

William Carleton's Pre-famine Fiction:
Shifting Political Perspectives

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Declaration

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Abstract

Kevan O'Rourke

William Carleton's Pre-famine Fiction: Shifting political perspectives

This study examines the life and pre-famine writings of Catholic-born nineteenth century Irish novelist William Carleton (1794-1869). Carleton chronicled the lives of the Catholic Irish peasantry, bearers of an oral tradition that went into terminal decline after the Great Famine (1845-50). Through his fiction Carleton offered an authentic, insider, eye-witness perspective on the lives of the rural poor unrivalled by his contemporaries; John Banim and Gerald Griffin. Carleton, however, converted to the Protestant religion before beginning his career in Irish literature and this renders a study of his writings more complex. He wrote from different political perspectives, for patrons of opposing views, at different junctures in his career and this led to accusations of his being a jobbing writer. Carleton struggled financially throughout his career and pecuniary necessity emerges as the primary motivating factor in the author's shifts from one political position to another. Consequently, Carleton can never be considered the most reliable of witnesses as his writings were often tainted with bias and prejudice against one group or another. What Carleton guarantees the historian, however, is a variety of perspectives on the pre-famine period that reveal as much about those who read his novels as of the people described within. This study will apply the concept of self-fashioning, pioneered by Stephen Greenblatt in his examinations of the Renaissance period, to Carleton and chart the evolution of the author's public identity and the shifting nature of his literary perspective through his pre-famine career. Initially a weapon of the evangelical New Reformation Movement Carleton would write for Young Ireland and the cause of Repeal during the 1840s. This study will examine the author's career, during what was a transitional period in Irish history, and consider the incremental phases of his writing that explain the wholly opposing perspectives offered in his writings at either end of the period 1828-1850.

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Introduction

This study will explore the social and political landscape of pre-famine Ireland through the lens of Irish novelist William Carleton. Described by J.M. Synge as ‘the father of Irish literature,’¹ by Seamus Heaney as ‘the old fork-tongued turncoat,’² and by Benedict Kiely as the ‘interpreter of the Irish people,’³ Carleton is perhaps the most interesting Irish novelist of the nineteenth century. He stood apart from his contemporaries, John Banim and Gerald Griffin, as the only ‘peasant’ author among the three. Banim and Griffin occupied slightly more elevated, middle-class positions upon the social ladder. Further, Carleton was the only one of the three authors to live through the Great Famine and did not leave for London, choosing instead to publish his work solely in Ireland. Born of rural Catholic origins in Co. Tyrone, an interpreter of the oral tradition that went into terminal decline after the Great Famine, Carleton allows the historian access into the hidden peasant world of devout religious practice, subsistence living and agrarian unrest. Carleton’s fiction offers unique, insider, eye witness perspectives relating to the issues that impacted upon Irish society during the period. Carleton converted from Catholicism to Protestantism before he began his career in literature, however, and this renders the perspectives offered in his fiction complex. By his conversion Carleton rose above his original social standing. Only after he had become a member of Dublin’s Protestant middle-class did he make his debut in literature. He wrote of the community he had left behind, and his rural upbringing allowed him to act as a witness and give voice to the Irish lower classes of the period. Life experiences on either side of the socially and religiously defined boundary existent in pre-famine Ireland allowed Carleton to write from the perspectives of Catholics and Protestants alike. His fiction must therefore be considered an invaluable source to the historian, offering a range of perspectives on various issues that impacted upon Irish society at large during the pre-famine period.

That Carleton’s fiction is a valuable source is proven by the fact that many historians have utilised extracts of the author’s writings to support and enhance their historical studies. Margaret Kelleher, for example, cited extracts from Carleton’s *The Black Prophet: A Tale of Irish Famine* (1847) in *The Feminization of Famine: expressions of the*

¹ Mrytle Hill, ‘Culture & Religion, 1815-1870’, in Donnchadh Ó Corráin and Tomás O’Riordan, (eds.), *Ireland 1815-1870: Emancipation, Famine and Religion*, (Cornwall, 2011), p. 51.

² Seamus Heaney, ‘Station Island’, (London, 1984).

³ Benedict Kiely, *Poor Scholar*, (London, 1947), p. 123.

inexpressible?.⁴ Similarly, segments of Carleton's fiction were also used by Desmond Keenan in *The Catholic Church in Nineteenth Century Ireland*, by Antonia McManus in *The Irish Hedge School and Its Books, 1695-1831* and by Chris Morash in *Writing the Irish Famine*.⁵ Carleton himself has been the subject of much study. Both Benedict Kiely and David J. O'Donoghue have written biographical accounts of Carleton's life, O'Donoghue completing the task of writing the second half of the author's unfinished autobiography. Gordon Brand's *The Authentic Voice*, an edited collection of essays, originally lectures at the William Carleton Summer School provides a variety of perspectives on the author's life, his stories and novels.⁶ Barbara Hayley has studied Carleton comprehensively, completing a bibliography of his works and examining *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, a collection of short stories that ran through numerous series and editions between 1830 and 1844.⁷ More recently Terence Dooley used Carleton's short story "Wildgoose Lodge" (1830) in his study of agrarian agitation in pre-famine Louth; *The Murders at Wildgoose Lodge: agrarian crime and punishment in pre-famine Ireland*.⁸ Despite this wealth of material, no full-length study exists that features Carleton and his complete collection of writings. Although this study will not encompass Carleton's writings in their entirety it will examine a significant portion of the author's life and career. It will focus on the writings Carleton published during the pre-famine period and upon those of his short stories and novels that dealt with issues relevant to the period. For reasons that will be explained below the writings Carleton produced during and about this period are of most value and interest to the historian.

Access to the 'voice' of the Irish peasantry of pre-famine Ireland has been problematic for historians. Though Niall Ó Ciosáin estimated that 47 per cent of the population over five years of age could read English in 1841, quite a high figure comparatively, many of the peasantry remained illiterate.⁹ The establishment of the National School System in 1831 was beginning to transform these figures but contemporary accounts of peasant life by peasants, or those who knew them intimately, are

⁴ Margaret Kelleher, *The Feminization of Famine: Expressions of the Inexpressible?*, (Cork, 1997).

⁵ Desmond Keenan, *The Catholic Church in Nineteenth Century Ireland*, (Dublin, 1983). Antonia McManus, *The Irish Hedge School and Its Books, 1695-1831*, (Dublin, 2002). Chris Morash, *Writing the Irish Famine*, (Oxford, 1995).

⁶ Gordon Brand (ed.), *William Carleton: The Authentic Voice*, (Gerrards Cross, 2006).

⁷ Barbara Hayley, *A Bibliography of the Writings of William Carleton* (Buckinghamshire, 1985). Barbara Hayley, *Carleton's Traits and Stories and the Nineteenth-Century Anglo Irish Tradition* (Gerrards Cross, 1983).

⁸ Terence Dooley, *The Murders at Wildgoose Lodge: agrarian crime and punishment in pre-famine Ireland*, (Dublin, 2007).

⁹ Niall Ó Ciosáin, *Print and Popular Culture in Ireland, 1750-1850*, (New York, 1997), p. 39.

relatively scarce. The use of Carleton's fiction helps to fill the void left by the lack of contemporary, primary source evidence. While the subject matter, the lives of the Irish peasantry or rural poor and the issues that they faced within the context of the pre-famine period, was consistent throughout Carleton's body of work, the perspective from which the author wrote shifted and altered over time. The author's perspective changed based on the readers available to him at different points in his career. The Irish Catholics Carleton wrote about had not the ability to read his fiction when the author began his career and so he was forced to address his sketches and stories to a Protestant and British readership. Later Carleton situated his writings within the popular nationalist discourse of the 1840s and drew readers from across the middle-classes. As a result, Carleton's fiction serves a second function; it reveals as much, if not more, about the readers it was addressed to as it does about those who it described.

This study is situated within the context of the increasing use of literary sources by historians. In 1987 Tom Dunne argued that:

There seems to be no reason why literary texts cannot be used successfully as primary source material for all aspects of the most difficult, yet most fundamental feature to understand about any age or society, the ways in which it perceived and interpreted reality. These texts offer the testimony of those who were particularly concerned with such perceptions and interpretations.¹⁰

However, Dunne also stated that:

Like other forms of historical evidence, literature has to be treated with caution and sensitivity, its particular language and conventions understood, its bias and motivation taken into account, its limitations accepted.¹¹

Similarly, Allan Pasco argued that 'it [literature] is a response to reality, whether by reflection or reaction'¹² and that 'stories frequently reveal history, especially its motivations and cultural reality.'¹³ Considering late eighteenth century, revolutionary, France Pasco suggested that literary sources are of particular importance to any historical examination of this period owing to a lack of available archival sources and to the fact that

¹⁰ Tom Dunne, 'A polemical introduction: literature, literary theory and the historian', in Tom Dunne, (ed.), *The Writer as Witness: literature as historical evidence*, (Cork, 1987), p. 7.

¹¹ Dunne, 'introduction', p. 7.

¹² Allan Pasco, 'Literature as Historical Archive', in *New Literary History*, xxxv, no. 3, (2004), p. 374.

¹³ Pasco, 'Literature as Historical Archive', p. 382.

the literary public had changed ‘from a limited elite to a mass audience.’¹⁴ As a result of this shift Pasco argued that the contemporary literature more accurately reflected and revealed French culture and society because ‘writers had to create works that would appeal to others, many others, and attract an audience with money in hand.’¹⁵ Moreover, these novels and plays had to resonate at some level with their prospective readers and had to retain a level of contemporary realism for their readers to establish a relationship with the narratives.¹⁶ Like Dunne, Pasco acknowledged that certain conditions had to be met for literary sources to be considered historically valuable. He stated that:

When both frequency of occurrence and congruence of content or meaning occur – whether in respect to subject matter, detail, patterns, attitude, or types of events or character – there is more reason to accept the results as an accurate, meaningful reflection of the culture.¹⁷

Dunne studied the symbiotic relationship between history and literature and advocated a greater recognition of this link by both historians and literary theorists alike. He noted that novels and fictive writings had been utilised successfully as supplementary evidence by historians prior to the 1980s, the time at which he was writing, but also suggested that there should be no reason why such writings could not be used as primary source material. Lady Morgan argued that fiction ‘exhibited a mirror into the times in which it is composed: reflecting morals, customs, manners, peculiarities of character and prevalence of opinion’¹⁸ and Dunne argued that regardless of an author’s intent to produce, ‘a work of individual imagination... the end product will inevitably be a personal ‘history’ of the writer’s time and place.’¹⁹ In this way Carleton’s fiction and other writings become invaluable historical sources. Through this study, his writings act as a lens into pre-famine Ireland, offering perspectives on rural life, class relations, religious practice and agrarian disturbance in the first half of the nineteenth century, albeit mediated through Carleton’s own personal ambitions and shifting religious and social position.

¹⁴ Pasco, ‘Literature as Historical Archive’, p. 379.

¹⁵ Pasco, ‘Literature as Historical Archive’, p. 379.

¹⁶ Pasco, ‘Literature as Historical Archive’, pp. 380, 383.

¹⁷ Pasco, ‘Literature as Historical Archive’, p. 388.

¹⁸ Tom Dunne, ‘Fiction as “The Best History of Nations”’: Lady Morgan’s Irish Novels’, in Dunne, *The Writer as Witness*, p. 133.

¹⁹ Dunne, ‘introduction’, p. 3.

In treating Carleton as ‘a historian of his own time and society’,²⁰ this thesis acknowledges that while writers of fiction may not always be relied upon as the most credible of witnesses, given the inevitabilities of bias, selection and embellishment, their writings still reveal certain truths about their time, place and society and particularly of the readers that their fiction was aimed at. This thesis will adopt a new historicist approach by considering Carleton’s writings as products of the society and culture in which they were produced. New historicism ‘views literary texts as cultural products that are rooted in their time and place, not works of individual genius that transcend them.’²¹ New historicism’s focus on the historical context of the author and their writings is apt for this study given the changing political landscape of pre-famine Ireland and the shifting political perspective from which Carleton wrote. Using a method similar to that applied by Terence Dooley in *The Murders at Wildgoose Lodge* this study will aim to examine Carleton’s fiction alongside and in conjunction with the writings of his contemporaries; contemporary evidence relating to the period, including newspaper articles, correspondence and statistical reports; and modern historical studies that engage with the themes and issues that arise throughout his writings. Dooley compared one of Carleton’s short stories, “Wildgoose Lodge”, to factual historical accounts of the same event the story depicts. He also compared Carleton’s story to contemporary portrayals of the event in question. In so doing Dooley constructed a broad picture of the event in question and the manner in which it was perceived by different sections of society. Dooley measured Carleton’s version of the murders at Wildgoose Lodge against those found in newspaper reports, court records and contemporary writings and subsequently gained an insight into the perspective from which Carleton wrote his tale. Such comparison allows for conclusions to be drawn regarding the motivations and influences under which the fictive text was penned. By adopting a similar framework this study will compare and contrast a variety of Carleton’s writings against a collection of historical and contemporary sources to better understand the numerous shifting and evolving perspectives from which the author wrote throughout his career.

This thesis will also adopt the concept of self-fashioning, a concept applied by new historicist progenitor Stephen Greenblatt to the Renaissance period. In this case it will be deployed as a way of thinking about the deviating course of Carleton’s life and writings.

²⁰ Tom Dunne, ‘Murder as Metaphor: Griffin’s Portrayal of Ireland in the Year of Emancipation’, in Oliver McDonagh and W.F. Mandle, (eds.), *Ireland and Irish Australia: studies in cultural and political history*, (London and Wolfeboro, N.H, 1986), p. 64.

²¹ Neema Parvini, ‘New Historicism’, (<http://www.oxfordbibliographies.com/view/document/obo-9780190221911/obo-9780190221911-0015.xml>) (2 February 2018).

That Carleton converted from Catholicism to Protestantism during the pre-famine period is the most controversial aspect of the novelist's career and questions arise over his motivations in doing so. Using the concept of self-fashioning, this thesis will foreground and illuminate the economic and social advantages that Carleton would gain through his conversion and, later, through further attempts to refashion his public identity. Following his arrival in Dublin Carleton changed his religion and assimilated into Dublin society. Through self-fashioning, the former peasant fashioned a new identity and public image that ultimately allowed him to begin a career in literature. The writings he subsequently produced aligned with his newly constructed persona and allowed Carleton to sustain a career for a time. The political landscape changed, however, and the novelist had to adapt accordingly. Again, he fashioned, the perspective from which he wrote shifted once more and, consequently, the novels he produced later in his career contrast strikingly with the sketches and short stories he published earlier. Carleton's self-fashioning was aesthetic, behavioural and literary and it can be argued that the author was engaged with this concept of identity shaping throughout the entire course of his career. The motivation for this continuous self-reimagining appears almost exclusively financial and earned Carleton the brand of jobbing writer.

Focusing on Carleton's career during the pre-famine period the author's writings will be broken into two distinctive phases and a transitional period in between. During the first phase of his career Carleton was associated with the Protestant and evangelical *The Christian Examiner and Church of Ireland Magazine*. A transitional phase followed when Carleton revised several of his original short stories for re-publication. The second phase of Carleton's pre-famine career saw him become associated with Young Ireland and *The Nation* and begin writing from a more reformist point of view. Carleton's writings, from his debut in literature in 1828 to the novels he produced in the 1840s, will be further divided into the two categories of religion and violence, the two most prominent themes found within his writings. Within these categories, Carleton's stance or stances upon these respective themes will be examined to reveal what different sections of pre-famine Irish society thought of these respective issues at different times during the first half of the century. Due consideration will be given in each case to the readership Carleton was addressing, the editor or publisher under whose influence he operated and indeed to the author's own personal experience of the event or issue he was engaging with. Ultimately, by utilising Carleton's fiction, and the perspectives captured therein, this study will attempt

to construct a broad picture of the views, opinions and feelings of Irish society, across social and religious divisions, on the pertinent issues of the day.

Chapter One will examine Carleton's life up to the point at which he began his career in literature. The author penned two autobiographical accounts during his life; an autobiographical introduction to his 1843-4 edition of *Traits and Stories*, and an autobiography he failed to finish before his death. Both account for the author's rural Catholic upbringing and his experiences in the sectarian north of Ireland but neither can be relied upon as fact. Of the correspondence that survives in the O'Donoghue papers only two of these letters were written before 1845 and none deal with the author's early life. Contemporary evidence, *The State of the Country Papers, Series 1* (1796-1820), the *Ordnance Survey Memoirs for County Tyrone* (1833-5) and John McEvoy's *Statistical Survey of County Tyrone* (1802), will therefore be used to construct an image of Carleton's early life, that which was to become the subject matter of his fiction. Carleton's personal experience with issues relevant to the themes of religion and violence, that were to feature heavily within his fiction, will also be examined. Finally, the author's attempts to break social boundaries and rise above his Catholic origins, first through securing an education and later setting out to become a Catholic priest will be charted.

Following this biographical sketch of Carleton's youth Chapter Two will take an in-depth look at the author's conversion to Protestantism. The concept of religious conversion within the context of pre-famine Ireland will be considered. Carleton's conversion will be compared to those of other individuals who chose to change their religion during the same period. Carleton's conversion to Protestantism, the manner in which he affected this change of religion and the subsequent impact it was to have on his life and writings will be the subject of detailed analysis. The concept of self-fashioning will be applied to Carleton to better understand why he chose to change his religion.

Chapters Three, Four and Five will consider Carleton's writings on the themes of religion and violence, respectively, through the various stages or phases of his career. Issues relating to religion and violence dominated public discourse during the pre-famine period and this is duly reflected in Carleton's writings. The popular religion of the rural poor, a combination of pagan-like ritual, superstition and the rites and practices of Catholicism, was perceived as backward and uncivilised by those outside of peasant society. While it was evident that reform was necessary as the church emerged from the

penal era, the Catholic hierarchy were ill-equipped to deal with increasing numbers of parishioners that were the result of the population explosion that occurred between 1750 and 1845. A lack of priests, and of church buildings and a mass attendance rate of approximately fifty per cent forced the church to partly embrace aspects of popular religion, including household based ‘stations’, to minister to their flocks.²² The clergy too, their stock, the quality of the education they had received, their use, or indeed abuse, of the power and authority they held over the laity, were all called into question during the pre-famine period.²³ Critics framed their perceptions of Irish Catholicism within existing international, anti-Catholic discourse highlighting what they viewed as the various practical and doctrinal errors of the religion and portrayed the priests as irresponsible, extortionate and manipulative. For Irish Protestants such criticism likely masked the fears and insecurities that they held, given the vulnerable, minority position they occupied within Irish society.

