that there are aspects of his Irish writing sometimes unwittingly reinforce gender and national stereotypes.

Thus while nationality is not often emphasised, Irishness tends to be most negative and stereotypical when Trollope struggles to add it to the combination of competing interests outlined above. Here, and elsewhere, expediency can result in a deployment of reactionary notions of Irishness. That allegorically charged female characters and marriages are used to support the Union is unsurprising given the author's political preference, but Trollope's recommendation is for a particularly thorough Union which disrupts simple dualities and notions of English male superiority. It is engendered by both his personal need to secure the Irish component of his own identity and his essential respect for women.

## CHAPTER THREE

# LANDLORDS AND TENANTS

The landlord-tenant relationship recommends itself as the most obvious and revealing focus for this examination of the character and determining forces of Trollope's representation of rural Ireland. It is the vehicle which he himself most often employed to represent rural conditions and relations, and it is a relationship which, for Trollope and many of his contemporaries, became an increasingly potent signifier of the state of Anglo-Irish economic and political affairs.

All of Anthony Trollope's Irish novels deal to a greater or lesser extent with the issue of landlord-tenant relations. Given the predominantly rural nature of nineteenth-century Ireland and Trollope's self-appointed mission to explain the land of his transformation to the English, this is not surprising. In a place and at a time when the lives of the majority of Irish people were substantially moulded – physically, economically and socially - by their relationship to the land, Trollope's representation would be peculiar and remiss in omitting it. Nor was he alone among his contemporaries in perceiving the issue of land as central to the understanding of Irish life. Indeed, as the century progressed the Land Question grew in political prominence and significance. Gladstone's Land Acts of 1870 and 1881 are testament to a conviction that reform of the system of land tenure was an essential step in the process of pacifying Ireland.

Other writers had employed, and continue to employ, the landlord-tenant relationship as a theme and device. When he began to write in the 1840s Trollope was already familiar with the writing of Maria Edgeworth whose *Castle*



*Rackrent* is held to have originated the Big House genre.<sup>615</sup> At the other extreme of the chronological spectrum Joseph O'Connor's recent novel *The Star of the Sea* demonstrates that a twenty first-century perspective still views the impact on both parties of the landlord-tenant relationship as of central importance in nineteenth-century Ireland.<sup>616</sup> Its prominence and persistence is also explicable in terms of its irresistible literary potential. A variety of plots and themes can be hung on it: love thwarted by class division; the innocent young maiden wronged by the callous landlord; the less innocent young maiden in pursuit of land and riches; loveless marriages constructed to amalgamate landed families or rescue indebted estates. It is a potential exploited in Trollope's English fiction as well as in his Irish work to explore notions of duty and responsibility and as a vehicle for the author's thinking on economic, social and political issues of the day.<sup>617</sup> In the Irish context, this takes on additional significance with the potential for allegorical interpretations of the landlord-tenant relationship which allude to Ireland's relationship with England.

Considering its prevalence and significance, Trollope's treatment of this and related issues has drawn remarkably little critical attention. In terms of nineteenth-century English responses to his English novels this could perhaps be explained by the concentration on the clerical and parliamentary worlds of the characters with whom he was so readily associated and which eclipses other issues. It is perhaps indicative too of the largely orthodox nature of his representation of this subject and at a time when hard-hitting, provocative representations of class division and social injustice tended more often, to have an urban and industrial context.<sup>618</sup> While an examination of landlord-tenant relationships in Ireland certainly had review-catching potential this seems to

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<sup>615</sup> Maria Edgeworth, *Castle Rackrent*, (London: Joseph Johnson, 1800; Rev. edn., London: Penguin, 1992). For an assessment of Edgeworth's importance to the genre see Cahalan, pp.13-24.

<sup>616</sup> Joseph O'Connor, *The Star of the Sea* (London: Secker & Warburg, 2002).

<sup>617</sup> The Pallisers, for example, although primarily portrayed in the political sphere, are landed aristocracy; *The Belton Estate* (London: *Fortnightly Review*, 1865-6; Rev. edn., Oxford: Oxford University press, 1923) and *Sir Harry Hotspur of Humblethwaite* (London: *Macmillan's Magazine*, 1870; Rev. edn., London: Penguin, 1993) both open with the death of an heir to a landed estate and deal in part with the privileges and responsibilities of the landowner.

<sup>618</sup> Simon Dentith, *Society and Cultural Forms in Nineteenth-Century England* (London: Macmillan Press, 1998), p.96.

have been an aspect of Trollope's work which excited little contemporary interest, perhaps because reviewers saw nothing exceptional or objectionable in his particular version of what was in any case a staple of nineteenth-century Irish writing. Whereas more recent literary criticism of Trollope's English fiction continues to largely neglect his place as a portrayer of the landed gentry, some studies have, mostly briefly, considered his representation of Irish landlords and tenants. It has also, however, been excluded from works in which it might have been expected to find a place. Indeed, in current literature, Trollope's portrayal of the Irish land question is at least as likely to be referenced as a source in works by political, economic and social historians as it is to appear for consideration in those by literary critics.<sup>619</sup>

In contemporary reviews Trollope's Irish novels are often welcomed and resisted, praised and condemned in accordance with the reviewers' perceptions of what constitutes Irishness and the degree to which they expect an Irish novel to reflect its national origins. While a few applaud Trollope's resistance of stereotypical representations, others seem to demand more. These perspectives infect the handful of comments on Trollope's treatment of Irish landlords and tenants. *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* did attract attention for its treatment of a fading and indebted Catholic landed family. It was met by a confused, and sometimes confusing, response. One review, while commending Trollope for his realism and naturalness, ironically then complains that the reader 'cannot feel for the characters either as gentry or peasants, because they are neither.'<sup>620</sup> Evidently Trollope's attempt to reproduce some of the nuanced complexities of Irish social relations was lost on this critic. Equally, another reviewer notes that *The Macdermots* was 'life-like and vigorous', but reduces the plot to a single sentence which misrepresents the tale as merely stereotypical and sensational: 'The story is one of hard landlordism, poor tenantry, seduction, and the upshot – the gallows!'<sup>621</sup> An unsigned notice in the *New Monthly Magazine* makes some perceptive

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<sup>619</sup> See below, pp.192-4.

<sup>620</sup> Unsigned notice, *Spectator*, 20, 8 May 1847, p.449, in Smalley, p.547.

<sup>621</sup> Unsigned notice, *Douglas Jerrold's Shilling Magazine*, 5, June 1847, p. 566 in Smalley, p.551.

observations about the sympathy Trollope evokes for Thady Macdermot and his family – the air of ‘tarnished chivalry’; the ‘family pretensions ever struggling against a humiliating position, a vanishing estate, and a crumbling tenantry’ – but again the degree to which these features meet perceptions of what is typically Irish is used as a measure of literary success. The novel is ultimately recommended as ‘a most characteristic picture of Irish society.’<sup>622</sup> Similarly, a reviewer of *The Kellys and the O’Kellys*, while he appreciates Trollope’s Austenesque treatment of the pretensions and hypocrisy of Lord and Lady Cashel, seems also to regret that they are somehow ‘less national’ - by which he seems to mean more English - than the Macdermots and Lord Ballindine.<sup>623</sup>

An essay in the *Dublin Review*, although still emphasising the issue of Irishness, stands out as more fully appreciating how Trollope’s representation reflects actual and complex social relations in Ireland, as opposed to the caricatured versions of the same which, he claims, appear in the work of Charles Lever, William Carleton, Gerald Griffin and John Banim.<sup>624</sup> He even goes so far, with reference to *Phineas Finn*, as to suggest that Trollope should stand for an Irish constituency since, ‘he understands the principles and difficulties of the land question in Ireland, in a way that not merely very few English or Scotchmen do apprehend them, but more clearly, perhaps, than the generality of Irishmen themselves.’<sup>625</sup>

The issue of Trollope as a chronicler of rural society has not attracted extensive analysis in more recent works of literary criticism which deal with nineteenth-century English literature and Trollope’s work in general. As A.O.J. Cockshut has commented, when set beside nineteenth-century novelists like Elizabeth Gaskell and Charles Dickens, it is notable how much he writes about the country and how even his London scenes concern people with rural

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<sup>622</sup> Unsigned notice, *New Monthly Magazine*, 80, June 1847, p.249, in Smalley, p.552.

<sup>623</sup> Unsigned notice, *Athenaeum*, 15 July 1848, p.701, in Smalley, p.553.

<sup>624</sup> Unsigned essay, ‘Trollope’s Irish novels’, *Dublin Review*, 17, October 1869, pp.361-7, in Smalley, pp.319-21.

<sup>625</sup> *Ibid.*, p.321.

roots.<sup>626</sup> Yet his representation of rural society tends to be examined only inside the limited framework of its significance in particular novels. Those critics who do work towards some general conclusions highlight a number of characteristics. Simon Dentith is representative in placing Trollope among the majority of nineteenth-century novelists 'who, while sometimes critical of the inhabitants of those great houses, mostly shared their perspective and looked from the inside out, [who] take the rural social order for granted and see the great houses of the rural elite, or at least some of them, as the benign centre of that order.'<sup>627</sup> Trollope is seen to be portraying a class under threat, 'feudal' values being challenged by commercial ones and while his representation is sometimes equivocal, his preference is more often seen to lie with the English landed gentry. Justifications for its continuance in power tend to emphasise the value of its morality, the possibility of its renewal.<sup>628</sup> In terms of the novelistic devices employed by Trollope, Juliet McMaster has noticed how he uses the country houses and gardens of his landed gentry as indicators of character and values.<sup>629</sup>

Critiques of Trollope's Irish fiction frequently remark on its Irish literary context and on connections between his work and that of writers such as Edgeworth, Morgan, Carleton and Griffin, all of who are seen to be influential to a greater or lesser extent in his depiction of landlord-tenant relations. Robert Tracy has argued convincingly for Trollope's *Macdermots of Ballycloran* as a more detached, more analytical version of *Castle Rackrent* and also as a neat and deliberate inversion of Lady Morgan's *Wild Irish Girl*.<sup>630</sup> Similarly Owen Dudley Edwards has interpreted Trollope's first novel as, at least in part, an inversion and contradiction of Gerald Griffin's *The Collegians*, a use of Griffin's

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<sup>626</sup> A.O.J. Cockshut, 'Trollope's Liberalism' in Tony Bareham (ed.) *Anthony Trollope* (London: Vision Press, 1980), pp.161-81 (p.164).

<sup>627</sup> Dentith, p.96.

<sup>628</sup> Overton, pp.123-93.

<sup>629</sup> Juliet McMaster, 'Country houses and estates', in R.C.Terry (ed.) *Oxford Reader's Companion to Trollope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1999), pp.119-21.

<sup>630</sup> Robert Tracy, "'The Unnatural Ruin'", pp. 363-8. For Irish literary context see also Cronin, pp.13-31; Melissa Fegan, pp.107, 115.

sources and his novel to strike, 'insistent blows for ugly reality instead of beguiling romanticisation.'<sup>631</sup>

Dudley Edwards's reference to Trollope's insistence on realism points to another theme which emerges from the literary criticism - his appreciation and representation of the complexities of Irish rural society. Seamus Deane is unusual in insisting that Trollope, 'has no close feeling for the texture of Irish life.'<sup>632</sup> W.J. Macormack, for example, has noted how, to a greater extent than his Irish contemporaries, Trollope acknowledged the existence of an Irish middle class, while Robert Tracy has commented on the unusual daring and commitment evident in his choice of the Macdermots, not Anglo-Irish but old Irish Catholic gentry, as the landlords in his first novel.<sup>633</sup> Similarly, Melissa Fegan has noted a diversification of the social structure of Ribbonism in this first novel which explodes 'the stereotypical polarity of landlord and tenant.'<sup>634</sup>

The degree to which Trollope recognizes and employs the connection between the system of land tenure in Ireland and British rule inevitably draws some discussion. Fegan has discerned, in Trollope's insistence on the 'Englishness' of the landowning Fitzgerald family in *Castle Richmond*, an avoidance of the otherness of Ireland 'in order to make the Union a tangible, physical fact.'<sup>635</sup> Bill Overton has also recognized Trollope's subscription to an 'establishment view' of the Union which, like his English country house fiction, argues a case for survival through a renewed and rejuvenated landlord-tenant relationship, but has detected signs, particularly in *The Macdermots*, that Irish landlords are seen to be doomed through causes not of their own making and that Trollope is prepared to attack English absentee landlords.<sup>636</sup> The title of the chapter devoted to Trollope's Irish writing in Mary Jean Corbett's book, *Allegories of Union in Irish and English Writing, 1790-1870*, announces the

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<sup>631</sup> Edwards, Introduction to *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* (1847), pp.xxvii-xxviii.

<sup>632</sup> Seamus Deane, *A Short History of Irish Literature* (London: Hutchinson, 1986), p.112.

<sup>633</sup> W.J. McCormack, *From Burke to Beckett: Ascendancy Tradition and Betrayal in Literary History* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.8 ; Robert Tracy, Introduction to *The Macdermots*, p.xiii. See Edwards, Introduction to *The Macdermots*, p.xxiii.

<sup>634</sup> Fegan, p.108.

<sup>635</sup> *Ibid.*, p.118.

<sup>636</sup> Overton, pp.19-21.

focus of her examination: 'Plotting colonial authority: Trollope's Ireland, 1845-1860'. She reads the motivation of reinforcing the necessity of English rule as crucial to the formation of his representation of Irish landlords and tenants. With reference, for example, to *The Macdermots*, she perceives an absence of foresight among the Macdermot men and their tenants which contrasts with the omniscience of the narrator and leaves them unable to 'plot' or offer a successful challenge to colonial authority.<sup>637</sup> Corbett argues, moreover, that the paranoia of the Irish Ascendancy is seen in the novel to render them incapable of government, thus further underlining the need for English rule.<sup>638</sup> Herbert Fitzgerald's ultimate reinstatement as rightful heir in *Castle Richmond* she interprets as intended to legitimise colonial authority, but she also recognizes that the fact that the novel, 'so obsessively revolves around questions of authority and responsibility...suggests the ambiguity at the heart of even so confidently imperial a reading of Ireland as Trollope's.'<sup>639</sup> Stephen Howe has argued that some post-colonialist criticism, 'slips into a glib anti-humanist rhetoric, the now standard postmodernist/ post-colonial identification of humanist and universalist values with colonialism'<sup>640</sup> With this in mind and without denying the ambiguity which Corbett has described or Trollope's commitment to the Union as one of its sources, it should be noted that other critics have convincingly read the dominance of themes such as the importance of authority and a sense of responsibility as signalling the prominence in Trollope's fiction of moral values which exist above and beyond national considerations. Thus James R. Kincaid, for example, has interpreted *The Macdermots* in terms similar to those employed above in regard to his English fiction, as 'a tragedy which traces the decay of the old gentlemanly code in the new and chaotic world.'<sup>641</sup>

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<sup>637</sup> Mary Jean Corbett, *Allegories of Union in Irish and English Writing, 1790-1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), pp.121-8.

<sup>638</sup> *Ibid.*, p.128

<sup>639</sup> *Ibid.*, p.145

<sup>640</sup> Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), p.235.

<sup>641</sup> James.R.Kincaid, *The Novels of Anthony Trollope* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1997), p.70.

A number of critics have described a changing attitude to Ireland which is evident in Trollope's representation of rural society. John Cronin has asserted that in his final novel, 'Trollope abandons all attempt to understand the sources of Ireland's violence and, apparently appalled by the Phoenix Park assassinations of 1882, simply mounts an all-out partisan attack on the Land League's agitation against the Irish landlords.'<sup>642</sup> Similarly Judith Knelman has observed, albeit with a degree of understatement, that while Trollope left Ireland in 1859 believing that 'prosperity was around the corner,' *The Landleaguers* demonstrates how, in the face of an agricultural slump and the Land War, 'his optimism had dimmed.'<sup>643</sup>

I have thus far resisted directly applying the term Big House to Trollope's Irish writing despite the fact that a case could be made for at least four of his Irish novels deserving the description: *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*, *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*, *Castle Richmond* and *The Landleaguers*. This is in part because, as McCormack has pointed out, despite it being such a 'long-established and respectable term of critical debate' the concept 'has not undergone rigorous conceptualisation, naming and refinement.'<sup>644</sup> Therefore, even if space permitted an extensive discussion here of whether or not Trollope's work qualifies to be included in the genre, such discussion would be difficult and not necessarily very productive in the absence of a clear working definition. Moreover, although there is a general consensus on the prevalence of Big House novels in Irish literature, there is a relative scarcity of critical writing specifically dedicated to its analysis.<sup>645</sup> The few book-length examinations which do exist do not always consider Trollope. Jacqueline Genet's survey excludes him, as does that of Otto Rauchbauer, although its introduction lists him with Banim, Carleton, Le Fanu and Maturin as 'missing

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<sup>642</sup> Cronin in Bareham, p.17.

<sup>643</sup> Judith Knelman, 'Anthony Trollope, English Journalist and Novelist, Writing about the Famine in Ireland', *Eire-Ireland*, 23, 3 (1988), pp.57-67 (p.67).

<sup>644</sup> W.J.McCormack, 'Setting and Ideology: with Reference to the Fiction of Maria Edgeworth' in Otto Rauchbauer (ed.), *Ancestral Voices: The Big House in Anglo-Irish Literature* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1992), pp.33-76 (p.34).

<sup>645</sup> Norman Vance should be mentioned as a notable exception to the consensus. See Norman Vance, *Irish Literature Since 1800* (London: Longman, 2000), p.48 where he argues that the Big House tradition in Irish fiction tends to be given 'undue prominence'; Rauchbauer, Introduction, p.vii.

signposts' omitted only because of limited space. In light of this, Malcolm Kelsall's study of the genre is notable not only in devoting an entire chapter to Trollope but also in that, while it recognizes its connection to Genet, Rauchbauer and Kreilkamp, its approach is from a different perspective. The ill-defined Big House term is jettisoned not only for its lack of definition but also because Kelsall chooses not a limited Irish context, but a broader European one and within that, an emphasis on 'the ironic interplay of civilisation with savagery as a leitmotif in European thought.'<sup>646</sup> This emphasis, I would argue, produces conclusions which are most apt and illuminating in relation to Trollope's final novel. Anne Oakman has remarked that Kelsall's occasional refusal to embrace some contextual aspects mars his study.<sup>647</sup> In the case of Trollope, a lack of appreciation of the contrasting historical, personal and textual contexts of his novels, when combined with Kelsall's chosen ideological binary opposition, results in a serious underestimation of Trollope's ability to portray, at least in his earlier novels, Ireland and its complexities without recourse to racialised readings of savagery. Kelsall erroneously locates all of Trollope's Irish writing 'between the famine and the Land League' whereas *The Macdermots* is set and was written before the Famine began.<sup>648</sup> Moreover, the analysis then goes on to offer a reading which treats Trollope's Irish fiction as uniform and unchanging. While it is arguably valid to invoke Conrad's horror-struck Mr Kurtz (Kelsall entitles his chapter 'Trollope as Mr Kurtz') as analogous to the Trollope who writes *The Landleaguers*, the author of *The Macdermots*, far from portraying 'a failure of all normal, scientific or historicist causal explanations', offers these in abundance.<sup>649</sup>

Nineteenth-century rural Ireland has attracted extensive analysis from historians. The Land Question in particular has been much discussed and the dominant influence of land on the lives of the Irish comprehensively confirmed.

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<sup>646</sup> Malcolm Kelsall, *Literary Representations of the Irish Country House: Civilisation and Savagery under the Union* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2003) p.28. See also p.22 for Kelsall's explanation as to why the inclusion of Trollope is 'ineluctable'.

<sup>647</sup> Anne Oakman, Review of Kelsall, *Irish Studies Review*, 12, 1 (April 2004), pp.111-13.

<sup>648</sup> Kelsall, p.113.

<sup>649</sup> *Ibid.*, p.115.



W.E.Vaughan has noted, for example, how 'Land and its ownership seemed to touch all aspects of rural life', how Ireland was 'overwhelmingly rural ...not only in demographic but perhaps even more in mental terms.' Similarly K.T.Hoppen has asserted that 'The social and economic fabric of Irish life ...continued to be dominated by the experiences of the agricultural community and the shifting relationships between its constituent parts.'<sup>650</sup>

The most prominent trend in the more recent historiography is a challenge to the earlier orthodoxy which simplistically represented landlords as ruthless, rackrenting and quick to evict a uniformly poor and powerless tenantry. These works describe a more diverse, more complex and less polarised rural society. Paul Bew, for example, has remarked how, from about the mid 1970s, the historiography of the Land War has treated landlords more sympathetically.<sup>651</sup> Barbara Solow has argued that in post-Famine Ireland eviction was relatively rare, rents were moderate and tenant investment incentives were beginning to be established.<sup>652</sup> If tenants felt insecure it was not the result of the imposition of impersonal market forces or widespread predatory landlord practices but the effect of a bewildering array of prices and practices varying from landlord to landlord combined with historical and religious tensions which made it possible to excite anxiety and agitation by publicising the actions of relatively few rack-renting landlords.<sup>653</sup> She has concluded also that landlords far from operating as unregulated autocrats were severely limited in exercising power since communal and tenurial custom meant that the 'improving' Irish landlord 'needed patience, persistence, determination and a robust indifference to public popularity' if he were to implement the improvements he desired.<sup>654</sup> Similarly, W.E.Vaughan has

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<sup>650</sup> W.E.Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants in Mid-Victorian Ireland* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), pp.13, 110; K.Theodore Hoppen, *Ireland Since 1800: Conflict and Conformity* (London: Longman, 1999), p.89.

<sup>651</sup> Paul Bew, "'The National Question, Land and 'Revisionism'": Some Reflections' in D. George Boyce and Alan O'Day (eds.) *The Making of Modern Irish History: Revisionism and the Revisionist Controversy* (London: Routledge, 1996), pp.90-100 (p.94).

<sup>652</sup> Barbara Solow, *The Land Question and the Irish Economy, 1870-1903* (Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971), p.13.

<sup>653</sup> *Ibid.*, p.44.

<sup>654</sup> *Ibid.*, p.82.

concluded that the landlord's exercise of the right to evict 'used moderately by many and abused by others' was also affected by considerations of reprisal and opprobrium so that, '[t]he management of an estate was not the exercise of absolute legal rights; rather it was the negotiation of a series of obstacles.'<sup>655</sup> In a similar vein, Michael Winstanley has challenged the traditional image of Irish rural society as 'synonymous with backwardness, poverty, eviction and exploitation.'<sup>656</sup> While he recognizes that most of the population in the 1830s and 1840s faced considerable hardship, he has also noted marked regional variation and concluded that 'Irish agriculture was relatively successful in adapting to changing market conditions and more and more farmers enjoyed increasing prosperity, especially after 1850.'<sup>657</sup> He has even gone so far as to suggest that absenteeism among Irish landlords was far from being the ubiquitous evil which some accounts allege.<sup>658</sup>

If, however, recent historiographical works challenge orthodoxies and describe a diversity and variety of experience, that is not to say that they deny the hardships of Irish rural life, especially in the period before and during the famine. James S. Donnelly, for example, with particular reference to post 1815 Cork, whilst noting attempts to adjust to current economic changes, also describes 'a crisis of appalling dimensions.'<sup>659</sup> He has highlighted in particular the excessive subdivision of tenancies fostered by the middleman system which fragmented holdings, encouraged population growth and economic vulnerability.<sup>660</sup> He has noted too how movements for reform did exist but were hampered by popular resistance, old unexpired leases, widespread indebtedness among landowners and the burden of past neglect.<sup>661</sup> Whilst Michael Winstanley confirms the presence of a responsiveness in pre-Famine Irish agriculture, noting the beginnings of a move away from arable farming

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<sup>655</sup> Vaughan, pp.32-4.

<sup>656</sup> Michael J. Winstanley, *Ireland and the Land Question 1800-1922* (London: Methuen, 1984), p.4.

<sup>657</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.7-8.

<sup>658</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>659</sup> James S. Donnelly Jr., *The Land and the People of Nineteenth-Century Cork: The Rural Economy and the Land Question* (London: Routledge & Kegan Paul, London, 1975), p.4.

<sup>660</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.4-5.

<sup>661</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5. See also Winstanley p.18.

before 1845, he also points to the blow dealt to Irish cottage-based industry by English factory-based industrialisation which robbed Irish small farmers and labourers of valuable subsidiary income and encouraged increased reliance on the potato crop.<sup>662</sup>

Like James Donnelly, a number of historians represent the Famine as providing 'its own drastic answers' to the problems of Irish agrarian society, strengthening moves towards dairying and dry cattle farming and away from subsistence farming, and facilitating the consolidation of holdings.<sup>663</sup> In terms of landlord behaviour Alvin Jackson has concluded that 'No clear picture... has emerged, although the evidence suggests that as minor casualties in the holocaust, they were not in a position to supply aid.'<sup>664</sup> Confirming a mixed response, Donald Jordan in his study of Cork has affirmed that there were landlords who apparently ignored distress, others who seem to have been unable to assist while some did make conscientious self-sacrificing efforts to assist tenants and who were irate at the inaction of their fellow proprietors.<sup>665</sup> Donnelly has concluded that some indebted Co. Cork landlords found the pressure of Poor Law Rates 'intolerable', especially when combined with a reduction in rent revenue and the requirement to provide employment. He has explained that they were therefore reluctant to reduce rents and were induced instead to clear estates of pauper tenants.<sup>666</sup> He has asserted that if some proprietors were pressed to these measures there were also many who were insensible to the suffering of tenants and callously set about making the most of the business opportunity provided by the Famine.<sup>667</sup>

A point on which historians tend to concur is that the catastrophic Famine was succeeded by a period of relative calm and prosperity in rural Ireland. The cottier class faced by far the most severe consequences but the Famine also left some landlords with increased debt burdens or even the

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<sup>662</sup> Winstanley, pp.6-8.

<sup>663</sup> Donnelly, p.5. See also Jackson, *Ireland*, pp.81-6.

<sup>664</sup> Jackson, *Ireland*, p.76.

<sup>665</sup> Donald E. Jordan Jr. *Land and Popular Politics in Ireland: Co Mayo from the Plantation to the Land War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), p.107.

<sup>666</sup> Donnelly, pp.107-12.

<sup>667</sup> *Ibid.*, p.118.

prospect of having to leave their estates. This left those proprietors who had remained sufficiently solvent, along with substantial tenant farmers, as the main beneficiaries of changes occurring in the Famine's wake.<sup>668</sup> The Encumbered Estates Act largely failed to attract capital from outside Ireland: the vast majority of purchasers were Irish making further investment in land. In the period up to the 1860s real wages, living standards and housing stock all improved.<sup>669</sup>

Barbara Solow has asserted that when Gladstone became Prime Minister in December 1868 and announced his mission to pacify Ireland, that country had just completed 'one of the most prosperous and peaceful decades in perhaps all her long history' - a decade in which economic improvement had been accompanied by the relatively mild demands of the Tenants' Right movement.<sup>670</sup> She affirms that it was Fenian terrorism rather than any purely economic imperative which made Ireland, and particularly its land tenure system, the question of the day.<sup>671</sup> For her 'the real problem in Ireland was not the division of a given pie but the provision of a larger one.'<sup>672</sup> By Solow's reasoning, the 1870 Land Act could not improve Ireland's agricultural economy because it was not based on economic imperatives.<sup>673</sup> Other historians cite different reasons for its ineffectiveness but Winstanley's assessment of the Act as, 'at best irrelevant, at worst counterproductive', is representative.<sup>674</sup> He has underlined Gladstone's intention of creating conditions in which Irish landlords could continue to function and to the benefit of the country. However, Roy Foster's conclusion that the Act's greatest significance lies in the implied admission of the Irish tenant's moral property in his holding, perhaps demonstrates its contradictory nature and effects.<sup>675</sup>

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<sup>668</sup> Jackson, *Ireland*, pp.77-82; Winstanley, p.16; Vaughan, p.18.

<sup>669</sup> Jackson, *Ireland*, p.84. See also Winstanley, p.9; Donnelly, p.219; Vaughan, p.18.

<sup>670</sup> Solow, p.17.

<sup>671</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.18-21.

<sup>672</sup> *Ibid.*, p.88.

<sup>673</sup> *Ibid.*, p.85.

<sup>674</sup> Winstanley, p.36.

<sup>675</sup> Roy Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972* (London: Penguin, 1988), p.397.

The historiography of the remaining period from the agricultural depression of the late 1870s, through the Land War, the foundation and operation of the Land League to Gladstone's Land Act of 1881, largely centres on this powerful and complex combination of the political and the economic. It investigates the reasons for and nature and consequences of the combination of the forces for land reform and national independence. It explains the persistent and increasingly prominent idea that the Land Question had always been inextricably linked in Irish minds with questions of moral right and sovereignty and that it had to become more so in the policies of those who hoped to continue to govern the country.

Historians generally agree that the agricultural depression had a part to play in generating the Land War but there is less consensus about how great a part and about the rôle of other influences. Winstanley and Donnelly, for example, have seen the Land War, at least in part, as 'a revolution of rising expectations' rather than a simple reaction to poverty.<sup>676</sup> Winstanley has described small holders and the wealthier grazier class uniting against the landlord in order to retain gains made in the previous thirty years.<sup>677</sup> In connection with this he has argued that 'Nationalism might more profitably be interpreted as a consequence of increasing literacy and prosperity, which kindled an Irish self-confidence which British concessions on agrarian, educational and religious matters heightened rather than satisfied.'<sup>678</sup> Vaughan has expressed reservations about this theory, arguing that it was the effects of the agricultural depression in combination with increasing indebtedness among tenants, the ineffective Land Act of 1870, the leadership of Parnell and Davitt, the participation of the Fenians, and Irish American support which incited rebellion.<sup>679</sup>

With so many potential influences having been identified, it is unsurprising that the nature and impact of the Act which Gladstone devised in

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<sup>676</sup> Winstanley, p.30; Donnelly, p.6.

<sup>677</sup> Winstanley, p.30.

<sup>678</sup> *Ibid.*, p.31.

<sup>679</sup> Vaughan, pp.209-13.

1881 in response to the Irish situation continues to be debated. Vaughan, for example, has concluded that on its own it need not have destroyed landlordism but actually had the potential to give it a new institutional base. In contrast, K.T.Hoppen has posited that the Act, by increasing division and awareness of competing interests among protagonists, went some way to quelling agitation while exacerbating some long-standing tensions and leaving the landlords to 'pay for the economic ravages of the time.'<sup>680</sup> Whether or not it was justified or avoidable, the scene was set for increasing cries for Irish national independence and a decline in landlord power.

The Anthony Trollope who wrote so extensively about Irish landlords and tenants was, of course, neither. While this arguably afforded him some objectivity, events in his childhood had taught him the significance of membership of the landed gentry. His barrister father had lived his life until the age of 45 in expectation of inheriting his childless uncle's estate in Hertfordshire. As biographers have pointed out, such great expectations had, at least in part, dictated the attitude, behaviour and lifestyle of Trollope *pere* so that when his elderly widowed uncle married a new young wife, who provided him with a son and heir, the shocked Trollope family found themselves in socially and financially reduced circumstances.<sup>681</sup> Trollope viewed this lost inheritance as one of the causes of the physical and emotional misery of his childhood. In his autobiography Trollope explains how his father's high hopes had to a significant degree encouraged the building of an expensive country house and the leasing of a farm, moves which to him represented 'the grave of all my father's hopes, ambition, and prosperity, the cause of my mother's sufferings, and of those of her children, and perhaps the director of her destiny and of ours.'<sup>682</sup> The brothers who entered Harrow school before 'the final crushing blow' of dashed expectations, he imagined as not having to face the ignominy of the social rejection which he had to endure.<sup>683</sup> By his exclusion

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<sup>680</sup> *Ibid.*, p.226; Hoppen, *Ireland*, p.102.

<sup>681</sup> Victoria Glendinning, pp.11-13; Hall, *Trollope*, pp12-13.

<sup>682</sup> *Autobiography*, p.7.

<sup>683</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9.

from it he must have understood very clearly, and at an early age, the economic and social power enjoyed by members of the landed class.

His feeling of social exclusion made all the more welcome the acceptance he found on his move to Ireland where the young foxhunting British official found a level of social acceptance, even respect of which the Harrow schoolboy could only dream.<sup>684</sup> The enthusiasm with which Trollope, the successful author, embraced the world of London's clubs on his return to England in 1859 demonstrates the persistence of this craving for social approval and acceptance.<sup>685</sup> Given this, one can speculate as to the degree of satisfaction he might have obtained from the list of the great and the good - titled landowners, Land Commissioners, a director of the Bank of Ireland - who were prepared to provide information and accommodation for the erstwhile outcast on his investigative trips to Ireland in 1882, and how much this immersion in the world of the establishment might have discouraged unbiased consideration of the Land League's case.<sup>686</sup>

From the outset, Trollope, in the eponymous landowning Macdermot family which occupies centre stage, and the other Irish landlords of his first novel, embodies an idea of what constitutes the good and the bad landlord. It is a notion which remains remarkably consistent throughout his writing career. Although his representation demonstrates an appreciation of the peculiar complexities of Irish conditions, at its core are moral values which he applies to all landlords regardless of nationality. However, its focus and implications are adjusted as events in Ireland unfurl, attitudes to the Irish change, Trollope realigns his mission to explain the Irish to his fellow countrymen and women, and his own feelings towards that country are altered.

In all probability the genesis of *The Macdermots* – his happening across the ruins of a once-grand house in Co. Leitrim - helped to establish his practice of attributing to the homes of his Irish landlords a significance which alerts the reader to much more than their social and financial standing. Although

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<sup>684</sup> *Ibid.*, p.105; 'The O'Conors of Castle Conor'.

<sup>685</sup> *Autobiography*, pp.104-5.

<sup>686</sup> Hall, *The Letters*, pp. 958-81; Hall, *Trollope*, pp.503-4.

Trollope might not welcome the comparison, it is the case that, just as Thomas Grandgrind's Stone Lodge – 'a calculated, cast up, balanced, and proved house' – is an architectural representation of his inflexible devotion to facts, the homes of Trollope's Irish landlords are often eloquent testament to their moral character and behaviour.<sup>687</sup> There were precedents too in Irish fiction.<sup>688</sup> In Big House novels that building inevitably comes to acquire symbolic significance. It is important to note, therefore, that in his description of the crumbling Ballycloran House Trollope emphasises that it is not simply 'Time' but 'Ruin' and 'unnatural ruin' at that, which is instrumental in the building's destruction.<sup>689</sup> By this emphasis Trollope seems to want to reinforce for the reader the negative influence of human agency: 'The usual story, thought I, of Connaught gentlemen; an extravagant landlord, reckless tenants, debt, embarrassment, despair, and ruin...Oh, what a picture of misery, of useless expenditure, unfinished pretence, and premature decay.'<sup>690</sup> Moreover, Trollope conjures up troubling images of crime and death in association with the house: 'One could see the rotting beams, some fallen, some falling, the rest ready to fall, like the skeleton of a felon left to rot on an open gibbet.'<sup>691</sup> The message is clear – these landlords have had a hand in their own destruction. Furthermore their failure is represented as not only destroying themselves but also endangering those around them. From the roof hang 'threatening timbers...which seemed only hanging till they had an opportunity of injuring some one by their fall.'<sup>692</sup>

Played out then in the novel are the tragic consequences of landlord extravagance and indebtedness. These faults are combined in Larry Macdermot with a fondness for alcohol and an excessive regard for the purity

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<sup>687</sup> Charles Dickens, *Hard Times* (London, *Household Words*, April-August, 1854; Rev. edn., London: Penguin, 1969), p.54.

<sup>688</sup> Jacqueline Genet (ed.), *The Big House in Ireland: Reality and Representation* (Dingle: Brandon, 1991), p.75.

<sup>689</sup> *Macdermots*, p .5.

<sup>690</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>691</sup> *Ibid.*, p.4.

<sup>692</sup> *Ibid.*



of the Macdermot bloodline.<sup>693</sup> If all of this suggests some indebtedness to Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*, it should be noted also that Trollope seems to deliberately turn away from Edgeworth's exclusive concentration on failed landlords. He provides a representation which appreciates the diversity of Irish landlords. Moreover, Trollope's narrator reports that the tale of the Macdermot family was told to him by the guard of the Boyle coach but then chooses to relate it himself.<sup>694</sup> In mentioning the coachman but deciding not to employ his own Thady Quirke, Trollope is perhaps hoping to maintain some of the benefits of apparent native authenticity while mediating this through a narrator who might appear to offer some objective distance from his subject and closer proximity to the reader. Furthermore, if Trollope's Thady is a nominal nod to Edgeworth, he is no old retainer, and while the Macdermots, like the Rackrents, are native Irish landlords unlike them they have remained Catholics and Trollope demonstrates the impact that this has on their lives.<sup>695</sup>

The novel's opening with references to 'The usual story...of Connaught gentlemen' and 'this characteristic specimen of Irish life' seems to promise that Trollope will render the tale in a manner and terms which will simply reinforce stereotypical notions of Irish landlordism.<sup>696</sup> However, before the first chapter ends, there are indications that the narrator's musings on the ruin of Ballycloran House have drawn him to particularise and individualise, and with some compassion, the implications of the decay around him. They have drawn him to 'thoughts of the wrong, oppression, misery, and despair, to which some one had been subjected by what I saw before me.'<sup>697</sup> Though never diminishing their culpability, or offering any hope of rescue, Trollope, nonetheless evokes sympathy for the Macdermots. The focus on the well-meaning but overwhelmed son of the house encourages this. While the father, who has succumbed to drink and begun to lose his reason, rails against the 'born devils' of tenants who do not pay their rent, Thady, sorely tried himself, reminds him

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<sup>693</sup> *Ibid.*, p.9, p.65.