An ever-increasing rural population that was outstripping resources also had implications of a violent nature. Tenants that were under increasing pressure, living at a level of subsistence on plots of land that had been continually sub-divided, organised to combat perceived injustices and to impose their own moral economy within local communities.²⁴ An inherent tendency towards violence, that which through faction fighting even pervaded their leisure activities, caused the peasantry to react violently to their circumstances. The displacement or replacement of fellow tenants, excessive tithes, taxes or dues, and acts of a sectarian nature were each retaliated against by local agrarian gangs. The character and purpose of the secret societies of pre-famine Ireland varied within localities. They often shared the characteristics of being oath-bound, of meeting nocturnally and of being exclusively Catholic and lower class, however, exceptions did exist.²⁵ Each society attempted to impose its own system of justice upon the local

²² Colin Barr, ‘The Re-energising of Catholicism, 1790-1880’, in Tom Bartlett, (gen. ed.), *The Cambridge History of Ireland*, (Cambridge, 2018), iii, pp. 280-90, Sean Connolly, *Priests and People in Pre-Famine Ireland 1780-1845*, (Dublin, 1982), pp. 24-73, Emmet Larkin, *The Pastoral Role of the Roman Catholic Church in Pre-Famine Ireland, 1750-1850*, (Dublin, 2006), D.W. Miller, ‘Landscape and Religious Practice: A Study of Mass Attendance in Pre-Famine Ireland,’ in *Éire-Ireland*, xl, no. 1&2 (2005), pp. 90-106, Timothy McMahon, ‘Religion and Popular Culture in Nineteenth-Century Ireland’, in *History Compass*, v, no. 3 (2007), pp. 845-64.

²³ Connolly, *Priests and People*, pp. 31-73.

²⁴ Maura Cronin, *Agrarian Protest in Ireland 1750-1960*, (Dundalgon, 2012), p. 14.

²⁵ Allan Blackstock explains that Tommy Downshire’s Boys included both Catholic and Protestant members while Roberts notes that the Caravats and Shanvests were organised along class lines rather than religious ones. Allan Blackstock, ‘Tommy Downshire’s Boys: Popular Protest, Social Change and Political Manipulation in Mid-Ulster, 1829-1847’, in *Past & Present*, no. 196, (2007), pp. 125-72, P.E.W. Roberts, ‘Caravats and Shanvests: Whiteboyism and faction fighting in east Munster, 1802-11’, in Samuel Clark and

community and threatened, through letters, notices and nocturnal visits, before acting violently.²⁶ Large numbers of the rural poor engaged in agrarian violence giving the societies a threatening character, yet, none of the gangs really possessed the organisational structures or leadership to have any major impact outside of their local communities.²⁷ Chapters Three, Four and Five will chart the evolution of Carleton's writings on the themes of religion and violence analysing the changing perspectives therein as examples of the author's continued self-fashioning.

As demonstrated in Chapter Two, Carleton began his career as a Protestant propagandist writing material of an anti-papist nature for the evangelical *Examiner* amidst the campaign for Catholic emancipation. Chapter Three will engage more thoroughly with these writings, their themes and their subsequent revisions. His early writings dealt, almost exclusively, with the perceived errors of Catholicism in Ireland. Carleton warned his readers of the 'superstitious' peasantry and of their manipulating clerics. Later in his career Carleton revised several of his original short stories, removed aspects of their anti-Catholic bias and produced more nuanced critiques as he attempted to appeal to both Catholic and Protestant sections of a broadening reading public. Therefore, as well as being one of the more prominent subjects within his writings, the theme of religion also highlights the varying perspectives available in the novelist's work during the different phases in his career.

Carleton's depictions of peasant violence changed over time too. He maintained an aversion to all violence, particularly sectarian violence, throughout his writings but did so from differing viewpoints at different stages in his career. Chapter Four will consider violence in the context of agrarian protest and secret societies. In early editions of *Traits and Stories* Carleton illustrated the perceived threat posed by rural Catholics to Irish Protestants owing to their inherent tendency towards violence. In truth agrarian protest bore little consequence to the Irish Protestant elites or indeed wider Irish society. For the most part secret societies addressed local grievances and while combinations of Whiteboys in the south and Ribbonmen in the north may have extended across provinces they posed no real threat of outright rebellion. Moreover, the targets of agrarian unrest were often

J.S. Donnelly Jr., (eds.), *Irish Peasants: violence and political unrest, 1780-1914*, (Manchester, 1983), pp. 66-101.

²⁶ Cronin, *Agrarian Protest in Ireland*, pp. 13-4, J.S. Donnelly Jr., *Captain Rock: The Irish Agrarian Rebellion of 1821-24*, (Cork, 2009).

²⁷ M.R. Beames, 'The Ribbon Societies: Lower-Class Nationalism in Pre-Famine Ireland', in *Past & Present*, no. 97 (1982), p. 142.

those of the same class as the banditti, land owners and the upper classes were not often affected. The incorrect attributing of local disturbances to secret societies heightened Protestant fears and insecurities that already existed following the attempted rebellions of 1798 and 1803. The large numbers that participated in rural protest coupled with the crowds Daniel O’Connell mobilised in support of his emancipation campaign did little, however, to ease the concerns of the Protestant community. Later, in the 1840s, Carleton began to examine the root causes that contributed to the culture of violence prevalent in Ireland during the pre-famine period, charging the British government with neglect. Carleton claimed to have been made a member of an agrarian secret society and offered a unique insider perspective on Irish violence. Simultaneously, however, he also made stern attempts to distance himself from this same violence. Like that of religion, the theme of violence spans Carleton’s pre-famine fiction and is apt to illustrate the evolution of the perspective from which the author wrote.

Finally, Chapter Five will consider peasant violence in the context of leisure. Carleton penned two short stories in 1830, “The Battle of the Factions” and “The Party Fight and Funeral”, in which he distinguished between two forms of fighting, faction fighting, fighting between rival Catholic factions, and party fighting, fighting involving parties of the opposing religions of Catholicism and Protestantism. This chapter will argue that through Carleton’s contradistinctive depictions of faction fighting and party fighting that the novelist presented the former as a form of leisure for the Irish rural poor of the pre-famine period but the latter as wholly unrelated to any form of recreational activity. Thus, this chapter will examine the recreational qualities of faction fighting, utilising Carleton’s short stories, as well as excerpts from the fiction of his contemporaries, and consider faction fighting as a leisure pursuit. In depicting factional violence as leisure for the Irish rural poor Carleton revealed the peasantry’s inherent tendency towards violence. In treating of faction fighting differently to the many other manifestations of violence he condemned during the same period Carleton suggested that the activity bore no threat or consequence to his predominantly Protestant and middle-class readership, however, it is unlikely that his readers shared or accepted this view.

This study will deal almost exclusively with Carleton’s pre-famine writings. Several exceptions will be made, however, for the purpose of highlighting trends in the author’s writings. Carleton’s *The Tithe Proctor: Being a Tale of Tithe Rebellion in Ireland* (1849) for instance will feature in Chapter Four. Although published in 1849 outside of the pre-

famine period the novel dealt with the issue of tithes and the tithe war of the 1830s and can therefore be situated within a discussion relating to agrarian crime and violence in the first half of the nineteenth century. Carleton's most famous novel, *The Black Prophet*, written in 1847 during the worst year of the Great Famine will also feature within the study to help illustrate trends in the author's writings but will not be examined in detail. This work has already been the subject of extensive research by literary critics, Margaret Kelleher, Chris Morash and Melissa Fegan included.²⁸ Crucially, however, this thesis will add to our knowledge of Carleton through its focus on his pre-Famine life and work and through its development of our understanding of both Carleton and representations of religion and violence in pre-Famine Ireland.

²⁸ Kelleher, *The Feminization of Famine*. Morash, *Writing the Irish Famine*. Melissa Fegan, *Literature and the Irish Famine*, (Oxford, 2002), pp. 131-63.

Chapter One

From Prillisk to the Metropolis: William Carleton's early life

In this chapter, William Carleton's youth and early life will be examined. His journey from rural Catholic origins, living in the north of Ireland, to his arrival in Dublin before his conversion to Protestantism sometime between the years 1818 and 1820 will be explored through a detailed study of the texts below, two from Carleton's own hand and a third written by David J. O'Donoghue. Carleton wrote a 'General Introduction' to the 'New Edition' of *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* published in 1843-4.²⁹ The passage contained an account of his early life that he was to base his unfinished autobiography upon. Carleton bibliographer Barbara Hayley stated of this piece that it 'gives the best account of his life.'³⁰ Carleton passed away in 1869 without finishing or publishing his last literary project, however, O'Donoghue later completed the task initiated by Carleton.³¹ O'Donoghue (1866-1917) had been a bookseller in London before he moved to Ireland in the 1890s. He discovered Carleton's autobiography amongst the author's daughters' papers. A selection of over 80 letters both written and received by Carleton are kept in the O'Donoghue Collection at UCD Archives³² but not all of the papers used by O'Donoghue in writing Carleton's life survive in the collection. O'Donoghue also penned a biographical memoir of Carleton for the 1895 edition of *Fardorougha the Miser*.³³ While both of Carleton's autobiographical sketches do give the best account of his early life, prior to his becoming a novelist, the autobiographical nature of these texts mean that neither can be relied upon completely. Contemporary historical sources, including the *State of the Country Papers, Series I* (1796-1820), *Griffiths Valuation* (1847-64), John McEvoy's *Statistical Survey of Co. Tyrone* (1802), and the *Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland* for

²⁹ William Carleton, *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry: A New Edition, with an autobiographical introduction, explanatory notes, and numerous illustrations on wood and steel*, (2 vols, Dublin and London, 1843-1844).

³⁰ William Carleton, *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry: with a preface by Barbara Hayley*, (2 vols, London, 1990), i, p. 11.

³¹ D.J. O'Donoghue, *The Life of William Carleton: Being his autobiography and letters; and an account of his life and writings, from the point at which his autobiography breaks off, with an introduction by Mrs. Cashel Hoey*, (2 vols, London, 1896).

³² (U.C.D. Archives, O'Donoghue Papers, LA15/1710-82, 91-4).

³³ 'D.J. O'Donoghue (1866-1917)', (www.ricorso.net/rx/az-data/authors) (5 Feb 2015). O'Donoghue's other writings include: articles contributed to the *Dublin Evening Telegraph*, the *Shamrock* and the *National Press*. *Life and Writings of James Clarence Mangan*, (Edinburgh and Dublin, 1897) and *Life of Robert Emmet*, (Dublin, 1902).

county Tyrone (1833-5) will be used to qualify the information that can be extracted from Carleton's writings and to illuminate the historical context of the novelist's early life.

I. Autobiography and Fiction

The autobiographical form is problematic. Peter Nagourney in his study of literary biography examined the difficulties faced by biographers in interpreting autobiographical sources.³⁴ Firstly, autobiography is written retrospectively. Both of Carleton's autobiographical sketches were written after the fact, years after the events he detailed had long passed. The first was written in August 1842, when Carleton was forty-four, and the second written in the final years of his life. Nagourney noted that 'any autobiographical account inevitably selects and rewrites the past in light of the present,'³⁵ that 'retrospective views always find appropriate antecedents, but can we determine whether the subject's action or thought had the same significance during his experience, [and] in his recollection of the experience.'³⁶ While some of the decisions Carleton made as a youth, giving up on his attempts to enter the Catholic priesthood for example, might not have seemed significant to the author at the time, in retrospect this decision was to alter the course of his life and it is therefore duly accounted for in his autobiographical writings. One could argue that this is but natural. Carleton could not have known what impact this decision was to have upon his future life, yet, years after the fact he was better positioned to analyse the consequences of his earlier determination. Mark Freeman noted that:

To confer new meanings onto the past is not necessarily to falsify it, but to situate it within a broader interpretive scheme, one that may have been unavailable at the time of experience.³⁷

Specificity regarding dates is also lacking in Carleton's autobiographical writings and this too is a consequence of the retrospective nature of the texts. Writing his unfinished autobiography, recalling experiences that had occurred forty, fifty and sixty years earlier, a failing memory inevitably distorted the detail of the author's final project. As a result, the dates detailed in the biographical sketches included in this study have been approximated

³⁴ Peter Nagourney, 'The Basic Assumptions of Literary Biography', in *Biography*, i, no. 2, (1978), p. 99.

³⁵ Nagourney, 'Literary Biography', p. 98.

³⁶ Nagourney, 'Literary Biography', p. 98.

³⁷ Mark Freeman, 'From substance to story: Narrative and identity, and the reconstruction of the self', in Jens Brockmeier and D.A. Carbaugh, (eds.), *Narrative and Identity: Studies in Autobiography, Self and Culture*, (Amsterdam and Philadelphia, 2001), p. 291.

following detailed studies of Carleton's two accounts, as well as, consultation with O'Donoghue's text.

A second concern that arises when analysing both biographical and autobiographical texts is the selective nature of the form. Nagourney explained that:

there is no absolute truth about a man, only relative and partial truths which are themselves limited by humanity, and by depending upon the subjective statements by the biographical subject.³⁸

In biography and autobiography, 'subjectivity is inevitable, selections must be made; if selections are not random, a principle of choice must be involved.'³⁹ In this way Carleton selected the life experiences that he deemed significant based, at the time of writing, on the life he had lived. The choices he made were also informed by his perceptions and interpretations of these events and the impact that they had had on his life up to that point. Nagourney noted of biography that:

Each bit of information fills in, modifies, or alters the developing image of the subject, yet at some point the biographer feels that some bits of information are more relevant and valuable than others for revealing his understanding of the subject. While this takes place the biography takes form.⁴⁰

Consequently, Carleton's autobiography is defined as much by the events and experiences that the author failed to account for, his conversion for instance, as it is by those he selected to include.

The identity or status of an author, relative to their readers, when writing their autobiography, may also impact upon the selections made in the construction of their life story. Jermone R. Schulster by comparing Richard Wagner's (1813-83) autobiography to letters the composer had written during his life argued that the creative vision Wagner claimed to have had at La Spezia was invented rather than actually experienced. The German composer suggested that when resting at La Spezia he had fallen into a 'somnambulist state'⁴¹ during which he had this vision and upon waking he 'recognized

³⁸ Nagourney, 'Literary Biography', p. 90.

³⁹ Nagourney, 'Literary Biography', p. 91.

⁴⁰ Nagourney, 'Literary Biography', pp. 91-2.

⁴¹ Jerome Schulster, 'Richard Wagner's creative vision at La Spezia or The retrospective interpretation of experience in autobiographical memory as a function of an emerging identity', in Brockmeier and Carbaugh,

at once that the orchestral prelude to “Das Rheingold”, long dormant within me but up to that moment inchoate, had at last been revealed.’⁴² Schulster argued that Wagner created the vision and inserted it into his autobiography because:

It was the sort of creative experience a Master ought to have; it was evidence of his identity.⁴³

Carleton too, as farmer’s son turned established novelist, who had sold his works on the strength of his being a reliable and authoritative witness to all aspects of Irish peasant life, may have been expected to have had certain or specific experiences during his early life. He grew up in rural Tyrone and described his origins as ‘humble’ and ‘lowly’.⁴⁴ While Carleton certainly lived amongst the Tyrone peasantry, he and his family were by no means of the poorest sections of that community. The Carletons were small farmers, considerably better off than landless labourers and labourer landholders, a fact that will be explained in detail later in this chapter. Carleton lived close to, and interacted daily with, the rural peasantry but was not subsisting in the same way as the poorest people of pre-famine society were. The experiences he reported to have had as a youth, however, suggest that he was actively involved in peasant life. His initiation into Ribbonism, the nocturnal raid upon his family home by Protestant Yeomen, and his pilgrimage to St. Patrick’s Purgatory at Lough Derg act as examples of such experiences. None of these events can be traced to fact. Carleton claimed also to have passed through Co. Louth and seen the bodies of the men convicted for the murders at Wildgoose Lodge, on 29/30 October 1816, hanging in gibbets by the roadside six months after the actual event had occurred, yet Daniel J. Casey argued that the author’s arrival in Louth can be dated another six months later.⁴⁵ Having written with an air of authority on the events of Wildgoose Lodge in “Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman” (1830), later renamed “Wildgoose Lodge” (1833), Carleton may have been expected to have visited the scene of this crime at the earlier date yet this may not have been the reality. Public expectation, owing to an author’s identity, can also impact on the construction of their autobiographical writings.

Narrative and Identity, p. 188. ‘Das Rheingold’ was the opening music to Wagner’s tetralogy ‘Der Ring des Nibelungen’.

⁴² Schulster, ‘Richard Wagner’s creative vision at La Spezia’, p. 188.

⁴³ Freeman, ‘From substance to story’, p. 214.

⁴⁴ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, pp. 2-5.

⁴⁵ D.J. Casey, ‘Carleton in Louth’, in *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological and Historical Society*, xvii, no. 2 (1970), p. 99.

Finally, the demand of the reader is also a consideration which must be accounted for when examining the autobiographical form. Throughout his career, Carleton was a writer of fiction, aiming to please and appeal to a readership through his novels and short stories to succeed and indeed survive as an author. One must assume that Carleton treated the story of his own life in the same way. He desired his autobiography to be read, to amuse and to please his readership. For this reason, the autobiographical and biographical forms utilise anecdotes. Nagourney noted that the author's 'selection depends as much upon his recognizing anecdotes which will read well as finding those which will inform.'⁴⁶

Furthermore:

Reports of episodes which are complete, self-contained, and which have or can be given a form appropriate to print, that is, an introduction, a development, and a preferably witty or memorable conclusion, will be especially favoured.⁴⁷

Such anecdotes may be favoured over actual and factual experiences which in turn may lead to inaccuracy, embellishment and exaggeration. In his autobiography, rather than explain his experience of the pilgrimage he made to Lough Derg in Co. Donegal in the nineteenth year of his life, Carleton suggested that his readers should consult his short story "The Lough Derg Pilgrim".⁴⁸ Instead of recounting the facts of his visit to St. Patrick's Purgatory Carleton directed his readership to an amusing and entertaining version of this event that he had already primed for print. As Freeman stated; 'It [life] is most assuredly not like those well-formed works with tidy beginnings, middles and ends,'⁴⁹ yet to engage readers authors tend to fit their life stories into the popular narrative form. A study of the author's life could not be completed without reference to these problematic texts, however, in consulting these texts due consideration of the difficulties that arise when using the autobiographical and biographical forms will be taken.

II. Carleton's Youth

William Carleton was born on 20 February 1794.⁵⁰ James Carleton, William's father came originally from the townland of Kilnahushogue, or Kilnahusogue, in the Parish of Clogher, Co. Tyrone where he met Mary Kelly, whom he married. Together the couple had

⁴⁶ Nagourney, 'Literary Biography', p. 95.

⁴⁷ Nagourney, 'Literary Biography', p. 95.

⁴⁸ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, i, pp. 98-107.

⁴⁹ Freeman, 'From substance to story', p. 296.