<sup>694</sup> *Ibid.*, p.7.

<sup>695</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138.

<sup>696</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3

<sup>697</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.5-6.

that 'the times...is very hard on them; too hard entirely, so it is, poor things.'<sup>698</sup>

Drawing on his personal experience as the son of a difficult and troubled father, Trollope paints an effective picture of Thady's conscientious efforts:

He had been called on at a very early age to bear the weight of the family. From the time of his leaving school he had been subjected to constant vexation...his pleasures were very few and far between; his constant occupation for many years had been hunting for money, which was not to be got. If his heart could have been seen, the word 'Rent' would have been found engraved on it.<sup>699</sup>

It is under the unsupportable pressure of trying to run the estate, appease his father and protect his sister Feemy that Thady commits the crime for which he is eventually hanged. The novel ends with a poignant evocation of his last days and execution.

Thady's worth is partly predicated upon his well-meaning, if ineffectual, compassion and it is interesting that in the second chapter of the book Trollope, while ostensibly condemning the tendency of Irish landlords to assume 'an absolute right over the tenants, as feudal vassals' adds almost wistfully, 'Still, they respected and to a certain extent loved him; "for why? Wasn't he the master's son, and wouldn't he be the master himself?" And he had a regard, perhaps an affection, for the poor creatures.'<sup>700</sup> There is a suggestion here of an aspect of the landlord-tenant relationship which for Trollope characterised its ideal form, a mutual and personal bond which extends beyond any business arrangement.

In *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* Trollope also offers a triplet of exemplary landlords in his portraits of the three magistrates Sir Michael Gibson, Mr Jonas Brown and Counsellor Webb. They seem to meet with varying degrees of authorial approval as measured against his standard of the good landlord. While financial acuity is certainly not ignored, their treatment of their tenants is a prominent criterion by which they are judged. Sir Michael is

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<sup>698</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.12-13.

<sup>699</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.66-7.

<sup>700</sup> *Ibid.*, p.10.

offered as being 'neither a bad nor a good landlord' on the basis that 'his land was seldom let for more than double its value; and his agent did not eject his tenants as long as they contrived not to increase the arrears which they owed when he undertook the management of the property.'<sup>701</sup> This is hardly an enthusiastic endorsement, an impression reinforced by Sir Michael's failure to consider his tenants at all. He 'neither looked after their welfare, nor took the slightest care to see that they were comfortable.'<sup>702</sup>

If Sir Michael inhabits a middle ground of benign inactivity, his fellow magistrates are offered as opposing extremes. Mr Webb meets with approval for his talent, clear-headedness and anxiety 'to ameliorate the condition of the poor' but not for his excessive desire to be 'the favourite among the peasantry' which, Trollope suggests, reduces his effectiveness in helping them.<sup>703</sup> On the other hand Jonas Brown, father of the flighty Julia, is roundly condemned as 'an irritable, overbearing magistrate, a greedy landlord, and an unprincipled father.'<sup>704</sup> His practice might be taken as a description of how a landlord should not behave towards tenants:

In every case he would, if he had the power, visit every fault committed by them with the severest penalty awarded by the law. He was a stern, hard, cruel man, with no sympathy for any one, and was actuated by the most superlative contempt for the poor, from whom he drew his whole income. He was a clever, clear-headed, avaricious man; and he knew that the only means of keeping the peasantry in their present utterly helpless and dependent state, was to deny them education, and to oppose every scheme for their improvement and welfare.<sup>705</sup>

What emerges from these portraits is a recommendation that landlords combine financial prudence with a considered, judicious paternalistic concern for their tenants. Helpless, ignorant dependence is not an acceptable state in which to maintain tenantry.

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<sup>701</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 451.

<sup>702</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>703</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.452-3.

<sup>704</sup> *Ibid.*, p.333.

<sup>705</sup> *Ibid.*, p.452.

As with his choice of Ussher as an Irish rather than an English seducer, in placing the Macdermots – Irish Catholic gentry as opposed to Anglo-Irish Protestants – at the centre of his novel, Trollope avoids the colonial issue. However, he is also afforded the opportunity to alert readers to the variety of Irish society. Moreover, as has already been suggested, he can explore the anomalies of alliance and division experienced by landlords like Larry and Thady Macdermot. Being Catholic and of the 'good ould blood' can win them allegiance from their tenantry - at least when the alternatives are an upstart builder and an oily Protestant attorney - but their religion, when it is combined with poverty wins them no friends among fellow landlords and creates the relative social isolation which allows Feemy to fall for the dubious charms of Myles Ussher.<sup>706</sup> Although Thady's Catholicism and poverty deprive him of many of the associated benefits, the fact that he is a landowner, as Fegan has noted, is nevertheless used in his trial as an argument for the implementation of summary justice.<sup>707</sup>

The only family with whom the Macdermots maintain ties are the McKeons. Fellow Catholics, but substantial tenant farmers rather than landowners, they move in polite society and are pillars of the community. Their inclusion further interrupts any notion of a society strictly polarised into wealthy landlords and impoverished tenants. Although Trollope is no fan of Mr McKeon's habit of reducing all of his guests to a drunken stupor, nor his practice of subletting land, he applauds his application and industry and explains how his comfortable lifestyle is achieved not only from farming but also from road and bridge construction.<sup>708</sup>

As well as chronicling the existence of a Catholic middle class, Trollope alerts his readers to the fact that some Irish people did live in towns where they also had landlords. In a passage which could have come from the social problem novels being written at the time about the English urban poor, Trollope describes the small country town of Mohill and the state of its more miserable

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<sup>706</sup> *Ibid.*, p.38; p.138.

<sup>707</sup> *Ibid.*, p.453, p.538; Fegan, p.109.

<sup>708</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.253-4.

habitations and inhabitants. Tenants are dehumanised by their surroundings. In contrast with the implications of the description of the ruins of Ballycloran House, the reference to their 'lot' suggests that the fate of these people is not in their own hands. His description of a Mohill hovel is eloquent of Trollope's early position on the state of the Irish poor. Its nature, style and progression is best appreciated through lengthy quotation:

Look at that mud hovel on the left, which seems as if it had thrust itself between its neighbours, so narrow is its front! The doorway, all insufficient as it is, takes nearly the whole facing to the street. The roof, looking as if it were only the dirty eaves hanging from its more aspiring neighbour on the right, supports itself against the cabin on the left, about three feet above the ground. Can that be the habitation of any of the human race? Few but such as those whose lot has fallen on such barren places would venture in; but for a moment let us see what is there.<sup>709</sup>

So the narrator leads the reader inside to witness the wretchedness:

A sickly woman, the entangled nature of whose insufficient garments would defy description, is sitting on a stool before the fire, suckling a miserably dirty infant; a boy, whose only covering is a tattered shirt, is putting fresh, but alas, damp turf beneath the pot in which are put to boil the potatoes – their only food. Two or three dim children – their number is lost in their obscurity – are cowering round the dull, dark, fire, atop of one another; and on the miserable pallet beyond – a few rotten boards, propped upon equally infirm supports, and covered over with only one thin black quilt – is sitting the master of the mansion; his grizzly, unshorn beard, his lantern jaws and shaggy hair, are such as his home and family would lead one to expect...Squatting on the ground – from off the ground, like pigs, only much more poorly fed – his children eat the scanty earnings of his continual labour.<sup>710</sup>

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<sup>709</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.125-6.

<sup>710</sup> *Ibid.*, p.126.

This drifts close to stereotype at points – associating this de-personalised Irish family with dirt, pigs and potatoes – but interestingly ‘the master of this mansion’ is not indolent. Trollope is careful to point out that he works continually; it is the remuneration provided which is insufficient. Moreover, this early depiction of a wretched Irish hovel is distinguished by its purpose from his later description, in Chapter 33 of *Castle Richmond*, of a cabin and its inhabitants during the Famine. Where later Trollope would use the scene to emphasise that landlords were powerless to act against the effects of a Divinely ordained occurrence, in his first novel the misery of the hovel is employed to underline, in scathingly ironic terms, the landlord’s responsibility to act. Moreover, in a novel which chronicles the decline of a profligate Catholic landowning family, Trollope is prepared also to attack an ostensibly worthy member of the Ascendancy landowning class:

Is the landlord then so hard a man? so regardless of those who depend on him in all their wants and miseries? No, indeed; Lord Birmingham is also a kind, good man, a most charitable man! Look at his name on all the lists of gifts for unfortunates of every description. Is he not the presiding genius of the company for relieving the Poles? A vice-presiding genius for relieving destitute authors, destitute actors, destitute clergymen’s widows, destitute half-pay officers widows? ... In short, is not every one aware that Lord Birmingham has spent a long and brilliant life in acts of public and private philanthropy? ‘Tis true he lives in England, was rarely in his life in Ireland, never in Mohill. Could he be blamed for this? Could he live in two countries at once? or would the world have benefited had he left the Parliament and the Cabinet, to whitewash Irish cabins, and assist in the distribution of meal?<sup>711</sup>

Trollope teasingly concedes that this excuse seems ‘a valid one’ but he makes this apparent concession only to increase the impact of his concluding pronouncements. Ultimately responsibility can only lie with the landlord:

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<sup>711</sup> *Ibid.*, p.128; Edwards, Introduction to *The Macdermots*, p.xix.

...shall no one be blamed for the misery which belonged to him; for the squalid sources of the wealth with which Poles were fed, and literary paupers clothed? Was no one answerable for the grim despair of that half-starved wretch, whom but now we saw, looking down so sadly on the young sufferers to whom he had given life and poverty? That can hardly be. And if we feel the difficulty which, among his numerous philanthropic works, Lord Birmingham must experience in attending to the state of his numerous dependents, it only makes us reflect more often, that from him to whom much is given, much indeed will be required.<sup>712</sup>

Financial matters are not unimportant; the connection is explicitly made between tenant squalor and landlord wealth. However, the final sentence alerts the reader to the moral, rather than purely economic, standards being employed to assess this landlord's behaviour. Just as he writes wistfully of the affectionate bond between Thady and his tenants and seems to recommend a judicious paternalism in his portrayal of Webb, Brown and Sir Michael, so Trollope here cites the landlord's duty to his tenants. The 'much' that is 'required' involves his personal attention and presence in Mohill, an active interest in his estates, his recognition that the misery belongs to him. The interdependence of landlord and tenant is apparent here. Lord Birmingham's diversion of wealth to charitable causes, while ignoring his immediate responsibilities, is represented as being just as great a danger as that of the Macdermots' profligacy signified by the 'threatening timbers' of Ballycloran House.

No less significant in terms of Trollope's clear-sighted representation in this novel of landlord-tenant relations, is his portrayal of agrarian societies. Among Thady Macdermot's tenants and led by his estate manager, Pat Brady, are some who have begun to meet at a local shebeen, banded together, sworn oaths and turned their attention to what they see as the sources of their

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<sup>712</sup> *The Macdermots*, pp.128-9.

grievances.<sup>713</sup> Trollope depicts the destructive and violent consequences such organisations can have on both their targets and their members. Thady unable, despite valiant efforts, to make his father's estate profitable or protect his sister, is lured into their company. In a haze of despair and alcohol he is tempted to join them but resists.<sup>714</sup> When, however, he kills Myles Ussher in the mistaken belief that Ussher is abducting his sister, Thady turns to the Ribbonmen for sanctuary.<sup>715</sup> He is taken to a remote mountain cabin in Aughacashel but finds the inactivity and moral void of life as an outlaw so intolerable that he goes home to give himself up.<sup>716</sup> Malcolm Kelsall has aptly identified the mood of the Aughacashel episode as 'phantasmagoric' and the old man who is Thady's unbearable companion there as a sort of 'speechless Caliban'.<sup>717</sup> John Cronin has noted its strange 'near Beckettian' quality which invites a symbolic reading.<sup>718</sup> However, whereas Kelsall incorporates the episode into his interpretation of Trollope's Ireland as essentially savage, I would cite Thady's rejection of this world as evidence of another Ireland, capable of choosing the lawful, civilised path. Ireland's tragedy is not that its people are essentially and inescapably savage but that the then current climate (and this is shown to be influenced by irresponsible landlordism and a misguided, alarmist official approach) sometimes thwarts honourable intentions. Thady does return from the moral void to face the consequences but his efforts at rehabilitation are rendered ineffectual. The Ribbonmen mistakenly interpret Thady's killing of their enemy, the Revenue policeman, as an act on their behalf.<sup>719</sup> It is partly as a show of gratitude, that they hack the foot off Hyacinth Keegan, the attorney who has designs on the Macdermot estate. This in turn is misinterpreted by the court as proof of organised,

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<sup>713</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.131-45.

<sup>714</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.212-218.

<sup>715</sup> *Ibid.*, p.402.

<sup>716</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.417-28.

<sup>717</sup> Kelsall, p.118.

<sup>718</sup> Cronin in Bareham, pp.21-2.

<sup>719</sup> *The Macdermots*, p.445.



widespread agrarian agitation and of Thady's involvement, which helps to ensure his conviction and execution.<sup>720</sup>

Trollope does suggest that no good can come from such violence. Moreover, he does not shrink from depicting it. The brutal attack on Keegan is rendered in stomach-churning detail indicative of Trollope's familiarity with such Carleton tales as 'Wildgoose Lodge'.<sup>721</sup> The brash attorney is reduced to begging for his life but his pleas leave his axe-wielding attackers unmoved:

...before the first sentence he uttered was well out of his mouth, the instrument fell on his leg, just above the ankle, with all the man's force; the first blow only cut his trousers and his boot, and bruised him sorely; the second cut the flesh, and grated against the bone;...a third, and a fourth, and a fifth descended, crushing the bone, dividing the marrow, and ultimately severing the foot from the leg.<sup>722</sup>

However, having confronted the acts which such organisations can breed, Trollope, nonetheless resists the temptation to demonise its members. It is the maiming of Keegan which Kelsall has read as confirmation of what he sees as Trollope's conclusion that 'there is a failure of all normal, scientific or historicist causal explanations of what is happening in Ireland'.<sup>723</sup> In support of this he has interpreted the blackened faces of Keegan's attackers as denoting their allegiance to 'forces of the night', as positioning them as 'black' men 'in opposition to "whites"; thus by commonplace cultural association [as] savages rather than civilised men, negro slaves rather than freemen.'<sup>724</sup> While Kelsall's reading of Trollope's representation of Ireland as emerging from a sense of embittered despair about the state of that country may be valid in relation to his later work, *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* does attempt to account for the violence it depicts. Moreover, if Trollope could not prevent his nineteenth-century readers making racial associations, there is no evidence here of him

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<sup>720</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.607-8.

<sup>721</sup> William Carleton, 'Wildgoose Lodge' (1833), in Benedict Kiely (ed.) *The Penguin Book of Irish Short Stories* (London: Penguin, 1981), pp.28-47.

<sup>722</sup> *Macdermots*, p.447.

<sup>723</sup> Kelsall, p.115.

<sup>724</sup> *Ibid.*, p.116.

intending to encourage this. Blackened faces were not an unusual disguise in such situations so to this extent Trollope is reflecting reality. Moreover, as Kelsall himself suggests, this blackness does also seem to emphasise their habitation of a morally dark criminal world. Furthermore, far from offering these men as imaginative and racialised symbols of an inexplicable condition, the appetites and weaknesses which Trollope ascribes to them are human, universal and believable. Pat Brady is an ambitious and manipulative opportunist who distances himself from the society when it has served his purpose. Joe Reynolds, who brings the axe down on Keegan, did not begin as a bloodthirsty murderer:

He was a reckless man, originally rendered so by inability to pay high rent for miserably bad land, and afterwards becoming doubly so from having recourse to illegal means to ease him of his difficulties.<sup>725</sup>

Moreover, Trollope's description of Father John McGrath weighed down by his parishioners' troubles, invites the reader to consider causes for tenant misery and unrest which are located in economic depression and government behaviour rather than an innate savage, criminal or rebellious tendency:

...his parishioners were in great troubles, the times were very bad on them; many of them were in gaol for illegal distillation; more were engaged in the business, and were determined so to continue in open defiance of the police; many of them were becoming Ribbonmen, or at any rate, were joining secret and illegal societies. Driven from their cabins and little holdings, their crops and cattle taken from them, they were everywhere around desperate with poverty, and discontented equally with their own landlords and the restraints put upon them by government.<sup>726</sup>

In addition, Trollope is careful to show that the targets of the Ribbonmen are neither random nor chosen simply for sectarian or political reasons. Ussher is Protestant, northern Irish and a revenue policeman. None of these attributes is

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<sup>725</sup> *Macdermots*, p.37.

<sup>726</sup> *Ibid*, pp.91-2.

likely to win him friends amongst the local population but it is his particular brand of officiousness and his treatment of Feemy Macdermot which ensure animosity. Keegan, similarly, has acted as an agent for an absentee landlord enthusiastically executing eviction notices; he is a convert to the Protestant faith and threatens to usurp the Macdermots. Motivations are seen to be complex and to contain in their mix personal and local issues.

What emerges then from this, Trollope's first novel, is a portrayal of landlord-tenant relations which reveals an appreciation of the complexities of Irish society in the 1830s and 40s. Trollope has developed opinions with regard to agricultural, economic and social conditions as to the real and ideal state of this relationship. Behaviour is also judged against a particular idea of the correct moral standard. His representation therefore invites condemnation of irresponsible landlord behaviour whatever its origins, and of criminal and violent activities. Yet it also evokes qualified sympathy for both the indebted and doomed landlord on the one hand, and some of those drawn into agrarian violence on the other.

Trollope's second novel, *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* has a subtitle, *Landlords and Tenants*, which promises more than it ultimately delivers in terms of Trollope's exploration of that relationship. In fact, there is less emphasis and explicit discussion than in *The Macdermots* of the actual operation of estates, of landlord responsibilities and agrarian dissent. At a time when the Irish Famine was raging, Trollope chose to reject the tragic form, which precluded a happy ending, to write a much lighter piece. The landlord-tenant distinction is employed primarily in the novel to provide contrasting social contexts for two parallel courtships. That is not to say, however, that Trollope ignores the themes and issues raised in his first novel. He offers a detailed depiction of a diverse rural society and deploys moral values which are not simply dictated by nationality, rank or creed.

Just as the McKeon's in *The Macdermots* interrupt any simple representation of a society divided into wealthy landlords on one side and impoverished tenants on the other, so the eponymous Kellys in Trollope's

second novel announce the existence in 1840s Ireland of a middle class made up of substantial farmers, merchants and minor officials. Martin Kelly is 'a young farmer, of the better class, from the county Mayo, where he held three or four hundred wretchedly bad acres under Lord Ballindine, and one or two other farms under different landlords.'<sup>727</sup> His widowed mother has raised six children. One son is an excise man, one an attorney's clerk. Of her three daughters, one is already married to a shopkeeper in Tuam who is rumoured to have 'got £500 with her', while of the remaining daughters, Meg and Jane, it was 'presumed that they would soon fly abroad, with the same comfortable plumage which had enabled their sister to find so warm a nest.'<sup>728</sup> Meanwhile they are expected to turn their hand to serving in the grocer's shop which their mother has added to the inn as her empire expands.<sup>729</sup> As has already been noted, Trollope's admiration of Mrs Kelly's self-reliance and industry is undisguised.<sup>730</sup> As part of her endeavours, we are told, she even took over the tenancy of a farm which had been held by her husband until her son could succeed her.<sup>731</sup> All of this is far removed from grand houses on the one hand and mud cabins on the other.

Moreover, the relationship between Martin Kelly and his landlord, Lord Ballindine, is not a straightforward one. He is a relative, 'a kind of confidential tenant' who is entrusted with tasks.<sup>732</sup> Martin feels he should win his 'landlord's sanction' in his pursuit of Anty Lynch and a sense of deference is conveyed by his need to 'wash his face and hands, and put on clean boots, before he presented himself to his landlord and patron, the young Lord Ballindine.'<sup>733</sup> However, the general effect of the parallel plots involving these two handsome young men is a levelling one. Their social positions might differ but the obstacles they meet and the moral issues they face are similar. Both contend with family opposition to their marriages and Trollope in both cases encourages

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<sup>727</sup> *The Kellys*, p.5.

<sup>728</sup> *Ibid.*, p.6.

<sup>729</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>730</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5

<sup>731</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>732</sup> *Ibid.*, p.8

<sup>733</sup> *Ibid.*, p.18.

examination of the correct motivations for such unions, the accommodation of vying demands of love, family and social sanction, practical and financial considerations.

As in *The Macdermots*, Trollope's snobbery is pushed aside and there is no automatic connection made between high birth and moral worth. Martin and Frank both achieve their goals but for Frank the journey is seen to necessitate more reform and personal growth while there is no indication of Martin having to prove his worth. He makes no pretence of the fact that his intended comes with a substantial inheritance but is equally convincing on the importance of his affection for her. He allows that, "It's throe enough in one way, I'm marrying her for the money; that is, in course, I wouldn't marry her without it." but insists too that he wouldn't marry her if he "wasn't really fond of her, and av' I didn't think I'd make her a good husband." He shows himself to be as good as his word by ensuring that Anty's inheritance would return to her in the event of his death and is not at his disposal.<sup>734</sup> That Frank may be essentially worthy is signalled by the affection he genuinely wins among his tenantry as their "raal young mather" and his emphatic declaration that "a poor absentee landlord is a great curse to his country; and that I hope I never shall be."<sup>735</sup> However, his accession encourages him to try to maintain a lifestyle commensurate with his title but not his financial status. It seems chiefly to involve hunting, shooting and the purchase of racehorses. To win the girl he loves who, as it happily transpires, has inherited a fortune which could restore the O'Kelly estates, he has to turn from his youthful dissipation. He has to heed his feeling that, 'the kind of life he was leading – contracting debt which he could not pay, and spending time in pursuits which were not really congenial to him, was unsatisfactory and discreditable.'<sup>736</sup> He needs too to distance himself from his friend Dot Blake who is Falstaff to his Prince Hal and resides at the significantly named Handicap Lodge.<sup>737</sup> Martin, in contrast, is seen to be financially shrewd

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<sup>734</sup> *Ibid.*, p.40; pp.11-12.

<sup>735</sup> *Ibid.*, p.23, p.45.

<sup>736</sup> *Ibid.*, p.130.

<sup>737</sup> *Ibid.*, p.131.

and sensible. Indeed the disruption of orthodox representations of rank and influence is further evident when Frank socially elevates Martin by inviting him to a hunt breakfast with the local gentry but, as it transpires, with a view to borrowing money from him.<sup>738</sup>

Although it is less prominent in this second novel, Trollope's moral standard for worthy landlord behaviour – a judicious mix of improvement moderated by paternalism - is still in operation. In some ways the Ascendancy O'Kellys have more in common with Edgeworth's Rackrents than the Macdermots. Through them absenteeism, idleness, extravagance and excessive regard for rank are all attacked. The estate which Frank inherits has been reduced by absenteeism, which had allowed the devious agent Simeon Lynch to fraudulently acquire large tracts of land for himself, 'thrifless extravagance', and an expensive lawsuit.<sup>739</sup> The reward for services rendered in connection with of the Act of Union of The O'Kelly becoming Lord Ballindine is represented as conferring no automatic benefits, any more than the Macdermots' retention of their ancient Irish lineage is portrayed as necessarily condemning them. Indeed, it is the change from 'ancient O'Kelly' to 'new-fangled viscount' which is seen to encourage the first lord to live beyond his means and his son to pass his 'whole long life' hovering about the English Court only to, as Trollope mockingly reports, end his days in joint charge of 'the laces belonging to the Queen Dowager.'<sup>740</sup>

As with Ballycloran House and its grounds, the appearance of the Ballindine residence, Kelly's Court, reflects the moral as well as the financial condition of the family. Frank's father, Captain O'Kelly, is recognized as an improvement on his predecessors. He has more practical sense, is better educated but his well-intentioned endeavours to retrieve the estate from ruin are limited by debt and his own early death.<sup>741</sup> He finds Kelly's Court 'sorry',

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<sup>738</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.269-70.

<sup>739</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.20-1

<sup>740</sup> *ibid.*, pp.18-19

<sup>741</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.20-21.

'neglected, dirty and out of repair.'<sup>742</sup> Trollope tells us that the Captain tried to restore the 'ugly' Court to 'respectability', 'to humanise the place.'<sup>743</sup> His efforts represent an attempt to overcome the effects of neglect and corruption. While these are not offered as innately Irish conditions, the most visible signs of this restoration are the rose trees and strawberry plants with which he 'civilised Kelly's Court a little.'<sup>744</sup> The image is one of the reclaiming of savage territory and interestingly this is emphasised by the detail that these plants have had to be imported to achieve this effect. The point is made implicitly and there is no sense here of a fully constructed ideology, but there is a suggestion that Trollope's unquestioned standard for civilisation is not an Irish but an English one.

Frank's reformation is announced at the end of the novel with reference to his efforts with Kelly's Court. With the help of the rejuvenating powers of his new wife's wealth he has effected 'great improvements': 'Old buildings have been pulled down, and additions built up; a great many thousand young trees have been planted, and some miles of roads and walks constructed.'<sup>745</sup> He has evidently continued the 'civilising' process begun by his father and the picture Trollope paints of the solidarity of the local gentry seems a warm and approving one:

Lord Ballindine himself is very happy. He still has the hounds, and maintains, in the three counties round him, the sporting pre-eminence, which has for so many years belonged to his family...Sophy O' Kelly married a Blake, and Augusta married a Dillon; and they both live within ten miles of Kelly's Court, and their husbands are related to all the Blakes and all the Dillons; and as Ballindine himself is head of all the Kellys, there is rather a strong clan of them.<sup>746</sup>

Malcolm Kelsall's argument that Trollope writes this ending in an ironic tone intended to encourage scepticism in the reader, that the reader is invited to

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<sup>742</sup> *Ibid.*, p.20.

<sup>743</sup> *Ibid.*, p.21.

<sup>744</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>745</sup> *Ibid.*, p.509.

<sup>746</sup> *Ibid.*, p.510.

question whether hunting will be enough 'to hold ennui at bay', is contested by the author's abiding love of the sport which he first took up in Ireland.<sup>747</sup> Trollope here is pointing to the successful balance Frank has achieved in his life. His involvement in sport is no longer excessive but incorporated into family life and wins him respect. However, it is difficult to resist the conclusion, which Kelsall has also drawn, that Ireland itself somehow puts limits on what can be achieved in that country: 'Connaught is still Connaught, and County Mayo is the poorest part of it.'<sup>748</sup> And it is only the activities of motherhood which prevent Lady Ballindine 'from being tormented by the weariness of the far west.'<sup>749</sup>

The most aristocratic member of the landowning class in the novel is not painted in glowing terms but rather deftly delineated with reference to his 'negative qualities.'<sup>750</sup> Lord Cashel, since he had never been 'intemperate' or done too many 'glaringly foolish things...had obtained a reputation for wisdom and judgement.'<sup>751</sup>:

He had run away with no man's wife, and, since his marriage, had seduced no man's daughter; he was, therefore, considered a moral man. He was not so deeply in debt as to have his affairs known to everyone; and hence was thought prudent. And, as he lived in his own house, with his own wife, paid his servants and labourers their wages regularly, and nodded in church for two hours every Sunday, he was thought a good man.<sup>752</sup>

The author is equally unimpressed by Lord Cashel's residence, Grey Abbey, which is 'large, commodious' but 'uninteresting', its park 'extensive...but deficient of any object of attraction except that of size and not very magnificent timber.'<sup>753</sup> Trollope later further undermines Lord Cashel's integrity in a deliciously venomous cameo of self-deluding, self-satisfied nobility which

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<sup>747</sup> Kelsall, p.129.

<sup>748</sup> *Ibid.*; *The Kellys*, p.510.

<sup>749</sup> *The Kellys*, p.510.

<sup>750</sup> *Ibid.*, p.134.

<sup>751</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>752</sup> *Ibid.* See also Kelsall, pp.124-5 for his analysis of Cashel's empty, functionless life.

<sup>753</sup> *The Kellys*, pp.131-2.



connects this Irish peer to his Scottish and English counterparts. Thinking about his wayward son he muses:

Why, he - Lord Cashel himself – wise, prudent, and respectable as he was – example as he knew himself to be to all peers, English, Irish, and Scotch, - had had his horses, and his indiscretions, when he was young. And then he stroked the calves of his legs, and smiled grimly; for the memory of his juvenile vices was pleasant to him.<sup>754</sup>

Moreover, Cashel's son is dissolute and manipulative but even he hesitates over his father's ruthless plan to marry him to his cousin Fanny in order to procure her fortune to pay off his debts.<sup>755</sup> Furthermore, Cashel's daughter, Selina, is the embodiment of unfounded aristocratic pride:

She listened, complacently, to all those serious cautions against pride, which her religion taught her, and considered that she was obeying its warnings, when she spoke condescendingly to those around her. She thought that condescension was humility, and that her self-exaltation was not pride, but a proper feeling of her own and her family's dignity.<sup>756</sup>

Similarly, Lady Cashel is a particularly useless creature who loves to 'twaddle', cannot run her own household and on especially trying days becomes incapable of even dressing herself.<sup>757</sup> It is telling that the tolerant and compassionate Rev. Armstrong finds his stay at Grey Abbey insufferable, much preferring the poverty of his 'little living down in Connaught' to the empty opulence and religious bigotry of life at Grey Abbey.<sup>758</sup>

Although not a major topic of discussion, it is apparent that those land management practices of which Trollope approves are testament, as in *The Macdermots*, to his advocacy of a combination of efficiency and active involvement with some regard for tenant welfare. Barry Lynch's plans for land clearance grow not out of an urge for improvements but out of murderous

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<sup>754</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.154-5.

<sup>755</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.164-5.

<sup>756</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.145-6; Kelsall, p.124.

<sup>757</sup> *Ibid.*, p.170; p.387.

<sup>758</sup> *Idid.*, p.485. See too Kelsall's perceptive analysis of the empty sterility of the Cashels, Kelsall, pp.124-7.

intentions towards his sister and are employed by Trollope to indicate Barry's callousness. He explains to the doctor whom he hopes to bribe with the offer of cleared land to ease his ailing sister Anty's passage into the next world: 'The land's crowded now, but there's a lot of them cottier devils I mean to send to the right about. They do the estate no good, and I hate the sight of them.'<sup>759</sup>

In *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*, therefore, Trollope continues his representation of complex Irish rural society. Responsible landlordism is signalled by personal integrity rather than rank. Qualities which are most highly valued – self-reliance, industriousness, sense of duty to others - are most evident not in the titled O'Kellys or Cashels but in the middle-class Kellys.

By setting *The Kellys* in 1844 before the Famine began, Trollope had neatly avoided any direct literary requirement to discuss that catastrophe. His first writing on the matter came not in fiction but in his series of letters to the *Examiner* in 1849 and 1850. In greater factual detail than in his first two novels, Trollope demonstrates intimate knowledge of agricultural Ireland – the consequences of entailment, subletting, factors influencing rent levels and payments.<sup>760</sup> At one point, for example, he is able to give a lengthy explanation of how a cottier with one acre of land can achieve higher productivity than a large tenant farmer.<sup>761</sup>

His intention was to delineate the causes of Irish agricultural decline which necessitated Divine intervention so it is perhaps not surprising that virtuous landlords are largely absent from the letters. Those landlords who are included seem to be there primarily to demonstrate Irish culpability. The picture of the Irish landlord class which emerges is therefore a more negative one but this is due to a shift in emphasis rather than any sense of a thoroughly revised opinion of the landlord-tenant relationship. Trollope continues to apply the moral standards employed in the novels and a strong sense of interdependence is sustained.

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<sup>759</sup> *The Kellys*, p.341.

<sup>760</sup> Letter to *The Examiner*, 30 March 1850.

<sup>761</sup> Letter to *The Examiner*, 11 May 1850.

A prime generator of distress is identified: 'The wealth of Ireland was almost entirely territorial, and the income arising from that wealth had been overdrawn.'<sup>762</sup> This overdraft has been created by excessive subletting which has artificially increased the 'value' of the land and encouraged excessively high rents.<sup>763</sup> Pretension and idleness are part of this mix. Just as Larry Macdermot is condemned for building a grand house he cannot afford and Jonas Brown is pilloried for raising sons fit only for lives as idle gentlemen, so, in the letters Trollope complains of tenant farmers who sublet land at high rents in order to lead lives of leisure rather than working the land. He venomously asserts that they are 'bats and owls' who should be 'driven from the walls which they have for a while allowed to infest.'<sup>764</sup> Landowners are also criticised for borrowing heavily on land artificially increased in value so that they can fund the lifestyles and marriages of their children.<sup>765</sup> Trollope is particularly critical of those Irish landowners who, he claims, refused in 1847 to make any sacrifices themselves but expected assistance from England:

At a time when English families afflicted with no want, no debts, were abstaining from their usual comforts that they might pour into Ireland the funds thus paid, in Ireland itself no carriages were abandoned, no hounds were destroyed, no retinues reduced.<sup>766</sup>

While this image of Irish landlords as selfish and irresponsible might well have proved the dominant one for English readers of the *Examiner* in 1850 with the Famine fresh in their minds, Trollope does also offer some sympathy for those landlords, 'utterly paralysed by former imprudence.' Just as he identifies with the tragic ineffectiveness of Thady Macdermot's well-intentioned efforts to run his father's estate, so here he invites 'indulgence' for 'the unhappy landlord' who is 'utterly powerless' through inherited debt and entailment:

He can neither live himself, nor allow others who are dependent on him to do so. He enjoys none of the sweets which property bestows; he

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<sup>762</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>763</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>764</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>765</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>766</sup> *Ibid.*

performs none of the duties which property enjoins; his only remaining privilege is to suffer the cares which property entails.<sup>767</sup>

However, in terms which reinforce the interdependence of landlord and tenant and the perniciousness of ineffective landlordism, Trollope urges euthanasia by means of the Encumbered Estates Bill. These unhappy landlords might complain at its implementation but:

[I]t would surely be a false mercy, nay a foul cruelty, to listen to their complaints: they are as injurious to others as helpless to themselves; their prolonged existence as landlords is an injustice to those who are still able to keep their tenants, and would destroy all hope of returning prosperity; they oppress the energy of the energetic, they deprecate the labour of the industrious, they deprive the poor of the value of their time, and spread a upas blast over the country they encumber.<sup>768</sup>

This is revealing too of the persistence of Trollope's essentially moral stance: Ireland's agricultural renewal requires solvency but also energy, industriousness, self-sufficiency and justice. Moreover, in the letters Trollope's vision of post-Famine Ireland is of a country which is moving away from a landlord-tenant relationship dictated by distance, division and difference in rank, religion and politics to one which relies more on estimations of personal integrity. According to Trollope, 'the farmer now appreciates his landlord solely by his usage of his tenants.'<sup>769</sup>

The Encumbered Estates Bill is a major component in Trollope's policy for Irish agricultural renewal. The letters are written in part to urge English investors to take farms in Ireland. It is crucial, therefore, that Trollope portrays post-Famine Ireland as having some attractive investment prospects. Thus, despite these negative representations of Irish landowners, he is anxious to emphasise that, 'the Irish gentry have learnt a lesson, and many of them have been taught to exert themselves.'<sup>770</sup> He suggests management strategies

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<sup>767</sup> Letter to *The Examiner*, 11 May 1850.

<sup>768</sup> Letter to *The Examiner*, 1 June 1850.

<sup>769</sup> Letter to *The Examiner*, 15 June 1850.

<sup>770</sup> Letter to *The Examiner*, 30 March 1850.

likely to meet with success, advocating rent reduction as the responsible act of a wise and caring landlord. In support of this he presents a case study of property whose landlord, although not heavily encumbered, did face a substantial reduction in income but, nonetheless paid his own and his tenants share of rates and reduced rents. The outcome – his tenants are solvent and his rents paid. The phrase Trollope uses to summarise this approach could stand as his recommendation to all responsible landlords: 'politic liberality'.<sup>771</sup>

Where the *Examiner* letters have more to say on failing Irish landlords, the worthy Fitzgeralds, the landowning family at the centre of Trollope's Famine novel, *Castle Richmond*, written nine years later, have a strong sense of responsibility towards their tenants and take an active part in famine relief. Indeed they could be seen as embodiments of the 'politic liberality' noticed in the letters as characterising the best Irish landlords. Trollope continues his rôle as Ireland's champion and chronicler but is writing from the perspective of what he sees as Ireland's increasing post-Famine prosperity. He seems to have no urge to revive or reinforce negative images of Irish landlordism which might too easily become associated with practices in the reformed and revived Ireland of 1859. The opening of the novel sees Trollope taking pains to counteract anti-Irish feeling and correct misapprehensions about the country, not least in relation to its landlords. Therefore, although, as Melissa Fegan has pointed out, the title of this novel echoes Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*, he pointedly asserts that Sir Thomas Fitzgerald's house has none 'of those interesting picturesque faults which are so generally attributed to Irish landlords and Irish castles. He was not out of elbows, nor was he an absentee. Castle Richmond had no appearance of having been thrown out of its windows.'<sup>772</sup> On the contrary, the Fitzgerald house has more attractive attributes than any residence of an Irish landlord described in his fiction up to that point. As an indication of Sir Thomas's worth it bodes well that his is a 'good, substantial, modern family residence.'<sup>773</sup> Lawns, fruit trees, kitchen gardens and a well-timbered, well-

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<sup>771</sup> Letter to *The Examiner*, 1 June 1850.

<sup>772</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.3; Fegan p.107.

<sup>773</sup> *Ibid.*

stocked park signal order and civilization and the clock over the entrance to the stable yard confirms this to be a well-regulated estate.<sup>774</sup> Trollope has already maintained that:

The readability of a story should depend, one would say, on its intrinsic merit rather than on the site of its adventures. No one will think that Hampshire is better for such a purpose than Cumberland, or Essex than Leicestershire. What abstract objection can there be to the county Cork?<sup>775</sup>

However, not only does his choice of name for the Fitzgerald house conjure up quintessentially English scenes, but he also recommends Castle Richmond and its owner on the basis of their 'English' qualities. He asserts that, 'as regards its appearance Castle Richmond might have been in Hampshire or Essex; and as regards his property, Sir Thomas Fitzgerald might have been a Leicestershire baronet.'<sup>776</sup> This could be Trollope trying to create a distance between his fictional Irish landlords and their more stereotypical brothers, in order to make the Fitzgeralds less susceptible to the 'strong feeling against things Irish' which he notes in the novel's opening.<sup>777</sup> However, it is also reminiscent of earlier instances in his Irish writing which implicitly equate civilization with Englishness and, as Melissa Fegan has pointed out, it has the effect of denying the otherness of Ireland.<sup>778</sup> It is nonetheless significant that in this novel which reveals 'the simultaneous participation and abstraction of their English author in this Irish catastrophe', the central landowning family has so many English members and connections. In this the Fitzgeralds stand in stark contrast to the Macdermots of his first novel and signal a greater need in the author to underline the existence of the Union.

The more elevated Desmond family operates as a foil to enhance their Fitzgerald neighbours' finer qualities. They provide a target for Trollope to re-launch his attack on preoccupation with rank, toadying at Court, and

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<sup>774</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>775</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>776</sup> *Ibid.*, p.3.

<sup>777</sup> *Ibid.*, p.1.

<sup>778</sup> Fegan, p.118.

irresponsible estate management. The reader is alerted to the comparison by an invitation to interrogate the pointedly reiterated term 'great'. The Fitzgerald residents of Castle Richmond who the reader has already been encouraged to admire, are not the 'greatest' family of these parts.<sup>779</sup> That honour goes to the Desmonds of Desmond Court. If Trollope suggests that tales of how their massive residence was erected by a 'rapacious earl' with cement 'thickened with human blood' have as their unreliable source a Celtic romanticism, his own description of Desmond Court nonetheless indicates that these landowners are unlikely to enhance or benefit the area.<sup>780</sup> It is 'huge, ungainly, and uselessly extensive' and, reinforcing the idea that the standards for architecture and estate management originate elsewhere, he explains that it was built at a time when 'at any rate in Ireland, men considered neither beauty, aptitude nor economy.'<sup>781</sup> Unlike the improved Kelly's Court, no rose-trees and strawberry plants have been imported to relieve the 'flat, bleak park' whose grey sterility reflects the moral status of the surviving Desmonds. The present earl is a minor at school in England and therefore in no position to be a responsible landlord, his mother, the English Countess, who married for rank and not love, has been left an impoverished, embittered widow and seems to have neither the means nor the will to act on his behalf.<sup>782</sup> Only her daughter, Lady Clara, who Trollope announces as 'the heroine of this story', seems to carry any potential.<sup>783</sup>

Like the O'Kellys, the Desmonds were rewarded for their support of the Union and with similarly negative results. The late earl chose to become an absentee and 'the toadying friend, or perhaps I should more properly say the bullied flunky, of a sensual, wine-bibbing, gluttonous – king.'<sup>784</sup> The prime target for Trollope's ire is once again a moral one. His distaste for the practice of rewarding support for the Union is implied by his description of the earl

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<sup>779</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.3.

<sup>780</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>781</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.3-4.

<sup>782</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.3-6.

<sup>783</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5; Kelsall, p.123.

<sup>784</sup> *ibid.*, p.4.

'selling himself' to repair his fortune.<sup>785</sup> Trollope extends his interrogation of greatness by neatly reversing the intended effect of the Desmond title and also reinforces the notion of sterility introduced in his description of Desmond Court. He explains that:

Their grandeur was shown by the prevalence of their name. The barony in which they lived was the barony of Desmond. The river, which gave water to their cattle, was the river Desmond. The wretched, ragged, poverty-stricken village near their own dismantled gate was the town of Desmond. The earl was the Earl of Desmond – not Earl Desmond, mark you; and the family name was Desmond.<sup>786</sup>

Trollope's final flourishing announcement of the title, 'Desmond Desmond, Earl of Desmond' has the effect of transforming 'grandeur' into debased, unimaginative self-absorption.<sup>787</sup> That rank brings no guarantee of an effective landlord is further underlined by the 'long leases, bad management, lack of outlay, and rack-renting' which characterise the Desmond estate.<sup>788</sup>

The third significant 'homestead' in this opening chapter belongs to the handsome young Owen Fitzgerald. If the reader has missed the indication in its name, Hap House, of this young man's perilous moral state, Trollope, as we have seen, is explicit on the matter. In this case a 'pleasant, comfortable residence...surrounded by pleasant grounds and pleasant gardens' should evoke alarm and concern rather than reassurance, for Owen is unmarried and, 'A house if it be not made pleasant by domestic pleasant things, must be made pleasant by pleasure. And a bachelor's pleasures in his own house are always dangerous'<sup>789</sup>

The fates of the occupants of all three residences ostensibly confirm expectations raised by this first chapter. Much occurs to them in the course of the novel but by its conclusion, Owen, having failed to win the bride to stabilise

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<sup>785</sup> *Ibid.*, p.5.

<sup>786</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>787</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>788</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>789</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.6-7



his life, has left Ireland to wander the world.<sup>790</sup> The Countess of Desmond is left alone and broken-hearted in 'her prison as she called it.'<sup>791</sup> In contrast, Herbert Fitzgerald has regained his rightful position at Castle Richmond having salvaged the last worthy remnant of the 'great' Desmonds, Lady Clara, to be his wife. Thus restored and reinvigorated it is the worthy Fitzgeralds among the landlords who look set to thrive. Herbert is the model caring and effective landlord. He gives 'devoted attention to the interest of the poor around him...and it was acknowledged that the Castle Richmond arrangements for soup-kitchens, out-door relief, and labour-gangs, might be taken as a model for the south of Ireland.'<sup>792</sup> Such is his virtue that this Irish landlord, albeit with significant English attributes, is being offered as a rôle model. Even Mr Carter an English clergyman who has in the novel proved himself to be no Hibernophile, 'was obliged to own that many a young English country gentleman might take a lesson from Sir Herbert Fitzgerald in the duties peculiar to his position.'<sup>793</sup>

Such a summary, while informative in regard to the message which emerges on the level of broad plot, also ignores a conflict in the novel which disrupts its cohesion and reveals contradictions in Trollope's representation of landlords and tenants. His explanation of the Famine's causes and development clashes with the moral expectations he establishes as essential to the conscientious landlord in such a way as to undermine the novel's success. 'Gentle deeds and honest conduct' as well as active involvement in the efficient operation of the land are obviously expected from Herbert.<sup>794</sup> The members of his family are also represented as having an important place in the lives and hearts of their tenants. In a passage which recalls his representation of the bond between Thady Macdermot and his tenants, Trollope reports the response on the estate to the news that Herbert Fitzgerald has seemingly lost

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<sup>790</sup> *Ibid.*, p.481.

<sup>791</sup> *Ibid.*, p.491.

<sup>792</sup> *Ibid.*, p.489.

<sup>793</sup> *Ibid.*, p.322.

<sup>794</sup> *Ibid.*

his right to inherit because his parents were bigamously married. The boundaries between love and respect are blurred:

As he went, the men about the place refrained from speaking to him, for they all knew that bad news had come to the big house. They looked at him with lowered eyes and with tenderness in their hearts, for they loved the very name of Fitzgerald. The love which a poor Irishman feels for the gentleman whom he regards as his master - 'his mather,' though he has probably never received from him, in money, wages for a day's work, and in all his intercourse has been the man who has paid money and not the man who received it - the love which he nevertheless feels, if he has been occasionally looked on with a smiling face and accosted with a kindly word, is astonishing to an Englishman. I will not say that the feeling is altogether good. Love should come of love. Where personal love exists on one side, and not even personal regard on the other, there must be some mixture of servility. That unbound respect for human grandeur cannot be altogether good; for human greatness, if the greatness be properly sifted, may be so.<sup>795</sup>

The final sentence reiterates Trollope's stance in opposition of worth necessarily following rank and revisits the investigation of true 'greatness' begun in the first chapter of the novel. Herbert's father, though well intentioned was perhaps too completely defeated by circumstances to be 'great' but his son when 'greatness be properly sifted' is ultimately offered as deserving of that respect.<sup>796</sup> If Trollope rejects servility and unthinking deference, he also applauds a symbiotic landlord-tenant relationship in which each behaves responsibly and earns the respect and affection of the other. Indeed Trollope uses an uncharacteristic moment of uncaring behaviour towards his tenants to illustrate Herbert's distress at believing his estate lost to Owen. Halted by a gang of his tenants employed on road-building relief work he passes on, 'running the gauntlet through them as best he might, and shaking them off from

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<sup>795</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.282-3.

<sup>796</sup> *Ibid.*, p.46.

him, as they attempted to cling round his steps.<sup>797</sup> So distraught is this conscientious landlord at the thought of losing his right to inherit that he cannot even pause to hear them. Similarly, the value to the tenant community of Herbert's aunts and sisters is dramatised in their leave-taking of the school in which they had taught. They are emotionally overwhelmed by a series of farewells and blessings and all but physically so by embraces and kisses from children and mothers.<sup>798</sup> One woman amongst them, 'gaunt' from Famine makes herself audible above the throng to deliver a valedictory.<sup>799</sup>

Yet in emphasising moral and emotional aspects of the landlord-tenant relationship, Trollope undermines his explanation of the Famine's causes and invalidates his chosen focus for the novel. Notions of a benign landlord-tenant interdependence are potentially under threat from the point at which Trollope chooses to employ the Famine and its victims as a backdrop to his Big House plot. There is a tension in scale and nature between the suffering of the Fitzgeralds facing disinheritance, a move to England, and the loss of one family member, and the starvation, death and disease faced by the tenantry so that episodes in which Trollope brings them together to establish Fitzgerald credentials and connect their fates tend to have the opposite effect.

The Famine as an act of Providence forms a more prominent part of Trollope's explanation in *Castle Richmond* than in the *Examiner* letters. If he is to match this to his representation of the worthy landlord as one who is capable, concerned and active, he must convince the reader that when such a landlord fails to relieve the distress of his tenants, it is because God has put it beyond his power to do so. The starkest illustration of Trollope's failure to do this is in a chapter entitled 'The Last Stage'. This is explored at some length in the next chapter but it is worth drawing out here some points which have particular salience in the context of this chapter. Herbert, as we have seen, is no absentee dispensing philanthropy abroad while his tenants live in distress, so to expect Trollope to repeat the scornful attack he made on Lord

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<sup>797</sup> *Ibid.*, p.287.

<sup>798</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.362-3.

<sup>799</sup> *Ibid.*, p.364.

Birmingham in *The Macdermots* would be unreasonable. However, far from convincing the reader that Herbert has done all that is humanly possible, aspects of the episode in which he comes face to face with the Famine's direst consequences tend to recall Trollope's own contention that, 'from him whom much is given, much indeed will be required.'<sup>800</sup>

Up to a point, a case can be argued in Trollope's defence. The Famine dead and dying whom Herbert discovers when he shelters from rain in a cabin are not Fitzgerald tenants. The cabin lies in, 'poor, bleak, damp, undrained country, ... beyond the confines of his father's property.'<sup>801</sup> It is part of the Desmond estate so the condition of the cabin and its starving inhabitants is consistent with Trollope's representation of the dangerous effects of self-absorbed, neglectful landlords. Furthermore, Herbert has no direct responsibility for these people and yet he is distressed by the suffering and is moved, against the principles of political economy, to give money to the woman in the cabin. He tries to have her taken to the workhouse. The intended message is that, do what he might, the reach of the Famine was beyond the powers of even the best-intentioned landlord since, 'her doom had been spoken before Herbert had entered the cabin.'<sup>802</sup> Yet aspects of the episode thwart the author's intention and ultimately Trollope disempowers Herbert in order to support his providential explanation of the Famine. The conscientious landlord senses that it behoves him 'to administer to her immediate wants' before he leaves her and the reader, disturbed by the contrast in their states, aware of Herbert as a responsible and practical landlord, is dissatisfied by the ineffective response Trollope allows him.<sup>803</sup> The description of the Mohill hovel in *The Macdermots* is a biting and effective call for responsible landlord behaviour. By contrast the cabin scene in *Castle Richmond*, in coming into conflict with Trollope's own ethical stance on the demands which should be

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<sup>800</sup> *The Macdermots*, pp.128-9.

<sup>801</sup> *Ibid.*, p.367.

<sup>802</sup> *Ibid.*, p.374.

<sup>803</sup> *Ibid.*, p.371.

made of landlords, is a distasteful and unconvincing excuse for the failure of landlords to do everything in their power.

It should be noted that Trollope has not entirely lost his ability to empathise with the Irish rural labouring class. He understands, for example, why men forced to carry out relief work cutting roads might hate their task:

They had not been accustomed to the discomfort of being taken far from their homes to their daily work.... They held their own land, and laboured there for a spell; and then they would work for a spell, as men do in England, taking wages; and then they would be idle for a spell. It was not exactly a profitable mode of life, but it had its comforts; and now these unfortunates who felt themselves to be driven forth like cattle in droves for the first time, suffered the full wretchedness of their position.<sup>804</sup>

But, on the whole, his representation of Irish rural life in *Castle Richmond* suggests a shift on Trollope's part to a stronger identification with the landlord class, or at least its most responsible members, and a reduced consideration of the tenants' lot.

Much of Trollope's next Irish novel written some seven years later, *Phineas Finn*, is set in England and is little concerned with the Irish landlord-tenant relationship. Its eponymous hero is the son of a doctor and Phineas is launched on a legal career before he changes tack and becomes a Member of Parliament. However, it is possible to pick up threads which can be traced back to Trollope's earlier representations of Irish rural life. Phineas's origins, for example, reflect Trollope's awareness of the complexity of Irish society. He counters perceptions of intractable religious division in Ireland by making Phineas the product of a religiously mixed marriage. So, as was the custom, like his father he has been raised as a Roman Catholic while his sisters are Protestant. He has also been educated, much to the consternation of some of his father's co-religionists, at Trinity College Dublin.<sup>805</sup> Similarly, the

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<sup>804</sup> *Ibid.*, p.201.

<sup>805</sup> *Phineas Finn*, Vol 1, pp.1-2.

occupations of the Finns signal the existence of an Irish professional class. Further the more genteel but rather idle and cynical Laurence Fitzgibbon, also an Irish politician, proves to be a dangerous acquaintance for the well-intentioned Phineas. He compromises him when he defaults on a debt for which Phineas has stood surety – another instance of high personal moral standards not necessarily accompanying high rank. Finally there are surely echoes of the Trollope we have already met as Ireland's champion and interpreter in Phineas's acidic complaint that English Members of Parliament 'know less about Ireland than they do of the interior of Africa.'<sup>806</sup>

More obviously relevant in the context of this chapter is Trollope's treatment of the issue of Tenant Right. Throughout the novel Phineas grapples with competing impulses and influences to achieve a morally comfortable position in which honesty and independence can be compatible with a successful political career. His ultimate conscientious decision to resign over this cause which argued for a departing tenant's rights to dispose of his saleable interest in his tenancy, might seem to signal clear authorial support for Tenant Right but Phineas's decision is presented ambiguously. John Cronin has even gone so far as to find it 'improbable'.<sup>807</sup> A capable, attractive well-meaning young man, Phineas is nevertheless easily swayed and influenced. When, for example he invites Mr Monk, a cabinet minister and his chosen mentor, to Ireland to research the issue, Phineas is seen to be more emotional than thoughtful in his convictions and also to be prone to hero worship. In his discussions with Monk he is described as 'fluttering like a moth round a candle.'<sup>808</sup> At a public meeting he drinks in the adulation and bathes in the delights of speaking to an attentive and enthusiastic audience. It is this seduction as much as any considered reasoning or moral propriety which influences his decision.<sup>809</sup> Monk actually voices his regret that Phineas has

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<sup>806</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 2, p.178.

<sup>807</sup> Cronin, in Bareham, pp.30-1.

<sup>808</sup> *Phineas Finn*, Vol 2, p.179.

<sup>809</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 2, p.263.

joined him in a public pledge to support a Parliamentary Bill, telling him emphatically, "I had thought about it, and I do not think you have."<sup>810</sup>

The most supportive view of the issue of increased tenants' rights emerges from Monk's musings on the subject. Trollope connects it to the necessity of maintaining the Union as beneficial to both countries but uses the analogy of 'compulsory wedlock' with Ireland as the 'bride' and explicitly not 'a kept mistress' who 'should be endowed with all the best privileges that a wife can enjoy.'<sup>811</sup> The reform of tenants' rights is raised in this context as something which might increase 'the good understanding' which should exist in a marriage and Monk's reading of it as a means of encouraging investment and improving holdings fits comfortably into Trollope's approval of active and industrious land management.<sup>812</sup> However, doubts as to the necessity for and efficacy of such reform are also evident in the sensible Dr Finn's observation that 'he could not understand in what it was that the farmers were wronged' and in Phineas's fiancée's, Mary Flood Jones's, report of her lack of success in promoting the cause of tenants' rights amongst tenants who want only to have rents removed altogether.<sup>813</sup> The narrator contends towards the end of the novel that 'tenant-right proposed for Irish farmers' is a 'terribly unintelligible subject.'<sup>814</sup> In *Phineas Finn*, Trollope's ambiguous treatment of it might well reflect its complexity and as Patrick Lonergan has suggested, the author's urge to avoid giving offence on a contentious issue. However, in the light of his later response to more radical land reform, it might also indicate a deep-seated ambivalence to changes which for Trollope were a potential threat to the Union.<sup>815</sup>

*An Eye for an Eye* seems at first glance to have little relevance in a chapter on Irish rural society. It is partly set in England and the landed family

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<sup>810</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 2, p.263.

<sup>811</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 2, pp.180-1.

<sup>812</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>813</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 2, p.275; p.287.

<sup>814</sup> *Ibid.*, Vol 2, p.341.

<sup>815</sup> See Lonergan, *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 32, 1 (2004), pp.147-58, in which he argues that Trollope's attempt to deal both inoffensively and realistically with the contentious and evolving issue of Irish land tenure, leads him into considerable creative difficulties.

at the centre of the tale is an English one. However, when Fred Neville, heir to the Scroope estate, travels to Ireland with his regiment in the hope of a little sport and excitement before he settles down to the serious task of learning his responsibilities, as has already been indicated, the story which unfolds is significant in the manner in which it challenges prevailing perceptions of Ireland. It is revealing too in the matter of Trollope's cross-national application of standards of landlord behaviour.<sup>816</sup> Trollope recognizes no significant national distinctions between English and Irish landlords. Indeed when Lady Scroope is concerned about Fred's behaviour in Ireland she can immediately contact Lady Mary Quin, a friend, who lives in County Clare to report on his shenanigans.<sup>817</sup> More than this, Trollope can be seen to apply the same moral standards in judging the house of Scroope as are seen in operation in regard to his Irish landlords. It is not financially impoverished but could be said to be so in almost every other way and this is signalled by the situation and condition of the house and grounds. They are dull and unattractive, an inward-looking isolation is suggested by the 'gloomy wall' which surrounds the estate, an irrelevance and obsolescence by the library filled with 'old books which no one ever touched', the suite of rooms 'which now were never opened.'<sup>818</sup> The Scroopes, like the Cashels in *The Kellys*, derive excessive and debilitating pride from their ancient lineage and Trollope's description of both implies a criticism of their lack of active engagement with the world around them and with their estates in particular.<sup>819</sup>

*An Eye for an Eye*, written in 1870, was not published until 1878. Trollope began what would be his final, unfinished novel, *The Landleaguers*, just four years later and while his belief in the necessity and wisdom of the Union is undiminished, events and attitudes in Ireland, as well as government response and legislation in the intervening years, had evidently left him despairing of that country's restorative powers. The author who in his

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<sup>816</sup> *An Eye for an Eye*, pp.12-14.

<sup>817</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>818</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>819</sup> Trollope, *An Eye for an Eye*, p.5; p.11; pp.16-17; Tracy, 'The Unnatural Ruin' pp.372-3.



autobiography, written between 1875 and 1878, was still portraying Ireland with affection as the site of his youthful transformation, by 1882 had arguably more in common with the disillusioned Fred Neville who in the end grew, 'sick ...of everything Irish and thought that the whole Island was a mistake.'<sup>820</sup>

As with his first novel, he chooses as a central character a minority landowner which might seem to indicate a continuing commitment to the representation of the complexity of rural society. Philip Jones in *The Landleaguers* stands for the English who made up only 4% of the total number of purchasers who took advantage of the Encumbered Estates Acts to acquire Irish land, but Trollope's choice of leading protagonist and the manner in which he opens the novel suggest a degree of personal investment in this particular landlord which could inhibit a clear-sighted nuanced representation. Jones is no mere investor but, as Mary Jean Corbett has also noted, the landlord Trollope had invoked in the *Examiner* letters as 'Ireland's best friend' and what befalls him needs to be viewed in this loaded context.<sup>821</sup>

Initially Jones's time in Ireland is happy and profitable. His tale has been one of investment, improvements to property, profitable returns and contented tenantry, but by the time the novel opens a change has taken place. In the first chapter Trollope emphasises and illustrates the contrast between what he sees as earlier, more propitious times and the state of Ireland in the early 1880s. He takes the reader back to 1850 when Jones first purchased his estate and, although he conspicuously fails to mention it, when the country was still reeling from the devastating effects of the potato blight. The author insists that at that time Jones's Ballintubber estate was a perfect investment for, 'there was no quieter spot in all Ireland, or one in which the lawful requirements of a landlord were more readily performed by a poor and obedient tenantry.'<sup>822</sup> The novel which follows contains little of the nuanced appreciation of Irish life offered in *The Macdermots*. The bleakness of Jones's position increases. The flooding of his land, boycotting, the loss of his son to Catholicism and then to

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<sup>820</sup> *An Eye for an Eye*, p.131.

<sup>821</sup> Corbett, pp.135-6.

<sup>822</sup> *The Landleaguers*, p.3.

the assassin's bullet leave him broken. In the novel's final pages Jones is seen to be sadly trying to recover his drowned land, but with little sense of faith in the future.<sup>823</sup>

A comparison of this final novel with his first reveals a failure to engage meaningfully with the conditions and thinking which generated the Land War and the foundation of the Land League. There is no equivalent of his analysis of the motivations of Pat Brady and Joe Reynolds. Instead the reader is offered dismissive references to dangerous and corrupting American teaching from Irishmen who have crossed the Atlantic, imbibed their 'liquor' and returned their intoxication with the populous. Qualified sympathy for hard-pressed tenants is replaced by scathing attacks on the tactics of the Land League which contain no consideration of the prevailing economic climate, and are couched in terms which trade ironically on images of Irish stupidity.<sup>824</sup> On the subject of boycotting, for example, the narrator observes:

It must be acknowledged that throughout the south and west of Ireland the quickness and perfection with which this science was understood and practised was very much to the credit of the intelligence of the people. We can understand that boycotting should be studied in Yorkshire, and practised, - after an experience of many years. Laying aside for the moment all ideas as to the honesty of the measure, we think that Yorkshire might in half a century learn how to boycott a Lancashire man, or Lincoln might boycott Nottingham. It would require much teaching; - many books would have to be written, and infinite amount of heavy slow imperfect practise would follow. But County Mayo and County Galway rose to the requirements of the art almost in a night!...at the first whisper of the word all Ireland knew how to ruin itself. This was done readily by people of the poorer class, - without any gifts

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<sup>823</sup> *Ibid.*, p.410.

<sup>824</sup> See Foster, *The Irish Story*, p.145 where he reads this as Trollope perceiving Irish intelligence as having been 'corrupted, and turned to the sinister uses of the boycott.'

of education, and certainly the immoderate practice of the science displays great national intelligence.<sup>825</sup>

Similarly, where violence is abhorred in *The Macdermots* this also comes with a warning against unthinking over-reaction. In *The Landleaguers* the Irish population is represented as an undifferentiated murderous mass.<sup>826</sup> In *The Macdermots* the insidious effects of secret societies are not ignored but dramatised in Thady's tormented conscience and his ultimate fate, but the reader's sympathies stay with him to the end. There is no equivalent in *The Landleaguers* in which Trollope employs a shadowy man in a mask and a spectral woman evoking the Blessed Virgin to terrify young Florian Jones.<sup>827</sup>

When Trollope interrupts what he calls his 'sensational' narrative to include a chapter entitled 'The State of Ireland', he would seem to be offering an objective assessment of current conditions and events.<sup>828</sup> And indeed in his pronouncements on the Land War and government response he does make some valid points. His assertion, for example, that Gladstone, by introducing the 1881 Land Act at a time when 'the Landleague was in full power', risked encouraging more extreme agitation from those who might believe that further concessions could be obtained, is a defensible one. This is true too of his assessment of the potential for alternating strategies of coercion and concession to engender confusion and anger.<sup>829</sup> However, any measured analysis is also limited by Trollope's unquestioning assertion that it is 'necessary' for Ireland to 'belong' to England and since 'the existence of Ireland as a province of England depends on the tenure of land' the alteration of the system of tenure cannot be countenanced.<sup>830</sup> To do so would be to jeopardise the Union, even the Empire.<sup>831</sup> Gone is the ambivalence of his treatment of Tenant Right in *Phineas Finn*. The opportunity for balanced, reasoned judgement is also precluded by Trollope's retreat behind an unbending version

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<sup>825</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.161-2.

<sup>826</sup> *Ibid.*, p.382.

<sup>827</sup> *Ibid.*, p.29.

<sup>828</sup> *Ibid.*, p.341.

<sup>829</sup> *Ibid.*, p.351.

<sup>830</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.343-4.

<sup>831</sup> *Ibid.*, p.341.

of political economy which relies heavily on rank and market forces being part of an irresistible natural order. To his mind there are unalterable 'laws governing the world' so that while Gladstone's Act can do great damage, it is ultimately doomed to failure.<sup>832</sup> He explains how even the more radical measure of tenant ownership could not defy these laws: there would simply be a period of great disruption in which the current proprietors would seek refuge in England, there to confidently await their restoration once the landless Irish had annihilated their new Irish landlords.<sup>833</sup> The Act is dismissed as a 'romantic theory as to the manipulation of land.' It has been passed only because its proponents 'have almost talked the world out of its power of sober judgment.'<sup>834</sup>

At the same time Trollope persists with his vision of moral standing as a measure of landlord behaviour. It is evident in the manner in which Jones's worth is predicated on his conscientious efforts to improve the estate and appeals made for him on the basis of his benevolence to his tenants: 'When rheumatism was rife, – and rheumatism down on the lough side had often been rife – they had all come up to the Castle for port wine and solace.'<sup>835</sup> Moreover, the appealing picture he paints of landlord-tenant relations before the pernicious effects of Irish-American influence is one of reciprocal affection. Jones's tenants had, 'always been willing to work for him at a moment's notice. He would have declared that no man in Ireland was on better terms with his tenantry than he.'<sup>836</sup> The strongest reaction from Jones to the Land League's activities is an emotional one, a feeling of betrayal.<sup>837</sup>

That Trollope at this time of greatest division between landlord and tenant is not thoroughly analysing economic and political conditions but rather emphasising personal morality and bonds of affection and loyalty, is indicative both of his thorough investment in his vision of the ideal landlord-tenant

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<sup>832</sup> *Ibid.*, p.346.

<sup>833</sup> *Ibid.*, p.344.

<sup>834</sup> *Ibid.*, p.351; p.344.

<sup>835</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.4-5; p.15.

<sup>836</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.15-16.

<sup>837</sup> *Ibid.*, p.167.

relationship, and his personal involvement in the issues being played out in Ireland. Where he had envisioned responsible landlord behaviour engendering an industrious, contented and devoted tenantry, the evidence was mounting for the existence of ambitions and an hostility which no amount of conscientious improvement, philanthropy or paternalism could quell. In this final novel he comes closest to Kelsall's analysis of his representation as a 'counsel of despair'.<sup>838</sup> It would seem that where just a few years in Ireland enabled Trollope to produce a complex and convincing representation of Irish landlords and tenants, a forty-year association with the country left him with a blinding and disabling sense of bitter betrayal.

His retreat from realism and complexity is perhaps nowhere more obvious than when Trollope's representation is set beside the assessments of nineteenth-century rural Ireland which emerge from the historiography. Trollope's name appears frequently in this body of literature. Indeed, in works which assert the diversity and complexity of Irish rural society he is valued as a perceptive observer of Irish social relations with an eye for realistic detail.<sup>839</sup> Philip Bull has noted the astute appreciation, evident in the episode which concludes *The Macdermots*, of 'the essence of a concept of passive resistance endemic to Irish life.'<sup>840</sup> In Trollope's portrayal of the local people refusing to attend Thady's hanging, Bull has perceived 'many of the elements which provide the basis of later agrarian agitation and explain the ready ability of the mass of the population to identify with its methods.'<sup>841</sup> He notes also a depiction of 'the essence of passive resistance' in the episode in *The Landleaguers* in which agitators stop the hunt.<sup>842</sup> This episode is also examined by L.P.Curtis Jr. who applauds its realism and Trollope's grasp of the

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<sup>838</sup> Kelsall, p.115.

<sup>839</sup> Philip Bull, *Land, Politics and Nationalism* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 1996); L.P.Curtis Jr, 'Stopping the Hunt, 1881-1882 : An Aspect of the Irish Land War' in C.H.E. Philpin (ed.) *Nationalism and Popular Protest in Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1987) pp.349-402.

<sup>840</sup> Bull, p.121.

<sup>841</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>842</sup> *Ibid.*, p.123.

mentalities of those involved on both sides of the confrontation but significantly also notes the 'political prejudice' which overwhelms the narrative.<sup>843</sup>

This points towards the other characteristic in Trollope's Irish fiction which historians of nineteenth-century Ireland have found useful - its resource as evidence of a prevailing mind set amongst English men and women involved with Irish rural society, and indeed as evidence of attitudes to the landlord-tenant relationship shared by members, English and Irish, of the establishment. Thus Barbara Solow sees in *The Landleaguers* a confirmation of the impact of disturbing contemporary events on Trollope in the loss of his usual authorial control as he is 'betrayed...into melodrama' and omits from the novel both tenant poverty and the 'legitimate nationalist aspirations of the Irish.'<sup>844</sup> She suggests that this is a symptom of 'the wildly emotional climate of the time.'<sup>845</sup> The manner in which she develops this theme of emotionalism underlines her reading of its influence on people and events. Resentment and hatred of the alien ruling class are seen to be driving the Land League; landlords are disturbed more by the apparent treachery of tenants who turn their backs on them than by the non-payment of rent. In all of this Trollope's representation of landlord response to the Land War can be seen to closely parallel the historiography: the most prominent response of Trollope's Mr Jones in *The Landleaguers* to the action taken against him is an emotional one.<sup>846</sup> Solow's use of Trollope, however, points also to some unwitting evidence of the author's own emotional, rather than thoughtful, reaction to events and conditions in Ireland, to his move away from a clear-sighted to a blinkered depiction of its rural society. W.E.Vaughan's citing of Trollope's Irish fiction extends beyond its use as evidence of a response to landlord-tenant relations in Ireland to suggest that his works, along with those of Scott and Disraeli, probably influenced the pervasive, complex ethos which underpinned estate management, that it encouraged commercial but also feudal and romantic

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<sup>843</sup> Curtis, p.390.

<sup>844</sup> Solow, p.144.

<sup>845</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>846</sup> *The Landleaguers*, p.167.

imperatives.<sup>847</sup> Trollope's inclusion in the historiography, therefore, reveals a tangled web of interconnections at work with Trollope functioning as accurate chronicler, index and formative influence.

It should be emphasised that in many ways Trollope's rural Ireland is the complex and diverse one which emerges from the more recent historiography. His inclusion of Catholic landowners, the Irish middle class, and a variety of landlord behaviours obviously disrupts the simple division of rural society into predatory Protestant landlords and exploited Catholic tenants. Trollope's representation of Ribbonism in *The Macdermots* concurs to a remarkable degree with M.R.Beames's study of rural conflict in the period before the Famine. While Beames finds some evidence to support the existence of an organized network of Ribbon societies, which is something Trollope and other historians resist, like Trollope he notes that Ribbonism was a term used rather carelessly by Protestants alarmed into believing in a nationwide Catholic conspiracy.<sup>848</sup> Trollope's accounts of the Ribbonmen's plans to assassinate Ussher and their attack on Hyacinth Keegan also coincide with Beames's findings that attacks occurred not simply on the basis of religion, class or national division but rather that immediate precipitating causes involved some perception on the part of the local populace that a particular landlord, agent or official had been ruthless or contravened local custom.<sup>849</sup> Similarly, Tom Garvin's assessment of Ribbonism as answering a variety of needs, including communal defence and ordinary criminal activity, and having leaders of a class superior to those in the rank and file, is reflected in Trollope's portrayal.<sup>850</sup>

With so much evidence of Trollope's perceptive insight into the nature and operation of Irish rural society, those areas in which there is a stark divergence become all the more telling. Trollope's failure, for example, to thoroughly address the many possible causes of the Land War cited by

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<sup>847</sup> Vaughan, p.106.

<sup>848</sup> W.R.Beames, 'The Ribbon Societies: Lower-Class Nationalism in Pre-Famine Ireland' in Philpin, pp.245-63 (p.245).

<sup>849</sup> M.R.Beames, 'Rural Conflict in Pre-Famine Ireland: Peasant Assassinations in Tipperary, 1837-1847' in Philpin, pp.264-81 (p.271).

<sup>850</sup> Tom Garvin, 'Defenders, Ribbonmen and Others: Underground Political Networks in Pre-Famine Ireland' in Philpin, pp.239-40.

historians emerges as requiring explanation. Where is the discussion of the impact of the agricultural depression or the recently enriched middle class loath to relinquish money and status which one might expect from the author of *The Macdermots*?

This chapter has demonstrated that the landlord-tenant relationship is central to Trollope's representation of nineteenth-century rural Ireland. When viewed in its historical and literary contexts this is not surprising. A writer like Trollope who was Ireland's self-appointed interpreter, who prided himself as portraying real people in believable situations was bound to reflect the pervasive influence of land and its ownership on the Irish population of the time. Trollope had arguably also been awakened to its social and economic significance in England by his interpretation of the far-reaching effects of his father's lost inheritance.

The greater part of his portrayal is characterised by the diversity and complexity of the society he describes. The extent of Trollope's affection for Ireland and his dedication to his task is underlined by his persistence in the face of the resistance and incomprehension of some contemporary literary critics who seem to have expected all of their fictional Irish to be recognizable stock characters. He created an Irish rural world peopled by landlords and tenants of mixed origins, natures, motives and experiences which in many ways concurs with the picture emerging from recent historical research.

While frequently demonstrating an impressive insight into and knowledge of characteristics of the Irish landlord-tenant relationship, Trollope does not generally approach the subject of their Irishness in a way which reveals expectations which are significantly different from those with which he approaches his English rural inhabitants. The English house of Scroope, for example, in *An Eye For An Eye* is berated for its redundancy and excessive pride in the bloodline in the same manner in which the Irish Cashels are attacked in *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*. In the way in which it sometimes operates in Trollope's Irish fiction, his brand of unionism here encourages not a vision of English superiority but a reinforcement of similarities and an



avoidance of stereotypes. That Trollope's Irish work reveals influences from both English and Irish fiction further suggests that he did not in any case always make marked distinctions. Moreover, features noted by critics of his writing on English country life – the primacy of moral values; houses and gardens employed as devices to indicate character - are also evident in his Irish work.

While, however, his unionism is influential, it is not often the dominant influence in his representation of Irish rural life. Moral values, more than considerations of nationality or even rank, are uppermost in his presentation of character and situation. Discernible in his work is a code for responsible landlord behaviour. It involves active, preferably resident, management of an estate with an eye to profit but an equal concern for tenant welfare. It begins with *The Macdermots* and is finally, and most completely, embodied in the venerable Mr Jones of *The Landleaguers*:

From his first coming into this country his purport had been to do good, as far as the radius of his circle went, to all whom it included. The necessity of living was no doubt the same with him as with others, - and of living well. He must do something for himself and his children. But together with this was the desire, nearly equally strong, of being a benefactor to those around him. He had declared himself when he bought the property that with this object would settle himself down upon it, and he had not departed from it. He had brought up his children with this purpose; and they had learned to feel, one and all, that it was among the pleasures and the duties of their life.<sup>851</sup>

If this code is unchanging, the nature of Trollope's representation of Irish rural life is not. The embittered, unbalanced, monochrome portrayal of his final novel is made remarkable by the manner in which it contrasts with so much that has gone before. Granted, there are signs in earlier work of his potential *in extremis* to succumb to stereotypical and uncharacteristic portrayals: his struggle in *Castle Richmond* to reconcile his approval of government policy with

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<sup>851</sup> *The Landleaguers*, p.410.

the catastrophic nature and extent of the Famine left him making callous pronouncements and undermining the credibility of his own story and explanation of events. Less obviously, English styles of estate management, architecture and garden design are used to signal civilized living. However, even more than is the case with Trollope's representation of the Famine, *The Landleaguers* stands out as being aberrantly one sided. The beloved land of his transformation seemed to him to have transformed itself into a country of violent, ungrateful traitors. The despairing complaint which he puts into the mouth of Black Tom Daly that "The very nature of mankind has altered in the old country. There are not the same hearts within their bosoms," might well be his own.<sup>852</sup> His personal and professional involvement was such that this change must have gone to his very core, inducing a feeling of personal rejection as well as anger and alarm that his moral, political and economic prescription for Ireland was apparently being dismissed. That the Liberal Party to which he belonged was complicit in this can only have added to his bitterness.