⁵⁰ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 2.

fourteen children, seven sons and seven daughters, only seven of whom were still living when their youngest child, William, was born. The Carletons had by then moved to the townland of Prillisk or Prolisque, also in the Parish of Clogher, before William's birth. Carleton and his family then removed to Towney or Townagh, which he described as 'a small village about a mile beyond, in a southern direction, the name of which is Tonagh, or as it is usually called, Towney.'⁵¹

Carleton commented, in length, in his autobiography, about his parents. James Carleton was a small farmer who held farms of up to 18 acres and supplemented his income 'by hand dressing flax after it had been scotched – a process akin to pulling the fibres through a strong iron comb,'⁵² known as hackling. When the family moved to Towney he took a farm under the McCreas.⁵³ The McCreas were among a group of large farmers, including the Stewarts, Nelsons and Fosters, who controlled 'the infield in and around the old plantation castle' on the Aughentain estate that was owned by the Honourable John Forbes of Granard until 1796 and the 1st Earl of Blessington thereafter.⁵⁴ Carleton did not offer any detail on the size or condition of these farms. According to *Griffith's Valuation* (1847-64) the approximate areas of rateable property of Kilnahusogue, Prolisque and Townagh were 595, 239 and 93 acres respectively. The taxable acres within each of these townlands according to earlier *Ordnance Survey Memoirs* (1833-5) were 363, 146 and 54 acres, and farm holdings in these townlands measured between 1 and 22, 4 and 16, and 7 and 11 acres respectively.⁵⁵ Carleton did not suggest that his families' circumstances had altered as they moved between farms. It can therefore be assumed that they held one of the largest farms in each of the aforementioned townlands.

When the family moved to Nurchasy or Nurchosy Carleton claimed that his father had again taken a farm of eighteen acres from the under-landlord or middleman, Hugh Traynor.⁵⁶ The Carletons were small farmers and lived in close proximity to the lower ranks of the rural peasantry in the Clogher Valley. They were not, however, of the poorest sections of Irish society during the period. They occupied a relatively elevated position, within the lower class, on Samuel Clark's pyramid-like structure of the agrarian classes of

⁵¹ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 11.

⁵² Jack Johnston, 'Carleton's Clogher', in Brand, *The Authentic Voice*, p. 112.

⁵³ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, i, pp. xiv, xv.

⁵⁴ Johnston, 'Carleton's Clogher', pp. 108-10.

⁵⁵ Angelique Day and Peter McWilliams, (eds.), *Ordnance Survey Memoirs of Ireland, Volume 5, Parishes of County Tyrone I, 1821, 1823, 1831-6, North, West & South Tyrone*, (Belfast and Dublin, 1990), pp. 35-7.

⁵⁶ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 33.

pre-famine Ireland. As small farmers they sat above landless labourers and labourer landholders and just below independent large farmers, narrowly missing the 20-acre standard.⁵⁷ They fair even better in Joseph Lee's classification of the different tiers within rural Irish society during that period. As farmer's holding more than 15 acres Lee positioned them above smaller farmers (5-15 acres), cottiers (5 acres) and labourers.⁵⁸

Hugh Traynor rented land from the Reverend Chancellor John Story (1764-1851) who was in turn an underagent of the Bishop of Clogher. The Story estate comprised of 600 acres among which were four plots in Scotch Nurchosy.⁵⁹ One of these holdings was 18 acres in size and likely that which the Carleton's held. Upon the estate the average cost per acre per annum was 20-21 shillings.⁶⁰ The Carletons were therefore paying the substantial sum of £18-19 each year for this property. This would suggest that Carleton lived far more respectably than the 'humble' and 'lowly' descriptions of his upbringing imply. Jack Johnston noted that while Traynor features in the 1791 rental records of Chancellor Story the Carletons do not as they were so far removed from the actual owner of the estate.⁶¹ Indeed the Carletons were four times removed from the proprietor.⁶² Similarly, when the family later moved to Springtown Carleton noted that 'our farm in springtown was about sixteen or eighteen acres.'⁶³ According to *Griffith's Valuation* the approximate area of rateable property of Springtown was 164 acres and the taxable acres within the townland according to the *Ordnance Survey Memoirs* was approximately 100 acres.⁶⁴ Again it would appear that the Carletons were in possession of one of the larger farms in the townland. During the pre-famine period land was frequently fragmented to cater for the ever-increasing Catholic population. Through subdivision, the division of farms amongst families, and subletting, portions of holdings being let out by small farmers to labourer landholders, the size of farm holdings decreased consistently in the first half of the century. High population densities upon estates, increasing levels of subsistence amongst the peasantry and a disconnect between the owners of the estates and their tenants

⁵⁷ Samuel Clark, 'The Importance of Agrarian Classes: Agrarian Class Structure and Collective Action in Nineteenth-Century Ireland' in *British Journal of Sociology*, xxix, no. 1 (1978), pp. 22-40.

⁵⁸ Joseph Lee 'The Modernisation of Irish Society 1848-1918', (Dublin, 1973), p. 2.

⁵⁹ J.M. Cox, 'Local Economics in the Clogher Valley 1790-1811', in *Clogher Record*, vii, no. 2 (1970), p. 238.

⁶⁰ Cox, 'Local Economics', p. 238.

⁶¹ Johnston, 'Carleton's Clogher', p. 110.

⁶² Johnston, 'Carleton's Clogher', p. 110.

⁶³ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. xiii.

⁶⁴ Day and McWilliams, *Ordnance Survey Memoirs*, pp. 35-7.

were the results of subdivision and subletting.⁶⁵ Thus, as subtenants or undertenants the Carletons do not feature in the statistical information that survives from the period.

Carleton described his father as ‘a very humble man... he was held in high esteem by all who knew him, no matter what their rank might be.’⁶⁶ He singled out his father’s gift of an ‘absolutely astonishing’⁶⁷ memory, claiming that his father ‘would repeat nearly the whole of the Old and New Testaments by heart, and was besides a living index to almost every chapter and verse in them.’⁶⁸ Carleton also noted that his father’s gift was not reserved solely for the purpose of reproducing or repeating scripture, ‘as a narrator of old tales, legends, and historical anecdotes he was unrivalled, and his stock was inexhaustible.’⁶⁹ Furthermore:

he spoke the Irish and English languages with equal fluency. With all kinds of charms, old ranns, or poems, old prophecies, religious superstitions, tales of pilgrims and pilgrimages, anecdotes of blessed priests and friars, revelations from ghosts and fairies, he was thoroughly acquainted.⁷⁰

While Carleton noted that his father spoke the English language, he did not state that his father was literate. John McEvoy in his 1802 *Statistical Survey of the County of Tyrone* noted that throughout Tyrone ‘the English language is most prevalent; indeed throughout the county it is gaining ground every day.’⁷¹ Further he stated that ‘the Roman Catholics are the only sect, who are fond of speaking the Irish language, and with them too it is wearing off very much.’⁷² It is obvious that Carleton’s father was of the oral tradition given his proficiency in telling fairy and ghost stories. His mother too appeared to have belonged to the same oral tradition. Carleton also commented affectionately of his mother within his autobiography. He noted that ‘she was not so well acquainted with the English language as my father, although she spoke it with sufficient ease for all the purposes of life.’⁷³ He

⁶⁵ For subletting and subdivision see: P.J. Duffy, ‘Irish Landholding Structures and Population in the Mid-Nineteenth Century’, in *The Maynooth Review*, iii, no. 2 (1977), pp. 3-27, Samuel Clark, *Social Origins of the Irish Land War*, (New Jersey, 1979), pp. 21-64.

⁶⁶ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 5.

⁶⁷ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 5.

⁶⁸ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 5.

⁶⁹ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 6.

⁷⁰ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 6.

⁷¹ John McEvoy, *Statistical Survey of the County of Tyrone, with observations on the means for improvement; drawn up in the years 1801, and 1802, for the consideration, and under the direction of the Dublin Society*, (Dublin, 1802), p. 201.

⁷² McEvoy, *Statistical Survey*, p. 201.

⁷³ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 7.

described his mother as an enchanting singer who ‘possessed the sweetest and most exquisite of human voices.’⁷⁴ He claimed that her fame was such that:

her presence at a wake, dance, or other festive occasion, was sure to attract crowds of persons, many from a distance of several miles, in order to hear from her lips the touching old airs of the country.⁷⁵

Like his father in respect of his memory, Carleton noted that his mother possessed an entire tradition of Irish songs, ballads and poems that she was capable of calling upon for the various aforementioned occasions. He also noted his mother’s ‘prejudice against singing Irish airs to English words,’⁷⁶ as he remembered an occasion when she was requested to sing such a song and replied:

I will sing it for you, but the English words and the air are like a man and his wife quarrelling – *the Irish melts into the tune but the English doesn’t.*⁷⁷

Of his siblings, Carleton offered very little information. Of his brothers, Michael was the eldest, John was the second youngest, five years older than William. Both married and left the family. James, when their father died was left to manage the family farm, however, Carleton stated that he:

became an invalid... The poor fellow was the most confirmed hypochondriac I ever met. Without assistance he was unable to manage the farm, and the consequence was that we were obliged to give it up.⁷⁸

Of his sisters, Carleton mentioned Mary and Sarah, both of whom had married. Having given up the family farm, William, James and their mother went to stay with Sarah. Mary is mentioned briefly when William visited her during his Easter holidays living in the townland of Ballagh, also in the county of Tyrone.

The parish of Clogher was situated in central Ulster. McEvoy stated that the land in Clogher was ‘generally speaking of as good a quality of land, as perhaps any in the kingdom.’⁷⁹ Daragh Curran noted of the quality of housing within the parish that third-

⁷⁴ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 7.

⁷⁵ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 7.

⁷⁶ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 8.

⁷⁷ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 8. [Carleton’s emphasis]

⁷⁸ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 108.

⁷⁹ McEvoy, *Statistical Survey*, p. 8.

class housing made up the majority, 48 per cent, of all housing within the parish.⁸⁰ Approximately 28 per cent of housing would have been classed as fourth-class, the lowest grade used in contemporary government reports.⁸¹ A similar standard of housing prevailed within the rest of the county. Strabane (45 per cent), Omagh (45 per cent) and Dungannon (48 per cent) all had a majority of third class housing.⁸² West of Tyrone circumstances were bleaker. Fourth-class housing dominated in the baronies of Boyleagh, Kilmacrennan, Rush and Bannagh, all situated in Co. Donegal.⁸³ While to the east the gap between second-class and third-class housing was narrower suggesting a better standard of living in the counties of Down, Antrim and Armagh.⁸⁴

According to the *Ordnance Survey Memoirs* for the barony of Clogher ‘the produce of the small farms is expended on the family, very little comparatively is exposed to sale.’⁸⁵ The papers further state that the tenants within the barony paid rent, bought clothing and other items with the profits they made by the spinning wheel and loom.⁸⁶ McEvoy estimated that the cost of living for a family of six in 1802 was £22 15s. 2d..⁸⁷ His estimate encompassed the costs of food, fuel and clothing. He also suggested that such a family would require farm lands of at least four and half acres at a cost of approximately £4-5 per annum to live in relative comfort.⁸⁸ McEvoy stated that:

It may be thought a matter of surprise in other countries, how a cottier, with six in family, could be able to make out 22l. 15s. 2d., with many other incidental occurrences. In this county, and throughout all the North of Ireland, so far as the linen trade is in a prosperous way, the difficulty is easily answered; the wheel and the loom answer all.⁸⁹

According to the 1821 census 56 per cent of the people in Tyrone were involved in the manufacture of handicrafts.⁹⁰ J.M. Cox suggested that Clogher was ‘not one of the important linen areas in Ulster,’⁹¹ however, it was situated not that distant from the major

⁸⁰ Daragh Curran, *The Protestant Community in Ulster, 1825-45 A society in transition*, (Dublin, 2014), p. 19.

⁸¹ Curran, *The Protestant Community*, p. 19.

⁸² Curran, *The Protestant Community*, p. 19.

⁸³ Curran, *The Protestant Community*, p. 18.

⁸⁴ Curran, *The Protestant Community*, p. 19.

⁸⁵ Day & McWilliams, *Ordnance Survey Memoirs*, p. 54.

⁸⁶ Day & McWilliams, *Ordnance Survey Memoirs*, p. 54.

⁸⁷ McEvoy, *Statistical Survey*, p. 156.

⁸⁸ McEvoy, *Statistical Survey*, p. 35.

⁸⁹ McEvoy, *Statistical Survey*, pp. 156-7.

⁹⁰ Curran, *The Protestant Community*, pp. 20-1.

⁹¹ Cox, ‘Local Economics’, p. 241.

linen triangle of Dungannon, Lisburn and Armagh.⁹² Further, McEvoy noted of the ‘good linen market’⁹³ at Fintona, 10 miles from Clogher town. Labourers could earn between 6*d.* and 8*d.* a day by weaving at night,⁹⁴ significantly supplementing their income, while farmers’ servant girls could earn 52*s.* a year producing linen.⁹⁵ The process of hackling, in which James Carleton, and most likely his entire family, were employed could have easily generated similar revenue or income.

Taking McEvoy’s estimate and applying it to the Carleton family of ten their cost of living per year would have been approximately £37 18*s.*. Adding to that rent of roughly £18 per year and the Carleton’s total outlay per annum amounts to over £55. Although the Carleton’s were once threatened with the prospect of eviction, forcing them to move from Nurchasy to Springtown, Carleton noted that this was through no fault of their own and that his father ‘paid his rent punctually to the middleman’.⁹⁶ It must therefore be assumed that the Carletons had sufficient income to cover their rent and costs of living. The family were therefore earning more than general labourers (£4-11 per annum), high level house servants (£12-17) and Catholic curates (£20-30).⁹⁷ Further, they were earning nearly as much as parish priests (£65 per annum).⁹⁸ Thus it might be argued that the Carleton’s lived in relative comfort and that William Carleton enjoyed a relatively respectable upbringing, however, this does not mean that the Carletons were exempt from the impact of other societal issues that affected Roman Catholics in the north of Ireland during the pre-famine period.

Sectarianism was particularly rife during the early nineteenth century and this impacted heavily upon the lives of the peasantry. Carleton spent his youth in Co. Tyrone between the years 1794 and 1816. Situated in central Ulster, Tyrone’s population like neighbouring counties Armagh, Londonderry and Fermanagh was divided ‘relatively evenly’⁹⁹ between Catholics and Protestants, both Anglican and Presbyterian. It was in these counties, where Catholics and Protestants lived in such close proximity and where high levels of interaction between the two sects occurred, that ‘sectarian strife was most

⁹² Curran, *The Protestant Community*, p. 20.

⁹³ McEvoy, *Statistical Survey*, p. 159.

⁹⁴ McEvoy, *Statistical Survey*, p. 200.

⁹⁵ McEvoy, *Statistical Survey*, p. 157.

⁹⁶ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 38.

⁹⁷ Cox, ‘Local Economics’, p. 242. Sean Connolly, *Priests and People in Pre-Famine Ireland 1780-1845*, (Dublin, 1982), p. 51.

⁹⁸ Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 48.

⁹⁹ Curran, *The Protestant Community*, p. 109.

likely to occur.’¹⁰⁰ According to Curran there were two main types of sectarianism in Ulster during the early part of the nineteenth century; that which was spontaneous, when groups of Catholics and Protestants clashed usually in a public place; and organised or planned sectarianism often attributed to Ribbonmen, Orangemen and Yeomen.¹⁰¹

The Catholic Ribbon Society was founded between 1805 and 1807. The Ribbonmen were descended in part from the Catholic Defenders. The Defenders, who existed in the later decades of the eighteenth century:

concerned themselves primarily with economic grievances relating to tithes, taxes, employment and occupation of land, while at the same time retaining... [a] sectarian character.¹⁰²

The Ribbonmen were a secret, oath-bound society who operated in the first half of the nineteenth century. The movement extended over the northern counties of Leinster, north Connaught and most of Ulster. It was an exclusively Catholic organisation and drafted its membership from among the lower classes.¹⁰³ The Ribbonmen’s ultimate goal was independence, however, in reality the society was largely occupied in dealing with local grievances.

While evidence, including the testimony of informers,¹⁰⁴ establishes the existence of a definite, structured Ribbon organisation many historians agree that the terms Ribbonism, Ribbonmen and Ribandmen were frequently used generically to describe much of the Catholic agrarian violence that occurred in the north of Ireland during the period.¹⁰⁵ Like Whiteboyism in the south of the country, Catholics committing crimes or clashing with their Protestant counterparts in the north were often styled or labelled Ribbonmen by those reporting to the authorities. Carleton could even be accused of confusing local agrarian crime with more organised Ribbonism. In one of his short stories, “Wildgoose

¹⁰⁰ Curran, *The Protestant Community*, p. 109.

¹⁰¹ Curran, *The Protestant Community*, p. 109.

¹⁰² Sean Connolly, *Religion and Society in Nineteenth Century Ireland*, (Dundalk, 1985), p. 20.

¹⁰³ Curran, *The Protestant Community*, p. 118.

¹⁰⁴ Jennifer Kelly studied the role played by one such informer, James Hagan Ribbon county delegate for Sligo, in the transportation of five men convicted of Ribbon crimes in 1842. Jennifer Kelly, *The downfall of Hagan’: Sligo Ribbonism in 1842*, (Dublin, 2008).

¹⁰⁵ A.C. Murray, ‘Agrarian Violence and Nationalism in Nineteenth-Century Ireland: the myth of Ribbonism’, in *Irish Economics and Social History*, xiii (1986), p. 56, Joseph Lee ‘The Ribbonmen’, in T.D. Williams (ed.), *Secret Societies in Ireland*, (Dublin, 1973), John Belchem “‘Freedom and Friendship to Ireland’: Ribbonism in Early Nineteenth-Century Liverpool”, in *International Review of Social History*, xxxix (1994), pp. 33-56.

Lodge”, Carleton highlighted the grotesque nature of Catholic violence in the northern part of the country. He detailed the events of the night of 29/30 October 1816, when a gang launched an attack on the home of a man who had three of their members convicted for a previous raid on his home. The house was burned to the ground along with its inhabitants, including a mother and child to the chorus of cries of ‘No Mercy’. Carleton wrongly labelled the men responsible for this crime as Ribbonmen. Terence Dooley in his study of the event revealed that the criminals concerned in the murders were part of a local gang rather than any Ribbon conspiracy.¹⁰⁶ Whether Carleton was mistaken or was using Ribbonism as a means to convey a particular message to his readers will be explored in detail in Chapter Four of this study. As stated, Carleton claimed to have become a member of the Ribbon society when a young adult. There is no evidence to corroborate this, however, and he made no mention of his being actively involved in the agrarian association.

The Ribbonmen were met with opposition in the north by two Protestant groups, the Orange Order or Orangemen and the government established Yeomanry. ‘The Orange Order was born in 1795 as the consequence of accelerating sectarian strife’¹⁰⁷ and was directly descended from the Protestant Peep o’ Day Boys, the Protestant counterparts of the Catholic Defenders. Tom Garvin notes that:

the Protestant groups had been formed to keep Catholics in check and, in particular, to ensure that the laws prohibiting Catholics from bearing arms were enforced.¹⁰⁸

Further, Curran stated that:

The Order was a response to increased Catholic activity and could be considered an organisation that was formed to protect the relatively privileged position that Protestants had enjoyed in society since 1690.¹⁰⁹

Membership of the Order united all classes of Protestants within the north. Rank and file members were generally of the lower classes but district masters, county masters and members of the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland typically came from the upper tiers of

¹⁰⁶ Dooley, *The Murders at Wildgoose Lodge*, p. 106.