Evident here is the emotiveness of Ireland as an issue which, as Barbara Solow has pointed out, was not limited to Trollope. It resulted in politicians as well as writers responding, especially at times of crisis, in a manner which owed more to emotion than reason. Interestingly, given their diverging stances on the Land Question, Solow has described a similar mix of considerations - moral, political, economic, as well as emotional - at work in the thinking of Gladstone to those apparent in Trollope. In Gladstone's case she has concluded that ultimately 'he was not able to keep the strands separate in his own mind. Confusion resulted.'<sup>853</sup> Trollope perhaps becomes more blindly vengeful than confused.

It is also worth considering, in relation to Trollope's personal experience, that where the Trollope who wrote *The Macdermots* was just beginning, thanks in part to Ireland, to emerge from social exclusion, the author of *The*

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<sup>852</sup> *Ibid.*, p.379.

<sup>853</sup> Solow, p.20.

*Landleaguers*, if not at the peak of his career, was still a renowned and respected writer and establishment figure. Where relatively fresh memories of the difficulties of his own waywardness and of dealing with a turbulent, impecunious father might have encouraged sympathetic portrayals of the marginalized and poor, long-suffering Thady, research trips to Ireland spent exclusively in the company of the 'loyal' and the eminent might not have left him best placed to appreciate the Land League perspective. The effects of this were perhaps also enhanced by an underlying conservatism in Trollope which seems to have become more prominent with age. Critics of his English country house fiction have noted his essential, though not uncritical, support of the landed gentry. In Ireland, of course, a pre-requisite for the maintenance of the status quo was the continuance of the Union.

Observations made by Philip Bull in connection with the impact on the Irish situation of the sort of *laissez-faire* ideology recommended by Trollope further illuminate some of the conditions which created his final representation of rural Ireland. Bull has explained that in England it had been possible to integrate the model of the paternalist improving landlord into new economic structures because there was a buoyant economy, industry to provide alternative occupation and indeed because this had been supplemented by the sort of legislation a *laissez-faire* approach resisted. In Ireland, however, this ideological approach had the effect of making 'even more overt the latent conflict between landlord "colonisers" and "native" occupiers', undermining the paternalist system and setting the scene 'for a conflict which was eventually to destroy the landlord system.'<sup>854</sup> Trollope in his portrayal of the ideal landlord-tenant relationship recreates the combination of paternalist and economic elements which Bull describes as operating in England but he fails to appreciate that, try as he might to reinforce the Union and reduce the division and differences between them in his fiction, Ireland is not England or even 'a province of England.'<sup>855</sup>

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<sup>854</sup> Bull, p.14.

<sup>855</sup> *The Landleaguers*, p.344.

It is to some extent the anomalous nature of Trollope's final representation of nineteenth-century rural Ireland which has drawn, perhaps undue, attention. But the fascination of this anomaly lies in what it reveals of the troubled interconnection between Britain and Ireland. Trollope understood much about the nature of Irish rural life but that comprehension had its limitations. In *The Landleaguers* what he perhaps reveals most is the Englishman's difficulty in coming to terms with Ireland as it really was, an Ireland that was showing signs of rejecting English plans for its future. His response, as Roy Foster has observed, was 'a violent reaction, expressing not so much the falling out of love, as the rage that comes when the love object lets you down by not being the thing that you have constructed it to be.'<sup>856</sup>

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<sup>856</sup> Foster, *The Irish Story*, p.138.

## CHAPTER FOUR

# THE FAMINE

If, as I suggested in my introduction, a degree of self-consciousness permeates much of what was written about Ireland in general during the century, it is especially true of representations of the Famine of 1845-51, and not only those works written with the benefit, or burden, of hindsight. If those in Ireland in 1845 when the fungus *Phytophthora infestans* first attacked the potato crop could not immediately have known that this would prove to be so much more catastrophic than previous crop failures, it was not long before an awareness of this famine as a momentous event and one which would be examined by contemporary and future generations, began to emerge. In parliamentary exchanges and political writing, but also in fiction, the discourse on the causes, course and consequences of the Great Famine soon began. In August 1847, for example, Lord Clarendon, Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, addressed Lord John Russell on the competing interests of the provision of relief and the tenets of political economy and with an awareness that government action was being scrutinised:

Esquimaux and New Zealanders are more thrifty and industrious than these people who deserve to be left to their fate instead of the hardworking people of England being taxed for their support, but can we do so? We shall be equally blamed for keeping them alive or letting them die and we have only to select between the censure of the Economists or the Philanthropists – which do you prefer?<sup>857</sup>

With an eye on future assessments, Sir Charles Trevelyan as early as 1848, while admitting 'The time has not yet arrived at which any man can with confidence say, that he fully appreciates the nature and the bearings of that great event which will long be inseparably associated with the year just departed,' nonetheless felt able to conclude, 'we think that we may render

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<sup>857</sup> Clarendon to Russell, 10 Aug. 1847, Clarendon Deposit Irish, letterbook 1. Quoted in Peter Gray, *Famine, Land and Politics, British Government and Irish Society, 1843-50* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1999), p.292.

some service to the public by attempting thus early to review, with the calm temper of a future generation, the history of the great Irish famine of 1847. Unless we are much deceived, posterity will trace up to that famine the commencement of a salutary revolution in the habits of a nation long singularly unfortunate, and will acknowledge that on this, as on many other occasions, Supreme Wisdom has educes permanent good out of transient evil.<sup>858</sup>

Although he signed himself 'Your Lordship's obedient servant' and dedicated the novel to Lord John Russell, William Carleton employed his dedication of *The Black Prophet* to condemn 'those principles of Government which have brought our country to her present calamitous condition.' It was Carleton's expressed hope, though perhaps not his expectation, that his fictional representation of Irish famine might so enlarge and enlighten the Prime Minister's sympathy that he would, 'put it out of the power of any succeeding author ever to write another.'<sup>859</sup>

Unsurprisingly, Anthony Trollope's writing on the Famine is very much in this self-consciously representative mode. As an Irish resident, an acute observer of Irish social complexities, a self-appointed interpreter of Ireland, a unionist, and the exponent in his fiction of a particular vision of landlord-tenant relations, the Famine presented Trollope with a painful personal and artistic challenge. He was uniquely placed among the class of prominent nineteenth-century English writers he would later join to participate in the discourse. Having arrived in Ireland in 1841 he had an opportunity to acquaint himself with the country and its people in less catastrophic times. His first novel, *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* was completed in the summer of 1845 by which time he had lived in Banagher and Clonmel and had travelled extensively in the surrounding districts. The novel indicates a breadth and depth of knowledge of the country and testifies to Trollope's reading of Irish fiction. One contemporary critic enthused:

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<sup>858</sup> C.E. Trevelyan, 'The Irish Crisis', *The Edinburgh Review* (Jan. 1848) in John Killen (ed.) *The Famine Decade, Contemporary Accounts, 1841-1851* (Belfast: Blackstaff, 1995) p.175.

<sup>859</sup> William Carleton, Dedication of *The Black Prophet: A Tale of Irish Famine* (London and Belfast: Simms & M'Intyre 1847) in Killen, p.11.

[T]he events are made to bring out all the peculiar features of Irish life among the peasantry, with a fidelity of description and knowledge of character equal to anything in the writings of Miss Edgeworth. There is no extravagance, no caricature, none of the hackneyed circumstances which raise a laugh at the expense of truth. The reader lays down the work at the end with the impression that he has visited Ireland, conversed with the individuals who are introduced, witnessed the scenes in which they are engaged, listened to their language, and watched the progress of their actions.<sup>860</sup>

Trollope certainly believed himself to be well qualified as a commentator on Ireland in general and the Famine in particular. In the first of the series of letters to *The Examiner* he affirms, 'I have this advantage on my side in the observations I am about to make: - I have been eight years in the country, and have passed those years in continual journeys through its southern, western, and midland portions. During this time I have been thrown much among Irishmen of every class.'<sup>861</sup> Even more emphatically in a later letter he insists, 'No Englishman has, I believe, had a wider opportunity than I have had of watching the changes which have taken place in Ireland during the last ten years, and I trust I may therefore be excused for presuming to offer an opinion on a subject which has been so long and so constantly under my notice.'<sup>862</sup>

If we revisit the biographical events of Trollope's life at this time we find that they confirm its Irishness but also a level of normality, even progress, not available to 'Irishmen of every class.' Between 1841 and June 1845 Trollope lived in Banagher and, after lodging for brief periods at Cork, Milltown Malbay in Co.Clare, Kilkenny and Fermoy settled in Clonmel, County Tipperary.<sup>863</sup> In June 1844, having regularised his finances and gone some way to improving his social and professional standing, he married Rose Heseltine.<sup>864</sup> The acceptance of his first novel for publication coincided with the first reports of the

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<sup>860</sup> Unsigned notice, *John Bull*, 27 (1847), p.327, in Smalley, p.549.

<sup>861</sup> Letter to the *Examiner*, 25 August 1849.

<sup>862</sup> Letter to the *Examiner*, 30 March 1850.

<sup>863</sup> Hall, *Trollope*, pp.94-5.

<sup>864</sup> *Ibid.*, p.95.

potato blight.<sup>865</sup> As the Famine developed, Trollope's two sons were born - Henry Merivale on 13 March 1846 and Frederic James Anthony on 27 September 1847.<sup>866</sup> He began writing the lighter, more comedic *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* in 1846. Set in pre-Famine Ireland, it was published in 1848, the year in which the Trollopes moved to Mallow, Co. Cork and the Young Irelanders staged their abortive rising – an event which does not seem to have unduly alarmed him.<sup>867</sup> It would be 1859 before he would attempt a fictional representation of the Famine in *Castle Richmond* but in 1849-1850 he wrote the *Examiner* letters which detail his opinion, as an Englishman resident in Ireland, of the causes, course and consequences of this cataclysmic event. If there is evidence that the Trollopes were able to conduct a relatively normal life during these years, it is also important to note that the areas in which the novelist was travelling between 1845 and 1850 were amongst those most severely famine-stricken. The census for 1851 calculated the decrease in population since 1841 in Co Tipperary at 23.87% and in Co. Cork at 27.13% (in comparison, for example, with a decrease of 11.24% in Co. Down and 8.9% in Co. Antrim).<sup>868</sup> That Trollope was able not only to carry on life as usual but also to positively thrive and prosper, while starvation, disease and death were all around him, is obviously relevant to an assessment of his representation of the Famine.

Beyond Trollope's personal experience, prevailing attitudes can be seen to play a part in dictating both the nature of his fictional representations and their reception.<sup>869</sup> Critiques of *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* and *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* written when they were published in 1847 and 1848 demonstrate this interconnectedness of text and context. Its nature was dictated by their Irishness as much as, if not more than, their artistic merits.<sup>870</sup>

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<sup>865</sup> *Ibid.*, p.91.

<sup>866</sup> *Ibid.*, p.95.

<sup>867</sup> Hall, *Trollope*, p.109.

<sup>868</sup> The Census of Ireland for the Year 1851 (Dublin, 1856), in Killen, p. 254.

<sup>869</sup> See Gilley, 'English Attitudes', pp.81-110; and Foster, *Paddy*, pp.171-6.

<sup>870</sup> See Unsigned notice, *Critic*, 5 (1847), p.344, in Smalley, p.546; Unsigned notice, *Spectator*, 20, (1847), p.449, in Smalley, p.547; Unsigned notice, *John Bull*, 27 (1847), p.327, in Smalley, p.549; Unsigned notice, *Douglas Jerrold's Shilling Magazine*, 5 (1847), p.566, in Smalley, p.551;



The manner in which current events could influence attitudes to Ireland which in turn influenced responses to fictional representations of Ireland, is vividly exemplified in a contemporary review of *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*. While judging it a 'well-told and intensely Irish story,' the anonymous reviewer nonetheless complains, 'we cannot sympathize at the present moment with the whimsicalities of that strange, wild, imaginative people, herein so characteristically described, when these whims are exhausting themselves in disloyalty and rebellion, and threatening rapine and bloodshed.'<sup>871</sup> The review is dated August 1848 so the 'disloyalty and rebellion' its author has in mind is doubtless the Young Irelanders' rather ineffectual rising in the previous month. That his response is dominated by this event rather than the on-going Famine may be because the rising has the impact of freshness. It could also be a measure of the alarm and dismay it excited but it suggests too that the reviewer, three years into the Famine, was more disturbed and repelled by Irish disloyalty than by Irish distress. What is certainly evident is that, like so many of his contemporaries, he understood the Irish within a framework constructed from a set of, if not precisely racial, then national characteristics.

During the 1840s the climate of concern around the Condition-of-England Question provided a constant backdrop against which specific events played their part in dictating attitudes to the Irish. Daniel O'Connell's reversion to the tactic of popular assembly in his campaign for Repeal, had done nothing to quell fears of political and social instability, and had enhanced notions of Irish Catholic disloyalty. One attempt to stabilise the situation set off a further wave of anti-Catholic feeling: in June 1845 Sir Robert Peel, in an effort to win over moderate Catholic support and, in effect, make the production of home-grown Father Johns more likely, substantially increased the state grant to

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Unsigned notice, *New Monthly Magazine*, 80 (1847), p.249, in Smalley, p.552; Unsigned notice, *Athenaeum*, 15 July 1848, p.701, in Smalley, p.553.; Unsigned notice, *Douglas Jerrold's Weekly Newspaper*, 22 July 1848, p.941, in Smalley, p.554; Unsigned notice, *New Monthly Magazine*, 83 (1848), p.544, in Smalley, p.555; Unsigned notice, *The Times*, 7 September 1848, 6, in Smalley, p.557.

<sup>871</sup> Unsigned notice, *New Monthly Magazine*, in Smalley, p.555.

Maynooth College, but widespread agitation ensued.<sup>872</sup> Studies of contemporary literature and journalism demonstrate that the onset of the famine was not met by callous indifference in Britain, but also that by 1847 sympathy was fading.<sup>873</sup> The 1848 rising on the heels of the Paris revolution, Irish involvement in Chartism, and the economic recession of 1847-8 added momentum to this.<sup>874</sup>

Since the central purpose of this chapter is not to address the causes, course and consequences of the Famine, I will deal in detail only with those aspects of the history of the Famine which are most directly pertinent in assessing Trollope's representation and as they arise. As an aid to understanding its context, however, it might be helpful to provide here a general summary of events, treading carefully through the academic minefield that is the historiography of the Great Irish Famine.

In 1845 the potato was the staple foodstuff of the Irish labouring poor – perhaps the majority of the island's 8.2 million people. The blight struck late in the growing season so that more than half of the crop was saved. There was distress, but there were comparatively few casualties. In 1846, however, the failure was an almost complete one and the poor, who had already exhausted any emergency resources, were reduced to eating their seed potatoes. Thus, while the blight was not extensive in 1847 neither was the acreage of potatoes planted, so that levels of distress were high. This was then disastrously followed by a near complete failure of the harvest in 1848. From this date yields began to improve but suffering continued. Rates of Famine-related disease and death remained high until 1851.<sup>875</sup>

The Conservative Peel administration which was in power in 1845, though admittedly dealing with only an 'embryonic disaster', seems to have coped relatively well with the crisis.<sup>876</sup> Special relief commissions were established to manage the supply of government-imported maize. Local relief

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<sup>872</sup> Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, pp.443-5; Jackson, *Ireland*, p.52.

<sup>873</sup> Foster, *Paddy*, p.174; Fegan, pp. 41-66.

<sup>874</sup> Swift and Gilley, *The Irish in the Victorian City*, pp.3-5; Harrison, *Early Victorian Britain*, pp.24-5.

<sup>875</sup> Jackson, *Ireland*, p.70; Hoppen, *Ireland*, p.59.

<sup>876</sup> Jackson, *Ireland*, p.71.

committees raised subscriptions and distributed food generally at cost price but sometimes gratis and work schemes were inaugurated to complement the food distribution system by providing earnings.<sup>877</sup>

Lord John Russell's Whig administration, which replaced that of Peel in 1846, was more doctrinaire and more concerned to adhere to *laissez-faire* principles. It discontinued Indian corn importation in the expectation that private merchants would step into the breach. The public works scheme, which was the chief prop of relief policy in the winter of 1846-1847, was centralized and managed more rigorously but the responsibility for funding was located locally.<sup>878</sup> That this scheme was not adequate for the task in hand is evidenced by the Destitute Poor (Ireland) Act of February 1847 which legislated for the provision of direct but temporary relief through the existing relief committees and the establishment of soup kitchens. Funding for this came from local rates, private charity and central funds. By August 1847 some three million people were being fed.<sup>879</sup> When the soup kitchens closed the burden of relief rested on the Poor Law, newly-amended to permit the provision of outdoor relief, but with the so called Gregory Clause which denied relief to anyone holding more than a quarter acre of land. The expectation was that the full cost of relief would be borne by local ratepayers but this proved problematic and numerous unions had to be supported financially while private charity supplied an additional prop. As late as 1850 indebted Unions were being rescued to the tune of £300,000.<sup>880</sup>

Two features of the historiography of the Great Famine are repeatedly singled out for comment in recent analyses. The first is the amount of scholarly research undertaken on the subject.<sup>881</sup> Before the 1980s a relative dearth,

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<sup>877</sup> *Ibid.*; Hoppen, *Ireland*, p.59.

<sup>878</sup> Jackson, *Ireland*, p.72..

<sup>879</sup> *Ibid.*, p.74.

<sup>880</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.75-6; Hoppen, *Ireland*, p.61. The Gregory of the infamous clause was none other than Trollope's friend and fellow old Harrovian Sir William Gregory, who at Coole Park had promoted Trollope's entry into Irish society and provided him with a supply of Irish fiction: Hall, *Trollope*, pp. 97-8.

<sup>881</sup> See, for example, S.J.Connolly, 'Revisions Revised? New Work on the Irish Famine', *Victorian Studies* 39, 2 (Winter 1996), pp.205-16 (p.206); R.D.Edwards, T.D.Williams (eds.), *The Great*

read by some as a possibly sinister avoidance of a problematic subject, allowed T.D.Williams' and R.D.Edwards' collection of essays with Cecil Woodham-Smith's *The Great Hunger* to dominate the historiographical landscape.<sup>882</sup> Works by Joel Mokyr, Peter Solar, Mary Daly, J.S. Donnelly and Cormac Ó'Gráda signalled a growing interest in Famine research which was confirmed by the deluge of publications associated with the 150<sup>th</sup> anniversary.<sup>883</sup> The second feature is the rather deceptively named 'nationalist-revisionist' divide which has characterised recent debate about the Famine and especially the issue of culpability – deceptive firstly because it is simplistic but also because the labels tend to be resisted by those to whom they are attached. An economic and vivid means of indicating its complexities and politicised nature of this division is to point, as Donald MacRaild has done, to the explosive connotations which have gathered around notions of 'objectivity' and 'subjectivity'.<sup>884</sup> 'Objectivity' has for some historians become synonymous with an intention to rehabilitate the reputation of the British Government, a callous refusal to confront the extent of the catastrophe, and an attempt to minimise the Famine's worst consequences. 'Subjectivity' is held by others to be equally suspect, suggestive of unscholarly emotionalism and polemic.<sup>885</sup> Such extremes of argument need to be recognised but should not be allowed to obscure much that is convincing and valuable in recent research

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*Famine: Studies in Irish History, 1845-1852* (1956), Introduction to the New Edition by Cormac Ó'Gráda (Dublin:Lilliput, 1994), pp.xvii and xxv.

<sup>882</sup> Edwards and Williams, *The Great Famine*; Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger: Ireland, 1845-49* (London: Penguin, 1991).

<sup>883</sup> Joel Mokyr, *Why Ireland Starved: A Quantitative and Analytical History of the Irish Economy, 1800-1850* (London: Allen & Unwin, 1983); Peter M.Solar, 'Why Ireland Starved: A Critical Review of the Econometric Results,' *Irish Economic and Social History*, 10, pp. 107-115; Mary E.Daly, *The Famine in Ireland* (Dublin: Historical Association of Ireland 1986); James S.Donnelly, 'The Great Famine, 1845-1852', in W.E.Vaughan (ed.) *A New History of Ireland, Vol 5: Ireland Under the Union, 1801-1870* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1989), pp.272-371; Cormac Ó'Gráda, *Ireland Before and After the Famine: Explorations in Economic History, 1800-1930* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988); Connolly, 'Revisions', p.205.

<sup>884</sup> Donald M. MacRaild on Gray, *Famine, Reviews in History* (Feb 2001).

<sup>885</sup> As well as texts already mentioned here see Brendan Bradshaw, 'Nationalism and Historical Scholarship in Modern Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies*, 26, 104 (November 1989) pp.329-351; Ciaran Brady, *Interpreting Irish History – The debate on historical revisionism, 1938-1994* (Blackrock: Irish Academic Press, 1994); Christine Kinealy, 'Beyond Revisionism, reassessing the Great Irish Famine', *History Ireland*, (Winter 1995), pp.28-34.

and which will provide a useful tool for assessing, later in this chapter, Trollope's representation of the Famine.

While Anthony Trollope, the Assistant Surveyor, was travelling through Famine-stricken Ireland in 1846-47, Trollope the novelist was occupied with *The Kellys and The O'Kellys*. Since this opens with an account of Daniel O'Connell's trial for conspiracy in early 1844 and ensuing events are all contained within that year, it is carefully placed just before the arrival of the potato blight. If the aforesaid reviewer in the *New Monthly Magazine* could work up no sympathy for the book, it was not because Trollope was addressing this most pressing of current Irish issues.<sup>886</sup> Indeed other contemporary critics, perhaps weary of reports of Irish distress, not only remarked on, but also positively welcomed, the much lighter treatment of Ireland offered in this second novel. The *Athenaeum* opined, 'We like this novel better than Mr. Trollope's former one... because though not more powerful, it is less painful.'<sup>887</sup> The picture he paints of Ireland in 1844 inevitably reveals something of Trollope's understanding of the conditions in which Famine proved possible. However, whether to make the book more palatable or because he is not ready to address the issue in a novel, a process which would entail close engagement with character as well as subject, he avoids any direct reference to the Famine and seems able to keep his two worlds, actual and fictional, largely separate. It would be 1859 before he would address the subject in his fiction. His initial response in print, the letters to the *Examiner* in 1849 and 1850, brought him into the debate therefore when harvests were beginning to improve and the direction of Government policy was established.<sup>888</sup> However, in terms of its legacy of disease, death and emigration, the Famine was still causing distress in Ireland. Moreover, as the Osborne-Trollope exchange which is discussed below reveals, whether or not reliance on the Poor Law and

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<sup>886</sup> Unsigned notice, *New Monthly Magazine*, 83 (1848), p.544, in Smalley, p.555.

<sup>887</sup> Unsigned notice, *Athenaeum*, 15 Jul 1848, p.701, in Smalley, p.553.

<sup>888</sup> Helen Garlinghouse King, (ed.) 'Trollope's Letters to the *Examiner*', *Princeton University Library Chronicle*, 26, (1965), pp.71-101. The letters were published on August 25, 1849; March 30, April 6, May 11, June 1, and June 15, 1850. On June 8 an additional letter from Trollope appeared commenting on an article in *The Times* about a recent murder in Ireland.

the Encumbered Estates Bill was an adequate response was still a moot point. Furthermore, assessments of Government performance made at this time had the potential to influence future policy on Ireland. This undermines the assertion behind Judith Knelman's reading of the letters that the Famine was a completed event with no implications for the future. While Knelman is justified in suggesting that Trollope's ends were best served by emphasising a positive view of Ireland, she is mistaken in her conclusion that Trollope's location of 'the negative element' of the Famine in 'past history', 'was right...in that it was too late for condemnation of Government aid.'<sup>889</sup>

Since Trollope had not yet achieved popularity as a writer, no particular claims can be made for their influence on current attitudes but, given their context, the *Examiner* letters do hold an additional interest. In his arguments Trollope chooses to 'toe the party line'. The letters therefore provide an insight into the mind-set which dictated, or at least sought to justify, the Government's response to the Famine. They were written to refute complaints about Government relief measures made in several letters to *The Times* in 1849 by Sidney Godolphin Osborne.<sup>890</sup> Their form therefore was to some extent dictated by the form of the source which triggered them, but Trollope may well have welcomed the opportunity this afforded to make a direct, unmediated statement. A recurring complaint in, and indeed a major motivation for, his writing on Ireland is what he perceived to be the mistaken and distorted images

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<sup>889</sup> Judith Knelman, 'Anthony Trollope, English Journalist and Novelist', pp.60-1. Knelman also erroneously attributes the gloomy ending of Trollope's first novel to its genesis during the Famine, when in fact the novel was completed before the Famine began. *Ibid.* p.61.

<sup>890</sup> It is not clear why Trollope chose *The Examiner* rather than *The Times* as the medium for his riposte. It may be evidence that his main motivation was not to methodically contest each point made by Osborne but rather to offer his own detailed thesis – Osborne's letters merely operating as the excuse for this. Perhaps the relatively unknown Trollope lacked the confidence to go 'head to head' with Osborne on home ground and in any case felt more politically and personally comfortable with the Liberal newspaper which was edited by a friend of his mother, John Forster. Trollope's attitude to *The Times* was ambivalent. While he parodied the paper in *The Warden*, he was also a faithful reader, and in 1871 offered *The Times* a series of travel letters from Australia. While these were declined, three letters complaining about overcharging on European railways were published in 1874. See Hall, *Trollope*, p.113; Richard Mullen, *Anthony Trollope: A Victorian in his World* (London: Duckworth, 1990), p.208.

being presented to a largely ignorant and misinformed English public.<sup>891</sup> A related worry he expresses in the *Examiner* letters is the blurring of fact and fiction in press accounts of the Famine:

The Irish press is not proverbial for a strict adherence to unadorned truth; and under the circumstances, it was perhaps not surprising that writers habituated to disdain facts should exaggerate and compose novels; but those horrid novels were copied into English papers, and were then believed by English readers.<sup>892</sup>

The main title he chooses, or at least does not contest, for his letters – ‘The Real State of Ireland’<sup>893</sup> – testifies to both his faith in the authenticity of his opinions and his concern that these should be recognised as ‘unadorned truth’. Given the contemporary belief in the congenital incapacity of the Irish to tell the truth – an aspect of the Irish stereotype which even Trollope did not contest – it is not incidental that it is explicitly the Irish press which is characterised as untrustworthy.<sup>894</sup> Perceived Irish deception was a factor behind the obsessive insistence of many of those who wrote about Ireland at the time on the truth and reliability of their accounts.<sup>895</sup> Trollope’s reference to ‘horrid novels’ is an intriguing one but should not, of course, be taken as an indication of a general lack of faith in the validity of fictional representations.<sup>896</sup> He finds these particular ‘novels’ ‘horrid’ because they are not novels at all and, moreover, purport to be reliable factual accounts. Reports from Irish newspapers were reproduced verbatim in the English press. It is these deceptive Irish accounts which he fears most for their power to mislead. The term ‘horrid novels’ is cleverly deployed by this novelist not for its usual purpose of attacking the

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<sup>891</sup> Letter to the *Examiner*, 30 March 1850; A.T. to Fanny Trollope, Spring 1848, in Hall, *Letters* p.17, ‘Father Giles of Ballymoy’, p.399.

<sup>892</sup> *Ibid.*, p.83.,

<sup>893</sup> His initial letter to the paper before he had agreed to offer a series on the subject is entitled ‘Irish Distress’. Letters 1-3 of the series are entitled ‘The Real State of Ireland’. Without explanation two letters are then given the title ‘The Real Condition of Ireland’ but numbered 4 and 5 and obviously regarded as part of the same series. Someone, editor or author, seems to have misremembered or failed to check the original title.

<sup>894</sup> *Autobiography*, p.46.

<sup>895</sup> See Fegan, pp.78-9.

<sup>896</sup> In chapter twelve of his autobiography Trollope develops a case for the value of the novel: *Autobiography*, pp.138-55.

dubious morality of the popular literary form but to highlight the questionable morality of the press. It can also be seen to have origins in terminology deployed by Osborne when he expresses his anxiety that the horror of what he has witnessed is such that he can scarcely expect to be believed. His account, he writes, 'appears to be a page from some ill-conceived romance.'<sup>897</sup> Thus Osborne's own anxiety is sent back by Trollope to attack him.

However, this underlying concern about potential misreading is surely a factor motivating authorial interventions in Trollope's Irish novels, and while he remains committed to his belief in the novel as a vehicle for accurate representation – his novels show him consciously moulding characters which dramatise the, or rather Trollope's, 'unadorned truth' – the discourse here involves an explicit consideration of the comparative credibility quotients of factual and fictional accounts. That he makes the choice of entrusting his first depiction of the Famine to a journalistic medium may betray less than complete confidence in the effectiveness of the fictional form to transparently transmit opinions on sensitive and controversial issues, or some doubt as to his own ability to use the form.

Osborne's letters to the *Times* initiated Trollope's entrance into the public debate about the Famine and he does make a direct attack on these. He contends, for example, that Osborne makes false deductions because he is insufficiently acquainted with Ireland; fails to appreciate seasonal changes and underestimates the enormity of the task faced by the Government. Trollope moves on, however, to offer an extensive thesis which seems to have been some time in the making.<sup>898</sup> The letters detail the causes, course and consequences of the Famine. The version which emerges is of a blight visited by God on an impoverished land – impoverished by extravagant landowners borrowing money they cannot repay and by middle-class tenants with genteel aspirations who subdivide the land they rent and then live an idle life on the proceeds. The availability of these subdivisions has in turn encouraged the

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<sup>897</sup> Quoted in Fegan, p.79.

<sup>898</sup> *Autobiography*, p.57; Letter to the *Examiner*, 30 March 1850.



peasantry to rely too heavily on the potato or the 'easy root' as Trollope labels it.<sup>899</sup> It is his assertion that God sent the Famine to correct this state of affairs and a conscientious English Government battled against unprecedented and overwhelming odds to provide well-judged and effective relief. Sidney Godolphin Osborne's 'lamentations' are therefore 'most injurious' because 'they are taken by the public to betoken, not the severity of the circumstances ordained by Providence, but the incompetence of the government in dealing with those circumstances.'<sup>900</sup> The correction of such dangerous misrepresentations of Ireland requires the attention of Trollope's expert pen. Not surprisingly, he chooses not to dwell on details of Famine misery but on indications of post-Famine recovery – unhampered by excessive Government action the Providential blight has done its work. In the second letter, for example, in which he condemns the reluctance of Irish landlords to make sacrifices during the Famine to assist the Irish poor, he pointedly interjects:

I wish it to be understood of what time I now speak: the intensity of the distress was in February, March, April, and May, 1847 – this is now the spring of 1850. In the intervening three years the Irish gentry have learnt a lesson...many good men have been formed during the last three years.<sup>901</sup>

He maintains too that the Irish are now politically quiescent and harvests are improving.<sup>902</sup>

The question of the correct operation of the economy, is a dominant theme in the letters which reveal an adherence to the precepts of political economy. Since this ideology, or at least the strain of it which Trollope adopts, incorporates matters of moral and social behaviour, Trollope considers these in analysing events and actions. Thus dissuasion from idleness among the peasantry and advocacy of a more conscientious landlord response figure in

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<sup>899</sup> *Ibid.* This is a term which was in common usage at the time. The alleged 'ease' of potato cultivation with its associated moral implications both fed into and emerged from identifications of Irishness with laziness.

<sup>900</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>901</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>902</sup> Letter to the *Examiner*, 25 August 1849; Letter to the *Examiner*, 15 June 1850.

the accounts, but financial considerations are repeatedly and forcefully employed to explain the choice and judge the success of relief measures and with no admission of this as potentially conflicting with a moral ideology which relies on estimations of personal integrity and personal relationships. The enormity, for example, of Lord John Russell's task is represented in the coldly analytical terms of a bank balance: 'What shall we say was the position of the Minister with regard to Ireland? He had a balance of seven millions at his bankers, three million people to feed, an account to render at the end of, say twelve months.'<sup>903</sup> Similarly, public works are established in order to save lives, but the form which they take is seen to be dictated by concerns about guarantees of repayment, refunds of outlay, and the disproportionate enrichment of one class.<sup>904</sup>

There is evidence in the letters of the author applying the knowledge of Ireland which he displayed in *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* and *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*. The extravagant landlords and impoverished potato growers of the letters have their precursors in his fiction.<sup>905</sup> Moreover, as in the fiction, there are points in the letters when Trollope demonstrates a capacity to reach beyond prevailing perceptions about the Irish and outside his position as a privileged Englishman. In his final letter, for example, he challenges a current tendency to attribute Irish violence to inherent national characteristics. In reference to the murder of Irish landlords he warns:

In thinking and speaking on Ireland men revert frequently to the murders which have in latter years disgraced her annals, and look on them as denoting a dark peculiarity in Irish character. It should be remembered that these crimes were confined to a small portion of the country, that they were all produced by the same cause, and that that cause is no longer operative. Though it is impossible to palliate the horrid deeds of blood which were so rife in Limerick, Clare and Tipperary, it still should be remarked that tenant-farmers have in those counties received a

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<sup>903</sup> Letter to the *Examiner*, 6 April 1850.

<sup>904</sup> Letter to the *Examiner*, 25 August 1849.

<sup>905</sup> *The Macdermots*, pp.253, 333; *The Kellys*, p.19.

harsher usage than in others; that there has been there less of kindly feeling from the gentry towards their dependants; and that the fell spirit of revenge which has been exhibited has not been without its cause.<sup>906</sup>

Trollope is also prepared in the letters, while offering a fervent defence of the government, to admit that relief measures were not without their weaknesses. Where, for example, Osborne complains of 'old roads spoilt - of ground cut up to make new roads which are still unfinished - of insulated bridges - of broken stones buried by the wayside unused - and of a curious mountain of wheelbarrows', Trollope admits, 'These things are all true'.<sup>907</sup>

If the above, however, is suggestive of continuity with earlier works, of sympathy and balance in the representation of the Famine which Trollope offers in the *Examiner* letters, there is also much which is puzzlingly contradictory, detached and blinkered. There is too a sense of Trollope 'protesting too much', being less certain of the validity of his argument than his emphatic tone would suggest.

It is difficult, for instance, to reconcile Trollope's conflicting assertions about Sidney Godolphin Osborne's objectivity. In the same paragraph he states that he believes that Osborne had 'gone through the country with his eyes open to the truth' and that he 'had fully determined, before putting his foot on Irish ground, that nothing much short of a miracle could save the country from impending ruin.'<sup>908</sup> Similarly, it is not easy to square the Trollope of the first two novels, who is aware of the complexities of Irish society and is generally resistant to prevailing stereotypical representations, with the author of the *Examiner* letters.

Granted, Trollope, despite his aversion to stereotyping, like many other Victorians, used a system of national characteristics to understand his world. At times his objection is more to the particular characteristics generally held to be Irish, rather than the whole idea of national types. Thus, for example, in his autobiography he challenges definitions of Irishness which involve automatic

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<sup>906</sup> Letter to the *Examiner*, 15 June 1850.

<sup>907</sup> Letter to the *Examiner*, 25 August 1849.

<sup>908</sup> *Ibid.*

associations with violence, stupidity and profligacy, but comments that the Irish are 'perverse, irrational, and but little bound by love of truth'.<sup>909</sup> Idleness, however, he claims in *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*, and would claim again in *Castle Richmond*, is not an inherent Irish characteristic. The poverty of Carrick-on-Shannon is attributable 'to circumstances and misfortune, and not to the idleness of the inhabitants'.<sup>910</sup> In *Castle Richmond* the Famine is not occasioned 'mainly by the idleness of the people' since 'they will work under the same compulsion and same persuasion which produce work in other countries'.<sup>911</sup> By contrast in the letters, although some of the numerous references to Irish idleness suggest an habitual, environmental cause – public works are portrayed as engendering 'additional habits of idleness', – others emphasise an inherent tendency: 'The prospect of a comparatively idle life is, I regret to say, seductive to an Irishman'.<sup>912</sup> Importantly, in terms of their potential effect on attitudes to Ireland, the contemporary reader of the letters is left with an impression of Irish idleness across the classes as a cause of the Famine. Unhappily for his mission to encourage investment, Trollope in reaching for a stock stereotype to exculpate the British government also reinforces negative images of the Irish which he aimed to counter.

Trollope hoped to persuade Englishmen to invest in Irish land freed for sale by the Encumbered Estates Acts of 1848 and 1849. He was also, as I have said, convinced that English public opinion was being distorted by inaccurate and excessively negative images of Ireland. It is not surprising, therefore, that he should elect not to reiterate graphic accounts of the Famine dead. As Mary Jean Corbett has observed, 'the narrative he shapes in these letters is far less concerned with what the famine destroys than with what it will enable'.<sup>913</sup> What are less easily explained are the extraordinary and unconvincing lengths to which he goes to minimise the suffering of the Irish poor. He insists, for example, that if the Government had not implemented the

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<sup>909</sup> *Autobiography*, p.46.

<sup>910</sup> *The Macdermots*, p.299.

<sup>911</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.66.

<sup>912</sup> Letters to the *Examiner*, 30 March, 6 April, 15 June 1850.

<sup>913</sup> Corbett, p.131.

public works scheme berated by Osborne, 'the poor, instead of dying by hundreds, would truly have died by thousands, till the deaths might have been counted in millions.'<sup>914</sup> Without expecting Trollope to have the gift of prescience and, therefore, the information that allows modern historians to set the figure at about one million dead, it is still difficult to accept that he believed deaths to be limited to hundreds. Does he perhaps begin the statement in direct reference to the numbers involved in the scheme which is criticised by Osborne and then intend the reader to understand that he is broadening this to give a national figure of 'millions'? Whatever his intention, the reader is left with the impression that hundreds died.

In contrast, other contemporary accounts from travellers in Ireland are heavy with descriptions of the dead and dying to an extent which is not entirely answered by such obvious explanations as Trollope's political bias and literary zeal. The Scottish journalist Alexander Somerville, for example, one of the long parade of those who sought the truth about Ireland, was sent from England by the *Manchester Examiner* to report on the 'actual' condition of Ireland in 1847.<sup>915</sup> Despite, like Trollope, generally supporting Government action and having doubts about the efficacy of graphic descriptions of corpses, he reports witnessing 'masses' of the dead or near dead - this in Co. Tipperary where Trollope was living and working.<sup>916</sup>

William Steuart Trench, an Irish land agent and pioneering experimental farmer, worked in the south and west of Ireland organising drainage schemes as part of the public works programme in 1846. His account of conditions first published in 1868 has a title - *Realities of Irish Life* - which echoes the claims to accuracy of Trollope and Somerville. In his description, however, the reader is left in no doubt as to the ubiquity of the dead and dying:

They died in their mountain glens, they died along the sea coast, they died in the fields, they wandered into the towns, and died in the streets,

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<sup>914</sup> Letter to the *Examiner*, 30 March 1850.

<sup>915</sup> Alexander Somerville, *Letters from Ireland During the Famine of 1847*, K. D.M. Snell (ed.) (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1994), Introduction, p.13.

<sup>916</sup> *Ibid.*, p.56.

they closed their cabin doors, and lay down upon their beds, and died of actual starvation in their houses.<sup>917</sup>

A confusing and unconvincing picture emerges in Trollope's third letter when he refutes such descriptions of untended dead bodies:

During the whole period of the famine I never saw a dead body lying exposed in the open air, either in a town or in the country. I moreover never saw a dead body within a cabin which had not been laid out in some sort of rough manner. Now it may be said that if I did not enter cabins, I could not see the horrid sights which were to be met within; but such a remark cannot apply to that which is said to have been of such frequent occurrence out under the open sky.<sup>918</sup>

Does he intend the reader to believe that he never saw a dead body lying in the open air, or that he specifically never saw an exposed, that is uncovered, body? Is he stating the latter but hoping the reader will infer the former? Is he even confessing that he did not enter any cabins and is therefore not qualified as a witness to the 'horrid sights' within? This fumbling logic is matched by semantic awkwardness when Trollope seeks to further minimise Famine deaths by separating deaths attributable to starvation and therefore to famine, from those caused by disease. Not wanting, for example, to confirm a connection by using the word 'famine' he writes of 'deaths from disease consequent on the sudden alteration in the nature and bulk of the food'.<sup>919</sup> Since he calculates such deaths as probably four times those caused by starvation, he is then able to claim, 'deaths from absolute famine were comparatively speaking, few.'<sup>920</sup> Moreover, Trollope discourages his reader from contemplating the possibility that more lives could have been saved. 'The question,' he insists, and with due regard for the tenets of political economy, 'is

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<sup>917</sup> William Steuart Trench, *Realities of Irish Life*, (London: Longmans, Green & Co, 1869), p.106.

<sup>918</sup> Letter to the *Examiner*, 6 April 1850.

<sup>919</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>920</sup> *Ibid.*

could an equal amount of life have been saved at less expense, and with fewer ill consequences?'<sup>921</sup>

The degree of conflict and confusion in Trollope's representation of the Famine in his letters to the *Examiner*, therefore, seems surprising given their author's professed conviction and their unifying theme of the encouragement of investment in an Ireland beginning, thanks to wise Government, to recover. One clue to the puzzle is perhaps to be found in the care Trollope takes in the letters to find the correct term to define his relationship to Ireland. He wants to establish himself as a creditable witness. He is a participant, an outsider, an apologist. How can he marry these identities? He confirms that he is an Englishman but rejects the nominations 'alien' and 'foreigner'.<sup>922</sup> Is this because they denote too much antagonism and distance? He prefers 'stranger'.<sup>923</sup> Does this suggest objectivity but with less hostile connotations? When he describes the operation of the new Poor Law, his identification with Ireland is more complete. 'We', he reports, 'have now been forced for above two years to feed our paupers here in Ireland.'<sup>924</sup> This thorny question of identity will form part of my later analysis. In the meantime it is worth noting that the Trollope who is the author of the final paragraph of the last letter certainly sees himself as representing his beloved Ireland in a manner which will rally the support it needs:

To combat this feeling [of hopelessness] should be the effort of every friend of Ireland; to encourage the industry, the hitherto feeble industry of the country; to do battle with habitual sloth, and almost habitual despair; to awake a manly feeling of inward confidence, and a reliance on the justice of Heaven, should now be the work of Government, of Parliament, and of every individual who has an interest in the country.

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<sup>921</sup> Letter to the *Examiner*, 25 August 1849.

<sup>922</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>923</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>924</sup> Letter to the *Examiner*, 11 May 1850.

The man who takes a farm in Ireland and lives on it is Ireland's best friend.<sup>925</sup>

The affection and concern for Ireland expressed at the end of the *Examiner* letters is also evident in Trollope's account of the genesis of his novel *Castle Richmond*. He began writing his fictional account of the Famine in 1859 when he was leaving 'the Green Isle and my old friends, and would fain say a word of them as I do.'<sup>926</sup> He was being transferred to England on his appointment as Chairman of Surveyors, his success as a Post Office administrator assured and recognised. As Mary Hamer has pointed out, this novel also came at a pivotal point in his career as a writer. He had already published three of his Barsetshire novels – *The Warden* (1855), *Barchester Towers* (1857) and *Dr. Thorne* (1858) – when in August 1859 he began writing *Castle Richmond*. W.M.Thackeray and George Smith, the editor and publisher of the new *Cornhill Magazine*, wanted Trollope to contribute to the first edition. Trollope recalls in his autobiography how Smith 'was sure that an Irish story would not do for a commencement.'<sup>927</sup> He broke off to write *Framley Parsonage*. This was his first fiction to appear in serial form and the novel which established him as a leading author.<sup>928</sup> He returned to complete *Castle Richmond* in the spring of 1860. The perceived unsuitability of an Irish story as the major fictional offering in a new magazine would seem to suggest that, nearly a decade after the Famine, Ireland still represented a less than appealing topic for contemplation. Indeed at around the same time that Trollope's Irish tale was being rejected by Smith, Charles Dickens was making the decision to publish his own *Great Expectations* in *All the Year Round* in a bid to reverse the decline in circulation which accompanied the serialization of Charles Lever's *A Day's Ride*.<sup>929</sup> Trollope's own objection to the 'strong feeling against things Irish' at the

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<sup>925</sup> Letter to the *Examiner*, 15 June 1850.

<sup>926</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.2

<sup>927</sup> *Autobiography*, p.94.

<sup>928</sup> Mary Hamer, Introduction to Trollope, *Castle Richmond* (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1989), ix-xxii (pp.ix-xi).

<sup>929</sup> Charlotte.Mitchell 'A Note on the Text' in Charles .Dickens, *Great Expectations* (London, *All the Year Round*, Dec 1860-Dec 1861 (Rev. edn., London: Penguin, 1996), xxvii-xxviii (p.xxvii).



opening of the novel confirms a continuing antagonism.<sup>930</sup> Irish migrants were still arriving in Britain in significant numbers. In fact it would be 1861 before the figures for England and Wales would peak at 602,000, and while the so-called 'Papal Aggression' of 1850-1851 had inflamed anti-Catholic feeling, Lord John Russell's response in the Ecclesiastical Titles Act invoked Catholic hostility, not least amongst Irish MPs.<sup>931</sup> Ireland itself was comparatively 'quiet' socially and politically during the 1850s, but the establishment of the Tenant League and the Independent Opposition Party indicated that issues of land tenure and political representation remained unresolved.<sup>932</sup> That no conclusive answer had yet been found to the troubling Irish Question makes Trollope's retrospective consideration of the Famine a live and relevant contribution to an ongoing debate. How he, as an increasingly prominent writer, depicted the Famine had the potential to influence public opinion on the future government of Ireland.

Although *Castle Richmond* is retrospective and therefore obviously able to benefit from the omniscience of hindsight, Trollope's basic contentions about the Famine are the same as those offered in the *Examiner* letters – that God sent the blight to correct an intolerable situation largely of Ireland's own making and that the government did its best in overwhelming circumstances. He is now able, however, to support these claims with what he regards as evidence of Ireland's economic recovery, and to celebrate the disappearance of the most idle and profligate landlords. He allows himself to focus not on this reprehensible group but on those worthy landlords who did meet their responsibilities during the crisis. He also offers a more thorough and prominent consideration of his Providentialist stance. Although there is a more extensive exploration of the weaknesses of government policy, the dominant authorial voice is one of conscience-salving reassurance.

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<sup>930</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.1.

<sup>931</sup> Roger Swift and Sheridan Gilley, *The Irish in the Victorian City*, (London: Croom Helm, 1985), p.1; Hoppen, *Mid-Victorian Generation*, pp.146-7

<sup>932</sup> *Ibid.*, p.583.

As Trollope is careful to emphasise in its last chapter, *Castle Richmond* does not purport to be a tale of the Famine but 'a tale of the famine year'. The Famine provides a backdrop for a conventional Big House plot of love thwarted and an inheritance threatened. Trollope does intervene to make a number of direct authorial statements which bring the Famine into the foreground but it mainly functions as a means of dramatising the Fitzgerald family's strong sense of duty and responsibility, their social and economic value as landlords and conduits of the government's relief policy. While it is not impossible to envisage a novel which marries the fates of the Irish of elevated and humble origins to tell a convincing Famine tale, Trollope, if indeed he even truly attempts it, fails to achieve this. There is no equivalent of the double plot in *The Kellys and O'Kellys* which functions to dramatise with equal weight issues and dilemmas facing people at different social levels. Nor, given the date of its creation, can the employment in *Castle Richmond* of the Famine as backdrop be attributed, as possible in the case of William Carelton's *The Black Prophet*, to an ignorance of how catastrophic it would ultimately prove to be.<sup>933</sup> Through his construction and deployment of plot, and in a manner Trollope neither fully intends nor appreciates, *Castle Richmond* offers a message which fatally undermines the sustainability of both his main plot and his explanation of the Famine.

Although the novel did not attract much contemporary critical attention, two reviewers remarked on Trollope's handling of his main story against the Famine background. The reviewer in the *Spectator*, perhaps as much from a concern that Trollope should adhere to the classical unities as from an objection to an intrusive degree of Irish distress, reassured his readers that although *Castle Richmond* 'has its scene in the south of Ireland, in the year of the Famine, ...none of its main issues are evolved out of that great calamity, [it] does not injuriously distract attention from the leading theme.'<sup>934</sup> A notice in the *Saturday Review*, while applauding Trollope's judicious assessment of the

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<sup>933</sup> Fegan, p.151.

<sup>934</sup> Unsigned review, *Spectator*, 33 (1860), p. 477, in Smalley, pp.115-6.

Famine, even suspecting that this was the theme 'which Mr. Trollope really cared for,' added 'but the milk and the water really should be in separate pails.'<sup>935</sup> In his autobiography Trollope himself declared that '*Castle Richmond* certainly was not a success.'<sup>936</sup>

A few modern literary critics, however, have unreservedly applauded Trollope's representation of the Famine in *Castle Richmond* as sympathetic and realistic. Arthur Pollard is impressed by the authenticity and poignancy of Trollope's depiction. Apparently deaf to the contrast between her compassionate call to action and Trollope's disempowering Providentialist thesis, he even compares it favourably with portrayals of English working-class suffering in the novels of Elizabeth Gaskell. Indeed, Trollope's Providentialist stance, far from drawing disapproval from Pollard, is seen as a revelation of the author as a 'sympathetic realist'.<sup>937</sup> Amazingly, Robert Tracy declares that '[T]he scenes of desolation and starvation he depicts are grim enough to satisfy any Irish patriot.'<sup>938</sup> Richard Mullen and James Munson puzzlingly read the Famine not as a backdrop but as 'a constant presence'.<sup>939</sup> Moreover, the scene in the novel in which Herbert chances upon a dead child and her dying mother and sibling receives high praise. In their judgement 'there are few paragraphs that are better written or more tragic in all Trollope's writings.'<sup>940</sup> Some of these surprising judgements are perhaps explained by a statement which confirms that literary criticism can be visited by the political prejudices and preoccupations apparent in Famine historiography. Tellingly, Mullen and Munson praise Trollope's representation of the Famine for its historical accuracy on the grounds that it 'is different from so many of the simplistic accounts that pass for history and that still nourish nationalistic nonsense.'<sup>941</sup>

More convincingly other critics have noted a discordance, located both in an imbalance between the Big House drama being played out in the

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<sup>935</sup> Unsigned notice, *Saturday Review*, 9 (1860), pp.643-644, in Smalley, pp.113-4.

<sup>936</sup> *Autobiography*, p.103.

<sup>937</sup> Arthur Pollard, *Anthony Trollope* (London: Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1978), p.21.

<sup>938</sup> Tracy, 'The Unnatural Ruin', p. 369.

<sup>939</sup> Mullen with Munson, p.65.

<sup>940</sup> *Ibid.*, p.66.

<sup>941</sup> *Ibid.*

foreground and the events of the Famine occurring in the background, and in a tension between Trollope's direct pronouncements and the fictional narrative. James Kincaid, has noted how the Famine theme works 'very oddly with the conventional love story.'<sup>942</sup> John Cronin too has remarked on an 'uneasy' combination of a thesis novel with a novel of manners and 'tacked on' unintegrated Famine passages.<sup>943</sup> In her introduction to the novel *Mary Hamer*, despite recognising that it contains vignettes of the indigenous Irish which have 'real power,' has maintained that 'the significance of what happens to the characters in the main plot is constantly diminished by comparison with poverty and starvation.'<sup>944</sup>

Three recent critical studies which have examined *Castle Richmond* in the context of the literature of the Irish Famine have also noted a tension in the work. Margaret Kelleher has posited that, 'In contrast to Trollope's intention, the manner of his depiction of famine victims, the anxiety released by the encounter between the upper class and the starving threatens to uncover very different power-relations.'<sup>945</sup> And although Christopher Morash describes a progress in the development of Herbert's character towards identification and empathy which has the potential to reduce the gap between landlord and famine victim, he has concluded that:

While the passages dealing with the victims of the Famine do provide a shock of ethical awareness, the final lines of the novel pronounce the triumph of progress in terms which erase the suffering on which such an awareness depends.<sup>946</sup>

In her study of the impact of the Famine on literature, Melissa Fegan has identified in *Castle Richmond* a 'lack of dialogue' between the narrator, who peddles the official policy, and the text, to the point where 'The banal

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<sup>942</sup> Kincaid, *The Novels of Anthony Trollope*, p.77.

<sup>943</sup> Cronin in T.Bareham (ed.), p.29.

<sup>944</sup> Hamer, Introduction to *Castle Richmond*, p.xv.

<sup>945</sup> Margaret Kelleher, 'Irish Famine in Literature', in Cathal Póirtéir, *The Great Irish Famine*, (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995), pp.232-47 (p.235).

<sup>946</sup> Christopher Morash, *Writing the Irish Famine* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1995), p.50.

conclusions of the narrator are juxtaposed and denied by the narrative experience, leaving him discredited and ignored by the very tale he tells.<sup>947</sup>

The version of the Famine offered in direct authorial statements in *Castle Richmond* accords in a number of ways with the version presented in the *Examiner* letters. In a chapter entitled 'The Famine Year,' for example, Trollope again rehearses the economic and logistical difficulties faced by the Government:

The feeding of four million starving people with food, to be brought from foreign lands, is not an easy job. No government could bring the food itself; but by striving to do so it might effectually prevent such bringing on the part of others. Nor when the food was there, on the quays, was it easy to put it, in due proportions, into the four million mouths.<sup>948</sup>

He also maintains that, 'the measures of the government were prompt, wise, and beneficent.'<sup>949</sup> Later in the novel, as he describes worsening famine conditions, he insists in terms which significantly support a reluctance to intervene, 'I shall always think – as I did think then – that the wisdom of its action and the wisdom of its abstinence from action were very good.'<sup>950</sup> As in the letters, there is a tendency to emphasise positive consequences. For example, he explains in colourful, buoyant terms: 'And now again the fields in Ireland are green, and the markets are busy, and money is chucked to and fro like a weathercock which the players do not wish to have abiding with them.'<sup>951</sup> Equally the impression of Ireland's recovery offered in the final chapter resounds with triumphant fervour and optimism. 'Famine', 'pestilence' and 'exodus' are characterised as 'These three wonderful events, following each other..., the blessings coming from Omniscience and Omnipotence by which the black clouds were driven from the Irish firmament.' They can be followed only by 'Ireland in her prosperity.'<sup>952</sup>

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<sup>947</sup> Fegan, p.123.

<sup>948</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.69.

<sup>949</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>950</sup> *Ibid.*, p.346.

<sup>951</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.346-7.

<sup>952</sup> *Ibid.*, p.489.

Trollope also continues in the novel to represent the Famine in a manner which understates the extent of suffering experienced by the poorest Irish. While, for example, he celebrates what he declares to be the 'extermination' of 'the idle, genteel class' of landholders and even affirms that, 'the poor cotter suffered sorely', he is careful to state that this same poor cotter 'as a class, has risen from his bed of suffering a better man. He is thriving as a labourer either in his own country or in some newer – for him better – land to which he has emigrated.'<sup>953</sup> By concentrating on the fates of classes as opposed to individuals, he neatly manages to obscure, even reverse, the consequences of the Famine. Those cotters who died in disproportionate numbers, who were truly exterminated by the Famine, and who did not live to enjoy any class revival have been effaced from this representation.

Trollope is also still disdainful of the Repeal movement, taking an ironic swipe at 'the good old days before the famine, when repeal was so immediately expected,' and philanthropists, like Sidney Godolphin Osborne, continue to attract bitter disapproval. They are opportunistic and irrational.<sup>954</sup>

Where, however, the argument in the letters is underpinned by an undeveloped Providentialist explanation, *Castle Richmond* offers a more extensive thesis. Where the intervening years and opportunity to consider his opinions seem to have left Trollope more prepared to question the difficulties of adhering to the principles of political economy, his conviction that the Famine was Divinely ordained seems to have become stronger. In the *Examiner* letters, while this origin of the blight is unchallenged – Ireland is 'visited by the hand of God' and faces circumstances 'ordained by Providence' – Trollope takes the thesis no further. From his first direct pronouncement in the novel on the causes of the Famine, however, he is insistent on this explanation and careful to delineate the precise strain of Providentialism to which he belongs. He cannot subscribe to such extensive and disproportionate suffering being occasioned by God's anger: 'I do not believe that our God stalks darkly along

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<sup>953</sup> *Ibid.*, p.68.

<sup>954</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.69; p.346.

the clouds laying thousands low with arrows of death, and those thousands the most ignorant, because men who are not ignorant have displeased Him.<sup>955</sup> To his mind it is the work not of a vengeful but of a merciful God:

When men by their folly and by the shortness of their vision have brought upon themselves penalties which seem to be overwhelming were no aid coming to us but our own, then God raises his hand, not in anger, but in mercy, and by his wisdom does for us that for which our own wisdom has been insufficient.<sup>956</sup>

Despite his use of first person pronouns, perhaps employed because this is offered as a statement of general as well as particular truth, the folly and shortness of vision which have occasioned God to act in this case are not generalized. They are swiftly and precisely located in Ireland. It is the unprincipled, middle-class tenants, the faux gentlemen of the *Examiner* letters, who have engendered a state of things:

which discouraged labour, which discouraged improvements in farming, which discouraged any produce from the land except the potato crop; which maintained one class of men in what they considered to be the gentility of idleness, and another class, the people of the country, in the abjectness of poverty.<sup>957</sup>

Although Trollope is a strong advocate for responsible and conscientious government, in this scheme there can only be a limited rôle for state intervention to stay the Famine since 'no human power could suffice to put it down.'<sup>958</sup> When coupled with the non-intervention encouraged by political economy, this marriage of religious and political ideology provides a balm to the conscience. This motivates and underpins the more reassuring Famine representations in *Castle Richmond*.

Trollope, as we have seen, uses occasions in the novel when the gentry come into contact with the poor to demonstrate the nature and value of

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<sup>955</sup> *Ibid.*, p.66.

<sup>956</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>957</sup> *Ibid.*, p.68.

<sup>958</sup> *Ibid.*, p.83.

responsible landlord behaviour during the Famine. Herbert Fitzgerald especially is presented as a principled and pragmatic provider of relief – establishing efficient soup kitchens, shops and mills, serving as a voice of sense and moderation on relief committees.<sup>959</sup> If he is not so immediately adept as the dashing Owen Fitzgerald at setting Clara Desmond's pulse racing, he knows how to make the boiler in the Desmond estate's soup kitchen operate more efficiently – or at least he knows a man who does.<sup>960</sup> He is seen with Clara and his sisters constructively preoccupied with the business of relief and, moreover, such conscientious application is represented as mutually beneficial.<sup>961</sup> Not only is it efficacious for the poor, it is emotionally, perhaps even spiritually, uplifting for the gentry.<sup>962</sup>

However, there is also in some encounters between the gentry and the Famine a willingness to question the principles of political economy, their compatibility with Trollope's moral vision, and the effectiveness of relief methods. So although Herbert, 'had learned deep lessons of political economy, and was by no means disposed to give promiscuous charity on the road-side', when confronted with the personal request of Bridget Sheehy for help to feed her famished children, he succumbs and gives her money. His suggestion that she seek recourse in the available relief measures – the Indian meal provided at the soup kitchens or the poorhouse – is dismissed by Bridget as inadequate or unacceptable, and the possibility allowed that a policy based on political economy is unworkable:

Herbert Fitzgerald, from the first moment of his interrogating the woman, had of course known that he would give her somewhat. In spite of all his political economy, there were but few days in which he did not empty his pocket of his loose silver, with these culpable deviations from his

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<sup>959</sup> *Ibid.*, p.73; p.205.

<sup>960</sup> *Ibid.*, p.77.

<sup>961</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.83-4.

<sup>962</sup> *Ibid.*, p.79.



theoretical philosophy. ... the system was impracticable, for it required frames of iron and hearts of adamant.<sup>963</sup>

Similarly, Herbert is allowed to voice reservations at a relief committee meeting about the ability of the public works scheme to provide a solution since, in rural areas, shops were not always available for men to spend their wages.<sup>964</sup> In a typically Trollopian analysis of how such bodies operate, personal, familial and religious, as well as altruistic motivations are seen to play a part in the committee's decision-making process. Ultimately a mix of principle and pragmatism prevails and rules are made in the knowledge that they will be bent:

[I]t was decided among them, that in their district nothing should be absolutely given away, except to old women and widows, - which kind-hearted clause was speedily neutralised by women becoming widows while their husbands were still living.....And in this way they got through their work, not perhaps with the sagacity of Solomon, but as I have said, with an average amount of wisdom, as will always be the case when set about their tasks with true hearts and honest minds.<sup>965</sup>

What is more, despite continuing to underplay Famine suffering, Trollope is more prepared than in the *Examiner* letters to admit that mortality rates were high. Indeed, descriptions in *Castle Richmond* question the veracity of statements in the letters. Where before he had claimed never to have seen a dead body lying exposed in the open air, now he writes of 'the people of a land [who] are worse than decimated, and the living hardly able to bury the dead.'<sup>966</sup> He explains that the worst of the Famine was signalled by men dying on the road-side.<sup>967</sup> Although still segregating population loss by cause of death – starvation or disease – he writes now of thousands, not hundreds, dying from starvation.<sup>968</sup>

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<sup>963</sup> *Ibid.*, p.79, p.192.

<sup>964</sup> *Ibid.*, p.209.

<sup>965</sup> *Ibid.*, p.210.

<sup>966</sup> *Ibid.*, p.65.

<sup>967</sup> *Ibid.*, p.83.

<sup>968</sup> *Ibid.*, p.347.

However, if there is greater a readiness than in the *Examiner* letters to contemplate government shortcomings and catastrophic Famine consequences in the representation offered in *Castle Richmond*, this does not denote a complete change of heart. Although, as evidenced by his depiction of women, Trollope did employ elements of his fiction to moderate and contain others, he is not offering a full and rigorous reappraisal of his stance on the Famine in which the official, orthodox view is presented in direct narratorial statements only to be consciously and systematically undermined by a fictional subtext. There is something less orderly and controlled at work – a striving for an effect which fails, rather than a planned contradiction - which exposes a Trollope who, even at this distance from the Famine, struggles to meet the eyes of its victims. Much, for example, of the attempted sympathetic reconstruction of the plight of the starving poor is diminished by his use of imagery, choice of vocabulary, the narrator's perspective and the comparisons he chooses to draw. Thus the Bridget Sheehy episode which ends with the practical failure of Herbert's political economy begins with a description of Bridget and her children which conveys their wretchedness. However, this is done in a manner which emphasises that they are uncivilized and unattractive. Some Irish peasants, Trollope explains, 'are singularly beautiful' but of Bridget and her children the reader is told 'her head was all uncovered, and her wild black hair was streaming round her face.....They all had the same wild black eyes, and wild elfish straggling locks; but neither the mother nor the children were comely.'<sup>969</sup> The uncharacteristic lack of respect for motherhood displayed here has already been noted.<sup>970</sup> Moreover, at this moment of engagement with the personal results of the Famine, Trollope retreats to the distance of an anthropological study. He muses, 'It is strange how various are the kinds of physical development among the Celtic peasantry in Ireland.....The peasants of Clare, Limerick, and Tipperary are, in this way, much more comely than those of Cork and Kerry.'<sup>971</sup> Furthermore, as Christopher Morash has pointed

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<sup>969</sup> *Ibid.*, p.189.

<sup>970</sup> See above, p.126

<sup>971</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.189.

out, Herbert succumbs to Bridget's demands at the point when she is threatening to apply to his rival Owen for help. This confuses the opposition between political economic principle on the one hand and its moral validity and practical application on the other. It allows the possibility that Herbert's resolve is destroyed not by the prospect of unrelieved suffering but by the thought of being bettered by Owen Fitzgerald.<sup>972</sup>

Similarly, in the chapter entitled 'The Famine Year' Trollope points out the degree of suffering endured in the winter of 1846-47, but in a manner which does not seek to involve the reader in the plight of the poor. He explains that, 'The greater part of eight million human beings were left without food', but these same human beings are referred to unfeelingly as 'swarms'.<sup>973</sup> Moreover, the reader is invited to measure the severity of conditions by the extent of its impact on the observer. The chapter opens: 'They who were in the south of Ireland during the winter of 1846-47 will not readily forget the agony of that period', and later he reiterates, 'Those who saw its course, and watched its victims, will not readily forget what they saw.'<sup>974</sup>

Possibly with a half-formed dual intention of providing a realistic representation of the complexities of the Famine's effects and uniting the two strands of the novel, Trollope attempts to develop a plot and draw comparisons which connect events in the life of his fictional gentry families with those occurring on a larger scale among the starving poor. When these devices fail they have the effect of suggesting a callous lack of identification which devalues his critique of relief measures.

Trollope's account, for example, of the operation of the store at Berryhill which Sir Thomas hires to sell Indian corn meal at a cheap rate, shows evidence of the author's detailed knowledge and appreciation of its shortcomings and the complaints of the populace against it. A certain determined and vociferous Kitty complains energetically to Clara that the meal she has bought cannot be made digestible. Trollope justifies her assessment

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<sup>972</sup> Morash, *Writing the Irish Famine*, p.43.

<sup>973</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.65.

<sup>974</sup> *Ibid.*, p.69.

and right of the poor 'to claim life, to demand food that should keep them and their young ones alive.'<sup>975</sup> He even hints at the inadequacies of refined young ladies like Clara when measured against Kitty's robust practicality. When Herbert's fiancée is invited to feel the sample Kitty has brought in her handkerchief, she can only put 'her pretty delicate finger down into the nasty daubed mess' and suggest ineffectually that she has not cooked it enough.<sup>976</sup> However, the episode ends with Trollope equating the sting of ingratitude felt by relief workers with that of women who have been forced into the poorhouse and have watched their children starve. The poor have right and cause to complain 'But not the less was it a hard task for delicate women to work hard, and to feel that all the work was unappreciated by those whom they so thoroughly commiserated, whose sufferings they were so anxious to relieve.'<sup>977</sup>

The most memorable encounter in the novel between the gentry and the Famine poor occurs in a chapter entitled 'The Last Stage'. It is, as has already been suggested, also an episode which demonstrates vividly Trollope's failure to resolve conflicting aspects of his representation of the Famine and to marry professed belief and fictional narrative to form a cohesive text. Both Trollope the novelist and Trollope the government apologist have a great deal invested in this pivotal chapter. In his autobiography he writes, 'No novel is anything, for purposes either of comedy or tragedy, unless the reader can sympathise with the characters whose names he finds upon the pages.'<sup>978</sup> Although Trollope maintains that the novel has no hero as such, he none the less affirms that if it had, 'Herbert Fitzgerald would be the man.'<sup>979</sup> The novel's success, therefore, is largely dependent on the author winning and maintaining sympathy for Herbert. While there is much in Herbert to admire - his dedication to relief work, loyalty to family, religious tolerance, - his rather worthy seriousness puts him at a disadvantage when set against Owen Fitzgerald's wayward charms. This is not helped by the fact that Trollope's own affection for Owen is obvious.

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<sup>975</sup> *Ibid.*, p.86.

<sup>976</sup> *Ibid.*, p.85.

<sup>977</sup> *Ibid.*, p.86.

<sup>978</sup> *Autobiography*, p.147.

<sup>979</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.45

A small but important detail indicates where the author's sympathies lie. Since Trollope was a keen huntsman, significance can be drawn from the information that whereas the masterful Owen can drop the reins and his horse will obediently walk behind him, poor Herbert has to lead his steed.

Trollope is aware that there is a danger of Herbert appearing priggish since he is at pains to deny this, but these very denials serve to underline the fault. Herbert is not as handsome, not as 'tall and stalwart and godlike in his proportions' as Owen. He is 'clean looking and clean made', has 'a gentle affection for bindings and title-pages' and has begun a coin collection.<sup>980</sup> Against this, the narrator's statement that 'Owen Fitzgerald had called him a prig; but Herbert was no prig' seems rather lame.<sup>981</sup> In allowing Herbert to win Clara's hand, Trollope promotes steadiness over romantic excitement, but in juxtaposing his central character against such an attractive rival he handicaps him in the sympathy stakes. He is most disadvantaged, however, by having to capture attention for his individual distress against a background of disease, death and migration on a huge scale. Since, as evidenced by his eventual reinstatement as heir to Castle Richmond, Trollope offers Herbert as the embodiment of those values and attitudes which he wishes to promote, an encounter in which Herbert is tested by extreme manifestations of the Famine's consequences must have implications for the validity of his author's pro-government, Providentialist stance on that issue.

The episode occurs as Herbert is about to leave for London to acquire a legal training so that he can earn a living. His father has died. His parents' marriage seeming at this point to have been a bigamous one, it is his cousin Owen Fitzgerald and not Herbert who stands as the rightful heir to Castle Richmond. The life he anticipated as a hard working, responsible landlord has been snatched away. Moreover, he can no longer offer Clara a marriage with position and wealth. He is on his way to bid her what he hopes will be a temporary farewell. His journey to Desmond Court through land impoverished

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<sup>980</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.44-5.

<sup>981</sup> *Ibid.*, p.45.

by poor management allows Trollope to reprise his thesis on the evils of irresponsible landlords and excessive subdivision.<sup>982</sup> Forced by a rainstorm to seek shelter, he dismounts and enters a roadside cabin, leading his horse in after him. Inside a desperate scene confronts him. 'Squatting in the middle of the cabin, seated on her legs crossed under her, with nothing between her and the wet earth, there crouched a woman with a child in her arms.' It transpires that not only are they both near death, a little girl, already dead, lies in the corner.

That his fictional hero enters one of the cabins about which the author dissembled in the *Examiner* letters might seem to promise a closer engagement, and aspects of the scene are recreated with genuine poignancy. The narrator touchingly describes the body as 'the small naked dwindled remains of humanity from which life had fled.'<sup>983</sup> Herbert is 'stricken with horror' and the woman and her family are individualized, not left as part of an undifferentiated crowd.<sup>984</sup> Moreover, the story Trollope builds from her answers to Herbert's questions is a heart-rending one. Her husband Mike has gone off to find what work he can, his rheumatic condition disqualifying him from the public works scheme. It becomes apparent that before he returns his entire family will be dead.<sup>985</sup>

However, other aspects of the encounter unwittingly give rise to the 'anxiety' identified by Margaret Kelleher, emphasising the unresolved imbalance in the novel and sabotaging Trollope's novelistic and ideological intentions for the chapter. His attempts to win sympathy for Herbert and justify his own stance on the Famine fail. An uneasiness is created in the reader from the moment Herbert, as an upper-class man, enters the cabin with his horse. The woman's near nakedness seems to be intended as a representation of the actual wretchedness of Famine victims, rather than an instance of insensitive voyeurism, but in emphasising the contrast between her inferior and vulnerable

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<sup>982</sup> *Ibid.*, p.367.

<sup>983</sup> *Ibid.*, p.373.

<sup>984</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>985</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.372-4.

state and Herbert's superior and powerful one, it both raises questions about his right to be there and expectations that he has a responsibility to act. Nor is such a response necessarily an anachronistic one. Trollope himself is uncomfortable enough with the idea of Herbert bringing his horse into the cabin to feel the need to explain:

In England no one would think of taking his steed into a poor man's cottage, and would hardly put his beast into a cottager's shed without leave asked and granted; but people are more intimate with each other, and take greater liberties in Ireland. It is no uncommon thing on a wet hunting-day to see a cabin packed with horses and the children moving about among them, almost as unconcernedly as though the animals were pigs.<sup>986</sup>

He adds for extra reassurance, 'But then the Irish horses are so well mannered and good-natured.'<sup>987</sup> (Significantly, he is not so uncomfortable that he asks whether this taking of 'greater liberties' is really justified.)

Moreover, Trollope is aware of the onus on Herbert to relieve the woman's distress: his character acknowledges that 'it behoved him to administer to her immediate wants before he left her' but in keeping with his reading of the Famine, Trollope puts it beyond Herbert's powers to do so.<sup>988</sup> Intent on leaving his readers with the reassuring message that everything that could have been done to relieve Famine distress had been done, Trollope places the woman and her younger child in an irretrievable state of starvation. Retreating to the protected distance of medical explanation, Trollope explains:

In those days there was a form of face which came upon the sufferers when their state of misery was far advanced, and was a sure sign that their last stage of misery was nearly run. The mouth would fall and seem to hang, the lips at the two ends of the mouth would be dragged down, and the lower parts of the cheeks would fall as though they had been dragged and pulled.....The famine was not old enough at the time

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<sup>986</sup> *Ibid.*, p.368.

<sup>987</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>988</sup> *Ibid.*, p.371.

of which we are speaking for Herbert to have learned all this, or he would have known that there was no hope left in this world for the poor creature whom he saw before him.<sup>989</sup>

The actions left to Herbert, whose worth has been predicated so much on his responsible and effective relief work, are either inadequate or doomed to failure. He gives the woman some money which she seems to have no means of spending and arranges for someone to take her to the union workhouse. Her transport arrives after she and her baby have died.<sup>990</sup>

Significantly the action by which Trollope seems to intend to indicate Herbert's, and his own, compassion and respect for the Famine dead, serves more effectively to highlight the divisions of wealth, class, experience and, in Trollope's case nationality, which separate Herbert and his author from the starving Irish poor. Having, with the handle of his whip, uncovered in some straw what turns out to be the naked body of four-year-old Kitty, Herbert is distressed and feels he should not leave the body of the child 'in that horribly ghastly state'.<sup>991</sup> He manages to straighten her limbs and close her eyes before folding his own silk handkerchief around her body.<sup>992</sup> The anxiety already excited by Herbert's presence at the scene is, however, heightened not diminished by this act. The silk handkerchief used to cover the body alerts the reader to potential resources at Herbert's disposal which were not employed to avert the death and Trollope's claims that these could have done no good seem insulting. What is intended as an act of engagement and respect becomes one of concealment and offence. As Melissa Fegan has pointed out, Herbert is mimicking his author, covering 'the corpse of the dead child with his silk handkerchief, as Trollope in the Six Letters shrouded the starving with words.'<sup>993</sup> The scene he has created demands a more active response than Trollope's reassurances that nothing could have been done and his passive stance is exposed as ethically inadequate by his own fiction.

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<sup>989</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.369-70.

<sup>990</sup> *Ibid.*, p.374.

<sup>991</sup> *Ibid.*, p.373.

<sup>992</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>993</sup> Fegan, p.127.