¹⁰⁷ W.J. McCormack, *Ascendancy and Tradition in Anglo-Irish Literary History from 1789 to 1939*, (Oxford, 1985), p.67.

¹⁰⁸ Tom Garvin, ‘Defenders, Ribbonmen and Others: Underground political networks in pre-famine Ireland,’ in *Past & Present*, no. 96 (1983), p. 136.

¹⁰⁹ Curran, *The Protestant Community*, p. 48.

society.¹¹⁰ The Order cemented a mutual relationship between the classes. The tenantry received favourable treatment from the gentry while landowning elites could rest safe in the knowledge that their fellow members would not revolt against them.¹¹¹ Of Orangeism and indeed the violent nature of society in the north of Ireland during the period in which he grew up, Carleton in the preface to his novel, *Valentine McClutchy, The Irish Agent, or, The Chronicles of the Castle Cumber Property* (1845), stated:

To our friends across the Channel it is only necessary to say, that I was born in one of the most Orange counties in Ireland (Tyrone) – that the violence and licentious abuses of these armed civilians were perpetrated before my eyes – and that the sounds of their outrages may be said still to ring in my ears.¹¹²

Carleton noted of one particular incident within his autobiography when his own family fell victim to such Protestant violence. He described a nocturnal raid upon his family home during which his sister was stabbed in the side with a screwed bayonet while lying in her bed, suspected of concealing a weapon. Carleton labelled the men who forced their way into his home as Yeomen, as opposed to Orangemen. At the same time, however, he suggested that there was little difference between the two groups stating:

Every yeoman with his red coat on was an Orangeman. Every cavalry man mounted upon his own horse and dressed in blue was an Orangeman.¹¹³

Strong links between the yeomanry and the Orange Order certainly existed. Curran stated that; ‘In Ulster, the force was almost exclusively Protestant and also of an Orange nature.’¹¹⁴ He explained that:

The yeomanry was a part-time militia force set up in Tyrone in 1796 as a measure to defend against possible French invasion, and it had been utilized by the government in 1798 during the rebellion, where it played a brutal role throughout the country.¹¹⁵

Unlike the Orange Order the Yeomanry were equipped, armed and uniformed, by the government.¹¹⁶ Recruits were selected, however, by the gentry and Allan Blackstock noted

¹¹⁰ Curran, *The Protestant Community*, p. 53.

¹¹¹ Curran, *The Protestant Community*, p. 48.

¹¹² William Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy: The Irish Agent; or, Chronicles of the Castle Cumber property*, (Dublin, 1845), preface.

¹¹³ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 29.

¹¹⁴ Curran, *The Protestant Community*, p. 52.

¹¹⁵ Curran, *The Protestant Community*, p. 52.

¹¹⁶ Curran, *The Protestant Community*, p. 87.

that ‘in some Orange areas, some landlords deliberately selected their Yeomen directly from the local lodge.’¹¹⁷ The Yeomanry was not exclusively Protestant, however, Catholics were unlikely to feature among their ranks. Both Protestant groups, intrinsically linked or otherwise, appear to have acted in a sectarian manner in the north of Ireland during the period. Both are noted to have engaged in brutal and violent clashes with Catholic opponents throughout the early part of the century.

Numerous reports relating to violent altercations, riots, fights and attacks, between Catholics and Protestants in Tyrone and indeed its surrounding counties can be found in *The State of the Country Papers*. For the first decade of the century few incidents are reported for Co. Tyrone, however, instances of nightly meetings and of Catholics buying arms are noted. In August 1803 Catholic weavers were found to be buying pistols, powder and lead with the profits they had made selling webs of linen at market.¹¹⁸ Sir John Stewart, Tory MP for Tyrone, claimed in January 1807 that nightly meetings were being hosted in houses in the Omagh area under the guise of dances.¹¹⁹ He suggested that ‘for some months past, the lowest Catholics are all becoming Freemasons.’¹²⁰ While Major General G.V. Hart,¹²¹ reporting from Strabane in January 1808, noted nightly meetings ‘among people who stile themselves ‘standard man’.¹²²

From 1814 on riots are reported more frequently. On 1 June 1815 a riot broke out in Pomeroy at 12 o’clock. The Yeomanry were summoned to break up the fighting. Catholics were reported to have fired upon the Yeomanry with stones from behind ditches. Captain Lowry of the Pomeroy Infantry argued that but for the Yeomanry’s intervention lives would have been lost.¹²³ In reports relating to the incident it is noted that further military assistance was called for lest ‘the Protestant inhabitants of that neighbourhood will assuredly be murdered.’¹²⁴ Later in the summer of 1815 there was a succession of riots

¹¹⁷ Allan Blackstock, ‘A Forgotten Army: The Irish Yeomanry’, in *History Ireland*, iv, no. 4 (1996), p. 29.

¹¹⁸ Disaffection in Tyrone, 13 Aug. 1803 (National Archives of Ireland, State of the Country Papers, Series 1, 1025/73).

¹¹⁹ John Stewart (1758-1825), MP for Co. Tyrone 1802-6, 1812-25, Sheriff for Co. Tyrone 1809-10. P.J. Jupp, ‘STEWART, John I (1758-1825), of Ballygawley Park, Co. Tyrone’, (www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1820-1832/member/stewart-sir-john-1758-1825) (6 February 2018).

¹²⁰ General Brigade Major’s Reports, Omagh, 5 Jan. 1807 (N.A.I., SOC, i, 1120/90).

¹²¹ G.V. Hart (1752-1832), army officer and MP for Co. Donegal 1812-1831. Hart served in Ireland from 1801 having returned from India. P.J. Jupp, ‘HART, George Vaughan (1752-1832), of Kilderry House, co. Donegal’, (www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/hart-george-vaughan-1752-1832) (6 February 2018).

¹²² General Brigade Major’s Reports, Strabane, 8 Jan. 1808 (N.A.I., SOC, i, 1120/41).

¹²³ Tyrone: state of, 16 Apr. 1815 (N.A.I., SOC, i, 1711/65).

¹²⁴ Tyrone: state of, 7 June 1815 (N.A.I., SOC, i, 1711/69).

within the county.¹²⁵ A riot took place at Lough Patrick where there was a pattern held annually on 3 August. On 10 August a riot broke out at Dunnemana at a Horse-racing meet. Two days later, 12 August, there was a riot at the fair in Donelong. Preparations were then made by supposed Ribbonmen for a further riot at the fair of Dunnemana on 28 August. It was claimed that a force of 10,000 from the counties of Derry, Tyrone and Donegal were assembling. Lieutenant Colonel of the Londonderry militia, Sir George Fitzgerald Hill,¹²⁶ reporting to Chief Secretary Robert Peel stated that measures were taken by the local magistracy, a notice was posted to deter all from engaging in fighting or any illegal activity, and that the threatened riot did not materialise.¹²⁷ The following year, however, a riot did occur at Donnemana fair. One was killed, and many were injured on 28 August 1816.¹²⁸

Ribbonmen, or Catholics labelled as Ribbonmen are cited as the aggressors in the vast majority of these reports. R. Marshall reporting on the Pomeroy riot stated that ‘as I pass through the country [I] am informed that at every fair the Protestants are attacked in the same way by the Ribbonmen so they call themselves.’¹²⁹ Similarly, Fitzgerald Hill when reporting on the riots of August 1815 claimed that; ‘They were in my opinion connected the one with the other and each and all systematically premeditated on the part of the Ribbonmen who were the assailants from the first to last.’¹³⁰ At Aughnacloy in 1818, however, Protestants were charged with instigating the violence. Two Catholics, Michael and Rose McKenna were killed during a riot.¹³¹ It was reported that there had been a quarrel between two parties in Armagh at horse-races when a young Catholic man from Monaghan was beaten by three Tyrone Protestants.¹³² The two parties, the Monaghan Catholics and Tyrone Protestants clashed again at the Aughnacloy races. The Protestants marched with drums and fifes playing party tunes while the Catholics gathered on a hill above the race course carrying sticks.¹³³ Shots were fired by the Yeomanry ultimately dispersing the crowd. Ten men were indicted and tried at the Monaghan assizes, 12 March

¹²⁵ Tyrone: state of, 21 Aug. 1815 (N.A.I., SOC, i, 1711/75).

¹²⁶ George Fitzgerald Hill (1763-1839), MP for Co. Londonderry 1801-1830, Lieutenant Colonel of the Co. Londonderry militia from 1800. P.J. Jupp, ‘HILL, Sir George Fitzgerald, 2nd Bt. (1763-1839), of Brook Hall, co. Londonderry’, (www.historyofparliamentonline.org/volume/1790-1820/member/hill-sir-george-fitzgerald-1763-1839) (6 February 2018).

¹²⁷ Tyrone: state of, 21 Aug. 1815.

¹²⁸ Tyrone: state of, 28 Aug. 1815 (N.A.I., SOC, i, 1765/87-9).

¹²⁹ Tyrone: state of, 7 June 1815.

¹³⁰ Tyrone: state of, 21 Aug. 1815.

¹³¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 8 April 1819.

¹³² Tyrone: state of, 30 Nov. 1818 (N.A.I., SOC, i, 1955/37).

¹³³ Tyrone: state of, 30 Nov. 1818.

1819, for the murders of the McKennas.¹³⁴ All ten were acquitted as each received ‘excellent characters from Lieutenant Montgomery, Mr. Anderson, Presbyterian Clergyman and Mr. Wolsley of the Established Church.’¹³⁵

Carleton in his autobiography stated of the situation that faced Catholics in the north of Ireland that:

In what a frightful condition was the country at that time. I speak now of the North of Ireland. It was then, indeed, the seat of the Orange ascendancy and irresponsible power... There was then no law *against* an Orangeman, and no law *for* a Papist.¹³⁶

The incident at Aughnacloy, the deaths of two Catholics and the trial that followed reveal an element of truth within his claim. Addressing the jury, the prosecutions’ 2nd counsel Mr. O’Hanlon stated the following:

I am aware, Gentlemen, that I address a Protestant Jury – I am aware that many of you, Gentlemen, if not all of you, are Orangemen... You are Protestants, the accused persons are Protestants; ... the persons at the bar, I am instructed, are of that Association... The prosecutors, those whose untimely death they deplore, and the maimed and injured survivors, are all Roman Catholic.¹³⁷

O’Hanlon did not officially condemn the judicial system as biased within his comments but said enough to imply the same. The acquittal of all ten accused was the verdict both O’Hanlon and Carleton would have argued was inevitable and gives some insight into the treatment of Catholics in the north of Ireland during the period.

Riots were not the only form of violence to occur in the province during the period. Attacks on persons and property were also reported. R. Marshall reporting from Dungannon in August 1815 stated that:

A man’s house was attacked, within a mile of Omagh, on the 9th inst. Between 10 and 11 o’clock at night by 4- or 500 people, however he contrived to keep them out, the next night he was again attacked but he had taken precaution to get a few Yeomen into the house and when they came about 2 or 3 o’clock in the morning, they attacked the house and the Yeomen fired, when they fled.¹³⁸

¹³⁴ *Freeman’s Journal*, 8 April 1819.

¹³⁵ *Freeman’s Journal*, 9 April 1819.

¹³⁶ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 29. [Carleton’s emphasis]

¹³⁷ *Freeman’s Journal*, 8 April 1819.

¹³⁸ Tyrone: state of, 18 Aug. 1815 (N.A.I., SOC, i, 1711/74).

Similarly, in neighbouring county Monaghan two homes were demolished on the night of 30 March 1818. The home of John Stewart was demolished by ‘a number of evil-minded Persons, with white Shirts over their Clothes and white Scarfs on their Hats’ while Hugh McConwell’s house in Tutootragh suffered the same fate, its roof thrown to the ground.¹³⁹ Curran noted that attacks of this kind in Ulster could often be attributed to what he terms the ‘Ulster custom’, or indeed the refusal to observe the ‘Ulster custom’.¹⁴⁰ The tradition held that outgoing tenants, evicted or otherwise, were to be compensated by any new incoming tenants. It was believed that the outgoing tenant was entitled to a payment from the incoming tenant owing to the work he had done upon the property during his tenure. Neglect or refusal to observe this unwritten custom often resulted in threatening notices and failing that, violent retaliation.¹⁴¹ The cost of such payments could be considerable amounting ‘from four to twelve years worth of rent, a sum that could reach £80 in some places.’¹⁴² All this violence resulted in a very disturbed society within the north of Ireland during the period and for the rural peasantry, the Carletons included, violence was not the only issue they had to contend with.

Seasonal scarcities, food shortages, the threat of eviction and insecurities in relation to leases and employment were issues that impacted heavily upon the rural poor of the north. Carleton and his family, as stated, were threatened with the prospect of eviction when living in Nurchasy but to what extent they were affected by the other issues listed above is difficult to determine. The very fact that they moved between townlands so frequently suggests some level of insecurity but the reasons for their doing so are not disclosed. As small farmers they were likely to have felt some of the effects of food shortages but their experience would not have compared to the sufferings of labourer landholders or cottiers and landless labourers.

III. Destined for the Priesthood

Carleton’s father entertained the popular ambition that existed amongst the Catholic peasantry for one of his sons to enter into the priesthood. Small farmers who occupied a position at the upper end of peasant society and had the means to educate their sons in the

¹³⁹ Tyrone: state of, 30 Mar. 1818 (N.A.I., SOC, i, 1955/33).

¹⁴⁰ Curran, *The Protestant Community*, pp. 41-3

¹⁴¹ Curran, *The Protestant Community*, p. 41.

¹⁴² Curran, *The Protestant Community*, p. 42.

classics of Latin, Greek and Hebrew often desired that one of them become a priest.¹⁴³ The priest was often the most learned man within the peasant community having been educated on the continent or having received a costly education in the seminary at Maynooth.¹⁴⁴ The clergy also acted as social leaders owing to the lack of other figures of authority within peasant society and given the general disconnect that existed between the tenantry, landlords and those of the middle and upper tiers of Irish society. To have a priest within the family was seen as a measure of respectability given the elevated status of the position, yet, increases in clerical numbers failed to keep pace with the ever-growing population.¹⁴⁵ Parish priests were not well enough remunerated to make the position financially attractive, the occupation of curate even less so, however, dues, payments in kind and the hospitality of their parishioners were not insignificant benefits.¹⁴⁶ The work of the priests was not without its challenges either. A ratio of 1 priest to 2260 people in 1800 rising to 1:2750 in 1840 coupled with a lack of church infrastructure resulted in a rural mass attendance rate in the 1830s of approximately 40 per cent and a reliance on the unorthodox practice of household worship known as ‘stations’.¹⁴⁷ While this ambition certainly existed, the realisation of it eluded many peasant families owing to the costs involved. The majority of those entering Maynooth in 1808 for instance were drawn from the class of independent tenant farmers that occupied a position above the peasantry.¹⁴⁸

John, William’s brother, had refused to follow the path his father had set out for him, however, William seemed more willing. In his autobiography, Carleton stated that he ‘was pitched upon for the priesthood.’¹⁴⁹ As a result Carleton was sent to various schools from a young age. Having removed from Prillisk to Towney, Carleton’s pursuit of education began and at the age of six or seven he attended his first day at school. This was to be his first and only day in the school at Towney. The school master, Pat Frayne, disappointed at receiving just three children at his school on the day of its opening, removed from the area that same day. Carleton attended several schools throughout his family’s stay in Towney.

¹⁴³ Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 38.

¹⁴⁴ Connolly noted that the cost of a student’s first year in Maynooth, exclusive of fees, was £50, while years two and three cost a minimum of £12 per annum. Moreover, it could cost a further £12 to educate a young man preparing for Maynooth. Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 38.

¹⁴⁵ Connolly suggested that clerical numbers increased by 12 per cent between 1731 and 1800 and by 35 per cent between 1800 and 1840. During the same periods the population increased by 88 per cent and 51 per cent respectively. Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 33.

¹⁴⁶ The average income of a parish priest was £65 in 1800 and rose to £150 in 1825 while a curate earned as little as £10, rising to between £20-30 during the same period. Connolly, *Priests and People*, pp. 48-51.

¹⁴⁷ Barr, ‘The Re-energising of Catholicism’, pp. 281-3.

¹⁴⁸ Connolly, *Priests and People*, pp. 39-40.

¹⁴⁹ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 25.

He attended Mrs. Dumont's ladies school in the townland of Kark until he was expelled for kissing the schoolmistress's daughter. He later attended a school run by Mr. O'Beirne and another that opened upon the return of Pat Frayne, in the townland of Skelgy. When the Carletons moved to Nurchasy, in preparation for becoming a priest, Carleton attended John Birney's classical school in Tulnavert but was removed when his family moved to Springtown. Such was the sporadic nature of Carleton's early schooling. Those seeking education prior to 1831 were dependent on self-employed schoolmasters to provide schooling and in Carleton's experience schoolmasters appear unreliable during the period. Educators in turn were dependent upon pupils to pay their wage and McEvoy explained that children of school going age were often otherwise employed:

With respect to education, attainable from day-schools by the lower class, very little benefit can be derived; as, when children are able to perform any sort of work, such as herding of cattle, they are then taken from school.¹⁵⁰

McEvoy also noted of schoolmasters receiving a guinea a month from each of their pupils.¹⁵¹ Such a cost added to the general costs of living stated earlier in this chapter could have proven a significant financial burden for lower class parents and was perhaps another reason for schoolmasters moving from place to place so frequently.

Of education in Ireland during the period Carleton stated that:

The Irishman was not only not educated, but actually punished for attempting to acquire knowledge in the first place, and in the second, punished also for the ignorance created by its absence. In other words, the penal laws rendered education criminal, and then caused the unhappy people to suffer for the crimes which proper knowledge would have prevented them from committing. It was just like depriving a man of his sight, and afterwards causing him to be punished for stumbling.¹⁵²

The schools that Carleton attended were known as hedge schools. This term was derived from the sites at which the schools were located. Antonia McManus explained that:

Teaching was done surreptitiously and schools were hidden away from public gaze. The safest area was considered to be beneath the sunny side of a hedge, and it was from this location they derived their name.¹⁵³

¹⁵⁰ McEvoy, *Statistical Survey*, p. 164.

¹⁵¹ McEvoy, *Statistical Survey*, p. 165.

¹⁵² Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. xviii.

¹⁵³ Antonia McManus, *The Irish Hedge School and Its Books, 1695-1831*, (Dublin, 2002), p. 16.