Similarly, Trollope's novel proves an eloquent adversary at the point in this encounter when Herbert, already disabled by his author's ideology, is forced to recognize the insignificance of his own misfortunes, 'now that he has witnessed to how low a state of misery a fellow human might be brought'.<sup>994</sup> To concede this is to admit the impossibility of expecting the reader to continue to view Herbert's fate as the dominant issue. However, while Herbert does not forget what he has witnessed, he does go on about his business and continued concentration on the Big House plot would seem to indicate an expectation that the reader will do the same. Trollope's closing comment on the scene, far from acknowledging a disruption, reiterates that the prevention of the woman's death was beyond the power of human agency: 'Her doom had been spoken before Herbert had entered the cabin.'<sup>995</sup>

Some sixteen years later in his autobiography, Trollope recognized that *Castle Richmond* was not a success and that this was connected to a failure to win sympathy for its characters. But while he attributes some unfavourable reactions to its Irish Famine setting, its main fault is located in characterisations in the main love plot. Owen is a 'scamp', Herbert, unsurprisingly, a 'prig', Clara has no character and her mother, despite the author's eloquent apologia on her behalf, is 'almost revolting'.<sup>996</sup> Nor is there any sense in *An Autobiography* of a more enlightened response to the Famine. In the brief statement he makes there are fewer indications of shortcomings in government measures and his faith, both in his own Irish experience and his Providentialism, are unshaken.<sup>997</sup>

His unfinished novel *The Landleaguers*, written only six years later, reveals a Trollope embittered by what he sees as the ghastly turn of events in Ireland that had wasted the 'opportunities' offered by the Famine. As Melissa Fegan has noted, the evidence is there in Trollope's last novel to contest this explanation of the Famine as 'the harbinger of prosperity' - in Jones's purchase of his land under the Estates Court, in the Irish-American Famine émigrés

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<sup>994</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.374.

<sup>995</sup> *Ibid.*, p.374.

<sup>996</sup> *Autobiography*, p.103.

<sup>997</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.56-7.

returning to fire up agitation, in the wall of the cutting begun as relief work during the Famine behind which Florian's assassin hides.<sup>998</sup> It is not a challenge Trollope is able to concede or even recognize.

It should be noted that a measurement of Trollope's account of the Famine against the historiography substantiates as accurate much of what he wrote about its economic causes. Peter Gray's assessment, for example, of the effects of the land tenure system on pre-Famine Irish economic development, shares some of Trollope's observations:

Most Irish landowners invested little money on the provision and upkeep of the farming infrastructure or on substantive agricultural improvements, preferring to spend on more socially prestigious but largely unproductive projects such as houses, demesnes and urban development...For the majority, maximizing rental income remained their chief priority, and, facilitated by rising population and intense land-hunger, rents rose in real terms until the Famine.<sup>999</sup>

Lack of investment, irresponsible spending and rent greed are all instanced by Trollope.<sup>1000</sup> Joel Mokyr has also noted that Irish landlords 'were rarely interested in agricultural progress, and as a class probably invested little', while Kevin Whelan has concluded, like Trollope, that the proliferation of a class of cottiers who were essentially paid a minimum 'potato wage' operated as a barrier to innovation and improvement.<sup>1001</sup> Moreover, the substantial degree of indebtedness accrued by improvident landowners is confirmed by K.T.Hoppen who has noted that 'by 1844 1,322 estates with a rental of £904,000 (possibly a tenth of the whole) were being managed by the courts, usually in preparation for sales to pay creditors.'<sup>1002</sup>

The historiography also uncovers, however, a certain selectivity in Trollope's representation. By concentrating on the features of the agricultural

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<sup>998</sup> Fegan, p.130.

<sup>999</sup> Gray, pp.4-5.

<sup>1000</sup> See this study, pp.15-16.

<sup>1001</sup> Mokyr, p.284; Kevin Whelan, 'Pre and Post – Famine Landscape Change', in Póirtéir (ed.), *The Great Irish Famine*, pp.19-33 (p.20).

<sup>1002</sup> Hoppen, *Ireland*, p.39.

economy discussed above, he excludes other more positive aspects. Christine Kinealy, for example, has explained that the image of pre-Famine Ireland as 'a poor, backward, potato-based country' is a partial representation. She has described a more diverse and commercialised agricultural economy with, for example, approximately 5,000 country fairs dealing in livestock being held each year and annual exports of a large surplus of food - mainly corn - to Britain.<sup>1003</sup> Moreover, while a large portion of the population was poor in the material sense, in some ways they were better off than agrarian workers elsewhere for 'Irish people tended to live longer, were healthier, better fed, grew taller and were more literate than many of their European counterparts.'<sup>1004</sup> The relatively few man-hours required to cultivate potatoes meant that Irish people also had more leisure time and, outside intermittent periods of failure, they had access to plentiful food. Cheap fuel in the form of peat or turf was also available.<sup>1005</sup> Kinealy argues therefore that when these factors are taken into consideration the depiction of pre-Famine Ireland 'as a monolithic economy, trapped in a spiral of poverty and hurtling towards disaster' is unjustified.<sup>1006</sup>

The issue of how the Irish Poor Law (1838) operated before and at the onset of the Famine is given no significant consideration by Trollope. He simply states without comment how it differed from its English equivalent, the initial reluctance of the Irish to enter the workhouse and landlord complaints about its expense.<sup>1007</sup> Joel Mokyr, however, while remarking on significant benefits for Ireland from the Union, singles out poor relief as, 'the only area in which British rule in Ireland failed.'<sup>1008</sup> Christine Kinealy has also described its unsuitability and inadequacies in the Irish context. She has noted how it failed to appreciate 'local characteristics' and so was ill suited to cope with the bad harvests and subsistence crises which, as Trollope himself was aware, were

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<sup>1003</sup> Christine Kinealy, *This Great Calamity: The Irish Famine, 1845-1852* (Dublin: Gill&Macmillan, 1994), pp.2-3.

<sup>1004</sup> *Ibid.*, p.15.

<sup>1005</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1006</sup> *Ibid.*, p.11.

<sup>1007</sup> Letter to the *Examiner*, 30 March 1850.

<sup>1008</sup> Mokyr, p.290.

part of the agricultural cycle in Ireland.<sup>1009</sup> Significantly she has argued that the unsuitability of the Poor Law was exposed before the blight arrived in 1845, during periods of severe regional distress in 1839-1842.<sup>1010</sup>

As with Trollope's representation of pre-Famine conditions, aspects of his depiction of the course of the Famine are substantiated by the historiography. Mary Daly, for example, has confirmed the unprecedented extent of the Famine and the associated logistical problems (something Trollope offers in mitigation of government relief measures). She has argued, as Trollope did, that the overwhelming extent of the Famine should figure large in any assessment of government relief.<sup>1011</sup> And Christine Kinealy has confirmed that the blight was 'remarkable for its longevity and its geographic spread.'<sup>1012</sup>

Similarly, if the *Examiner* letters and *Castle Richmond* are taken together, the range of landlord response to the Famine which Trollope offers is reflected in the historiography. As Cormac Ó'Gráda has explained, 'The record yields instances of landlords who met the crisis with brutality and irresponsibility, and of others who were bewildered and overwhelmed by it.'<sup>1013</sup> To this can be added examples of active and altruistic landlords like the Marquis of Sligo who, when thousands of poor descended on the town of Westport in Co Mayo in the spring of '47 chartered a ship to sail from America with 1,000 tons of flour which he sold at half price. He bore most of the loss himself and had as a result to close down the family home and move into town.<sup>1014</sup> Trollope's landlords of the *Examiner* letters who refused to give up their carriages, hounds and retinues, the Countess of Desmond disabled by inherited debt and the responsible Fitzgeralds can all find a place in historiographical accounts.

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<sup>1009</sup> Kinealy, *This Great Calamity*, p.107, Letter to the *Examiner*, 25 August 1849.

<sup>1010</sup> *Ibid.*, p.107.

<sup>1011</sup> Daly, p.113.

<sup>1012</sup> Kinealy, *This Great Calamity*, p.345.

<sup>1013</sup> Cormac Ó'Gráda, 'Making Irish Famine History in 1995', *History Workshop Journal*, 42 (Autumn 1996), p.91.

<sup>1014</sup> O'Sullivan, *The Irish World Wide*, Introduction, p.28.

Some of the fine detail of Trollope's descriptions of Famine conditions can also be substantiated. Brigid Sheehy's indignant complaints about the inadequacies of Indian corn reflect an actual resistance among the Irish population to this form of food, just as the bewildered young engineer whom Herbert encounters ineffectually organizing a public works scheme, had real life counterparts.<sup>1015</sup> Trollope's representation of a certain willingness among some relief committees to bend the rules is borne out by criticisms from central government of a lack of ruthlessness.<sup>1016</sup>

However, the general conclusions that Trollope draws and wishes his readers to share are less justified. His affirmations, particularly about the effectiveness of the public works scheme and the operation of the Poor Law, are one-sided. While he admits some shortcomings in public works as a relief measure, his emphasis is on the scale of need and the credit which should be given to the government for introducing this beneficial measure.<sup>1017</sup> Contrary to these claims, Christine Kinealy has concluded that 'By the end of 1846 even the most ardent supporters of the public works realised that the system of providing relief in return for labour had failed.'<sup>1018</sup> And Mary Daly has concurred that ultimately the measure failed to meet the demands of the Famine. Incompetence, corruption, administrative problems, a failure to serve the neediest regions, the removal of workers from the land, rising prices rendering wages inadequate, deaths among workers and the spread of disease through the gangs feature in a long list of failings which contributed to the abandonment of the scheme.<sup>1019</sup>

Trollope characterises the amended Poor Law as the means by which imprudent 'gentlemen of Ireland, having learnt a most useful lesson...did put their shoulders to the wheel', destitution was significantly reduced and

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<sup>1015</sup> *Castle Richmond*, pp.85-6, p.205; E. Margaret Crawford, 'Food and Famine', in Póirtéir, *The Great Irish Famine*, pp.60-73 (p.64); Kinealy, *This Great Calamity*, p.47; p.56.

<sup>1016</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.210; Kinealy, *This Great Calamity*, p.103.

<sup>1017</sup> Letter to the *Examiner*, 25 August 1849.

<sup>1018</sup> Kinealy, *This Great Calamity*, p.100.

<sup>1019</sup> Daly, p.130.

agriculture began to recover.<sup>1020</sup> Moreover, it has brought security to the pauper who, entitled now to food and shelter, need no longer fear eviction.<sup>1021</sup> The historiography paints a much less laudatory picture. Mary Daly has reserved 'major criticism' for 'the decision to abandon any special famine relief programmes, to deny the continuation of an emergency after the autumn of 1847 despite the fact that distress remained prevalent in Ireland throughout 1849 and in some cases until 1850', and to locate the relief burden instead on a law which was specifically not designed to cope with a major Famine.<sup>1022</sup>

Christine Kinealy too has found signs of its ineffectiveness in the levels of excess mortality in the workhouses.<sup>1023</sup> Importantly, where Trollope generally represents the government as a unified body, Kinealy has pointed to a significant division between the perceptions and opinions of officials in Ireland and those in London which reached a crisis when Edward Twistleton, Chief Poor Law Commissioner for Ireland, resigned. The reasons for his departure suggest not only significant weaknesses in the Poor Law as a means of relieving distress, but also continuing high levels of demand for relief. The Whig administration, having determined that the relief of Irish poor should be financed from Irish resources, responded to continuing demands by introducing a new tax of 6d in the pound, known as the Rate-in-Aid. Twistleton resigned, believing that Ireland should not at a time of widespread distress, be left to her own resources. He denounced the government for refusing to adequately finance the Poor Law. Kinealy cites perhaps the strongest evidence that reliance on the Poor Law to relieve the Famine was unjustified when she quotes George Nicholl. Since he had framed the legislation, his conclusion that, 'where the land had ceased to be reproductive, the necessary means of relief cannot be obtained from it, and a Poor Law will no longer be operative' is a damning one.<sup>1024</sup>

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<sup>1020</sup> Letter to the *Examiner*, 11 May 1850.

<sup>1021</sup> Letter to the *Examiner*, 8 June 1850.

<sup>1022</sup> Daly, p.114.

<sup>1023</sup> Christine Kinealy, 'The Rôle of the Poor Law During the Famine', in Póirtéir, *The Great Irish Famine*, pp.104-22 (p.118).

<sup>1024</sup> *Ibid.*, p.120-1.

While he admits a level of suffering, at least until *The Landleaguers*, Trollope's assessment of the consequences of the Famine is primarily positive. The signs of recovery vaunted in the *Examiner* letters and encouraged by the Poor Law and the Encumbered Estates Acts have, to his mind, reached fruition by the time he writes *Castle Richmond*. He allows himself to leap ahead from its 1847 setting to describe scenes of 1859. Markets are busy; money is in plentiful supply; land prices and wages are rising. 'Ireland in her prosperity' has emerged from 'famine', 'pestilence' and 'exodus'.<sup>1025</sup> Both Alvin Jackson and Cormac Ó'Gráda have noted such post-Famine economic improvements. Jackson has described a rise in real wages and in living standards, and an end to the dominance of the potato in the Irish diet.<sup>1026</sup> Ó'Gráda has concluded, 'Few would deny that once economic life returned to normal in the early 1850s, most famine survivors became winners in the material sense.' There is even an echo of Trollope's labourer thriving, 'in some newer – for him better – land', in Ó'Gráda's confirmation that emigrants 'were materially better off where they went.'<sup>1027</sup>

Trollope's hopes that the Encumbered Estates Acts would encourage substantial numbers of English investors did not materialise. The majority of purchasers were Irish landlords who had survived the Famine in good financial shape.<sup>1028</sup>

Most importantly, Trollope's concentration on economic recovery obscures both the human cost of the Famine and the suffering which continued long after the official declaration of the end of the crisis. An historiographical consensus seems to have been reached at around one million 'excess' deaths resulting from the Famine, and these disproportionately among labourers and cottiers.<sup>1029</sup> And the onerous on-going cost of operating the Poor Law after 1847 is evidence in itself of continuing distress. Nor, of course, did Ireland simply awake from the nightmare a new and prosperous land. Alvin Jackson

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<sup>1025</sup> *Castle Richmond*, pp.346-7; p.489.

<sup>1026</sup> Jackson, *Ireland*, p.84.

<sup>1027</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.68; Ó'Gráda, 'Making Irish Famine History', p.96.

<sup>1028</sup> Hoppen, *Mid-Victorian Generation*, p.575.

<sup>1029</sup> Hoppen, *Ireland*, p.62.

has argued convincingly for the existence of 'a much wider pain': the burden of self-imposed guilt carried by the survivors – men and women ashamed of their action or inaction during the Famine.<sup>1030</sup> Indeed, the selectivity of Trollope's representation of the Famine is indicative as much of his membership of this group as of his allegiance to the ideologues who dominated government policy.

This study demonstrates that Anthony Trollope's representation of the Irish Famine is a complex and, at times, contradictory and surprising one. It is a considered and detailed account from one of the century's leading English writers of a critical time in Ireland's history. It contains elements which suggest insight and compassion, but more which are suggestive of short-sighted heartlessness. The explicit analysis is undermined by the fictional tale intended to support it. Aspects are confirmed by the historiography, but this also exposes an imbalance and omissions. A web of influences and motivations combine to create this representation.

Roy Foster, while recognizing Trollope's perceptiveness in other aspects of his representation of Ireland, has described his view of the administration during the Famine as 'deliberately myopic'. Trollope's biographer Victoria Glendinning has remarked upon, 'The pathological insensitivity of some of his perceptions and attitudes, among much that was sensible and accurate.' The blinkered callousness evident in his representation of the Famine is in some ways uncharacteristic and therefore surprising. As his poignant portrayal of the doomed and isolated Thady Macdermot and convincing depiction of the mixed motivations of Ribbonmen in *The Macdermots of Ballycloran* demonstrate, he can be insightful in his observations and delineations of the subtle complexities of Irish society.

The 'moral crassness' of his insistent adherence to a harsh, pro-government, Providentialist explanation of the Famine is also surprising given that there are aspects of the man and his work which would raise other expectations.<sup>1031</sup> In his representation of religion in Ireland, for instance,

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<sup>1030</sup> Jackson, *Ireland*, p.81.

<sup>1031</sup> Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1995), p.15.



Trollope demonstrates his willingness to challenge prevailing attitudes. He offers positive images of Irish Catholic priesthood which oppose anti-Catholicism. Moreover, his liberal religious stance would not seem to make him a likely believer in such Divine extremism.<sup>1032</sup>

Perhaps most puzzling of all is the tension between Trollope's professed view and that available in his fiction. This is partially unravelled by Bill Overton who has argued for the existence of two Trollopes – the official and the unofficial. The former he finds in Trollope's direct, often consciously didactic pronouncements, the latter emerging indirectly from his fictional creations. The official Trollope is more conformist and conventional, even prejudiced, the unofficial is more liberal and perceptive. An examination of Trollope's representation of the Famine reveals these two Trollopes operating by two competing sets of ethical standards, one able in his fiction to imagine situations which the ideology of the other cannot accommodate. The result, as in *Castle Richmond*, is an unconvincing and conflicted representation.

However, arguably the most influential factor dictating the nature of Trollope's response to the Irish Famine is his problematic relationship with Ireland. His affectionate perceptive portrayals, his underplaying of the most tragic consequences, his tenacious adherence to a pro-government Providentialism all emerge from competing reactions to that country. While Trollope's residence in Ireland at the time of the Famine placed him ideally to observe and comment on it, he was far from being a neutral observer. He was fond of the country and he was a British official. While the opportunity afforded by Ireland for him to transform himself personally, socially and professionally, certainly left him warm feelings for the country, the events of the Famine brought him up against extreme distress. Moreover, this distress was being read by some as evidence of British misrule. For Trollope to concede this would be to question not only the basis of his official position but also the basis on which he had built his longed-for social acceptance, personal happiness and professional success. With this in mind he energetically defended the

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<sup>1032</sup> See above, p.38-39

government and, if the theory he chose to accomplish this seems at odds with some aspects of his religious position, it is entirely in keeping with his belief in the function of religious faith as a source of personal comfort and reassurance. For Trollope and others, in the midst of suffering, life largely carried on. One response to this emotionally charged situation is to avoid confronting its most disturbing features. In this mixture of involvement and detachment, and conflicting affections and loyalties, the more contradictory elements of Trollope's representation find an explanation.

In an article about Famine historiography, Christine Kinealy selects a quotation from Leo Tolstoy to explain the mind-set of 'revisionist' historians. Examining the characteristics she discerns as denoting revisionism in the Famine context – minimising its impact; emphasising inevitability; rehabilitating the British Government – Trollope's representation seems to provide evidence of very early origins for this practice. Certainly the Tolstoy quotation offers an eloquent insight into the motivation to cling determinedly, as Trollope did, to a professed ideology:

I know that most men, including those at ease with the problems of the greatest complexity, can seldom accept even the simplest and most obvious truth if it be such as would oblige them to admit the falsity of their conclusions which they have delighted in explaining to colleagues, in which they have proudly taught to others, and which they have woven, thread by thread, into the fabric of their lives.<sup>1033</sup>

Trollope had woven his explanation of the Great Irish Famine into the fabric of his life and he clung to it resolutely, but ultimately it proved as insubstantial and inadequate as the silk handkerchief which Herbert Fitzgerald draped over one of its tiny victims.

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<sup>1033</sup> Leo Tolstoy, 'What is Art' (1902). Quoted in Christine Kinealy, 'Beyond Revisionism', reassessing the Great Irish Famine, *History Ireland* (Winter, 1995), pp.28-34 (p.28).

## CHAPTER FIVE

# IRISH NATIONALISM

This final chapter will deal with the issue which Trollope arguably found even more difficult to confront than the harrowing events of the Famine – Irish ambitions for increased independence. The term ‘nationalism’ is used here to include all calls for increased Irish independence during Trollope’s lifetime, whatever the degree of separation involved. In part this is in keeping with both Trollope’s own failure to differentiate in any detailed, meaningful way between nationalist movements, and the frequent failure of the organizations themselves to devise precise definitions. More honestly, however, it provides a convenient umbrella term under which to construct an analysis which nonetheless recognizes the peculiar characteristics of these groups.

The caution evident above as I attempt to tiptoe around the explosive terminology of Irish politics in itself suggests that the battlefield imagery which frequently attends surveys of Irish historiography is nowhere more appropriate than in relation to Irish political historiography. This is not to suggest that the Irish nationalists of Trollope’s era were invariably given to violent tactics but it is rather to comment on the disparate, sometimes starkly opposed, interpretations apparent in the historical discourse during the nineteenth century and after.

Alan O’Day, for example, has identified Unionist, Irish patriotic, liberal, university-based, Marxist and ‘Revisionist’ perspectives in the ‘voluminous’ writing on Home Rule since 1886, and has noted ‘the fisticuffs of recent academic disputes.’<sup>1034</sup> Alvin Jackson has defined nationalist, unionist, ‘scientific’, ‘liberal’, neo-nationalist, counter-revisionist and Marxian interpretations of Irish political history.<sup>1035</sup> Surveys of the historiography tend to concur on the existence of some obviously partisan contemporary works and the appearance of a more professional, academic approach in the second quarter of the twentieth century. However, descriptions of recent ‘historical

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<sup>1034</sup> Alan O’Day, *Irish Home Rule, 1867-1921* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), pp.13-15. [nb.The author’s terms and capitalisation have been used above].

<sup>1035</sup> Jackson, *Ireland*, pp.1-4. [nb.Again, the author’s terms and capitalisation are used].

warfare' seem to confirm the continuing difficulty for historians in maintaining, or rather convincing other historians that they are maintaining, a reasonable degree of objectivity.<sup>1036</sup>

Added to this is the complication that the partition of the north-east corner of the island has meant that nationalism has been, and still is, a live issue with the potential to influence interpretations of past events and the focus of historical research. Jackson has suggested, for example, that the paramilitary ceasefires in 1994 and 1997 allowed a renewal of a nationalist historical perspective on modern Irish history which had been halted by the IRA campaigns of 1969 and after.<sup>1037</sup>

Mindful of this, but also aware of Trollope's claim to be providing an accurate portrayal of Ireland, investigating the light that the available historiography can throw on the nature of his representation of Irish nationalism is a valuable exercise. Perhaps these difficulties serve best as a salutary reminder that in any case, 'No History is value-free.'<sup>1038</sup>

There is relatively little literary criticism on Trollope's depiction of Irish nationalism, objective or otherwise, to be negotiated since critical analysis of Trollope as a political writer concentrates overwhelmingly on his British parliamentary works.<sup>1039</sup> With relation to his Irish fiction, critiques which focus on the influence of Trollope's unionism are much more common than those which explicitly examine his depiction of nationalism. The post-colonial perspective of much recent criticism has contributed to this, especially in relation to his portrayal of the Famine and his Irish MP Phineas Finn.<sup>1040</sup> Where this inevitably involves some assessment of his attitude to nationalism, it is often slight or implied and does not evolve into a detailed examination. Ostensibly this can be explained by the fact that the representation of Irish

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<sup>1036</sup> Hoppen, *Ireland*, pp.1-5; D.George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland*, 3rd edn (London: Routledge, 1995), p. 393, pp..397-400; O'Day, *Irish Home Rule*, pp.13-15 ; Jackson, *Ireland*, p.1-4.

<sup>1037</sup> Jackson, *Ireland*, p.3.

<sup>1038</sup> Boyce, *Nationalism*, p.393.

<sup>1039</sup> See John Halperin, *Trollope and Politics: A Study of the Pallisers and Others* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977); Arthur Pollard, 'Trollope's Political Novels', An inaugural lecture delivered in the University of Hull on 30 April 1968 (University of Hull, 1968); Robert Tracy, *Trollope's Later Novels* (University of California Press: London, 1978).

<sup>1040</sup> See Berol, pp.103-17; Corbett.

nationalism occupies relatively few pages in Trollope's Irish fiction and the critical coverage is merely reflecting this, but to accept that would be to deny the significance of the issue. Given its prominence as one of the most problematic and recurrent aspects of the Irish Question, this relative paucity of representation in itself raises the question as to why Trollope seems to choose not to advertise its existence.

Bill Overton has commented on Trollope's apparent marginalisation of Irish nationalism. He has read Trollope's adoption, but subsequent abandonment of the subject of the trial of Daniel O'Connell and the Repeal movement in the opening chapters of *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*, as a deliberate suppression of the case for political change.<sup>1041</sup> Patrick Lonergan has interpreted Trollope's invention of a coalition government in *The Prime Minister* as a device to avoid an examination of the Home Rule question.<sup>1042</sup> Others have detected strategies designed to devalue the nationalist cause. Mary Jean Corbett, although she underestimates the formative influence of Trollope's avoidance of stereotypes, has read the English nationality of the villains in *Castle Richmond* as evidence of 'the consistency with which Trollope undercuts and downplays the possibility of native Irish resistance to colonial rule.'<sup>1043</sup> Terence de Vere White links a tendency to 'always underrate the power of nationalistic ideals' with Trollope's 'dislike of heroics'<sup>1044</sup> Conor Johnston has attributed his hostile portrayal of Irish nationalist priests to Trollope's conservative liberalism.<sup>1045</sup>

Most recently a concentration on Ireland's 'colonial' status has occasionally produced conclusions, in otherwise astute critiques, which underestimate the sympathetic realism of much of Trollope's Irish writing and

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<sup>1041</sup> Overton, p.20.

<sup>1042</sup> Patrick Lonergan, 'The Representation of Phineas Finn', pp.147-57.

<sup>1043</sup> Corbett, pp.144-5.

<sup>1044</sup> Terence de Vere White, Introduction to *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* (The Folio Society: London, 1992), p.xiii.

<sup>1045</sup> Conor Johnston, 'The Macdermots of Ballycloran: Trollope as Conservative-Liberal', *Eire-Ireland*, 16, 2 (Summer 1981), pp.71-92; Johnston, 'Parsons, Priests, and Politics', pp.80-97.

claim too much for his fiction as allegory.<sup>1046</sup> It is thus that Laura M. Berol, fails to consider the possibility of apolitical moral and social messages in the abusive relationship between the Protestant Barry Lynch and his Catholic sister Anty when she, with misplaced ambition, concludes that it is intended to replay 'on an individual level the history of oppression that the Anglo-Irish Protestant Ascendancy established through England's colonial exploits,' and is, 'the neatest and most transparent allegory of Irish social conflicts available in the work of Trollope or Thackeray.'<sup>1047</sup> Similarly, whilst I endorse Bridget Matthews-Kane's conclusion that tensions 'between the text's ideology and the reader's emotional response ultimately unsettle most of *Castle Richmond's* readers,' Clara's uncertain memory of her response to Owen Fitzgerald's proposal of marriage, is surely too flimsy a hook on which to hang the claim that Trollope's treatment of memory in the text 'attacks the very basis of the cultural nationalist movement.'<sup>1048</sup>

The apparent inseparability of Ireland and politics perhaps goes some way to explaining these particular literary critical interpretations and is something to which Trollope himself makes reference in his final letter in the *Examiner* series where he declares that: 'An attempt to describe the state of Ireland without an allusion to politics would appear to be another acting of Hamlet without the part of the prince.'<sup>1049</sup> Setting aside the complication that he then tries to convince the reader that Ireland is innately politically apathetic, there is a recognition here of a widespread perception of mid-nineteenth century Ireland as a political issue. During the time when Trollope was writing, the Irish Question had an unavoidable political dimension. While it seems likely that, as K.T. Hoppen has argued, Irish politics were just as often 'concerned

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<sup>1046</sup> As Terrence Mc Donough's recent book demonstrates, whether or not Ireland was a colony is still a hotly debated topic. Its incorporation under the Act of Union with concomitant access to representation at Westminster would seem to invalidate the application of the term, but many would argue that the Irish experience of conquest, occupation and subjugation qualifies it for colonial status. For a brilliant and provocative airing of the matter see Terry Eagleton, 'Afterword: Ireland and Colonialism', in Terrence McDonough (ed.), *Was Ireland A Colony?: Economics, Politics and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2005), pp.326-333.

<sup>1047</sup> Berol, 'The Anglo-Irish Threat', p 103, p.113.

<sup>1048</sup> Matthews-Kane, 'Love's Labours Lost', p.129.

<sup>1049</sup> Letter to the *Examiner*, 15 June 1850.

with the local and the everyday as with the grand issues such as repeal, Home Rule, or independence', the Act of Union bestowed on every aspect of Irish life the potential to excite nationalist debate.<sup>1050</sup> It is important in the context of this chapter, therefore, to appreciate the conjunction between political events and Trollope's residence in Ireland.

When Trollope arrived in Ireland in 1841 Daniel O'Connell, having succeeded in winning Catholic Emancipation in 1829, was thoroughly engaged in the Repeal cause. Trollope's early years in the country coincided with O'Connell's 'monster' meetings, his trial for sedition and his death in 1847. Trollope was resident in Clonmel not many miles from Ballingarry in 1848 when O'Connell's erstwhile associates, the Young Irelanders, staged their abortive rising. As he removed to England in 1859, Fenianism was being established after a post-Famine period of relative political calm with an emphasis on constitutional strategies. The rising of 1867, which brought Irish nationalist violence to British cities, occurred in the year after Anthony and Rose had holidayed in Bantry Bay and while he was writing *Phineas Finn*, whose eponymous hero is an Irish MP. Issac Butt, who founded the Home Rule movement in 1870, had, in his rôle as a barrister, sparred humorously with Trollope in an Irish courtroom some twenty-one years before.<sup>1051</sup> 1874 saw substantial election success for this movement which under Charles Stewart Parnell's more militant leadership would be linked during the Land War with the Land League from which Trollope derived the title of his final novel. Parnell's release from prison under the Kilmainham 'treaty' with Gladstone took place in the year of Trollope's death, 1882. Gladstone's public conversion to the Home Rule cause, which would almost certainly have appalled Trollope, took place three years after the author's death.<sup>1052</sup>

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<sup>1050</sup> Hoppen, *The Mid-Victorian Generation*, p.561.

<sup>1051</sup> Mullen, pp.229-31.

<sup>1052</sup> For accounts of political Ireland in Trollope's lifetime see Boyce, *Nationalism*; Hoppen, *Ireland*; Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800-2000* (London: Phoenix, 2003); Jackson, *Ireland*; O'Day, *Irish Home Rule*. For Trollope's experiences in Ireland see Hall, *Trollope*, pp.81-171, pp. 498-506; Mullen, *Anthony Trollope*, pp.113-52, pp.197-234, pp.644-8.

During Trollope's lifetime, therefore, the constitutional position of Ireland was challenged but did not change, and it is important to note that, with the exception of the Fenians, those calling for change were not insisting on a complete break with Britain; some were even promoting Home Rule as a means of preserving the Union. This did not prevent the Irish Question pushing to the front of the political stage, more understandably so at times of insurrection and agricultural crisis and disaster. In the last years of Trollope's life Parnell's obstructionist tactics in parliament, the employment of boycotting and more violent modes of agitation in Ireland, were guaranteeing its continuing high parliamentary and public profile, with a particular focus on both land reform and Home Rule.<sup>1053</sup>

Given his active interest in politics, Trollope might be expected to find the Irish situation a fascinating one. His engagement is reflected in his political novels - John Halperin has made the claim that *Phineas Finn* 'may well be the best political novel in English.'<sup>1054</sup> For three years in the late 1860s Trollope edited *St.Pauls*, a political journal to which he also contributed articles.<sup>1055</sup> His political involvement went even further in 1868 when he stood (but failed to be elected) as a Liberal candidate for Beverley. In true Trollopian style, this appears to have come about through a combination of his high opinion of the value of political service with a rather more base desire to get the better of an uncle, now dead, who had jeered at his young nephew's political ambitions.<sup>1056</sup> The Beverley episode may well have been a disillusioning one but it certainly provided first hand experience of politics outside the rarefied atmosphere of Westminster and the drawing rooms of London.

His careful description in *An Autobiography* of his political position is devised with a deft precision which allows for a generous amount of ideological elbowroom. Trollope, as has already been noted, explains that he considers himself, 'an advanced, but still a conservative Liberal'. Perceiving inequality as

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<sup>1053</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1054</sup> Halperin, *Trollope and Politics*, p.69.

<sup>1055</sup> John Sutherland, 'Trollope and *St.Paul's*', in Bareham, pp.116-137.

<sup>1056</sup> *Autobiography*, p.186.



'the work of God', he nonetheless sees a Divine intention for that inequality to be gradually and peacefully diminished.<sup>1057</sup> Gradualism is central to his political philosophy and his life-long disapproval of radicals emerges in unsympathetic portrayals of them in his fiction. Turnbull in *Phineas Finn*, who is offered as something of an unprincipled demagogue, is but one of a series of discredited radicals in his novels.<sup>1058</sup>

Janet Egleson Dunleavy has argued that Trollope's interest in politics, 'was matched by and compounded with his lifelong fascination with Ireland.'<sup>1059</sup> A letter from Ireland to his mother in Italy in the revolutionary year of 1848 tells something of the impact on his political perceptions. Its remarks on the contrast between the political and civil unrest dominating press reports, and the actual experience of life going on without disruption, will resonate with any one who has shared this:

Everybody magnifies the rows at a distance from him. You write of tranquillity in Tuscany, where we expected to hear of revolt, provisional governments, and military occupation. And I get letters from England asking me whether I am not afraid to have my wife and children in this country, whereas all I hear or see of Irish rows is in the columns of the *Times* newspaper.<sup>1060</sup>

The same letter, however, also provides an early instance of Trollope's preference for taking this one step further and, by the distasteful employment of stereotypes, minimising Ireland's political potency:

I think there is too much intelligence in England for any large body of men to look for any sudden improvement; and not enough intelligence in Ireland for any body of men at all to conceive the possibility of social improvement.<sup>1061</sup>

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<sup>1057</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.186-7.

<sup>1058</sup> *Phineas Finn*, pp.160-6; Halperin, *Trollope and Politics*, p.20.

<sup>1059</sup> Janet Egleson Dunleavy, 'Trollope and Ireland' in John Halperin (ed.) *Trollope Centenary Essays* (Macmillan: London and Basingstoke, 1982), pp.53-69 (p.55).

<sup>1060</sup> A. T. to Fanny Trollope, Spring 1848, in Hall, *Letters*, p.17.

<sup>1061</sup> *Ibid.*

He was reminded of the contrast between image and experience, of his sense of how the routine can exist with the revolutionary, which he had noted thirty-four years before, as he wrote to Rose during the first of two visits to Ireland in what would prove to be the year of his death: 'It is astonishing how one loses here all sense of rows and riots and how soon one begins to feel that the world is going on the same as ever.'<sup>1062</sup> It is not accompanied now, however, by a reassuring dismissal of Irish political ambitions but rather, in the wake of the Phoenix Park assassinations, by his idea that 'we ought to see the Parnell set put down. We should try it out with them and see whether we cannot conquer them. I do not doubt but that we could, them and the American host at their back.'<sup>1063</sup> Reflected here is Trollope's support for the repressive measures advocated by his friend W.E.Forster who had resigned as Chief Secretary for Ireland in protest at Gladstone's policies over Parnell and Home Rule.<sup>1064</sup> September 1882 would find Trollope writing of the leader of the party for which he had stood in Beverley, 'I for one cannot forgive him the injustice which he has done in Ireland at the behest of Mr. Bright.'<sup>1065</sup> The Grand Old Man is perhaps partially excused blame for originating the measures when he is seen to be urged on by one of Trollope's dreaded radicals, but his actions are unforgivable nonetheless. Tellingly, like Forster, Trollope found the Kilmainham 'treaty' particularly abhorrent. He does not employ the logic he had applied in *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* to conclude that imprisonment of political leaders runs the risk of winning recruits for the very organizations to which the government is opposed. Rather he commends an article in the *Observer* which accuses Gladstone of making a 'fatal error' and 'grievous blunder' in being party to the 'treaty'.<sup>1066</sup>

A letter from Trollope's son Frederic in September 1882 cannot be said with certainty to contain his father's opinions on the political state of the country

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<sup>1062</sup> A. T. to Rose Trollope, 20 May 1882, in Hall, *Letters*, p.963.

<sup>1063</sup> A. T. to Rose Trollope, 23 May 1882, in Hall, *Letters*, p.963.

<sup>1064</sup> R.C.Terry, *Anthony Trollope: The Artist in Hiding* (London and Basingstoke: Macmillan, 1977), pp.196-7.

<sup>1065</sup> A. T. to Rose Trollope, 23 May 1882, in Hall, *Letters*, p.963.

<sup>1066</sup> Note in Hall, *Letters*, p.963.

which had been their home and which would be the subject of Trollope's last novel as it had been of his first. But there is something in its manner which appears to expect paternal approval for the stance taken. Frederic, who in exclaiming, 'What an everlasting trouble those Irish fellows are,' seems to have forgotten that technically he is one of 'those Irish fellows' himself, seems prepared to agree some limited form of Home Rule 'if they can show reason and justice.'<sup>1067</sup> His objection to concessions while agitation continues is a defensible one but his reaction to an envisaged request for independence is unthinking:

[I]f they go in for Independence, they must be crushed, if necessarily utterly – But nothing should be conceded to them except by reason. They should be taught that they cannot work upon our fears – I must say that I think letting those men out of jail in the hopes that they would use their influence with the Irish was an unEnglish thing to do.<sup>1068</sup>

Ironically, given his argument that 'nothing should be conceded except by reason', there is a point at which reason ceases to be part of Frederic's response to the situation. In this, in his sense of the otherness of his fellow Irishmen, or at least those who espouse the nationalist cause, and in his automatic assumption that Englishness represents some sort of 'gold standard' for correct political behaviour, he reflects some of the confusion and impulses which are formative in his father's depiction of Irish nationalism.