The reason that these schools existed in such a covert and concealed manner was that the education of Catholics had been outlawed with the introduction of the penal laws in 1695:

Among the first of the penal laws to be enacted in 1695, during the reign of King William (1689-1702) were those against Catholic education... There was also a domestic provision added on, forbidding any ‘person whatsoever of the popish religion to publicly teach school or instruct youth in learning.’¹⁵⁴

Despite the repeal of many of the penal laws by 1793, including those associated with education, the traditional hedge school remained. The purpose of the hedge schools of pre-famine Ireland was to provide ‘education for students intended for the priesthood, for service in the foreign armies, for trading on the continent or for employment at home.’¹⁵⁵ The subjects taught at these hedge schools were numerous, they included; ‘religion, history, arithmetic, book-keeping, science, surveying and land measuring, astronomy, geography, Latin, Greek, Hebrew, English, Irish and dancing.’¹⁵⁶ The hedge schools themselves were also numerous as a ‘general survey conducted in 1824 revealed... [there was] an average of six schools in each rural parish, with far more in the towns.’¹⁵⁷

Carleton received his education in a number of these hedge schools throughout Co. Tyrone during his youth. He offered some insight into his own personal experience of hedge schools in the short story “The Hedge School”. The story was first published in the first series of *Traits and Stories* in 1830 and appeared in the revised 1842-4 edition of the short story compilation. Carleton offered a damning critique of the hedge school system as it existed in Ireland prior to 1831. He stated that ‘the truth is, that it is difficult to determine, whether unlettered ignorance itself were not preferable to the kind of education which the people then received.’¹⁵⁸ He added that ‘their education, indeed, was truly barbarous; they were trained and habituated to cruelty, revenge, and personal hatred, in their schools.’¹⁵⁹ Carleton held the hedge schoolmasters of the period accountable for the poor standard of education received by students within these institutions. He portrayed hedge schoolmasters throughout his writings as possessing far less education or learning than they led their students, students’ parents, and the wider communities to believe. Carleton suggested that pupils were subjected to cruelty and physical brutality within

¹⁵⁴ McManus, *The Irish Hedge School*, p. 15.

¹⁵⁵ McManus, *The Irish Hedge School*, p. 13.

¹⁵⁶ McManus, *The Irish Hedge School*, p. 118.

¹⁵⁷ McManus, *The Irish Hedge School*, p. 21.

¹⁵⁸ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 312.

¹⁵⁹ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 313.

hedge schools at the hands of their teachers. Furthermore, he believed that many hedge schoolmasters were connected with illegal agrarian societies and portrayed Mat Kavanagh of “The Hedge School” being transported, accused of burning Moore’s, a local landowner, stables. In his introduction to the new edition of *Traits and Stories* Carleton remarked of hedge schoolmasters that they were:

a class of men who, with few exceptions, bestowed such an education upon the people as is sufficient almost, in the absence of all other causes, to account for much of the agrarian violence and erroneous principles which regulate their movements and feelings on that and similar subjects.¹⁶⁰

At the beginning of the story as the locals of Findramore search for a new schoolmaster they draft an advertisement for the position listing an affiliation to Ribbonism as a prerequisite for interested candidates.¹⁶¹

In “The Hedge School” Carleton described in detail the construction of the new schoolhouse in Findramore in the manner that such buildings were typically erected during the period.¹⁶² He stated that an excavation was made into a ditch to form the back and two side walls of the schoolhouse. The front wall and two gables were then built of clay or green sods. A series of A-shaped frames were then laid to support the roof which was ribbed with branches and thatched with rushes. Within the building some of the scholars sat on stones but the majority positioned themselves on the bare clay floor. The master sat on a deal chair at the head of the room facing his pupils. Each student had ‘a copy-board – a piece of planed deal’¹⁶³ upon which to support their pen and paper when writing. Carleton mentioned spelling, mathematics, book-keeping, Latin and Greek among the subjects taught in such schools.¹⁶⁴ He listed the prophecies of Pastorini and Columkill, as well as, a book called *Ward’s Cantos* that contained ‘ridicule of the Word of God, and hatred to the Protestant Religion’¹⁶⁵ amongst the texts utilised within hedge schools of the period. The study of such material, that which was sectarian and appealed to an exclusively Catholic readership, reflected Carleton’s opinion that many hedge school masters were also involved in Ribbonism. That school children were taught to hate their Protestant neighbours and hope for the demise of Irish Protestantism was more likely a reflection on

¹⁶⁰ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. xx.

¹⁶¹ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, pp. 284-5.

¹⁶² Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 294.

¹⁶³ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 301.

¹⁶⁴ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 302.

¹⁶⁵ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 313.

the character of the school master in Carleton's sketch than on the hedge school system in general.

While critical of hedge schoolmasters and the limited education students received at hedge schools during the period Carleton suggested, however, that the system and style of education was preferable to the more modern variant that was introduced in 1831. Carleton believed that Bell and Lancaster's monitorial system, that which was practiced in hedge schools, in which the older and more experienced scholars helped to teach their fellow students, created an environment more conducive to learning than the modern system that forced pupils to sit in silence. Carleton stated:

I think it a mistake to suppose that silence, among a number of children in school, is conducive to the improvement either of health or intellect... a child is capable of more intense study and abstraction in the din of a schoolroom... The obligation to silence, though it may give the master more ease, imposes a new moral duty upon the child, the sense of which must necessarily weaken his application. Let the boy speak aloud... do not keep him dumb and motionless as a statue – his blood and his intellect both in a state of stagnation, and his spirit below zero.¹⁶⁶

Like the many aspects of Irish peasant life that Carleton illustrated throughout his writings he held some degree of affinity to the hedge school system in which he spent a significant part of his young life, however, he also saw the flaws and errors therein and sought to expose them. Carleton allowed his readers access to the inner workings of an early nineteenth century schoolhouse and offered an example of the character of the hedge schoolmaster. It is worth noting that this short story was written during the first phase of Carleton's writings, however, a period in which his portrayals of the Irish peasantry were decidedly negative. Writing for a predominantly Protestant readership, contributing to the anti-papist *Examiner* during the same period, Carleton was writing from a particular perspective and with a specific agenda.

Following his father's untimely death, in 1808, shortly after his family had moved to Springtown, Carleton determined that he would attempt to fulfil his father's wish. He decided to leave his family and journey to Munster as a poor scholar. Benedict Kiely explained that 'if a boy seriously wanted to follow learning he must follow it along the road that led to Munster, and, as a general rule, along the road that led to the priesthood.'¹⁶⁷

¹⁶⁶ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, pp. 306-7.

¹⁶⁷ Kiely, *Poor Scholar*, p. 28.

Carleton himself explained that, as their title suggested, ‘the poor scholars who go to Munster are indebted for nothing but their bed and board, which they receive kindly and hospitably from the parents of the scholars.’¹⁶⁸ Although students themselves the poor scholars taught the children of the families who took them in. Kiely also stated of the advantage for Carleton of leaving for Munster as a poor scholar, rather than staying in Tyrone, was that in Munster ‘the schools had higher reputations and longer lives.’¹⁶⁹

Young candidates for the priesthood were expected to be well educated in the classics of Latin, Greek and Hebrew. McManus explains that:

Kerry was the county which contemporary writers repeatedly singled out as the centre of classical learning in Ireland, especially the famous classical hedge school at Faha. It was here scholars arrived from all over the country, some of whom were intended for the priesthood. They all sought the much coveted ‘Munster diploma’ for proficiency in Greek, Latin and Hebrew.¹⁷⁰

Carleton did not state that he sought out this ‘Munster diploma’ or that the destination of his journey was Kerry, however, he was certainly aware that these schools existed:

It was this condition of education in the north which occasioned so many poor scholars to be sent to the south, especially to Kerry.¹⁷¹

Carleton did not make it to Kerry. He only managed to reach Granard, Co. Longford, where he stayed a night in an inn. During the night Carleton recalled a dream he had which he considered prophetic:

I dreamt that I was pursued by a mad bull, and overtaken. The bull was about to gore me, when I awoke in a perspiration of terror.¹⁷²

The next morning Carleton returned home, frightened by what his dream may have meant and suffering from a bad bout of home sickness. Pat Frayne, the schoolmaster, had since opened another school convenient to Springtown and Carleton was offered the opportunity to return to education. Frayne before long, however, removed again from the area and returned to his native Connaught. Carleton was again without a school until he

¹⁶⁸ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. xiv.

¹⁶⁹ Kiely, *Poor Scholar*, p. 28.

¹⁷⁰ McManus, *The Irish Hedge School*, p. 128.

¹⁷¹ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 12.

¹⁷² O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 71.

came to know of a second cousin of his, named Keenan, who ran a classical school in Derrygola, in the adjoining parish of Truagh. He went to stay with the McCarrons, to whom his family were also related, and was then able to attend Keenan's classical school. He did so for a time until Keenan removed to Dundalk where he opened a much larger school. Carleton had hoped that Keenan would bring him to Dundalk, but he did not, and the young scholar was forced to return home again. Carleton then heard of a priest, who was a distant relative of his, who had opened a classical school near Glasslough, Co. Monaghan. Carleton went to meet with this distant relative and secured another two years schooling under the clergyman, after which time he again returned to his family.

When nineteen, Carleton decided to travel to St. Patrick's Purgatory on the island of Lough Derg in Co. Donegal. Having heard many stories and anecdotes relating to this popular site of Catholic devotion from his father, Carleton decided to go and see the place for himself. He stated that:

A warm imagination inflamed my curiosity so powerfully, that I resolved to make a station to that far-famed scene of penitential devotion.¹⁷³

This station, Carleton reflected in 1842 was the means of shaping his subsequent life and career. He stated that:

It was that pilgrimage and the reflections occasioned by it, added to a ripener knowledge and a maturer judgement, that detached me from the Roman Catholic Church, many of whose doctrines, when I became a thinking man, I could not force my judgement to believe.¹⁷⁴

He added that the station effectively destroyed his aspirations of joining the priesthood.

The pilgrimage he reflected:

was also the means of preventing me from being a pleasant, strong-bodied parish priest at this day.¹⁷⁵

Carleton suggested that he returned home from Lough Derg having abandoned the prospect of entering the Catholic priesthood. According to his short story, "A Pilgrimage to Patrick's Purgatory" he had had an altercation with a priest when at Lough Derg. If this

¹⁷³ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 97.

¹⁷⁴ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 101.

¹⁷⁵ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. xvi.

was true it was more likely the reason that he did not pursue a career within the priesthood. Writing many years after the event, upon reflection, Carleton attached greater meaning to his experiences at Lough Derg suggesting his pilgrimage was the catalyst in his decision to ultimately leave the Catholic faith. Carleton's "A Pilgrimage to Patrick's Purgatory" and indeed his decision to leave Catholicism for Protestantism will be examined in greater detail in Chapters Two and Three of this study.

Upon his return home Carleton was again without the prospect of further education or employment. His eldest brother, Michael, urged him to try his hand at a trade and he was engaged to become the local stonecutter's apprentice, however, Carleton refused to lower himself to such manual labour. He left his family at the age of twenty-two in search of employment as a schoolmaster or tutor.¹⁷⁶ He spent time travelling to and from the houses of his relatives and friends bringing him eventually to the county of Louth. He claimed to have arrived in Louth in 1817, six months after the atrocity at Wildgoose Lodge had occurred.¹⁷⁷ In Louth he resided for a time with the Rev. Edward McArdle. It was when staying with McArdle that Carleton secured his first job, as a tutor, with 'a wealthy farmer named Piers Murphy'¹⁷⁸ who lived in Lowtown or Lowertown. 'Pierce Murphy subsequently settled in Newry, Co. Down, where he established a tan-yard... By his wife, Jane Clinton he had twenty-three children, nineteen of whom reached maturity.'¹⁷⁹ Carleton tutored some of the Murphy children for about four months, 'I received my first quarter's salary... After I had gone nearly a month into a new quarter... I decided to leave.'¹⁸⁰ He decided to move on to Dundalk where he sought out his cousin Keenan. Keenan could provide Carleton with no employment and he moved on again to Drogheda. He then heard of a vacancy with a Catholic gentleman, Fitzgerald, in Fane Valley. By the time he met with Fitzgerald, however, the position had already been filled. He applied for positions in Navan, Clongowes College in Clane and in the college in Maynooth but again to no avail. Shortly after this visit to Maynooth he was told of a school opening in Newcastle in County Dublin. His proficiency in classical learning appears to have allowed him to become the master of this hedge school. He was unable, however, to make a living

¹⁷⁶ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. viii.

¹⁷⁷ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. xvii. D.J. Casey dated Carleton's arrival in Louth another six months later. Casey, 'Carleton in Louth', p. 99.

¹⁷⁸ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. xvii.

¹⁷⁹ T. G. F. Paterson, 'The Chamberlains of Nizelrath (Continued),' in County Louth Archaeological and History Society, *Journal of the County Louth Archaeological Society*, xi, no. 3 (1947), p. 178.

¹⁸⁰ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, i, pp. 151-2

from it and ultimately turned his step towards Dublin. Carleton arrived in Dublin for the first time in 1818.

While Carleton described his upbringing as 'humble' and 'lowly' the historical evidence suggests that he and his family lived in relative comfort. When writing the story of his life, a process he began in 1843, as an author who had built his career on the basis of being of peasant origins, it appears that he overstated the facts to meet public expectation. Carleton most certainly witnessed the struggles of the peasantry but to what extent he endured those struggles is uncertain. It is highly likely that the Carletons were affected by the issue of sectarianism and the fact that they moved so often suggests a level of insecurity with respect to the leasing of farmlands. Seasonal scarcities and food shortages, however, were issues that would have had a much greater impact on the labourer landholders and landless labourers who sat below the Carletons on the social ladder. That he received a decent education and that his father could educate him to a standard that could have prepared him to enter into the Catholic priesthood suggests that the Carletons occupied an elevated position within the lower tier of Irish society. The very fact that Carleton was pitched upon for the priesthood suggests that this was a goal attainable for the son of a small farmer. While many peasant parents might have dreamt of one of their sons becoming a priest it is evident that very few of them would have possessed the financial wherewithal to make this a reality. Carleton, therefore, as a member of the Catholic community in the Clogher Valley of the early nineteenth-century might be considered a witness to the lives of the rural poor but not one who had fully experienced the same hardship. After he left his home in Tyrone Carleton carved out a literary career depicting what he claimed were authentic accounts of the lives of the rural communities of the pre-famine period. Before he began to write, however, Carleton became a Protestant. His conversion was the most contentious aspect of his journey from peasant to novelist and it was to have a significant impact upon the writings he would produce. His change of religion casts further doubt over his reliability as a witness to the peasant experience in the north of Ireland.

Chapter Two

‘Old Fork-tongued Turncoat’¹⁸¹: William Carleton’s conversion and emergence as a writer

This chapter explores William Carleton’s life between his conversion to Protestantism, sometime after 1818, and his emergence as a literary figure in 1828. William Carleton converted from Catholicism to Protestantism sometime between 1818, when he first arrived in Dublin, and January 1821, when he married his Protestant wife Jane Anderson.¹⁸² There is no mention of his conversion within his correspondence. Most of the letters written and received by Carleton that survive in the O’Donoghue papers are concerned with the second half of the novelist’s career. Only two of these letters are dated prior to 1845. The first he received from John Windele, an antiquary, who requested assistance to obtain a copy of the ‘Ogham Inscription on Knockmany.’¹⁸³ While the second, dated 27 November 1842, he received from Robert Peel who told Carleton that:

I would accept with the greatest pleasure the volumes which you have been good enough to offer me if I were not already in possession of all your works.¹⁸⁴

These letters reveal little in respect of Carleton’s early career. They do not mention his change of religion nor do they offer any insight into his relationship with Caesar Otway or his employment with *The Christian Examiner and Church of Ireland Magazine* (*Examiner* hereafter). Further, the author did not detail fully nor account sufficiently within his autobiographical writings for his change of religion. He merely explained in his unfinished autobiography, written in the years preceding his death in 1869, that he became disillusioned with the doctrines of the Catholic faith particularly that of exclusive salvation:

¹⁸¹ Seamus Heaney, ‘Station Island’, (London, 1984).

¹⁸² Jane Carleton noted in an application to the Royal Literary Fund after her husband’s death that she married William Carleton ‘on or about the third day of January one thousand eight hundred and twenty-one.’ Jane Carleton to the Committee of the Literary Fund, including her sworn testimony of her marriage, 15 Feb. 1869, (British Library, Royal Literary Fund – Case Files, Loan 96 RLF 1/711/15).

¹⁸³ John Windele to William Carleton, 3 June 1842, (U.C.D.A., O’Donoghue Papers, LA15/1773).

¹⁸⁴ Robert Peel to William Carleton, 27 Nov. 1842, (U.C.D.A., O’Donoghue Papers, LA15/1765).

One doctrine of the Catholic Church I had sent to the winds long before that period. I allude to exclusive salvation.¹⁸⁵ Neither logic nor reasoning was required to enable me to discard it. Common feeling – the plain principle of simple humanity – was sufficient. This, indeed, was the doctrine which first taught me to feel the justice of thinking for myself; and from that moment I felt that I could not much longer hold the doctrines of a Catholic.¹⁸⁶

Carleton's decision to convert must be considered curious given the religiously defined divisions that existed within pre-famine Irish society. Beyond the explanations offered above, Carleton neither revealed the reasoning nor the motivating factors that led to his change of religion and his conversion therefore remains open to interpretation. Many historians and literary commentators have speculated upon this matter. Brian Donnelly wondered if Carleton's conversion was 'a necessary prelude to his marriage and position as a teacher.'¹⁸⁷ Similarly, Carleton entertained notions of entering Trinity College, and his conversion might be seen as a prerequisite to realising this goal. From a less practical and more religious viewpoint Brian Earls argued that:

Carleton was attracted to evangelical Protestantism because of its distancing of the supernatural and also perhaps because of its textuality. For one who had inhabited the miracle-filled world of his father, the Protestant insistence that miracles had ceased with the ending of the apostolic age may have come as something of a relief.¹⁸⁸

While Protestantism may well have appeared attractive to Carleton, in its insistent commitment to the Bible text and through its concentration on believers' direct relationship with God, the consensus is that the author's conversion lacked such religious conviction. Benedict Kiely suggested that:

William Carleton scrambled up on the fence with the firm intention of becoming a Protestant, but ended up with a long leg dangling on either side of the rickety division.¹⁸⁹

Similarly, Frances Cashel Hoey stated that:

¹⁸⁵ Outside the church there is no salvation taken from the Latin 'extra ecclesiam nulla salus' was the Catholic doctrine that taught that only formal members of the Catholic church would be saved by Christ. 'Salvation, Necessity of the Church for', in *New Catholic Encyclopaedia*, xii, (Detroit, 2003), pp. 624-6.

¹⁸⁶ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, i, pp. 214-5.

¹⁸⁷ Brian Donnelly, 'William Carleton: Novelist of the People,' in Charles Dillon and H.A. Jefferies, (eds.), *Tyrone: History & Society*, (Dublin, 2000), p. 575.

¹⁸⁸ Brian Earls, 'Oral Culture and Popular Autonomy', (www.drb.ie/essays/oral-culture-and-popular-autonomy) (4 July 2012).

¹⁸⁹ Kiely, *Poor Scholar*, p. 88.