Father Cullen in *The Macdermots* who suffers so much when set beside his parish priest, is the first in a line of representations of Irish nationalists designed to encourage the reader to disdain, ignore or dismiss their cause. He is in most things, as has already been observed, the venerable John's opposite:

He was educated at Maynooth, was the son of a little farmer in the neighbourhood, was perfectly illiterate, - but chiefly showed his dissimilarity to the parish priest by his dirt and untidiness. He was a

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<sup>1067</sup> Frederic Trollope to A. T., 5 Sept. 1882, in Hall, *Letters*, pp.983-4

<sup>1068</sup> *Ibid.*

violent politician; the Catholic Emancipation had become law, and he therefore had no longer that grievance to complain of; but he still had national grievances, respecting which he zealously declaimed when he could find a hearer. Repeal of the Union was not, at that time, the common topic, morning and night, at work and at rest, at table and even at the altar, as it afterwards became; but there were, even then, some who maintained that Ireland would never be herself, till the Union was repealed; and among these was Father Cullen.<sup>1069</sup>

Into this embodiment of Irish nationalism Trollope carefully incorporates a devaluation of the Repeal movement. Cullen's Maynooth education, it is implied, is not only inferior to the French education enjoyed by Father John but is also one which encourages narrow-minded parochialism.<sup>1070</sup> This is reinforced by the improbable claim that Cullen is 'perfectly illiterate'. His lowly origins make him no match for the parish priest and his even lower standards of personal grooming and hygiene are an ominous sign. Already the reader is encouraged not to consider seriously Cullen's claim for Repeal. The additional information that, 'He was zealous for his religion as for his politics' is not intended to redeem him since Trollope energetically disapproved of active proselytism, whatever its confessional origin, and Cullen's particularly insistent methods are shown in any case to be ineffective, even opening him up to ridicule.<sup>1071</sup> If the reader had any lingering intentions to examine the man and his opinions more closely, they are surely repulsed by an ensuing description of the sweaty, oleaginous curate with his, 'lank and yellow features, much-worn dress and dirty, moist hand.'<sup>1072</sup> Significantly, in this first novel, the parish priest is seen to be in full control of his curate. As Conor Johnston has observed, Cullen and his opinions are neatly put in their proper place.<sup>1073</sup> When the obtuse and lardy Cullen lingers unwanted by Father John's fire, deaf

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<sup>1069</sup> *Ibid.*, p.44.

<sup>1070</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.40-1; Appendix, p.643

<sup>1071</sup> *Ibid.*, p.99.

<sup>1072</sup> *Ibid.*, p.88.

<sup>1073</sup> Johnston, 'Parson, Priests and Politics', p.93.

and blind to hints that he should go, the parish priest is seen to be able to dismiss him with a paternal, "...just go home, there's a good fellow."<sup>1074</sup>

This dismissal of Cullen and, by association, the case for Repeal sits alongside other representations of Irish society in this novel which suggest complexity and diversity, but imply also that nationalism is not a prominent motivation or consideration. In Trollope's Ireland personal, moral, religious and social considerations are often seen to be dominant influences. Trollope's Ribbonmen, for example, are not essentially political animals. Joe Reynolds has been made 'desperate' by poverty, misfortune and his descent into crime.<sup>1075</sup> As a result he is 'ready not only to take part against any form of restrictive authority, but anxious to be a leader in doing so; he had somehow conceived the idea that it would be a grand thing to make a figure through the country; and, as he would have said himself, "av he were hanged, what harum?"'<sup>1076</sup> Similarly the land agent Pat Brady has uppermost in his mind thoughts of pursuing his own interests, rather than of freeing Ireland, when he encourages the enlistment of his master Thady Macdermot into the ranks of the secret society and manoeuvres its members towards the murder of a government officer.<sup>1077</sup> When this officer, the Revenue Policeman Ussher, is killed it is by Thady, although not as a political act but in the mistaken belief that Ussher is abducting his sister. Indeed Trollope incorporates into Thady's tale a potent dramatisation of the unfortunate consequences of too readily reading events in Ireland as primarily political. The failure of magistrates and government to appreciate the personal and local motivations for the death of Ussher and the subsequent attack on Hyacinth Keegan causes them to overreact, to 'imagine that the country was in a disorderly state generally, and that it was therefore necessary to follow up the prosecutions at the Assizes with more than ordinary vigour.'<sup>1078</sup> It is thus that poor unfortunate Thady's fate is sealed. Overwhelmed by his responsibilities he is at most guilty of

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<sup>1074</sup> *Macdermots*, p.100.

<sup>1075</sup> *Ibid.*, p.143.

<sup>1076</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1077</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.137-45.

<sup>1078</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.448.

manslaughter while defending his sister. He has given himself up to the authorities and turned his back on the Ribbonmen. The worthy Father John is his confessor, friend and advocate but none of this can save him because an alarmist and primarily political interpretation of his attack on Ussher decrees that he must be executed.

Trollope's second novel, *The Kellys and the O'Kellys*, opens with such a detailed description of Daniel O'Connell's arrival for his conspiracy trial that it raises the expectation that this will form a major part of the novel. The author's observational skills are in evidence as he deftly invokes the excited anticipation of the crowd awaiting the Liberator's arrival.<sup>1079</sup> He gives a discerning account too of how such celebrated cases temporarily but completely capture the public imagination so that ordinary citizens become briefly conversant with obscure legal terms.<sup>1080</sup> It is interesting with reference to Trollope's later opposition to the Kilmainham 'treaty' that here he opposes the imprisonment of O'Connell, arguing that it would increase his popularity by supplying him with the glamour of martyrdom.<sup>1081</sup> Moreover, in its relative mildness the account contains little of the venom Trollope would later direct at O'Connell.

The two young Repealers at the focus of the description, Martin and John Kelly, are not loathsome or illiterate like Cullen. Indeed one, Martin Kelly, emerges in the novel that follows as an attractive, hard-working and sensible young man. Importantly, however, the novel moves abruptly from the O'Connell trial to develop into a double-plotted comedy of manners and Martin's political stance is largely forgotten. The opening and other brief references to the trial seem to serve primarily to locate events geographically and chronologically. Significantly, Trollope suggests that the Kellys' support for Repeal has a dubious basis. Even the novel's first readers in 1848 would have been aware of the inaccuracy of Martin's conviction that Repeal would be achieved before the close of 1844, while John lacks conviction altogether, relishing only the excitement of the battle:

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<sup>1079</sup> *The Kellys*, pp.3-4, pp.13-14.

<sup>1080</sup> *Ibid.*, p.2.

<sup>1081</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.1-2.

...it was the battle, rather than the thing battled for, that was dear to him; the strife, rather than the result. He felt that it would be dull times in Dublin when they should have no usurping Government to abuse, no Saxon Parliament to upbraid, no English laws to ridicule, and no Established Church to curse.<sup>1082</sup>

Albeit with rather more subtlety, Trollope has given the reader as little reason to pay serious attention to the political views of John and Martin Kelly as to those of Cullen. Moreover, the O'Connell Trollope describes arriving at the Four Courts in a display of 'bravado' and 'contempt' is the O'Connell who excites emotional idolatry and not considered affiliation.

There are some further references in the novel to the trial and the political climate but none which encourages serious consideration of the validity of the Repeal cause. A sense of the continuing fascination with the developments of the O'Connell trial is reflected later in the novel in a discussion between the young Lord Ballindine and some of his friends. Among them is 'a little Connaught member of Parliament' named Morris. His diminutive size when combined with the wearing of a wig, a lack of intelligence and an inability to recognize when his audience has tired of his oft-repeated stories, does nothing to recommend his cause. This is reinforced by Mat Tierney's wry suggestion that Morris is in any case only an opportunistic, fair-weather Repealer. He remarks that, "Morris'll never let his politics harm him,...Repeal's a very good thing the other side of the Shannon; or one might carry it as far as Conciliation Hall, if one is hard pressed, and near an election."<sup>1083</sup> By contrast, through Tierney Trollope also seems to acknowledge the importance to government of popular assent, and the impossibility of successful repression by force. With reference to O'Connell *et al*, Tierney comments:

I can understand they would have all been found guilty of high treason a few years back, and probably have been hung or beheaded; and if they

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<sup>1082</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.17-18

<sup>1083</sup> *Ibid.*, p.184.

could do that now, the country would be all the quieter. But they can't: the people will have their own way.<sup>1084</sup>

However, at the same time Tierney pronounces rather colourfully on the issue raised in the novel's first chapter - the imprisonment of the alleged conspirators - and in a way that shows little respect for them or their demands. He recommends that, "if they want the people to go easy, they shouldn't put O'Connell into prison. Rob them all of the glories of martyrdom, and you'd find you'll cut their combs and stop their crowing."<sup>1085</sup>

In his letters to *The Examiner* Trollope considers the subject of political Ireland in the context of his Providential explanation of the Famine which vindicates the government. He makes a call too for English investors to take advantage of the Encumbered Estates Acts by buying Irish land. His earlier relatively restrained undercutting of the Repeal movement is replaced by a more energetic denial that it has any real substance. He claims not only that Ireland is politically quiescent but also that the Irish people are 'not naturally prone to political excitement,' and even that there is no prospect of political agitation in Ireland for the remainder of the century.<sup>1086</sup>

He justifies this opinion by expounding a theory of Irish political activity which argues that it is dependent on the co-existence of an inherent susceptibility to charismatic leadership in the Irish people with the presence of such a leader. Daniel O'Connell who had been fulfilling that rôle is, happily, deceased. This allows Trollope to declare: 'O'Connell and Irish agitation were co-existent, co-eval and inseparable; the one could not exist without the other, they died together, the vital principle of their joint life being worn out and extinct.'<sup>1087</sup> In terms which rely on stereotypical notions of Irish emotionalism, incendiary eloquence and immaturity, he erases political Ireland. The Irish people are, 'impetuous, impassioned and quick-worded' and as such do not

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<sup>1084</sup> *Ibid.*, p.186.

<sup>1085</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1086</sup> Letter to the *Examiner*, 15 June 1850.

<sup>1087</sup> *Ibid.*



make conscientious and steady leaders.<sup>1088</sup> Political duties are 'assumed without conviction, performed without principle, and abandoned without consideration.'<sup>1089</sup> Trollope therefore finds it 'impossible to believe that the Irish are gifted with those qualities which are required to support a stern struggle for constitutional liberty.'<sup>1090</sup> Their natural submissiveness makes the Irish vulnerable to domination, even possession so that what appears to be widespread support for repeal is in reality only the echo of their leader's demands made, 'with so loud a shout that the Government thought that Ireland was in earnest – and so she was, but her earnestness was the deification of a man, and not the performance of a right.'<sup>1091</sup>

The reputation of O'Connell himself is destroyed by both blatant and subtle means. In regard to the campaign for repeal, Trollope's assessment of O'Connell is disdainful, dismissive and deadly. He holds O'Connell responsible for keeping Ireland poor. O'Connell's devotion to peaceful constitutional means is questioned. If he did not issue a call-to-arms, it was not because he was opposed to the use of physical force but because he was too 'prudent' to test his domination of the people.<sup>1092</sup> If he died broken-hearted, it was not because of the emergence of the physical force doctrine of the Young Irelanders but because, 'The hero found himself no longer omnipotent, and his heart, disdainful to share an empire, broke.'<sup>1093</sup>

In a masterly piece of character assassination in which virtues are married to, or even transformed into, vices, Trollope lists O'Connell's extraordinary characteristics:

The iron energy and pliant will, the tender heart and brazen forehead, the strong mind anxious for right but more anxious for success, the capacious intellect bright enough for any effort but that of discerning

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<sup>1088</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1089</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1090</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1091</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1092</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1093</sup> *Ibid.*

good from evil, and then the tongue, soft, suasive and generous, but also unscrupulous and often intolerable.<sup>1094</sup>

By concluding that such 'gifts' are 'seldom combined' he allows himself and the reader the reassurance that the Irish gullibility he has already described presents no on-going danger since, 'two men of such a stamp will hardly be found to adorn and distress the same century.'<sup>1095</sup> The Young Irelanders' rising in 1848 which followed O'Connell's death is dismissed as 'the dregs, and lees and slime and mud' of O'Connell's legacy, resulting only in 'the serious injury of Mrs McCormack's cabbages.'<sup>1096</sup>

In short, Ireland is portrayed in the *Examiner* letters as presenting no political threat because its people have no political intelligence or ambition and its one malign, self-serving leader is dead, even, 'already forgotten.'<sup>1097</sup> What is perhaps most remarkable is how, and how completely, Trollope destroys O'Connell's reputation, how Trollope seems to feel the need to erase him even from Irish memory, to refute the possibility of a successor, and to avoid the contemplation of any justification for a continuance of Irish nationalism.

When Trollope returned to the subject of Ireland in the novel *Castle Richmond* it was with, at least to his mind, the reassurance that Divine intentions as to the efficacy of the Famine had been fulfilled, that O'Connell had not been succeeded, the rebellion of '48 had not been repeated. He feels confident in declaring, 'But lo! The famine passes by and a land that had been brought to the dust by man's folly is once more prosperous and happy.'<sup>1098</sup> Much has already been written in this study about the impact on his representation of the Famine of Trollope's unionism. It has been posited that the novel does not invite close, objective questioning of the government's handling of the catastrophe since such an interrogation might in turn raise issues about the validity of British rule. Irish nationalist ambitions are similarly played down. The starving poor of Gortnaclough and Berryhill are seen to

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<sup>1094</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1095</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1096</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1097</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1098</sup> *Castle Richmond*, p.66.

interpret their predicament in economic and class terms. They do not rail against British neglect or callousness but rather believe that 'the famine could be put down if the rich would but stir themselves'; that they are 'being ill used by the upper classes.'<sup>1099</sup> Moreover, 'sedition' is something explicitly ruled out by Trollope as a significant factor in the pre-Famine state of Ireland. Conceding that it is 'bad' he nonetheless insists, 'in Ireland, in late years, it has not been deep-seated.'<sup>1100</sup>

In keeping with this, Father Cullen's successor, Father Columb Creagh is a milder, if still repellent, embodiment of nationalism. His physical appearance is not auspicious since he was, 'not a nice-looking young man. He was red-haired, slightly marked with small pox, and had a low forehead and cunning eyes.'<sup>1101</sup> But his political affiliation is detectable only in ominous pronouncements at relief committee meetings on the unlikelihood of the local men being attracted to relief work on the roads. Feeling that the time has come 'to speak up for the people,' he declares that "They may bear it in England, but they won't here."<sup>1102</sup> As discussion follows he gives stronger voice to his belief in the superiority of "the finest pisantry on God's earth." and implies his opposition to the Union by referring disdainfully, in a response to one of the other committee members, to "the Government, as you call it."<sup>1103</sup> Creagh demonstrates an alarming tendency, if not checked, to rise to his feet and offer incendiary orations but happily, just as Father McGrath is able to dismiss Cullen in *The Macdermots*, Creagh's parish priest can silence him. When Trollope has him halt Creagh's speech at a particularly impassioned juncture he is made to look like a blustering but harmless bigot.<sup>1104</sup>

Trollope includes an Irish MP in four of his most political novels written as part of the Palliser series between 1866 and 1876: *Phineas Finn*, *Phineas Redux*, *The Prime Minister* and *The Duke's Children*. Given the events of this

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<sup>1099</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.83 and 86.

<sup>1100</sup> *Ibid.*, p.66.

<sup>1101</sup> *Ibid.*, p.207.

<sup>1102</sup> *Ibid.*, p.208.

<sup>1103</sup> *Ibid.*, p.209.

<sup>1104</sup> *Ibid.*

period and Phineas Finn's eponymous billing in two of the novels, expectations could be raised of a considered analysis of the issue of Irish ambitions for increased independence. If so, such expectations would be doomed to disappointment. Trollope's political fiction is not primarily ideological. This stems not from any lack of political insight or knowledge, or from intellectual laziness but rather from an interpretation of the political world which, while it does not exclude ideological considerations, views such things as rank, family traditions and pressures, personal animosities and loyalties, ambition, sense of duty, financial status, as among the disparate forces at work in the corridors and, more often, the drawing rooms of power. Personal morality rather than party doctrine tends to dominate, to the extent that Phineas Finn's tale can be read as belonging to the nineteenth-century *Bildungsroman* tradition. During the course of the novels he develops from a well-meaning, naïve, rather fickle young man into a worldly wise, even world-weary statesman. Phineas's 'progress' centres on the moral question of whether a less than wealthy man can honourably climb the political ladder and stay true to himself. It is a tale about the conflict between ambition and personal integrity, between public success and private honour. While all of this might not immediately demand detailed analysis of, for example, the aims of Fenianism or the Home Rule movement, it does not preclude it. Trollope could, for example, have written Phineas as a man debating the case for Home Rule as part of his politico-moral journey. Far from this, however, there is evidence in these novels of Trollope actively manoeuvring to avoid analysis of such topics and employing again tactics designed to minimise or dismiss the claims and impact of Irish nationalism.

It is telling that when Trollope writes in *An Autobiography* that it was 'a blunder' to take his 'political hero', Phineas Finn, from Ireland, the reason he gives is the 'added difficulty in obtaining sympathy and affection for a politician belonging to a nationality whose politics are not respected in England.'<sup>1105</sup>

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<sup>1105</sup> *Autobiography*, p.202. Perhaps Trollope was beginning to conclude, as Terence de Vere White has done, that English people are always bored by Irish politics. De Vere White, p.xiii.

Therefore it is not Phineas's Irishness *per se* but a perceived lack of respect for Irish politics which Trollope claims to have necessitated him having to strive harder to win sympathy and respect for the character. The writing of the novels in which Phineas appears covers a period in which Irish political developments engendered fear and anxiety in Britain and won little respect from the author himself. It saw increased Fenian activity and the rise of the Home Rule Party with 59 Irish Home Rule MPs returned in the election of 1874. That Phineas is least prominent in *The Duke's Children*, the last of the four and written immediately after his *Autobiography*, perhaps indicates that Trollope was finding that the task of making his Irish politician acceptable and endearing was becoming increasingly onerous.<sup>1106</sup>

If this was so, it was not, of course, because Phineas is either a violent Fenian or an obstructionist Home Ruler. He is avowedly unionist. His resignation over the issue of tenant right at the end of *Phineas Finn* and his return to Ireland to wed his Irish Mary Flood Jones are not presented as the acts of a patriotic nationalist rejecting Westminster and all it stands for. As I have suggested above, Phineas's eventual support of Irish land reform and his choice of Mary as a wife are depicted ambivalently. The impression that both resignation and marriage were ill advised is reinforced when, at the opening of *Phineas Redux*, Trollope finds it necessary to summarily dispose of Mary in childbirth and return Phineas to England in order to continue his tale.<sup>1107</sup> There is a distinct sense of Ireland as a backwater where Phineas can find no true fulfilment. The narrator declares that, 'since the day on which he had accepted place and retired from London, his very soul had sighed for the lost glories of Westminster and Downing Street.'<sup>1108</sup> Unlike George Moore, whose *Drama in Muslin* reflects in its 'ambivalent realism' the political complexities of the period in a manner not even attempted in *The Landleaguers*, Trollope resists or misses implications in this of the negative impact of British rule on a land left

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<sup>1106</sup> See Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch*, p.145 where he raises the possibility that the declaration in his autobiography about Phineas reflects Trollope's feeling that he had been rejected by the politics of Parnellite Ireland.

<sup>1107</sup> *Autobiography*, p.202.

<sup>1108</sup> *Phineas Redux*, p.7.

blighted and diminished by the removal of its parliament.<sup>1109</sup> On the contrary, Phineas's return to London is part of a characterisation which seeks to attach Ireland even more thoroughly to Britain by showing how an Irish MP can become part of the social and political establishment. His passage is neither smooth nor uneventful but Phineas wins appointments at the Colonial Office, as First Lord of the Admiralty, Chief Secretary for Ireland and Chancellor of the Duchy of Lancaster. If, in *Phineas Finn*, Finn is troubled by his two identities as 'an Irishman from Killaloe', and 'a man of fashion and member of Parliament in England,' his declaration in *Phineas Redux* to Madame Max Goesler that, 'It has been my ambition to live here in London as one of the special set which dominates all other sets in our English world,' would seem to suggest at least the literary intention of incorporating Irishness into the metropolitan ruling elite; of serving Ireland by placing her best men at the centre of power and influence. Moreover, this incorporation would seem to be already underway in Phineas's staked claim to 'our English world.'<sup>1110</sup>

In *The Prime Minister*, Phineas is unequivocal on the issue of Home Rule. The imagery is particularly telling given Trollope's view of British imperialism involving, for some countries at least, the prospect of independence from Mother Britain once the children have demonstrated sufficient maturity.<sup>1111</sup> Ireland would seem to fall short of the 'manly self-respected strength' required.<sup>1112</sup> When Barrington Erle asks whether, in the face of apparently growing support for Home Rule, Phineas would grant it, he replies emphatically:

Certainly not; any more than I would allow a son to ruin himself because he asked me. But I would endeavour to teach them that they can get nothing by Home Rule – that their taxes would be heavier, their property

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<sup>1109</sup> Carla King and Neil McCaw, 'Some Late Victorian Novels and the Irish Question', in Neil McCaw pp.210-27, (p.212). See George Moore, *A Drama in Muslin* (London: Vizetelly, 1886; Rev. edn., Belfast: Appletree Press, 1992), pp.133-4 where Moore uses the metaphor of Dublin Castle as an upas tree which poisons the city beneath it.

<sup>1110</sup> *Phineas Finn*, pp.270-1; *Phineas Redux*, p.439.

<sup>1111</sup> Anthony Trollope, *North America* (London: Chapman & Hall, 1862; Rev. edn., New York: Knopf, 1951), p.86.

<sup>1112</sup> *Ibid.*

less secure, their lives less safe, their general position more debased, and their chances of national success more remote than ever.<sup>1113</sup>

References here to issues of national security, crime and the economy place the argument at the level of political debate, but the filial analogy and the allusion to debasement revive Trollope's unthinking denigration of nationalism and this characterises the scant consideration given to the matter in this series of novels.

As Patrick Lonergan has pointed out, Trollope's invention of a coalition government in *The Prime Minister* facilitates his marginalisation of Irish calls for independence.<sup>1114</sup> It seems to be a strategy to achieve in fiction what the author longed for in reality. Trollope's narrator bears unwitting testimony to this:

...there grew up an idea that the Coalition was really the proper thing. In one respect it certainly was successful. The Home Rulers, or Irish party generally, were left without an inch of standing ground. Their support was not needed, and therefore they were not courted. For the moment there was not even a necessity to pretend that Home Rule was anything but an absurdity from beginning to end.<sup>1115</sup>

However, dismissing Home Rule as 'an absurdity from beginning to end' does not come without a cost, even in fiction. Trollope's apparent admission in his autobiography that choosing an Irish MP was a 'blunder' perhaps reflects the difficulties of maintaining sympathy and credibility in Phineas and his unionism at a time when a majority of Irish MPs supported Home Rule. Where the young Phineas who entered parliament is so convincing as to have excited debate over a list of potential real-life models for his character, the Phineas of *The Prime Minister* is something of an anachronism.<sup>1116</sup>

Similarly, Trollope's attempt to promote the unionist cause by employing a marital metaphor is not entirely successful. If in portraying the 'marriage'

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<sup>1113</sup> Anthony Trollope, *The Prime Minister* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1983), p.110.

<sup>1114</sup> Patrick Lonergan, 'The Representation of Phineas Finn', p.151-2.

<sup>1115</sup> *The Prime Minister*, p.107.

<sup>1116</sup> Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch*, p.145; Lonergan, p.149, p.151.

between England and Ireland as a forced union - 'a compulsory wedlock' - he allows the possibility of a dubious moral basis, he also endeavours to counter this by insisting that the marriage is necessary, arises from 'fixed' 'laws of nature'. and that it is beneficial to both countries.<sup>1117</sup> He confirms that 'England could not afford independence established so close against her own ribs' but insists that if this reluctant bride is treated responsibly all will be well.<sup>1118</sup> She 'should be endowed with all the best privileges that a wife can enjoy.'<sup>1119</sup> The 'privileges' he has in mind are Tenant Right and Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland. Indeed Mr Monk's plea for the latter is heartfelt. The 'Establishment in Ireland [is] a crying sin.....A man had married a woman whom he knew to be of a religion different from his own, and then insisted that his wife should say that she believed those things which he knew very well that she did not believe.'<sup>1120</sup> Yet while Trollope decries religious coercion, he seems to expect a political one. The potential for marital disputes is reduced to 'a warm word now and then.'<sup>1121</sup> He relies on a thorough and complete union - 'bone of my bone and flesh of my flesh' with 'a thoroughly good understanding at bottom' - to somehow eradicate any struggle on the part of the bride.<sup>1122</sup> A marriage which begins inauspiciously, therefore, can still be retrieved by responsible, caring behaviour on the husband's part. As Patrick Lonergan has astutely argued, this is contested by the portrayal in the Palliser novels of the marriage of Plantagenet and Glencora Palliser.<sup>1123</sup> Having chosen duty over love by marrying Palliser rather than Burgo Fitzgerald, Glencora might well be seen as the reluctant bride. The marriage which follows is seen to be relatively successful as each changes the other for the better and they come to love each other. With *The Duke's Children*, however, some doubt is raised as to the continuing viability of such a union. Glencora is dead and Palliser's children wish to marry for love. Palliser eventually gives his consent and with it forces a

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<sup>1117</sup> *Phineas Finn*, p.437.

<sup>1118</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1119</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1120</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1121</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1122</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1123</sup> Lonergan, pp.156-7.



re-examination of his own relationship and, by extension, the whole question of marriage, symbolic or otherwise. Lonergan rightly concludes that the implication is that 'for all the positive qualities of the relationship that frames the series, a marriage of convenience could not be encouraged in the modernising world – even if the two in the partnership learn to love and respect one another, even if one is humanised and the other disciplined as a result of it. ...The formal conclusion of the series in this way undermines the symbolical construction that Trollope earlier forged.'<sup>1124</sup>

The explicit deployment of the marital metaphor in *Phineas Finn* confirms Trollope's knowledge and use of this well-worn figurative representation of the Union between England and Ireland. This adds weight to the argument made above for a symbolic significance in the relationship portrayed in *An Eye for an Eye*, especially since it was written in 1870 and therefore between the composition of two other Palliser novels, *The Eustace Diamonds* and *Phineas Redux*. An examination of the novel at the level of plot might seem to contradict its rôle in Trollope's unionist literary project, since Fred Neville, Trollope's English nobleman, far from achieving a happy union with the Irish Catholic Kate O'Hara, is pushed to his death by her maddened mother. On closer investigation, however, a reading is possible which points not to the impossibility of successful union but rather the desire for a more thorough and respectful integration. Fred is no blackguard. He struggles to reconcile competing familial and personal, social and moral imperatives but he dies because he offers the Irish woman he has seduced only an irregular, unsanctioned, incomplete union which in her mother's eyes would leave Kate a 'harlot'.<sup>1125</sup> In this reading the novel is not a cry of despair but a call for clear-sighted, responsible treatment of Ireland. It contests wrong-headed, romantic notions of Ireland as the location for reckless adventures which incur no consequences. It is, as Michael Cotsell has affirmed, a 'most thorough critique of the characterization of the non-English as a field for romance and

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<sup>1124</sup> Patrick Lonergan, 'The Representation of Phineas Finn in Trollope's Palliser Novels' (unpublished M.A. thesis, University College Dublin, 1998), pp.96-97.

<sup>1125</sup> *An Eye for an Eye*, p.193.

adventure'<sup>1126</sup> The novel recommends instead that the English establishment, in the shape of the moribund House of Scroope, could have benefited from the intellect, vitality and charm of an Irish Catholic Countess. Trollope reiterates his faith in the moral power of the Irish Catholic priest when he uses Father Marty's rock-like moral stability to highlight Fred's ill-founded faith in being somehow able to act honourably towards Kate without marrying her:

The young Earl could not look him in the face as he stammered out his explanation and proposal. The burly, strong old man stood perfectly still and silent as he, with hesitating and ill-arranged words, tried to gloze over and make endurable his past conduct and intentions as to the future.<sup>1127</sup>

Since Father Marty, unprejudiced and 'human to the core', so obviously bathes in the light of his author's approval, it is no surprise to read that he 'was no great politician, and desired no rebellion against England. Even in the days of O'Connell and repeal he had been but luke warm.'<sup>1128</sup> Moreover, the 'justice for Ireland' which this admirable man seeks is a pragmatic one of 'wealthy English husbands for pretty Irish girls' which also promotes assimilation.<sup>1129</sup> The novel is testament to Trollope's enduring faith in the viability of the Union, a faith which coexisted with a continuing denial of the force of Irish national ambitions.

Trollope's *An Autobiography*, the bulk of which was written between 1875 and 1876 but with some changes being made until 1879, further exemplifies this. As Home Rule grew in strength and support and Parnell began to look like the sort of charismatic leader to whom Trollope, in the *Examiner* letters, had declared the Irish people to be perilously attracted, his attitude to Ireland is one of dogged optimism. He wonders at 'the obduracy with which people have spoken of the permanent ill condition of the country'

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<sup>1126</sup> Michael Cotsell, 'Trollope: The International Theme', in Michael Cotsell (ed.), *English Literature and the Wider World, Vol. 3, 1830-1876: Creditable Warriors* (London-Atlantic Highlands N.J.:The Ashfield Press, 1990), pp.243-56, (p.254).

<sup>1127</sup> *An Eye for an Eye.*, p.176.

<sup>1128</sup> *Ibid.*, pp. 52-3; p.52.

<sup>1129</sup> *Ibid.*, p.52.

and incorporates into his vision of a thriving Ireland not strengthening calls for increased independence but the inevitable decline of such ill-judged demands:

Home Rule no doubt is a nuisance, - and especially a nuisance because the professors of the doctrine do not believe it themselves. There are probably no other twenty men in England or Ireland who would be so utterly dumbfounded and prostrated were Home Rule to have its way as the twenty Irish members who profess to support it in the House of Commons. But it is not to be expected that nuisances such as these should be abolished at a blow. Home Rule is at any rate better and more easily managed than the rebellion at the close of the last century; it is better than the treachery of the Union, less troublesome than O'Connell's monster meetings, less dangerous than Smith O'Brien and the battle of the cabbage garden at Ballingarry, and very much less bloody than Fenianism. The descent from O'Connell to Mr Butt has been the natural declension of a political disease which we had no right to hope could be cured by any one remedy.<sup>1130</sup>

Nationalism is allowed neither a justifiable basis nor the likelihood of continued existence. The effect of Trollope's obvious use of dismissive words like 'nuisance' and 'disease' is stealthily supported by his choice of the term 'declension'. It carries the ideas of both something which, by its very nature has to be expressed in various forms or stages as it works its way through the body politic, and the reassurance that it is declining, that the process is nearing completion.

By 1882 and *The Landleaguers*, he has to recognise that the 'disease' far from declining has drawn strength through its amalgamation with the cause of Land reform and increased its hold. He doggedly continues, however, to refuse to concede any real validity to the cause. Indeed the opening chapter suggests a return to the strategies of the *Examiner* letters. The English Mr Philip Jones, as Trollope had urged in the letters, had taken advantage of the Encumbered Estates Act and in 1850 bought an estate in Ireland. In a

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<sup>1130</sup> *An Autobiography*, pp.51-2.

passage which at first one hopes is ironic, Trollope nostalgically reconstructs his vision of the Irish of 1850 who, 'were all Roman Catholics, were for the most part uneducated, and it may be said of them that not only were their souls not their own, but that they were not ambitious even of possessing their own bodies.'<sup>1131</sup> However, he seems all too sincere in regretting the passing of these conditions and offers again an image of the Irish as politically incapable and emotionally incontinent:

Not only have they in part repudiated the power of the priest as to their souls, but, in compliance with teaching which has come from America, they claim to be masters also of their bodies. Never were a people less fitted to exercise such dominion without control. Generous, kindly, impulsive, and docile, they have been willing to follow any recognised leader.<sup>1132</sup>

References to the intoxicating, deranging impact of American influence recur in the novel as part of an explanation which locates impulses forming the Land League and motivating Parnell and his party largely outside Ireland, thus supporting Trollope's theory that the Irish themselves have no real or sustained ambition for independence.<sup>1133</sup> It is explicitly an Irish-Americanness which Trollope accuses as he explains that 'there does grow up in New York, or thereabouts, a mixture of Irish poverty with American wealth, which calls itself "Democrat," and forms as bad a composition as any that I know from which either to replenish or to create a people.'<sup>1134</sup> It is 'a feeling which I will not call American but which has been engendered in America by Irish jealousy and warmed into hatred by distance from English rule.'<sup>1135</sup> It is 'like gin made of vitriol when mingled with water. A small modicum of gin, though it does not add much spirit to the water will damnably defile a large quantity. [It] mounts to the brain and surrounds the heart and permeates the veins' so that judgement

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<sup>1131</sup> *The Landleaguers*, p.3.

<sup>1132</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1133</sup> *Ibid.*; p.89.

<sup>1134</sup> *Ibid.*, p.382.

<sup>1135</sup> *Ibid.*, p.341.

is impaired and 'the infuriated gin drinker' is mistaken for 'the true holder of a new gospel.'<sup>1136</sup>

This debased Irish-American nationalism is embodied in the novel in Gerald O'Mahony – an American of Irish extraction who becomes MP for Co. Cavan. He is not monstrous, or ugly or less than fastidious when it comes to personal hygiene but nor is he an intelligent or well-informed politician. 'No educated man', Trollope declares, 'was ever born and bred in more utter ignorance of all political truths than this amiable and philanthropic gentleman.'<sup>1137</sup> Similarly, Trollope explains that O'Mahony is sincere and really believed, 'that something good for his old country would be achieved by Home rule,' but tellingly he adds, 'though how Home Rulers would set to work when Home Rule should be the law of the land, he had not the remotest conception.'<sup>1138</sup> Mr O'Mahony is eloquent but previous portrayals have taught Trollope's readers to mistrust that attribute as a recommendation.<sup>1139</sup> Moreover, like Cullen and Creagh he is the subject of ridicule:

There were those among his own special brethren who greatly admired him and praised him, but with others of the same class there was a shaking of the head and many doubts. With the House generally, I fear, laughter prevailed rather than true admiration.<sup>1140</sup>

The nationalist curate in *The Landleaguers*, Father Brosnan, is offered as both less devout and more politically extreme than Cullen and Creagh and, significantly, his superiors struggle to control him. This more radical version of the nationalist curate whose cause in Trollope's eyes is even less legitimate since disestablishment has removed the one true injustice, 'is very hot for Home Rule, less obedient to the authority of the bishops than he was of yore, and thinks more of the political, and less of the religious state of his

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<sup>1136</sup> *Ibid.*, p.382-3.

<sup>1137</sup> *Ibid.*, p.41.

<sup>1138</sup> *Ibid.*, p.240.

<sup>1139</sup> *Ibid.* Trollope displayed a general mistrust of oratorical powers. In 1882, just a year before he wrote this last novel he completed a biography of Lord Palmerston whom he much admired. This contains references to Palmerston's judicious use of oratory as 'a means used for an end': Anthony Trollope, *Lord Palmerston* (London: William Ibister, 1882), p.212.

<sup>1140</sup> *Ibid.*, p.292.

country.<sup>1141</sup> As part, perhaps, of what Roy Foster has read as a 'deliberate un saying' of his earlier writing on Ireland, Trollope recycles the name of the eponymous hero of his cheery Irish short story 'Father Giles of Ballymoy', applying it to Brosnan's compassionate, pragmatic but increasingly jaded and ineffectual parish pastor:

He was a man seventy years of age, in full possession of all his faculties, very zealous in the well-being of his people, prone to teach them that if they would say their prayers, and do as they were bid by their betters, they would, in the long run, and after various phases of Catholic well or ill-being, go to heaven. But the older Father Giles became the more he thought of the good things of this world, on behalf of his people, and the less he liked being troubled with the political desires of his curate. He had gone so far as to forbid Father Brosnan to do this, or to do that on various occasions, to make a political speech here, or to attend a demonstration there; - in doing which, or in not doing it, the curate sometimes disobeyed the priest, thereby bringing Father Giles in his old age into infinite trouble.<sup>1142</sup>

While 'an inclination for Home Rule' is ascribed, in no blatantly antagonistic manner, to another parish priest, this is qualified almost to the point of extinction. Father Malachi has 'no sympathy whatever with Father Brosnan.... Ireland for the Irish might be very well, but he did not at all want to have Ireland for the Americans.'<sup>1143</sup> Similarly, a passage which begins with the statement that, 'It would have been unfair to Mr Brosnan to say that he sympathised with murderers, and ends with the reiteration that 'it would have been unjust to him to say that he was a murderer; or that he countenanced murder,' might seem to be intended to distance Brosnan from the most violent extremists, achieves, through this overly-insistent repetition, the opposite effect.<sup>1144</sup> This is reinforced by other aspects of his character which suggest that his emotionally

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<sup>1141</sup> *Ibid.*, p.24.

<sup>1142</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1143</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.24-5.

<sup>1144</sup> *Ibid.*, p.26.

charged politics might well subjugate his religious and moral principles, that he is prepared to meet political ends by dishonest means. He, like the rest of the parish, knows that a certain Pat Carroll is responsible for flooding Jones's land, but because he has sympathy with the Land Leaguers and because no one has actually named Carroll to him, he persuades himself that he does not know. Brosnan, the reader is told, 'was able to justify the falsehood of his own heart, by stumbling over the degree of knowledge necessary. There was a sense in which he did not know it. He need not have sworn to it in a Court of Law. So he told himself and so justified his conscience.'<sup>1145</sup> Moreover, his fanaticism is signalled, as Conor Johnston has noted, by a tendency to overheat:

At every victory won by the British Parliament his heart...boiled with indignation. At every triumphant note that came over the water from America – which was generally raised by the record of the dollars sent – he boiled, on the other hand, with joy.<sup>1146</sup>

The fanatical irrationality of Brosnan's stance is further confirmed:

He believed that England was enriched by many millions a year robbed from Ireland, and that Ireland was impoverished to the same extent. He was a man thoroughly disloyal, and at the same time thoroughly ignorant, altogether in the dark as to the truth of things.<sup>1147</sup>

That word 'disloyal' is telling. It indicates Trollope's inability to conceive of the Irish as owing loyalty to anywhere other than Britain. This is something apparent too in his pronouncement in the novel on the necessity of the Union:

Ireland has lain as it were between two rich countries. England, her near neighbour, abounds in coal and iron, and has by means of these possessions become rich among nations. America very much the more distant, has by her unexampled agricultural resources put herself in the way to equal England. It is necessary – necessary at any rate for England's safety – that Ireland should belong to her. This is here stated

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<sup>1145</sup> *Ibid.*, p.27.

<sup>1146</sup> *Ibid.*, p.26; Johnston, 'Parsons, Priests and Politics', p.96.

<sup>1147</sup> *The Landleaguers*, p.26.

as a fact, and I add my own opinion that it is equally necessary for Ireland's welfare. But on this subject there has arisen a feud which is now being fought out by all the weapons of rebellion on one side, and on the other by the force of a dominating Government, restrained, as it is found to be, by the self-imposed bonds of a democratic legislature.<sup>1148</sup>

Broader anxieties are apparent here in the form of Britain's economic and international status. They are anxieties which fuel Trollope's reaction. But there is no detailed working through of how and why these necessitate the Union. It is offered as 'a fact'. Moreover, the apparently understated way in which the two sides are described is deceptive. The use of the term 'rebellion' is arguably technically correct but it carries negative connotations. By contrast, while the government is said to be 'dominating', its position is legitimised, even granted moral approval since it is not only restrained by 'bonds of a democratic legislature' but has also imposed these bonds on itself.

This passage appears in a chapter entitled 'The State of Ireland' an abrupt authorial intrusion in which he seems concerned to convey a particular view of the country and its condition, and especially 'the political circumstances of the day' and appears to be not entirely confident that his fictional tale will achieve this.<sup>1149</sup> His confidence in the accuracy of his view, however, appears complete. As in the passage above, debate is stifled when he characterises his analysis as 'the facts as stated'.<sup>1150</sup>

There are intriguing, if fleeting, points at which Trollope is less blinkered and dogmatic. He concedes, for example, that 'She (the feminine personification of Ireland bringing echoes of earlier marital metaphors) was subjected to much ill-usage' but importantly this is distanced by the use of the past tense, and its impact is further diminished by his qualification that 'she has readily accepted the language, the civilisation, and the customs of England, and has in fact grown rich by adopting them' so that if Ireland is now allowing 'memories of former hardships' to make her sympathetic to 'the teachings of

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<sup>1148</sup> *Ibid.*, p.343.

<sup>1149</sup> *Ibid.*, p.341.

<sup>1150</sup> *Ibid.*



those whose only object has been to undermine the prestige of the British Empire', she seems ungrateful, vengeful and treacherous.<sup>1151</sup>

Perhaps paradoxically, in this novel which contains some of his most venomous and pessimistic pronouncements on Ireland, Trollope briefly comes closest to admitting a valid case for increased Irish independence. He explains that he has 'met gentlemen who as Home Rulers, have simply desired to obtain for their country an increase of power in the management of their own affairs.'<sup>1152</sup> Significantly, he also reports that these men have been 'loyal and patriotic' by which Trollope presumably, given his use of the word elsewhere, means loyal British patriots, and he is spurred to briefly wonder whether 'it might perhaps be well to meet their views.'<sup>1153</sup> What exactly this might entail is not clear but such a sentiment should not be overlooked given the lengths to which Trollope has gone to undermine and dismiss the nationalist cause. However, the moment of measured consideration soon passes and his ensuing comments imply that the now-dominant Home Rule spirit which derives its politics, aspirations and money from New York, indulges in obstructionist parliamentary tactics and clamours 'to put an end to the British power of governing the country' needs to be defeated not appeased.<sup>1154</sup>

Those instances when a more perceptive Trollope threatens to examine his intransigent unionism barely register in this despairing, sometimes apparently vengeful, novel. It is, of course, incomplete and it must be allowed that a different balance might have emerged from the finished piece. However, the planned conclusion available in Henry Trollope's postscript – two weddings and a hanging – seems to offer little to compete with earlier dark pronouncements on Ireland.<sup>1155</sup> It is a bleak image which prevails of an Ireland made murderous by ambitions for radical land reform and self-government. The words uttered by Black Tom Daly, master of the Galway hounds, in the wake of the murder of a Galway landowner, echo the harsh rejection of

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<sup>1151</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1152</sup> *Ibid.*, pp.349-50.

<sup>1153</sup> *Ibid.*, p.350.

<sup>1154</sup> *Ibid.*

<sup>1155</sup> *Ibid.*, p.412.

Trollope's opening comments: 'The very nature of mankind has altered in the old country. There are not the same hearts within their bosoms.'<sup>1156</sup>

Trollope disapproves of Daly's religious bigotry but in other respects here and elsewhere a connection is made between this character and the author. They share an abiding passion - hunting - which Trollope first took up in Ireland and with the hunt of which Black Tom is master, so that passages which describe the stopping of the hunt by Land League supporters and the anguish this causes for Daly are invested with additional personal and political significance, and some of Tom's sombre musings could be said to be Trollope's own:

A sad idea came across his mind, as he shook his head, warning him that in this terrible affair today, he might see the end of his life's work. Such a thought had never occurred to him before. If a crowd of disloyal Roman Catholics chose to prevent the gentry in their hunting, undoubtedly they had the power. He was aware now, though he never had thought of it before, by how weak a hold his right of hunting the country was held.<sup>1157</sup>

Trollope chooses to leave the thought there but it is surely no great leap from rights of hunting the country to rights of governing it, and the necessity of having popular assent for the successful operation of both. If in this, as Roy Foster has suggested, Trollope is revealing a dawning realisation that the age of deference politics has come to an end, if it denotes Trollope's recognition of the will and the power of the Irish to take charge of their own affairs, it is met in *The Landleaguers* not with acceptance but with at best wistful regret, at worst spiteful rejection.<sup>1158</sup>

It could be said, of course, that to find a Victorian Englishman displaying an unquestioning adherence to the Union is scarcely remarkable. However, given Trollope's ability to produce insightful, subtle representations of Ireland, the lengths to which he is prepared to go to maintain a blinkered vision of

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<sup>1156</sup> *Ibid.*, p.379.

<sup>1157</sup> Glendinning, p.123; p.91; p.95.

<sup>1158</sup> Foster, *The Irish Story*, p.143.

political Ireland, and the uncharacteristically one-sided and stereotyped representation which it produces, require explanation. As Jane Nardin has observed 'Conceptual tensions and expanded sympathies, not moral judgments are to be expected of Trollope...We should not register surprise when we do encounter them, but rather when we do not.'<sup>1159</sup> It is not even a question, as with his portrayal of Irish landlords and tenants, of the monochrome of *The Landleaguers* contrasting with earlier more diverse and unprejudiced portrayals, nor of the sort of conflict which destabilises his depiction of the Famine in *Castle Richmond*. Trollope's portrayal of Irish nationalism is singular in the extent of its prejudiced uniformity.

The measurement of Trollope's portrayal of Irish nationalism against the historiography is particularly illuminating. Far from it revealing an entirely fabricated account or total ignorance of the nature of the issues and personalities involved, it indicates an awareness but one which is strictly limited to those features and interpretations which support Trollope's hostile view.

The Daniel O'Connell of *The Kellys and the O'Kellys* and the *Examiner* letters, for example, is not entirely unrecognisable in the versions which appear in the historiography, even in those works which are predominantly approving of the man and his achievements. The political showman seen arriving for his trial in the Lord Mayor's state carriage in the first chapter of the novel is confirmed in Fergus O'Ferrall's description of O'Connell's 'deliberate theatricalism', 'his need for approval and applause.'<sup>1160</sup> Alvin Jackson has similarly remarked on the careful stage-management of his public appearances in the 1820s when he was 'regularly decked out in his trademark emerald green suit, and installed in magnificent carriages or on elaborate platforms.'<sup>1161</sup> Even the lethal pairing of O'Connell's 'gifts' in Trollope's *Examiner* letter of 15 June 1850, finds resonance in historical studies. O'Ferrall has commented on the difficulty of reaching a final assessment on O'Connell because he had a

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<sup>1159</sup> Nardin, p.1.

<sup>1160</sup> Fergus O'Ferrall, *Daniel O'Connell* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1981), p.10, p.134.

<sup>1161</sup> Jackson, *Home Rule*, p.14.

'protean' nature and was 'subject to confusing extremes in his behaviour.'<sup>1162</sup> Contemporaries echoing Trollope's description of, for example, 'the strong mind anxious for right but more anxious for success' complained that O'Connell's 'love of power and his methods of gaining and keeping it were not always scrupulous, and his policy often seemed to be guided by expediency rather than by principle.'<sup>1163</sup> George Boyce's assessment of O'Connell's break with the Young Irelanders also concurs to some extent with Trollope's in that he reads the split as to some degree the product of O'Connell seizing upon the physical force issue to discipline them, to reinforce his leadership and for 'partly personal' reasons.<sup>1164</sup> J.C. Beckett has commented too, and with the sort of genial insight into human nature which one might expect from Trollope himself, that, 'In the whole affair there was no doubt some element of personal jealousy, for an old leader can rarely endure to have his authority questioned by a new generation.'<sup>1165</sup> Significant here are the qualifications 'partly' and 'some element' which avoid simplistic and entirely negative explanations of the sort offered by Trollope. For while readings of O'Connell as a colourful performer, thirsty for power and not averse to expedient measures, exist in the historiography they form only part of the interpretation.

The flamboyant orator is also characterised as an extremely effective political leader, an exemplary pioneer in the field of 'bringing the force of public opinion to bear on government in a constitutional and yet aggressive way'; 'one of the greatest organizers of mass movements...among the remarkable characters of history.'<sup>1166</sup> George Boyce has concluded that through O'Connell 'the politics of the Catholic democracy were launched as the most stable and enduring contribution to the making of modern Ireland.'<sup>1167</sup>

On the issue of his commitment to moral, as opposed to physical, force the balance is in favour of O'Connell's dedication to the former. Fergus

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<sup>1162</sup> O'Ferrall, p.132, p.133.

<sup>1163</sup> *Ibid.*, p.133.

<sup>1164</sup> Boyce, *Nationalism*, pp.168-9.

<sup>1165</sup> Beckett, p.142.

<sup>1166</sup> Beckett, p.139; R.Dudley Edwards, *Daniel O'Connell and His World* (London: Thames & Hudson, 1975), p.95.

<sup>1167</sup> Boyce, *Nationalism*, p.140.

O'Ferrall has argued that while O'Connell was never a pacifist, he believed that violence was inappropriate in the struggle for national and human liberation.<sup>1168</sup>

O'Ferrall and Jackson have contended, that if he was prepared in speeches to use ambiguous language in a way which might seem to threaten violence, his underlying commitment was, nevertheless, to constitutional means.<sup>1169</sup> George Boyce offers a more developed version of this argument, suggesting that O'Connell's use of 'verbal violence' was actually a means of channelling anti-British sentiment away from the use of physical force:

O'Connell, like any popular leader, had to tell his audience what they wanted to hear; and, since his earnest and long-held desire was to curb the violence that he feared might break out among the peasants, he was obliged to substitute verbal violence for real blows, to threaten to shed the last drop of his blood while all the time preventing his fellow countrymen from shedding theirs – or anyone else's.<sup>1170</sup>

On balance there seems to be little reason to doubt that O'Connell's statement on his position in *The Nation* in November 1843, is a sincere one:

The principle of my political life and that in which I have instructed the people of Ireland is, that all ameliorations and improvements in political institutions can be obtained by persevering in a perfectly peaceable and legal course, and cannot be obtained by forcible means, such means create more evils that they cure and leave the country worse than they found it.<sup>1171</sup>

As with his portrayal of O'Connell, there are aspects of Trollope's representation of nationalist Catholic clergy which are not entirely at odds with the historiography. This reports, for example, contemporary concerns about the social origins, training and politicised nature of Maynooth educated priests.<sup>1172</sup> Donal.A. Kerr has cited a comment in a letter from Maria

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<sup>1168</sup> O'Ferrall, p.10, p.139.

<sup>1169</sup> *Ibid.*, p.118, Jackson, *Home Rule*, p.19.

<sup>1170</sup> Boyce, *Nationalism*, p.147.

<sup>1171</sup> Daniel O'Connell, *The Nation*, 18 November 1843. Quoted in O'Ferrall, pp.139-40.

<sup>1172</sup> Connolly, *Priests and People*, pp.37-40; Keenan, *The Catholic Church*; p.60; .Kerr, *Peel, Priests and Politics*, p.230, pp.239-40.

Edgeworth which reflects these and is not out of place beside Trollope's distasteful description of the curate Cullen in *The Macdermots of Ballycloran*. She complains that 'priests educated at Maynooth are so vulgar that no gentleman can, let him wish it ever so much, keep company with them.'<sup>1173</sup> Sean Connolly has also noted that, particularly in the first half of the nineteenth century, the subject of social origins was much discussed.<sup>1174</sup> But what is confirmed is a perception about the backgrounds of the new generation of priests rather than an accurate assessment. While it does seem to have been the case that the older, French educated priests like Father John McGrath were more likely to have come from a higher social class, those emerging from Maynooth were far from being from the lowliest origins. Kerr and Connolly have both found evidence to suggest that it was increasingly the essentially middle class sons of farmers, merchants, shopkeepers, 'persons of some substance' who were becoming priests.<sup>1175</sup>

There is also evidence to suggest that the pre-Famine Maynooth student 'pursued a narrowly defined course in a restricted setting, surrounded exclusively by persons of the same background as himself. As a result, he emerged less cultured, less polished in his manners, and more intolerant in his attitudes.'<sup>1176</sup> Indeed one of the reasons for the introduction of the Maynooth Grant was to improve standards at the college. However, this is far from allowing the possibility that they were, as Trollope claims of Cullen, 'perfectly illiterate.'<sup>1177</sup>

Trollope's championing of conservative priests like Father John underplays the degree of active clerical political involvement in pre-Famine Ireland. Sean Connolly has concluded that, when it came to Repeal, 'Catholic priests and bishops flung themselves wholeheartedly into the campaign, recklessly mingling religious and political appeals.'<sup>1178</sup> K.T. Hoppen has

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<sup>1173</sup> Maria Edgeworth to Honora Edgeworth (12 Aug. 1831), Edgeworth Papers. Quoted in Kerr., p.240.

<sup>1174</sup> Connolly, *Priests and People*, p.37.

<sup>1175</sup> *Ibid.*, p.40, Kerr, p.239

<sup>1176</sup> Connolly, *Priests and People*, p.43.

<sup>1177</sup> *The Macdermots*, p.44.

<sup>1178</sup> *Idid.*, p.14

similarly stated that the mass of priests was 'overwhelmingly active and enthusiastic.'<sup>1179</sup> Moreover, those priests who like Cullen had been involved in the campaign for Emancipation had been part of an organized political machine and had learned skills as agents and local organizers which could be applied to the Repeal cause.<sup>1180</sup> None of this is detectable in Trollope's portrayal of the bigoted blustering Cullen and Creagh.

In moving away from the simple binary model of earlier novels to a more complex triumvirate of Catholic clerics in *The Landleaguers*, Trollope, in a sense, moves closer to an accurate representation of the range of clerical responses to Irish nationalism. Sheridan Gilley has concluded that 'in the end, the priests were the populace writ large', that they 'reflected the nation's divisions' and therefore a variety of stances.<sup>1181</sup> It would be impossible to contend that volatile, fanatical nationalist priests like Brosnan did not exist but to include him as the only fully committed nationalist priest in the novel is to misrepresent the majority of those who sympathised with the aims of the Land League and Parnell, but who also conscientiously opposed violence.<sup>1182</sup> Moreover, Brosnan's alleged thorough ignorance when combined with O'Mahony's, 'utter ignorance of all political truths' improbably allows for no possibility of informed dedication amongst those active in the nationalist cause.<sup>1183</sup>

Trollope's figuring of nationalism as a political 'disease' in *An Autobiography* describes a contagion beginning with the United Irishmen and reaching its decline in Home Rule under Issac Butt.<sup>1184</sup> The continuities identified and their nature do not always coincide but the association of various forms of Irish nationalism from 1798 until the late 1870s (and beyond) is also a practice to be found in the historiography. Alvin Jackson has, like Trollope, drawn a link back from Home Rule through the risings of '67 and '48 to

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<sup>1179</sup> Hoppen, *Ireland*, p.31.

<sup>1180</sup> *Ibid.*; Sheridan Gilley, 'The Catholic Church and Revolution' in D. George Boyce (ed.), *The Revolution in Ireland, 1879-1923* (London: Macmillan Education, 1988), pp.157-172 (p.159).

<sup>1181</sup> Gilley, in Boyce, *The Revolution in Ireland*, p.160, p.172.

<sup>1182</sup> *Ibid.*, p.165.

<sup>1183</sup> *The Landleaguers*, p.26; p.41.

<sup>1184</sup> *Autobiography*, pp.51-2.

O'Connell.<sup>1185</sup> While, however, a case can therefore be made to validate such connections, Trollope, unlike the historians, takes no real account of the diversity of the nationalist movements involved. As we have seen, some sort of hierarchy of violent tendency is suggested:

Home Rule is at any rate better and more easily managed than the rebellion at the close of the last century; it is better than the treachery of the Union, less troublesome than O'Connell's monster meetings, less dangerous than Smith O'Brien and the battle of the cabbage garden at Ballingarry, and very much less bloody than Fenianism.<sup>1186</sup>

But the general effect is to gather together constitutional and physical force groups so that they may be more easily despatched, and with no regard to the degrees of separation from Britain that they demanded.

Home Rulers of the mid 1870s might well have been particularly galled by Trollope's description of them, not for its blatant fabrications but rather for the deftness with which it targets some of the organization's potential weaknesses. In his declaration, for example, that 'the professors of the doctrine do not believe it themselves' he exposes the problems of nominal membership and ambiguous definition.<sup>1187</sup> The election of 1874 saw 59 Home Rulers returned but these could not be said with certainty to share a single vision and goal. Many were liberals who changed their labels when they saw the likely outcome of the ballot, and few members had any official endorsement.<sup>1188</sup> 'Home Rule', like 'Repeal' before it, was open to a number of interpretations. The existence of a contemporary perception of the ambiguity in definition is amusingly supported by the parliamentary journalist Henry W. Lucy's comments on obstructionist tactics:

[T]he difficulty of defining what Home Rule really is, and what it precisely means, has always cropped up in the House of Commons. The difficulty no longer exists. After the experience of the last twenty-six hours it is

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<sup>1185</sup> Jackson, p.3.

<sup>1186</sup> *Autobiography*, pp.51-2.

<sup>1187</sup> *Ibid.*,

<sup>1188</sup> Boyce, *Nationalism*, pp.197-8.



clear enough that Home Rule means not going home all night yourself, and keeping as many other people as possible out of their beds.<sup>1189</sup>

What Trollope does not acknowledge is how such an ambiguity could also be an advantage, attracting disparate nationalist interests, even drawing some from physical force to constitutional strategies and how it could help to maintain unity, albeit a 'fragile' one:

Home Rule as a moral idea had a particular meaning – self-government of some substantial variety in the long term – but it also acted as an ideological umbrella under which different, sometimes mutually antagonistic interests could huddle together to promote an ordered and relatively harmonious agenda.<sup>1190</sup>

The reduction of the 59 Home Rule MPs to 20 is in keeping with Trollope's attempts to minimise the strength of nationalism, but is not a complete fabrication. Joseph Lee has analysed the make-up of the 59 and, taking into account those who simply changed their description to secure election, has estimated the same number of 20 as that of those who were genuinely committed to the cause.<sup>1191</sup> In insisting on the lower number, however, Trollope is arguably less concerned with accuracy than with minimising Home Rule support.

Where the arrival on the scene some thirty years after O'Connell's demise of another powerful political leader in the shape of Parnell calls in to question Trollope's prophetic powers, it might also seem to confirm the innate Irish susceptibility to charismatic leadership that he identifies in the *Examiner* letters and returns to in *The Landleaguers*. While the particular personalities and abilities of both men do seem to have played a crucial rôle in support for their causes, it is certainly possible to reach for explanations other than an innate Irish vulnerability to demagoguery to explain their central importance, to account for their elevation to the level of folk hero as 'The Liberator' and 'The

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<sup>1189</sup> H.W.Lucy, *A Diary of Two Parliaments: The Disraeli Parliament, 1874-1880*. Quoted in Alan O'Day, *Irish Home Rule, 1867-1921* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1998), p.47.

<sup>1190</sup> O'Day, *Irish Home Rule*, p.38.

<sup>1191</sup> Lee, p.64.

Uncrowned King.' Philip Bull, for example, has argued convincingly that the rise of O'Connell, Butt and Parnell resulted from the political vacuum created by the Union, which left the nation without a parliament or Prime Minister and, therefore, in need of a substitute focus.<sup>1192</sup>

Finally, Trollope's insistence on America as an influence on the Land League and Parnell receives some confirmation. A number of historians have identified the contribution - financial, ideological and in terms of personnel - which was made.<sup>1193</sup> George Boyce has explained that American constitutional Fenianism was a great asset to Parnell, and his description of the emigrant strain of nationalism which grew up in America has some characteristics not entirely dissimilar to those of Trollope's explanation. Both Trollope and Boyce describe a transformation of the Irishman on American soil but other elements contributing to the genesis of the nationalism of the late 1870s and early 1880s are omitted from Trollope's account. The Irish at home who had to be at the heart of any successful popular movement are reduced to dupes and this despite the level of politicisation they had already achieved through earlier campaigns, education and the press.<sup>1194</sup> Moreover, there is no mention of influential émigrés like Michael Davitt and John O'Connor Power who grew disaffected not in America but in England. Nor is Trollope keen to allow the part played by bitter memories of the Famine in fuelling nationalist feeling.<sup>1195</sup>

In conclusion, Anthony Trollope's representation of Irish nationalism differs from his depiction of every other aspect of Irish life in the completeness of its consistent resistance to the tendency to liberalism, the appreciation of social complexity and diversity, and the balanced application of insight into human psychology which, to a greater or lesser extent, influence other portrayals. Nationalism is alone in being repeatedly marginalized and

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<sup>1192</sup> Philip Bull, 'Issac Butt, British Liberalism and an alternative nationalist tradition' in D. George Boyce and Roger Swift (eds.), *Problems and Perspectives in Irish History Since 1800* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), pp.147-63 (p.157).

<sup>1193</sup> Boyce, *Nationalism*, p.203; Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics*, p.253; Jackson, *Home Rule*, p.41; Jackson, *Ireland*, p.114.

<sup>1194</sup> Boyce, *Nationalism*, p.204.

<sup>1195</sup> Jackson, *Ireland*, p.86; Boyce, *Nationalism*, p.171.

discredited without ever being properly examined under the author's characteristically acute and tolerant gaze.

A number of explanations can be offered for this anomaly:

Trollope's moral and political make-up involved an abhorrence of all Radicalism. O'Connell, Cullen, Creagh and Brosnan are not the only Trollopians characters to be given repellent characteristics designed to render their causes unattractive or ridiculous. However, this leaves unanswered the question as to why, for the politically discriminating Trollope, Irish nationalism, whatever its form, is automatically an extreme cause.

The absence of any detailed discussion of nationalist ideology is in keeping with Trollope's political fiction in as much as his understanding of the operation of the political world did not place political theory at its centre. When it comes to Irish nationalists, however, Trollope's piercing appreciation of these other forces at work is put only to the service of denigrating the characters described. He can identify, for example, the likely concern for his position as leader in O'Connell's challenge to the Young Irelanders, but cannot allow the possibility that O'Connell was truly wedded to a moral force approach.

Revulsion at the violent, terrorist tactics sometimes adopted by those espousing the nationalist cause is an easily justifiable response. The public at large was understandably appalled, for example, by the assassinations of Cavendish and Burke in Phoenix Park, Dublin in May 1882. Trollope's percipience is apparent in his vivid depiction of the operation of terror which silently drains courage from the virtuous, 'when twenty men are afraid to tell what one man has been seen to do.' He was not alone in feeling an antipathy to Gladstone's Irish policy as a form of 'truckling to gangsters and revolutionaries.'<sup>1196</sup> But Trollope, so often aware of moral dilemmas and distinctions, does not meaningfully discriminate between those nationalists who support the use of physical force and those opposed to it. Moreover, his comment on the killing of Cavendish seems politically naïve. Having made what can only be a curious mistake in naming April rather than May as the

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<sup>1196</sup> R.C.Terry, *Anthony Trollope: The Artist in Hiding* (London: Macmillan, 1977), p.196.

month of the murders, he then claims he 'can hardly guess the reason' for the assault on Lord Frederick Cavendish since, 'he had come over to Ireland on that very day,...and had as yet done no service, and excited no vengeance in Ireland.'<sup>1197</sup> It is difficult to believe that Trollope could not conceive of groups like the Invincibles, detached as they were from their victims in a way that the Ribbonmen of *The Macdermots* were not, targeting the office with no regard to the man.

In much of what he wrote about Irish nationalism, Trollope would have seen himself as Ireland's champion. During the Famine, when fears were being raised in parliament and in the press of Irish immigrants packing into already overflowing ghettos, when the Chartist movement seemed to be made all the more threatening by an injection of Irish oratory and leadership, when Ireland seemed poised to rise in rebellion, his experience of and affection for the country dictated its defence. When he insists in *The Macdermots* that the Ribbonmen have personal and local grievances to resolve, he provides a valuable corrective to the image of everything Irish carrying political significance. However, while a minimising of nationalist ambitions could constitute part of this reassuring correction, the extremes to which he seems to need to go to accomplish this are surprising. Why, for example, having destroyed his character, does he need to erase O'Connell from Irish memory? Why, when he is noted even by contemporary reviewers for the avoidance of Irish stereotypes, do these play such a part in his portrayal of Irish nationalism?

A more satisfactory explanation lies in the notion of Trollope, like all of us, being inescapably a product of his times. For him and many of his contemporaries the 'necessity' of the Union was so commonplace a concept as to have become a 'fact.' At work in the formation of this was what J.C. Beckett has defined as an English nationalism which viewed the Union as completing a 'natural process' and regarded any attempt to break up this national unity, 'not as a desire for self-government...but as treason against the nation.'<sup>1198</sup> It, 'was

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<sup>1197</sup> *The Landleaguers*, p.327.

<sup>1198</sup> Beckett, pp.131-2.

at bottom an irrational determination to maintain the integrity of what it regarded as the national territory and to impose its will upon every recalcitrant group within its borders.'<sup>1199</sup> The aptness of this as a description of Trollope's stance is confirmed in the species of English patriotism he displays in *The New Zealander*, his optimistic response to Thomas Babington Macauley's 'prophecy' that a visitor from New Zealand would one day sketch the ruins of St. Paul's from a broken arch of London Bridge. Without discounting the possibility of English decadence, he still insists that:

[I]t is impossible not to be hopeful for one's country. Let reason tell us with ever such unanswerable arguments that countries and nations will be alike to man, if man will but be virtuous; let history assure us with facts never so answerable that the father country must die so that its offspring colonies may have room to live, still we cling, to the hope that these very fields, which are smiling for us, shall smile also for our children's children and their children's children.<sup>1200</sup>

Also as a man of his times, Trollope can be seen to employ strategies to launch political attacks which are used in other cultural portrayals of Ireland. A hostile account by William McComb, for example, of Daniel O'Connell's visit to Belfast in 1841 contains a number of line drawings one of which is entitled 'Repeal Cookery'. It locates The Liberator in the witches' cauldron scene from Macbeth and thus obviously associates him with evil forces and intentions.<sup>1201</sup> In August 1881 *Judy* carried a cartoon entitled 'The Most Recently Discovered Wild Beast.' The beast in question is The Irish-American Dynamite Skunk whose cage bears the legend, 'Bred in the United States.' In front of the cage Mother Gladstone holds up an infant Land Bill who offers a biscuit of 'Concession to

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<sup>1199</sup> *Ibid.*, p.154.

<sup>1200</sup> Anthony Trollope, *The New Zealander*, N.John Hall (ed.) (Oxford; Oxford University Press, 1972), p.208.

<sup>1201</sup> William McComb, *The Repealer Repulsed* (Belfast, 1841; Dublin, 2003). Quoted in Patrick Maume, 'Repelling the Repealer: William McComb's caricatures of Daniel O'Connell' in *History Ireland* 13, 2 (March/April, 2005), pp.43-47 (p.47).

Violence' to the monster.<sup>1202</sup> Connections with Trollope's attempts to discredit O'Connell, attack Gladstone and blame a monstrous type of Irish-Americanism for the murderous state of Ireland in the early 1880s are obvious.

And yet one objects to Trollope keeping such company! Where are the nationalist characters who are, like other of his Irish men and women, 'natural, without much of book exaggeration...human in their vices, not mere abstractions of unalloyed folly, villainy, weakness or virtue'?<sup>1203</sup> What of the influence of his friend Charles Bianconi whose four-wheeled carriages Trollope believed did so much to transform Ireland's coaching and postal system, and who was an active O'Connellite?<sup>1204</sup>

Once again a final crucial factor emerges to make sense of all of this. Such is the part that Ireland plays in Trollope's sense of himself and his work that to contemplate any degree of separation causes him real anguish. It is an anguish which is enhanced, not reduced, by his essential Englishness. The Union, in his fiction and in his life, provides a model for, and the means of, the incorporation of his Irish experience. For most of his writing life he keeps nationalism at bay by discrediting, minimising or dismissing it. By 1882 events in Ireland are rendering these strategies ineffective. He responds with an 'irrational intensity' born of losing a cherished part of his 'achieved personality.'<sup>1205</sup> Feeling rejected by Ireland, he repudiates the treasured land of his youthful transformation as an 'accursed, unhallowed, godless country.'<sup>1206</sup>

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<sup>1202</sup> 'The Most Recently Discovered Wild Beast' *Judy*, 3 Aug.1881, in Michael de Nie, *The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press, 1798-1882* (Wisconsin: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004), p.238.

<sup>1203</sup> Unsigned notice, *Spectator* 20, (1847), p.449, in Smalley, p.547.

<sup>1204</sup> Mullen, *Anthony Trollope*, pp.117-8; Colm Tóibín (ed.), *The Penguin Book of Irish Fiction* (London: Penguin, 1999), Introduction, p.xviii.

<sup>1205</sup> Foster, *Paddy*, p.296.

<sup>1206</sup> *The Landleaguers*, p.257.

## CONCLUSION

One of the most useful services a scholar can perform is to re-create the conditions and materials out of which a work of art first came. This always increases our sense of the wonder of human creation, even if it can never fully account for the miraculous process by which ordinary matter was transmuted into pure art: and it also induces in readers a proper awareness of the limitations within which all authors must work. There should always be, even in the most exacting criticism, a compassionate reference of human achievements to actual human abilities.<sup>1207</sup>

This thesis sought to examine three key questions in relation to Trollope's Irish fiction. With regard to the first of these, it is clear that Anthony Trollope's Irish fiction is a vibrant chronicle of nineteenth-century Ireland and Irish issues, and the compelling record of a foremost Victorian novelist's personal, artistic and ideological interaction with that country. Its location at such a congested intersection of contexts makes its negotiation both problematic and intriguing, as indeed it proved for the writer himself.

Through his compassionate, pragmatic Irish Catholic priests he offers a predominantly positive view of Catholicism as spiritually and socially beneficial, which contests contemporary prejudices. He reinforces this by launching a lethal attack on religious distortions - bigotry, excessive proselytism, divisiveness - to which his Irish Protestants are rather more prone than their Catholic compatriots.

His representation of women in his Irish fiction contains elements which are progressive and conventional, enlightened and occasionally reactionary. It displays Trollope's remarkable ability to appreciate the female perspective but reveals too that the task of controlling so many competing considerations is sometimes beyond him. Nationality is not often a prominent issue but some

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<sup>1207</sup> Declan Kiberd, *Irish Classics* (London: Granta Publications, 2000), Introduction, p.ix.

stereotypical representations are deployed as expedient measures. Those women who do carry symbolic significance promote the vision of a particularly thorough Union between Britain and Ireland.

In general, the landlords and tenants who inhabit Trollope's Irish novels are diverse and convincing. They advertise their author's knowledge of and affection for Ireland, and are most often portrayed and judged with reference to the moral values which dominate the novels regardless of their Irishness. However, when in the last year of his life, his recommended mix of paternalist and *laissez-faire* ideologies is seen to be failing in Ireland, Trollope responds with a representation that draws bitterly and liberally on anti-Irish stereotypes.

Representing the Famine and Irish nationalism presents the greatest personal and artistic tests for Trollope. Compassionate and insightful accounts are overwhelmed and overshadowed by a callous pro-Government Providentialist explanation of the Famine. His Irish nationalists are marginalized, dismissed and discredited in a way that is starkly anomalous.

Secondly, it is apparent that the same formative influences and motivations are evident in all of these representations but in significantly different proportions, and with contrasting results: Trollope's desire to counter prevailing misconceptions about Ireland; his artistic principles and practice; the negotiation of contemporary proprieties and sensitivities; his avoidance, complication or adoption of contemporary English and Irish literary devices and versions of Ireland; the pervasiveness of nationality as a explanation of character and behaviour; Trollope's personal religious, moral and political beliefs, and his experiences and relationships.

Such is his level of identification with Ireland, the credibility of his characters, the acuity of his appreciation of the subtleties of Irish society in his first two novels, that Colm Tóibín has nominated him to fill that nineteenth-century Irish literary gap as 'the missing novelist between Carleton and George Moore.'<sup>1208</sup> Trollope would be charmed at this recognition for he thoroughly appreciated and advertised the transformation which Ireland performed on the

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<sup>1208</sup> Tóibín, p.xviii.



twenty-six year old hobbledehoy, and he wrote out of an affection and gratitude for the country and a related determination to communicate the real Ireland to his countrymen and women. Moreover, Tóibín's nomination recognizes Trollope's capacity to value an Irishness which was not just a pale imitation of Englishness, in which the parish priest is a benign influence, social standards less restrictive, and social barriers more porous. It testifies to aspects of his work and reading which allow him to integrate into the Irish literary world.

However, Tóibín's concentration on those first two novels misses more problematic aspects of Trollope's incorporation of his Irishness, and of Trollope's ready incorporation into the Irish novel tradition. Despite his Irish dimension, indeed because of it, Trollope's Irish fiction bears witness to the inescapable power of the issue of national identity and its unavoidable personal and literary effects.

Trollope is essentially a moralist and in his work moral standards are generally applied regardless of nationality because he believes that they have a relevance to the human condition which ignores national boundaries. Yet there is in his work an ineluctable sense of England as the home and the apotheosis of these values. If he had an Irish self, it is also the case that he must never have been more aware of his Englishness than when he travelled and lived in Ireland. His English patriotism was not negotiable, so that for personal and political reasons the necessity of the Union had to remain unquestionable. He may have applauded elements of Irish difference but he also minimised or demonised other less palatable Irish realities.

The anomalous failures in this literary union – the fatally conflicted *Castle Richmond*, the poisonously sour, unbalanced *Landleaguers* – testify to the inability of even Trollope, or especially Trollope (for both are true), to represent the most catastrophic and disruptive aspects of the nineteenth-century relationship between England and Ireland. Such failures could be interpreted as confirmation of the impossibility of deploying the realist form in this Irish context, but the failure is more human than formal. It is his own

standard for moral, credible, sympathetic characterisation which Trollope fails to meet.

At its controlled best his ability to simultaneously appreciate opposing sides of an issue means that Trollope's fiction brilliantly yokes and exploits contradiction and tension. It is on this that the painful competition between the interests of society and the individual rests in *The Warden*. It is this ability which keeps the reader's sympathies shifting between Louis and Emily Trevelyan in *He Knew He Was Right*. However, even his English novels can be unstable affairs. The man himself, conservative and a Liberal, a sensitive observer and a bullish blusterer, a friend of Charles Bianconi and a violent critic of O'Connellite politics, embodies contradiction. The contemporary requirement for propriety in novels which might well be read aloud in Victorian parlours, combines with Trollope's acute sense of their moral impact but competes with his aim of fidelity, to encourage the subterfuge of containing more subversive messages in orthodox frameworks. All of this means that his fiction always involves a balancing of competing interests. Add to this the sometimes painful, contentiousness of Ireland and Trollope's unique involvement, and the potential for implosion is immense. It is a measure of the man and his dedication to the country that out of this there emerges some cohesive and challenging representations of Ireland, but a measure too of the man, rather than the form, that this was not a feat that he could always achieve. In the case of the Famine it is the man, perhaps even more than the writer, who cannot bear to draw the conclusions demanded by his own fiction. Distraught at the events of the Land War, Parnellite politics and Gladstonian appeasements, it is the percipient observer and writer who briefly evokes in his portrayal of the stopping of the hunt the forces which will spell the end of the Union, but the man who retreats into vicious condemnation of an Ireland that resists English solutions.

Finally, that Trollope's personal relationship with Ireland proves so influential in forming his representation, does not preclude general conclusions being drawn from its analysis about the nature of the relationship between

Britain and Ireland, and its manifestation in the literature of the period. Indeed Trollope's struggles bear testament to the painful instability of that Union. They highlight its almost unavoidably emotional quality in a climate in which personal identity was so indissolubly tied to national identity, and when character and action were so frequently understood with reference to nationality. In this context, perhaps even a writer of Trollope's generous spirit and lynx-like vision, may be excused for hiding behind a shield of callous dogma and blindly wielding anti-Irish stereotypes as weapons.

Anthony Trollope began and ended his literary life with representations of Ireland. The country was central to his idea of himself. This study has sought to 're-create the conditions and materials' from which his Irish fiction emerged. It has assessed their influence on the nature of Trollope's representation, but ends with the acknowledgement that '[t]here should always be, even in the most exacting criticism, a compassionate reference of human achievements to human abilities.'<sup>1209</sup>

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<sup>1209</sup> Kiberd, p.ix.

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