It came to be said, long after the period at which his *Autobiography* ends, that “Carleton was a Catholic when it suited him, and a Protestant when it suited him better.”¹⁹⁰

Did Carleton’s conversion lack religious conviction? Did he see his conversion as a means to an end in attempting to achieve other goals? If Carleton merely borrowed the Protestant religion to what end did he do so? How did he benefit by converting to Protestantism? Given the structure of pre-famine Irish society during the period, the tiers and divisions therein, did Carleton’s conversion alter his status or position within the social landscape of his time? In this chapter, each of these questions will be addressed to understand Carleton’s unlikely conversion to the Protestant religion, given the rarity of Catholics conforming to Protestantism during the period. In doing so the chapter will first examine the general question of conversion in Ireland during the period and then seek to explore Carleton’s conversion.

In converting to Protestantism Carleton was afforded the opportunity to become acquainted with Dublin’s literary middle-class. His adopted Protestant identity led him to move in social circles that his former Catholicism may not have permitted him to access. Initially, this conversion allowed Carleton to secure posts as a teacher and tutor and later as a clerk in the Sunday School Society for Ireland. This conversion will be examined in the second section of this chapter. Ultimately, Carleton’s conversion allowed him to begin a career in literature by becoming acquainted with the editor of the *Examiner*, the Reverend Caesar Otway. In its third section, this chapter will examine this turn of events and provide context to Carleton’s literary emergence by comparing his path to some of his prominent contemporaries who advanced their careers outside Ireland and by describing the Dublin literary set of the period.

Finally, this chapter will suggest that these years in Carleton’s life constitute a process of self-fashioning, a concept pioneered by Stephen Greenblatt in the context of the Renaissance period. While not suggesting that Carleton converted for the purpose of carving out a literary career, this chapter argues that Carleton’s early literary career can be seen as a phase in an on-going process of self-fashioning that began with his conversion.

¹⁹⁰ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. xxii.

I. Religious Conversion in Context in Pre-Famine Ireland

William Carleton's curious decision to change his religion adds an intriguing layer to a study of this novelist. Conversion was neither common, popular nor widespread in pre-famine Ireland. An official record, or roll, of those who conformed to Protestantism, specifically Anglicanism, during the eighteenth, and the first half of the nineteenth, century was kept at the High Court of Chancery. Following the enactment of 'An Act to Prevent the Growth of Popery' in 1704 Catholics converting to Protestantism were required to submit proof of their conformity in the form of a certificate, obtained from their local Protestant bishop, to the court.¹⁹¹ These rolls were destroyed in a fire in the Four Courts in 1922, however, Eileen O'Byrne compiled a similar list from the information that survived in other sources. *The Convert Rolls: the calendar of the convert rolls, 1703-1838* was compiled from three sources. The first was a two-volume calendar created following the transfer of the rolls from the Chancery Division to the Irish Public Record Office in 1867.¹⁹² The second was a list compiled by John Lodge, a deputy keeper of the rolls, entitled 'An Alphabetical list of Converts', to act as a guide to the original rolls.¹⁹³ Lodge's list ran up to 1773, he died a year later in 1774.¹⁹⁴ The third source used by O'Byrne was a pamphlet entitled *An exact list of all persons who have conformed to the Church of Ireland from the popish religion and enrolled their certificates since the year 1703 when the Act to prevent the further growth of popery was made*, printed in Dublin in 1732."¹⁹⁵ Just 73 persons conformed to the Church of Ireland during the period of 1800-1838 according to *The Convert Rolls*.¹⁹⁶ During the previous century, between 1703 and 1799, out of a population of over 8 million people, approximately 80 per cent of whom were Catholic, 5,817 Catholics converted to the Anglican faith.¹⁹⁷ Given the nature of these rolls these figures relate to all those who satisfied the process for conforming as prescribed by the state. There is no official record for those who failed to provide proof of their conformity. State recognition was important for the convert in eighteenth century Ireland due to the repressive penal laws that affected Catholics during the period. Ownership of property,

¹⁹¹ Eileen O'Byrne, (ed.), *The Convert Rolls: the calendar of the convert rolls, 1703-1838 with Fr. Wallace Clare's Annotated List of Converts, 1703-78*, edited by Anne Chamney, (Dublin, 2005), p. xi.

¹⁹² O'Byrne, *The Convert Rolls*, p. xiii, C.I. McGrath, "Review: The Convert Rolls: the calendar of the convert rolls, 1703-1838 with Fr. Wallace Clare's Annotated List of Converts, 1703-78, edited by Anne Chamney" in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxv, no. 140 (Nov. 2007), p. 565.

¹⁹³ O'Byrne, *The Convert Rolls*, p. xiii.

¹⁹⁴ O'Byrne, *The Convert Rolls*, p. xiv.

¹⁹⁵ O'Byrne, *The Convert Rolls*, p. xiv.

¹⁹⁶ O'Byrne, *The Convert Rolls*, p. xviii.

¹⁹⁷ O'Byrne, *The Convert Rolls*, p. xviii.

access to education and the rights to vote and hold public offices were denied to Catholics during the eighteenth century. Converts could not enjoy the advantages that accompanied being Protestant in Ireland unless they had enrolled. Following the enactment of a series of concessions, through relief acts, granted to Catholics between 1778 and 1793, however, enrolment became less significant and the official records of those conforming dwindled from the turn of the century onwards. There is no record of Carleton's conversion to Protestantism in *The Convert Rolls*. He did not obtain a certificate, testifying his conformity from a Protestant bishop, or if he did so he did not have it enrolled with the Court of Chancery. Therefore, *The Convert Rolls* do not shed any light on the circumstances of Carleton's conversion, however, they illustrate the fact that it was indeed unusual for a Catholic to change his or her religion during the period.

As stated there were significant legal advantages to be gained by converting from Catholicism to Protestantism during the eighteenth century. As a result many who chose to change their religion during the period were suspected of 'strategic conversion.'¹⁹⁸ T.C. Barnard explained that 'from the seventeenth century onwards the reliability of those who came over... was suspected.'¹⁹⁹ He also suggested that during the period of the eighteenth century that conversion 'was becoming simply another device whereby supple Catholics retained, or averted the amorcellization of, their estates.'²⁰⁰ In *Converts and Conversion in Ireland, 1650-1850* a number of eighteenth century converts are examined by the study's authors and that strategic conversion was indeed a phenomenon during the period is established. David A. Fleming cited the conversions of the FitzGibbons of Limerick and the Redingtons of Clarinbridge, Co. Galway. Fleming noted that; 'The motivation for John Fitzgibbon senior to convert in 1731 was in order to qualify for the Irish bar.'²⁰¹ Furthermore he stated that:

The experience of the Redingtons is a prime example of a family that engaged in a collusive conversion out of motives of self-interest. It was a strategic conversion orchestrated by the father, Thomas Redington, to make possible the purchase of land in the names of his two sons, the first of whom converted in 1753 and the second in 1767.²⁰²

¹⁹⁸ James Kelly, 'The conversion experience: the case of Fr. James O'Farrell, OP, 1785-7' in Michael Brown, C.I. McGrath and T.P. Power, (eds.), *Converts and Conversion in Ireland, 1650-1850*, (Dublin, 2005), p. 215.

¹⁹⁹ T.C. Barnard, 'Historiographical Review: Farewell to Old Ireland', in *The Historical Journal*, xxxvi, no. 4 (1993), p. 915.

²⁰⁰ Barnard, 'Farewell to Old Ireland', p. 915.

²⁰¹ D.A. Fleming, 'Conversion, family and mentality', in Brown, et al, (eds.), *Converts and Conversion in Ireland*, p. 20.

²⁰² Fleming, 'Conversion, family and mentality', p. 20.

John Martin Anster (1793-1867), provides a nineteenth century example of such strategic conversion. Anster, a poet, translator of Goethe and lawyer, a contemporary of Carleton, also changed his religion from Catholicism to Protestantism. His conversion again appears strategic as he conformed in order to enter Trinity College in 1810. A biographical note on Anster appeared in the September 1886 edition of *The Irish Monthly*:

John Anster was born at Charleville, in the county of Cork, in 1793, and spent part of his boyhood at Bruree... Anster's father was a Catholic; and for his son's change of religion Trinity College is, we fear, responsible. He entered that college in 1810, and won a Scholarship in 1814.²⁰³

As stated many of those who converted were suspected of doing so for strategic or tactical reasons and as a result were treated with suspicion and often marginalised. Catholics regarded those who had conformed as traitors while James Kelly stated that Protestants concluded that:

because so many converts maintained close links with their erstwhile co-religionists or promoted their interest at every opportunity, they were indivisible with the Catholic interest at large. Some indeed, lumped 'papists and converts' together as equally untrustworthy.²⁰⁴

The convert occupied a curious position within Irish society during the period unless they could prove that their conversion was sincere.

Both Barnard and Kelly have argued that despite the long list of economic and social advantages that could have enticed Catholics to change their religion, that sincere conversion was also a possibility and should not be discounted. Members of the Roman Catholic clergy were also amongst those who converted to the Protestant religion in the eighteenth century and sincerity was necessary in their application to conform. Kelly cited several instances of priests converting during the 1760s and 1770s that were recorded in the press.²⁰⁵ He also examined in detail the attempted conversion of the Dominican priest, Father James O'Farrell to the Anglican Church in the late eighteenth century. O'Farrell applied to Thomas Percy, bishop of Dromore, to be accepted into the Church of Ireland in 1785. Kelly noted that for clergymen:

²⁰³ 'Nutshell Biograms', in *The Irish Monthly*, xiv, no. 159 (1886), p. 486-7.

²⁰⁴ Kelly, 'The conversion experience', p. 222.

²⁰⁵ Kelly, 'The conversion experience', p. 219. Kelly cited the conversions of Thomas Hurley, Andrew Meagher, Patrick Fay, Charles Farrell and Barnabas O'Farrell.

the act of conversion had, by law, to take place in public and to be enrolled if it was to be recognized officially and if he was to secure the financial support authorized by parliament specifically to support convert clergy.²⁰⁶

In order to fully satisfy himself that O'Farrell's reasons for wishing to convert were sincere and that he was not motivated out of self-interest Percy requested him 'to commit to writing the reasons, which had induced him to forsake the opinions he had hitherto professed and taught.'²⁰⁷ O'Farrell did so and within his 'epistle' he cited transubstantiation, purgatory, the adoration of images, and praying to saints and angels amongst the errors he had found in Catholicism.²⁰⁸

Kelly explained that like O'Farrell other clergymen choosing to convert also put pen to paper to explain their reasons for leaving the Catholic Church. Thomas Hurley's "A brief account of the motives and reasons of the conversion of the Rev Mr Thomas Hurley, AM, late a priest of the Church of Rome" appeared serially in the *Freeman's Journal* from 24 September to 1 October 1765. In it he listed what he had come to see as the errors of Catholicism in Ireland. His criticisms match those found in O'Farrell's statement and indeed it could be argued that O'Farrell modelled his epistle on Hurley's account. In introducing his testimony Hurley gave thanks to God:

that he hath been pleased to set me free from this Bondage, and to bring me out of the gross Superstitions of Popery, in which I was bred, and in which I have been so long the unhappy instrument of instructing others.²⁰⁹

He attacked the use of items and practices peculiar to Catholicism in Ireland that he claimed were not found in Continental Europe:

As to many other Articles looked upon as essential in this Country, viz. Indulgences, Pardons, Pilgrimages, ridiculous and feigned Miracles, divine Virtue attached to Medals, Beads, Agnus Dei, and the like, they are not insisted upon in France (where he studied) even in the Schools, and are commonly termed by the Secular Clergy in Conversation, *pious Frauds, and harmless Tricks, to feed the Devotion of the Ignorant*.²¹⁰

²⁰⁶ Kelly, 'The conversion experience', p. 214.

²⁰⁷ Kelly, 'The conversion experience', p. 225.

²⁰⁸ Kelly, 'The conversion experience', pp. 225-6.

²⁰⁹ Thomas Hurley, 'A brief account of the motives and reasons of the conversion of the Rev Mr Thomas Hurley, AM, late a priest of the Church of Rome', *Freeman's Journal*, 24 September 1765.

²¹⁰ Hurley, 'the conversion of the Rev Mr Thomas Hurley'.

Finally, he attacked the conduct of the clergy towards their laity. He suggested that they derived wealth from the maintenance of the aforementioned paganistic items and practices:

The Regulars encourage and the Secular Priests wink at these Abuses, from thence reaping no small gain to themselves; so that in this point I plainly saw, that modern Popery had a perfect Conformity with ancient Paganism... Besides, the rest of the Priests, particularly the FRYARS, would cry out with DEMETRIUS, *Sirs, you know that by the Craft we have our Wealth*, Acts 19:25.²¹¹

It appears from Hurley's account that the sincerity of a person's conversion was measured as much by their recognition of the perceived errors of Catholicism as it was by their belief in the tenets of Protestantism. Both Hurley's and O'Farrell's statements outlining their reasons for leaving Catholicism in favour of Protestantism highlight the divide that existed between the two religions in Ireland during the period and indeed the level of animosity that members of the Established church held towards their Catholic counterparts. This animosity coupled with insecurity would only grow into the nineteenth century as the authority and position of the Anglican Church in Ireland weakened following the repeal of many of the penal laws between 1778 and 1793.

At the turn of the century members of the Anglican Church were under increasing pressure given their threatened position within Irish society. Catholics had been granted concessions through relief acts. Daniel O'Connell's campaign for Catholic emancipation had moved into a new and highly active phase in 1823 with the establishment of the Catholic Association. Millenarianism was rife amongst the lower classes of Catholicism as the widely circulated prophecies of Pastorini, foretelling the demise of the Protestant religion in Ireland by Christmas 1825, became popular. Evangelicalism began to creep into Irish Protestantism from the beginning of the century as evangelicals attempted reform from within the ranks of the Established church. With the 'Second Reformation' movement beginning in the 1800s evangelicals stepped up their campaign to revive and add to the Protestant church in Ireland.²¹² The pinnacle of evangelicalism within Irish Protestantism occurred in 1859 with the Ulster revival.²¹³

²¹¹ Hurley, 'the conversion of the Rev Mr Thomas Hurley'.

²¹² Irene Whelan, *The Bible War in Ireland: The 'Second Reformation' and the polarization of Protestant-Catholic relations, 1800-1840*, (Dublin, 2005), p. 161.

²¹³ For the Ulster Revival of 1859 see: David Hempton and Myrtle Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism in Ulster Society*, (London and New York, 1992).

Irish Protestant evangelicals felt an overwhelming responsibility to spread the ‘good news’ to Irish Catholics and to save them from the exploitation of a corrupt clergy. Evangelicals perceived Catholics ‘as dominated by a superstitious religion that had contributed to the backward economic and social condition of the country.’²¹⁴ It was believed that the peasantry’s plight was a direct result of the behaviour of the Catholic clergy rather than the people themselves and this ‘inspired evangelicals with confidence in their ability to convert Ireland to Protestantism.’²¹⁵ Early nineteenth century evangelical campaigns involved the establishment of various biblical societies with the aim of widening the readership of the Bible. ‘The British and Foreign Bible Society’ and the ‘Hibernian Bible Society’ are but two of these societies, established in 1804 and 1808, respectively, to spread the ‘good news’ of evangelicalism and to convert those not saved.²¹⁶ Irene Whelan stated that the aims or objectives of ‘The British and Foreign Bible Society’ were twofold:

to provide bibles in foreign languages wherever the ground had been cultivated for this purpose, and to supply the home market wherever the demand existed, whether it was in Sunday schools or the other innumerable philanthropic societies, or for distribution to the public through its own network of auxiliaries.²¹⁷

The Irish language was used to reach those in poor rural communities, evident from the establishment of the ‘Irish Society for Promoting the Education of the Native Irish through the medium of their own language’ in 1818.²¹⁸ Evangelicals were also accused of philanthropy and soupism, attempting to win converts by providing them with food, work, shelter or money, in their conversion missions.

The ‘Second Reformation’ saw evangelically influenced Protestants move to oppose the campaign for Catholic emancipation as well as step up the drive for biblical readership and conversion to their Protestant faith. Evangelicals believed that conversion to Protestantism rather than Daniel O’Connell’s political protesting was the solution to the Catholic’s political grievances. Evangelicals reportedly reached a mass of Catholics with their biblical drives alleging ‘thousands are in the constant habit of reading the Bible, who

²¹⁴ Janice Holmes, ‘Irish evangelicals and the British evangelical community, 1820s-1870s,’ in Dillon and Jefferies, *Tyrone: History & Society*, p. 219.

²¹⁵ Hempton and Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism*, p. 82.

²¹⁶ Whelan, *The Bible War*, pp. 69-71.

²¹⁷ Whelan, *The Bible War*, p. 70.

²¹⁸ Whelan, *The Bible War*, p. 93.

are the poorest and were till lately the most ignorant of the Roman Catholic population.’²¹⁹ Again, however, conversion was not widespread, rather it was confined to particular areas. A comment made by Bishop John Jebb, Protestant Bishop of Limerick, Ardfert and Aghadoe, in 1827 indicates the progress being made with this second reformative movement:

I have learned that in almost every part of Ireland inquiry and a thirst for knowledge and in some instances a degree of religious anxiety are gaining ground amongst Roman Catholics. Numbers in neighbourhoods predominantly popish are thinking and inquiring and reading the Scriptures.²²⁰

Numerous conversions to Protestantism during this period were reported as Bishop Jebb claimed that there were ‘weekly notices of conversion in all parts of the country.’²²¹ It is likely, however, that much of this was propaganda on the part of Jebb and other evangelicals. It is impossible to obtain figures relating to these alleged conversions. As stated just 73 conformists were recorded for the period of 1800-38, however, by 1793 the need to legally and officially report one’s conversion had lost much of its significance with the repeal of most of the penal laws. Moreover, the class of Catholics targeted by such conversion drives must also be considered. It was primarily the poverty stricken tenantry that were induced by evangelicals to convert. Generally illiterate, this class were the least likely to follow state procedure and file reports to claim official sanction for their change of religion. There is therefore no evidence to support Jebb’s claim and the only official figures that exist fall well short of his estimate.

Probably the most important and notable of these conversions occurred in Co. Cavan between 1826 and 1827. With the ‘decline of handloom weaving associated with the cotton and linen industries’²²² and the ‘exercised extensive local influence’²²³ of resident local landlord, Lord Farnham, Kingscourt Estate Co. Cavan became a ‘major arena for evangelical proselytism’²²⁴ and religious conversion. Whelan noted that:

the prominence of weaving in Cavan had made it one of the most prosperous and densely populated of Irish counties by the end of the eighteenth century. All this was to change, however, when mechanization turned handloom

²¹⁹ Alan Acheson, *A history of the Church of Ireland 1691-2001*, (Dublin, 2002), p. 161.

²²⁰ Acheson, *A history of the Church of Ireland*, p. 161.

²²¹ Acheson, *A history of the Church of Ireland*, p. 162.

²²² Whelan, *The Bible War*, p. 179.

²²³ Hempton and Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism*, p. 86.

²²⁴ Hempton and Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism*, p. 86.

weaving into an obsolete trade... Between 1820 and 1835, the income of cotton weavers declined by more than 50 per cent, while the cost of food and housing remained steady.²²⁵

Farnham used his position to encourage his Catholic tenants towards his own religion. On his 29,000 acre estate Farnham supplied ‘churches, day schools, Sunday schools, a lending library, and material aid for those who earned it.’²²⁶ In return Farnham’s tenants were expected to respond to his hospitality with punctual payment of rents. All children on the estate were schooled together in an evangelical manner with scripture central to their daily lessons. Given the economic uncertainty that had visited many of Farnham’s tenants following the decline of the weaving industry Whelan argued that:

It is certainly not difficult to appreciate how tenants faced with eviction on top of all their other miseries might agree to attend Bible school or even to change their religion so as to preserve their slender subsistence.²²⁷

In effect Farnham’s system was ‘designed to erode traditional rural folk culture and replace it with an alternative set of values.’²²⁸ 450 conversions were recorded in Co. Cavan between October 1826 and January 1827 while evangelical sources then claimed that 1,903 conversions had been made publicly throughout Ireland by October 1827.²²⁹ Again, given the class of Catholics allegedly converting these figures are not reflected in any official report and were most likely exaggerated in an attempt to promote Farnham’s campaign and indeed the evangelical cause in general.

II. Carleton and Conversion

Carleton arrived in Dublin in 1818 with just the last quarter’s payment from his teaching position in the hedge school at Newcastle. He spent his days searching for employment and his nights in lodging houses across the city. Emancipated from his family and freed from the shackles of living within a rural community under the influence of the Catholic clergy, Carleton claimed in his autobiography to have become a ‘thinking man’.²³⁰ He suggested that he began to form his own view of the world and sought to forge

²²⁵ Whelan, *The Bible War*, p. 179.

²²⁶ Hempton and Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism*, p. 87.

²²⁷ Whelan, *The Bible War*, p. 180.

²²⁸ Hempton & Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism*, p. 88.

²²⁹ Hempton & Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism*, p. 89. The *Examiner* for instance claimed that more than 1,340 people had publicly renounced Catholicism in Ireland between October 1826 and April 1827. *The Christian Examiner*, iv, no. 23 (1827), p. 397.

²³⁰ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 101.

a place for himself within it. He reflected, in his autobiography, that upon his first visit to Dublin he began a search for a new religion:

About this time, too, I began to think a good deal upon the subject of religion. I occasionally went, at first out of curiosity, sometimes to one church and sometimes to another; and I was struck and often deeply impressed by what I had both seen and heard. I did not, however, confine my Sunday visits merely to churches of the Establishment. I often went to the Presbyterian places of worship also, but I did not relish them so well. Even the Methodists did not escape me. In point of fact, I was resolved to look through them all. If I do not examine and compare, thought I, how can I form an opinion as to their relative merits?²³¹

Carleton stated that he had become disillusioned with the doctrines of the Catholic Church, one, that of exclusive salvation, in particular. He explained that ‘I was Protestant at least twelve months before the change was known to a human being.’²³² Carleton did not specify a date upon which he converted to Protestantism, it can generally be assumed, however, that he settled upon Protestantism shortly after his arrival in Dublin in 1818.

Carleton soon began to seek out employment in the city. He became a classical tutor to the son of a gentleman, Mr. Fox, of the Combe. Mr. Fox, a Protestant, was the master of one of Erasmus Smith’s English schools.²³³ Carleton moved into the Foxes’ family home and through his association with the family he began to make numerous connections with the professional middle-class gentlemen of Dublin society. He secured a second tutorship with the son and daughter of a man named Short. Carleton began to adopt the persona of the middle-class men that he became acquainted with. He secured further tutorships through Mr. Fox and his connections, and in time secured a position as an office clerk in The Sunday School Society for Ireland. During his period of employment with the Foxes, Carleton fell in love with his master’s niece. Carleton married Jane Anderson in 1821.

The Sunday School Society for whom Carleton worked as a clerk was established in 1809. Originally ‘The Hibernian Sunday School Society’, and later ‘The Sunday School

²³¹ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 214.

²³² O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 215.

²³³ Erasmus Smith (1611-1691), a British Protestant, inherited lands his father had been granted under the Settlement of Ireland Act 1652. He founded four grammar schools and one hundred and forty English schools across Ireland from 1669 on. W.J.R. Wallace, *Faithful to our Trust: A History of the Erasmus Smith Trust and The High School, Dublin*, (Dublin, 2004).

Society for Ireland',²³⁴ the society aimed to encourage and promote Sunday schools in Ireland and to provide such schools with requisite resources, including, books for both teachers and pupils, alphabets, spelling books and copies of the Holy Scriptures.²³⁵ Founder member, secretariat and later honorary secretariat, James Digges La Touche, a Dublin banker, philanthropist and evangelical Protestant, employed Carleton to work as an office clerk for the society.²³⁶ Before and during his employment with the Sunday School Society Carleton entertained notions of entering Trinity College. Ultimately, these aspirations of higher education were to act against Carleton's position of employment at the time. Clerks had before Carleton left their positions to enter Trinity College much to the dissatisfaction of the Sunday School Society committee. When Carleton's intentions became known to Thomas Parnell, one such member of this committee, he took a case against Carleton and insisted he be removed from his position as clerk. Mr. La Touche intervened on Carleton's behalf but ultimately the clerk was removed from his position when Parnell threatened to withdraw from the society. Mr. Fox, under whom Carleton and his wife boarded was none too pleased with his nephew-in-law's dismissal. Carleton was evicted and removed to an eating-house while his wife went to reside with her mother. While at her mother's Jane gave birth to their first daughter, Mary-Anne. Carleton then enjoyed two spells of employment as a school teacher, the first in a Protestant school in Mullingar, the second in Carlow. Neither opportunity amounted to a sustainable career and Carleton and his family returned to Dublin after a short absence.

In his later writings, Carleton conceded that conversion was uncommon, unlikely and unnatural, particularly amongst the lower classes, in Ireland during the pre-famine period, through an anecdote that appeared in his novel *Valentine McClutchy: The Irish Agent; or, Chronicles of the Castle Cumber property* (1845). Written by Carleton in 1845, approximately twenty-five years after his own conversion, the author described two such converts, one formerly a Catholic, the other originally a Protestant. These two characters, Darby O'Drive, baliff to the land agent Valentine McClutchy and convert to the Protestant religion, and Bob Beatty, a convert to the Catholic faith, meet during the course of Carleton's narrative. An argument ensues, as both men discuss the virtues of their adopted religions. Bob accuses Darby of changing his religion for personal gain, indicating the

²³⁴ William Urwick, *Biographic Sketches of the late James Digges La Touche, Esq. Banker, Dublin, Honourary Secretary to the Sunday School Society for Ireland, during seventeen years from its commencement*, (Dublin, 1868), pp. 99-105.

²³⁵ Urwick, *James Digges La Touche*, p. 399.

²³⁶ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 234.

connection between Protestantism and privilege or at least greater economic potential in the period, while Darby notes the absurdity of Bob's conversion given his former infamy as an Orangeman:

“You disgraced your family by turnin' apostate...”

“Why, you poor turncoat, isn't the whole country laughin' at you, and none more than your own friends. The great fightin' Orangeman and blood-hound turned voteen! – oh, are we alive afther that!”²³⁷

Bob had suffered with epilepsy for some time before the Catholic priest, Father McCabe, miraculously cured him of his affliction, and he chose to convert on the basis of this cure. Darby's reasons for converting to Protestantism were not revealed within the novel, however, one must assume that his association and employment with the Protestant land agent had some bearing on his decision to change his religion.

The significance of the exchange between these two men lies not, however, with either convert or the initial argument between the two but with the reaction of those looking on, both Catholic and Protestant, and the commencement of a violent brawl. Carleton claimed that equal numbers of Catholics and Protestants watched on as Darby and Bob came to blows. The crowd joined the battle and Carleton noted that:

The Catholics, ignorant of the turn which the controversy had taken, supported Bob and Protestantism; whilst the Protestants, owing to a similar mistake, fought like devils for Darby and the Pope.²³⁸

Carleton clearly recognised that conversion was an alien concept within pre-famine society. He illustrated as much through this scene as, during the confrontation, the onlooking Catholics joined the fight for Protestantism while the Protestants battled for the Catholic religion.

It is no surprise that Carleton had left home and moved to Dublin before he changed his religion to Protestantism. It is unlikely that his family, friends and neighbours would have understood or accepted his decision to convert. Had Carleton announced his conversion before leaving his native Tyrone he would have been susceptible to abuse, and marginalisation and it is highly likely that he would have been regarded as a traitor. The

²³⁷ Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, p. 244.

²³⁸ Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, p. 246.

position of the convert in pre-famine society was often hopeless. Irene Whelan suggested that converts to Protestantism ‘were frequently attacked by their neighbours, refused goods when they went to purchase them, and often driven out of their homes altogether.’²³⁹ While George Ensor noted that Protestants treated the conformists on the Farnham Estate with similar disdain:

they despised them as Catholics – they despise them as renegades – they dread them as impostors – and, moreover, they fear them as new competitors for the favours and the lands of the lords of the soil.²⁴⁰

Given this context it is not surprising that there is no evidence to suggest that Carleton publicised the fact that he had changed his religion. And, as we have seen, scepticism about conversion was not confined to the community which a convert left. In Carleton’s case, while he was welcomed by some, such as Digges La Touche, he was dismissed from one job and failed to achieve security in others, very likely, at least in part, because of doubts about his reliability among the community he had joined.

III. Carleton Enters the Irish Literary World

Margaret Kelleher explained that, Carleton, like his contemporaries John Banim and Gerald Griffin, was forced to look outside of Ireland for his prospective audience; ‘of the authors who remained in Ireland, few could sustain themselves solely in the domestic market and sought a wider readership.’²⁴¹ The readership Carleton sought out was predominantly Protestant and existed amongst upper and middle-class society in Dublin and Britain. Over 80 percent of the Irish population during the period in which Carleton began to publish were Catholics and these Catholics dominated the lower classes of society. According to the 1841 census only 28 percent of the country’s population could read and write, more than 50 percent of the Irish people were illiterate.²⁴² Access to education was limited. Those who Carleton depicted in his writings had neither the access nor the ability to read his works. As a result, many of Carleton’s short stories were reflective of popular Protestant perceptions of the Irish Catholic peasantry.

²³⁹ Whelan, *The Bible War*, p. 188.

²⁴⁰ George Ensor, *Letters showing the inutility, and exhibiting the absurdity, of what is rather fantastically termed “The New Reformation”*, (Dublin, 1828), p. 11.

²⁴¹ Margaret Kelleher, ‘Prose and drama in English, 1830-1890: from Catholic emancipation to the fall of Parnell,’ in Margaret Kelleher and Philip O’Leary, (eds.) *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, (2 vols, Cambridge, 2006), i, p. 450.

²⁴² Ó Ciosáin, *Print and Popular Culture*, p. 32.

Carleton was not alone in seeking out a readership from across the water. Amongst William Carleton's contemporaries were John Banim,²⁴³ and Gerald Griffin.²⁴⁴ Banim was Ireland's first Catholic novelist. His father was a shopkeeper and farmer and belonged to the trading or merchant class of Catholics, who occupied a position just above the peasant classes, the class to which the Carletons belonged. Banim attended Kilkenny College, 'the most famous as well as most ancient preparatory school in Ireland,'²⁴⁵ and later received his education at the Royal Dublin Academy. He left home in 1820 for Dublin in pursuit of a career in literature and later moved to London. Banim like many other Irish writers in London at the time soon realised that in his knowledge of Ireland he possessed 'inimitable and very saleable material.'²⁴⁶ The Catholic question was to the fore in the 1820s. Daniel O'Connell and the Catholic Association were pressing forward in their campaign for Catholic emancipation amassing supporters from within the lower classes of Irish society. Moreover, in the years preceding 1825 there was great fervour and excitement amongst the Irish Catholic population who hoped that Pastorini's prophecy of the end of Protestantism in Ireland would be fulfilled.²⁴⁷ Knowing little of the realities of Irish life, barring propagandist fuelled stereotypes, British audiences called out for interpreters of the Irish people and their customs and traditions. Irish writers, including William Maginn²⁴⁸ and Thomas Crofton Croker,²⁴⁹ began the process of making 'educated English opinion aware of Irish realities, and to counteract the dominant and damaging negative image of Ireland in England.'²⁵⁰ Griffin for example, who with Banim would later join the cause, was

²⁴³ John Banim, (1798-1842), novelist, poet and playwright. Author of "Celts Paradise" (1821), "Damon and Pythias" (1821), *Tales of the O'Hara Family* (1825) and *The Boyne Water* (1826). Claire Connolly 'Irish Romanticism 1800-1830', in Kelleher and O'Leary, (eds.) *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, i, pp. 421-4. Helen O'Connell, 'Reconciliation and Emancipation: The Banims and Carleton' in J.M. Wright, (ed.) *A Companion to Irish Literature*, (Chichester and West Sussex, 2010), pp. 411-26.

²⁴⁴ Gerald Griffin, (1803-1840), author of *Holland Tide* (1826), *Tales of the Munster Festivals* (1827), *The Collegians* (1827) and *The Rivals, Tracy's Ambition* (1829). Connolly 'Irish Romanticism 1800-1830', i, pp. 423-4. Dunne, 'Murder as Metaphor', pp.64-80.

²⁴⁵ Thomas Flanagan, *The Irish Novelist 1800-1850*, (Columbia, 1959), p. 168.

²⁴⁶ Flanagan, *The Irish Novelist*, p. 170.

²⁴⁷ For the prophecies of Pastorini see: S.J. Connolly, 'Mass politics and sectarian conflict, 1823-30' in W.E. Vaughan, *A New History of Ireland, V: Ireland under the Union, I, 1801-70*, (Oxford, 1989), pp. 74-107. R.F. Foster, *Modern Ireland, 1600 – 1972*, (Allen Lane, 1988), pp. 295-6. J.S. Donnelly, Jr., 'Pastorini and Captain Rock: Millenarianism and Sectarianism in the Rockite Movement of 1821-4' in Samuel Clark and J.S. Donnelly Jr., (eds.), *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest 1780-1914*, (Manchester, 1983), pp. 102-40. Carleton mentioned Pastorini in the short stories "Father Butler" in *Father Butler, or, Sketches of Irish Manners*, (1834), p. 26 and "The Poor Scholar" in Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 261.

²⁴⁸ William Maginn, (1793-1842), contributor to *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* 1819-28 and 1834-42, author of *Ten Tales* (1833), a collection of Irish stories. Connolly 'Irish Romanticism 1800-1830', i, pp. 437-8. Terry Eagleton, *Crazy John and the Bishop: essays in Irish Culture*, (Cork, 1998), pp. 199-206.

²⁴⁹ Thomas Crofton Croker, (1798-1854), folklorist, author of *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland* (1825) which ran through numerous editions and was translated into German by the brothers Grimm. Connolly 'Irish Romanticism, 1800-1830', i, p. 426. Ruan O'Donnell and Bob Reece, "'A Clean Beast': Crofton Croker's Fairy Tale of General Holt' in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, vii, (1992), pp. 8-9.

²⁵⁰ Tom Dunne, 'Murder as Metaphor', p. 67.

concerned with ‘the roots of Irish lawlessness and violence’ and called for reform.²⁵¹

Croker shared Irish folk tales and traditions with British readers, while Maria Edgeworth explored landlordism within colonial Ireland.²⁵²

Banim, with his brother Michael (1796-1874), under the pseudonym of the O’Hara Family (brothers Abel and Barnes), penned the series *Tales of the O’Hara Family* during the 1820s. This collection of novels ran through two series and six volumes and included *Crohoore of the Billhook*, *The Fethches* (both 1825), *The Nowlans*, *Peter of the Castle* and *The Boyne Water* (all 1826). The Banims’ work attempted to portray to a British readership the peculiarities of Irish life and society. Tom Dunne, Tetsuko Nakamura and Helen O’Connell have all argued that both Banim brothers supported Catholic emancipation, however, it was in John’s novels that this sentiment found greatest expression. They have argued that John expressed his support for the Catholic cause variously by combating British perceptions, portraying Irish Catholics in a more positive way, depicting a loyalism amongst them that was then absent from popular stereotypes and suggesting emancipation as a remedy for the lack of orderliness then existent within Irish society.²⁵³ John Banim’s career in literature was short, lasting just six years, as he contracted a ‘fatal and immediately incapacitating illness.’²⁵⁴ He died in 1842.

Gerald Griffin was born in 1803. His father was a middle-class brewer and farmer.²⁵⁵ Like Carleton, Griffin’s education was confined to hedge schools. In 1823 he moved to London where he met Banim. Griffin wrote, like Banim, of his homeland and his people, of the Irish peasantry, their customs and traditions. His first two books were collections of short Irish stories *Holland Tide* (1826) and *Tales of the Munster Festivals* (1827). Griffin intended these volumes to be ‘illustrative of manners and scenery precisely as they stand in the South of Ireland’²⁵⁶ and his stories, according to Thomas Flanagan, included ‘fairies, and priests, and joyants... wakes and weddings... or smugglers, or coiners, or fighting at fairs, or Moll Doyle, or rebellion, or murdering of one sort or other.’²⁵⁷ In 1829, the year

²⁵¹ Tom Dunne, ‘Murder as Metaphor’, p. 66.

²⁵² Tom Dunne, ‘Murder as Metaphor’, p. 66.

²⁵³ Tom Dunne ‘The Insecure Voice: a Catholic novelist in support of Emancipation’ in *Culture et pratiques politiques en France et Irlande XVIe-XVIIIe siècle: actes du [5e] Colloque de Marseille, 28 septembre-2 octobre 1988*, (Paris, 1991), pp. 213-33. Tetsuko Nakamura, ‘Irish’ quests in Catholic-oriented novels of the 1820s and 1830s: the Banim brothers and William Carleton’ in *Journal of Irish Studies*, xxvi, (2011), pp. 38-51. O’Connell, ‘Reconciliation and Emancipation’, pp. 411-26.

²⁵⁴ Flanagan, *The Irish Novelist*, p. 175.

²⁵⁵ Tom Dunne, ‘Murder as Metaphor’, p. 64.

²⁵⁶ Flanagan, *The Irish Novelist*, p. 212.

²⁵⁷ Flanagan, *The Irish Novelist*, p. 213.

of Catholic emancipation, he published three novels in two volumes, *The Collegians* (i) and *The Rivals, Tracy's Ambition* (ii). Tom Dunne argued that although these novels did not directly address emancipation that Griffin supported and attempted to promote the cause. Griffin depicted a distressed, divided and violent colonial society within his novels. Dunne argued that like the Catholic Association, Griffin favoured 'timely reform'²⁵⁸ and sought out an end 'to peasant alienation from an oppressive legal system,'²⁵⁹ that which he believed was the root cause of peasant violence in Ireland.

Carleton when beginning his career in literature, while depicting the same people and tackling the same issues as Banim and Griffin had before him, would write from a different perspective and for a different purpose. Carleton did not support the Catholic Association. He was suspicious of its leadership and of the Roman Catholic clergy in particular.²⁶⁰ While his predecessors appealed for reform amid debates over the Catholic question, Carleton warned of the dangers posed by the emancipated Catholic populace in the immediate aftermath of the passing of the Roman Catholic Relief Bill of 1829.²⁶¹

Carleton, unlike John Banim and Gerald Griffin, who both moved to London to advance their literary careers, remained in Ireland. Carleton's success therefore depended upon his gaining access to the literary world of Protestant Dublin. With the introduction of the Copyright Act in 1801 the publishing industry in Ireland, that had flourished throughout the eighteenth century producing 'cheap reprints of novels, plays, and poetry', effectively collapsed.²⁶² Ironically, the lack of copyrighting laws prior to the Union had encouraged Irish authors to take their work to London for publication, thus setting a precedent for those who would follow them in the nineteenth century. As a result, during the period when Carleton announced himself upon the Irish literary stage, there were notably few original novels being published in Ireland; 27 between 1800 and 1829.²⁶³ Carleton, with Charles Lever,²⁶⁴ would create a relative resurgence in the Irish book trade

²⁵⁸ Dunne, 'Murder as Metaphor', p. 68.

²⁵⁹ Dunne, 'Murder as Metaphor' p. 75.

²⁶⁰ William Carleton, 'The Peel Memorandum (1826)', in Brand, *The Authentic Voice*, pp. 3-8.

²⁶¹ Roman Catholic Relief Act, 10 Geo. IV, c. 7, (13 Apr. 1829).

²⁶² Charles Benson, 'The Dublin Book Trade', in J.H. Murphy, (ed.), *The Oxford History of the Irish Book, The Irish Book in English, 1800 – 1891*, (5 vols, Oxford, 2011), iv, p. 27. Kelleher, 'Prose and drama in English', p. 451.

²⁶³ Benson, 'The Dublin Book Trade', p. 28.

²⁶⁴ Charles Lever, (1806-72), novelist. Author of *The Confessions of Harry Lorrequer* (1839) and *Our Mess*, (3 vols, 1843-4). Lever edited *The Dublin University Magazine* between 1841 and 1844 and increased its circulation to an all-time high of 4,000 during his tenure. E.S. Tilley, 'Lever, Charles James (1806–1872)', (www.oxforddnb.com.jproxy.nuim.ie/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-16531?rskey=eN9Ien&result=2) (24 March 2016).

by the 1840s but during the intervening period the Irish literary world was dominated by the periodical press.

A variety of magazines and periodicals, many short-lived, satisfied middle and upper-class readers' appetites in both Ireland and Britain during the pre-famine period. Approximately twenty new titles launched between 1800 and 1830 whose political perspective and range of content varied according to each periodicals' *raison d'être*, its editors and proprietors.²⁶⁵ Caesar Otway²⁶⁶ was a key figure within the Irish periodical industry. He founded the *Examiner* (1825-1869) with Dr. J.H. Singer, and the *Dublin Penny Journal* (1832-6) with George Petrie. Otway was also among 'a group of young Trinity College Tories'²⁶⁷ including Isaac Butt, Samuel Ferguson²⁶⁸ and John Anster that founded the *Dublin University Magazine* (*DUM* hereafter), (1833-77). The circulation figures for these magazines varied. The *Examiner* claimed to have a readership of 1,000 in 1850 while the *DUM* boasted a peak circulation of 4,000 during the 1840s when Charles Lever was editor. The *Dublin Penny Journal*, costing significantly less than the *Examiner* (1s. 6d.) and the *DUM* (2s. 6d.), reached a peak of 40,000 readers.²⁶⁹ Other periodicals did not enjoy the same success as those already mentioned. The *Dublin Family Magazine* (1829), *Dublin Literary Gazette, or, Weekly Chronicle of Criticism, Belles Lettres, and Fine Arts* (1830-1) and *Dublin University Review and Quarterly* (1833) only lasted for approximately a year each. The more nationalist and Catholic periodicals of the period, *Irish Catholic Magazine* (1829) and *Irish Monthly Magazine* (1832-4) suffered similar fates. A significant portion of the readers available to the Irish periodical industry were British. By 1836 one third of the *Dublin Penny Journal's* readers were derived from England while the *DUM* 'was used by the English press as a source of educated, rational Irish opinion.'²⁷⁰ As a result, the contents of Irish magazines and periodicals, notably those

²⁶⁵ Connolly 'Irish Romanticism 1800-1830', i, p. 424.

²⁶⁶ Caesar Otway, (1780-1842), religious journalist and evangelical preacher. Founded *The Christian Examiner and Church of Ireland Magazine* with J.H. Singer in 1825. Author of *Sketches in Ireland* (1827), *A Tour in Connaught* (1839) and *Sketches in Erris and Tyrrawley* (1841). D. J. O'Donoghue, 'Otway, Caesar (1780-1842)', (www.oxforddnb.com.jproxy.nuim.ie/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-20942?rskey=IUQzDB&result=1) (22 March 2016).

²⁶⁷ Kelleher, 'Prose and drama in English', p. 453.

²⁶⁸ Samuel Ferguson, (1810-86), Presbyterian poet and archivist. Contributed more than 90 items to the *Dublin University Magazine* and *Blackwood's Edinburgh Magazine* during the period 1832-50. Peter Denman, 'Ferguson, Sir Samuel (1810-1886)', (www.oxforddnb.com.jproxy.nuim.ie/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-9328?rskey=m8TY9E&result=1) (24 March 2016).

²⁶⁹ Kelleher, 'Prose and drama in English', p. 453.

²⁷⁰ Elizabeth Tilley, 'Periodicals', in Murphy, *The Oxford History of the Irish Book*, iv, p. 154.

that maintained sustained success, were tailored to reflect the opinions and perceptions of the middle and upper-classes, primarily Protestant, of both Dublin and Britain.

In his first short story Carleton signalled his intention to write for this Protestant readership, introducing the Irish peasantry as ‘superstitious’ and their clergy as ‘devious’ and ‘corrupt’. The Catholic peasantry of rural Ireland were considered by this Protestant readership as backward, uncivilised, uneducated, altogether opposite to themselves. Such thinking existed as far back as the sixteenth century when poet Edmund Spenser (1552-99)²⁷¹ described the native Irish as savage, violent and unruly. Carleton therefore had to present the Catholicism of the lower classes in this way in order to be accepted within the literary world of Protestant Dublin.

It was through Otway that Carleton made his entry into literature. Upon his return to Dublin, between 1826 and 1827, Carleton met with the Reverend Caesar Otway, editor of Ireland’s first religious magazine, the *Examiner* that he established in 1825 with J.H. Singer. Caesar Otway (1780-1842), a Protestant cleric, was educated at Trinity College Dublin and had held posts at the Magdalen Chapel, Leeson Street and St. Patrick’s Cathedral, both in Dublin, before co-founding the *Examiner*.²⁷² Otway’s writings included; *Sketches in Ireland: descriptive of interesting, and hitherto unnoticed districts, in the north and south* (1827), *A Tour of Connaught: Comprising Sketches of Clonmacnoise, Joyce Country, and Achill* (1839) and *Sketches in Erris and Tyrawly* (1841).²⁷³ O’Donoghue noted that Carleton met Otway through the acquaintances he had made previously when tutoring the sons of Dublin’s middle-class Protestants and through his employment with the Sunday School Society:

as he had access to some of the leading personages among the class known as “Evangelicals,” then of social importance in Dublin, he soon became acquainted with the Rev. Caesar Otway.²⁷⁴

²⁷¹ Edmund Spenser (1552-99), sixteenth century English poet. Appointed private secretary to Lord Grey, lord deputy of Ireland in 1580. Author of *The Faerie Queene* (3 vols, 1590-6) and *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (1596).

²⁷² ‘Caesar Otway, Life’ (www.ricorso.net/rx/az-data/authors/o/Otway_C/life.htm) (19 Oct 2015). O’Donoghue, ‘Otway, Caesar (1780–1842)’.

²⁷³ Caesar Otway, *Sketches in Ireland: descriptive of interesting, and hitherto unnoticed districts, in the north and south*, (Dublin, 1827). Caesar Otway, *A Tour of Connaught: Comprising Sketches of Clonmacnoise, Joyce Country, and Achill*, (Dublin, 1839). Caesar Otway, *Sketches in Erris and Tyrawly*, (Dublin, 1841).

²⁷⁴ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 1.

Otway's second wife was Elizabeth Digges La Touche, daughter of William George and sister of James.²⁷⁵ James had employed Carleton at the Sunday School Society and it seems that through this familial connection that Otway and Carleton met. Benedict Kiely described Otway as a man 'racked and feverish with the hatred of the Church of Rome.'²⁷⁶ Similarly, O'Donoghue explained that Otway 'was personally a most estimable man, a very pleasant writer, an enthusiastic antiquarian, but a determined proselytizer.'²⁷⁷ A member of the New Reformation Movement, a society who 'were devoted to the task which they described as the rescue of Ireland from Popery',²⁷⁸ Otway's newspaper acted as a vehicle for this movement's views and opinions on Catholicism and indeed religion in general in Ireland. 'Published monthly in Dublin, the single column, 70-page magazine cost 1s. 6d. per issue and had a circulation of about 1,000 copies per month in 1850.'²⁷⁹ The periodical was established, according to the preface to the 1826 volume:

For the purpose of advocating the cause of the Established Church, against the assaults of her incessantly active enemies; of spreading more widely correct views of her doctrines and her discipline, and disseminating her genuine principles. In connection with this object, it was the wish of the Conductors to advocate the cause of Protestantism against the Roman Catholic, and of Christianity against the Infidel; and to seek to raise to the Gospel level the standard of Christian morals.²⁸⁰

The *Examiner* contained various articles, essays and letters from contributors and correspondents all organised under sections entitled; 'Miscellaneous Communications', 'Foreign Religious Intelligence', 'Domestic Religious Intelligence', 'Literary and Philosophical Intelligence and Ecclesiastical Intelligence'. Essays included "Ireland in 1826", "Maynooth" and "The Reformation in Ireland" while religious intelligence comprised of reports from countries around the world including France, Italy, India and America, as well as, reports from across Ireland on the progress of the reformation and of the numbers of persons converting or conforming to the Protestant religion. Reviews of works recently published, poems and commentaries on current affairs in Ireland were also present in the *Examiner's* pages.

²⁷⁵ O'Donoghue, 'Otway, Caesar (1780–1842)'.

²⁷⁶ Kiely, *Poor Scholar*, p. 81.

²⁷⁷ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 1.

²⁷⁸ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 1.

²⁷⁹ Laurel Brake and Marysa Demoor, (gen. eds.), *DNCJ: Dictionary of Nineteenth-Century Journalism*, (Gent, 2009), p. 113.

²⁸⁰ 'Preface', *The Christian Examiner*, ii, (1826), p. iii.

Otway shared the views of many Protestants in both Britain and Ireland at the time. He perceived the Catholic laity as superstitious and misled by a corrupt clergy and attempted to expose the shortcomings of the Catholic religion in Ireland through the *Examiner*. The aims of the New Reformation Movement were very much at the forefront of Otway's mind when in 1827 he invited Carleton to meet with him. The views, perceptions and opinions on the subject of Irish Catholicism, held by the Protestant readerships of Britain and Ireland during the period, will be examined in greater detail in Chapter Three of this study.

O'Donoghue pointed out that:

At the stage of his career indicated at the point where his autobiography closes, Carleton returned to Dublin, and was temporarily reduced to almost his earlier condition of poverty.²⁸¹

Moreover, O'Donoghue stated that 'he had a wife and child depending on him,'²⁸² indeed Carleton had two children when arriving in Dublin for the third time. Having given up the position in the school in Carlow Carleton was again unemployed. Otway expressed his desire for Carleton to write for the *Examiner* and Kiely noted that Otway suggested that Carleton should 'write of the people as he talked of the people.'²⁸³ He also suggested that the young author:

could do the service of *The Christian Examiner* by holding up to the light the superstitions of the people as he had seen them: the superstitions of pilgrimage and priesthood and prophecies, mass and miracles, sermons and stations and rosaries, voteens and holy wells.²⁸⁴

The magazine had been accused of appealing solely to a mature, male readership in 1827.²⁸⁵ In an attempt to widen the readership of the *Examiner*, to enliven it, 'and make it read by the parson's wife and daughters, as well as the parson himself'²⁸⁶ Otway began to

²⁸¹ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 1.

²⁸² O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 4.

²⁸³ Kiely, *Poor Scholar*, p. 87.

²⁸⁴ Kiely, *Poor Scholar*, p. 87.

²⁸⁵ Maryanne, a reader, in a letter to the editor, complained that there was nothing in the *Examiner* for her aunt, mother or younger brother to read. She suggested the editor might include more travel writings within the paper and descriptions of the people of the lower classes then converting in large numbers to the Protestant Church across the country. The *Examiner* was then (1827) reporting on the success of the Reformation and conversion drives on Lord Farnham's estate in Co. Cavan. *The Christian Examiner*, iv, no. xxi (1827), pp. 189-92.

²⁸⁶ 'Samuel Ferguson on Caesar Otway (1839)' in Brand, *The Authentic Voice*, p. 14.

vary its contents and penned travel writings and a series of anecdotes entitled “Chronicles of a Curacy” for the magazine in 1827 and 1828. In Carleton, Otway saw a means to further address this issue. No fiction had appeared in the pages of the *Examiner* prior to Carleton’s becoming a contributor and this new departure for the newspaper would undoubtedly raise its appeal. In return for the financial assistance he required Carleton agreed to write for the *Examiner*, beginning a relationship with Otway that would last almost three years. Carleton had twelve sketches or short stories and two poems published in the *Examiner* between April 1828 and November 1831.²⁸⁷ “A Pilgrimage to Patrick’s Purgatory”, a short story influenced by the aforementioned station Carleton made to St. Patrick’s Purgatory when nineteen, was to be his first contribution to Otway’s paper and was to constitute his debut in literature. The story first appeared in 1828 in the April and May editions of the *Examiner*. “A Pilgrimage to Patrick’s Purgatory,” which was later revised and renamed as “The Lough Derg Pilgrim,” appeared under the section entitled ‘Miscellaneous Communications’ and effectively replaced the sketches and travel writings Otway had himself contributed to the *Examiner*. Of “A Pilgrimage to Patrick’s Purgatory” Otway stated in 1841 that ‘its success was decisive and instantaneous’.²⁸⁸ The story had achieved the editor’s aim to the extent that he had it ‘rapidly followed by the story of “Father Butler”’.²⁸⁹ The short story subsequently appeared alongside “Father Butler” in book form as *Father Butler; The Lough Derg Pilgrim: Being Sketches of Irish Manners* in 1829 and was also one of the short stories collected in the first series of Carleton’s *Traits and Stories* published between 1830 and 1833.²⁹⁰

While Carleton’s early sketches fulfilled Otway’s prescribed brief they were also well received. The *Belfast Newsletter* championed the ‘amusing’²⁹¹ stories that were appearing in the *Examiner*. Extracts were published each month as each new contribution from Carleton appeared. In October 1829 Carleton’s “The Death of a Devotee” was

²⁸⁷ List of Carleton’s contributions to *The Christian Examiner*, 1828-31:

1828: “A Pilgrimage to Patrick’s Purgatory”, Apr., May, “The Broken Oath”, June, July, “Father Butler”, Aug. – Nov., “Retrospections” [Poem], Aug., “The Midnight Hour” [Poem], Nov..

1829: “The Station”, Jan., Apr., June, “The Death of a Devotee”, Oct..

1830: “The Priest’s Funeral”, Jan., Feb., “The Brothers”, Mar. – June, “Lachlin Murray and the Blessed Candle”, Aug., “The Lianhan Shee”, Nov..

1831: “History of a Chimney Sweep”, Apr., “The Materialist”, July, “Denis O’Shaughnessy Going to Maynooth”, Sept. – Nov..

²⁸⁸ ‘Caesar Otway on William Carleton (1841)’, in Brand, *The Authentic Voice*, p. 21.

²⁸⁹ ‘Caesar Otway on William Carleton (1841)’, p. 21.

²⁹⁰ William Carleton, *Father Butler; The Lough Derg Pilgrim: Being Sketches of Irish Manners*, (Dublin, 1829).

²⁹¹ ‘The Station’, *The Belfast Newsletter*, 14 April 1829.

described as a ‘powerfully written tale.’²⁹² The editor at the *Newsletter* was so impressed that he claimed not to have ‘met with anything equal to it.’²⁹³ Moreover the following comments on “Denis O’Shaughnessy Going to Maynooth” signalled the *Newsletter*’s running appreciation of Carleton’s work:

The lighter portions of the *Christian Examiner* are those which chiefly suit us in the way of selection and in its last two numbers there is the commencement of an Irish sketch, which promises to be as interesting as those which on former occasions attracted so much attention.²⁹⁴

Neither the *Freeman’s Journal* nor *Finn’s Leinster Journal* comment on Carleton’s writings for the *Examiner* or share extracts of his sketches. It is no surprise that the arguably more Protestant read *Newsletter* affords the *Examiner* and its contents more coverage. Carleton’s contributions to the *Examiner* engaged with a range of different issues arising from Protestant perceptions of Irish Catholicism but all were written from the same religious perspective. It is therefore likely that all of Carleton’s contributions to the evangelical publication were as well received by Protestant society as the aforementioned sketches.

During the period between 1818 and 1828, following his conversion to the Protestant religion, William Carleton rose steadily up the social ladder. He had little in terms of financial gain to show for this progress but had certainly increased his prospects of employment. Carleton’s conversion appears as the catalyst in his social ascent towards the literary middle-class of Protestant Dublin where he came to rest for the remainder of his life following his debut in literature. His conversion allowed him marry a Protestant wife, tutor the children of Protestant gentlemen, secure a clerkship with The Sunday School Society for Ireland, attempt to enter Trinity College and ultimately begin a career in literature through his acquaintance with Otway. Would Carleton have been afforded these opportunities had he remained a Catholic? One cannot say for certain that he would not. One must assume, however, that in Carleton’s eyes Protestantism was the religion, and English the language, of advancement. Agitation towards Catholic emancipation did not begin in earnest until 1823. For a twenty-something Carleton in the late 1810s, having spent his youth in Co. Tyrone amongst a suppressed Catholic tenantry, the prospect of concessions and reforms being delivered by a Protestant government seemed unlikely if

²⁹² ‘Death of a Devotee’, *The Belfast Newsletter*, 6 October 1829.

²⁹³ ‘Death of a Devotee’, *The Belfast Newsletter*, 6 October 1829.

²⁹⁴ ‘Denis O’Shaughnessy Going to Maynooth’, *The Belfast Newsletter*, 21 October 1831.

not impossible. At a more local level, social mobility amongst Catholics in Ulster was very uncommon. Curran noted that; ‘in Ulster little upward movement was possible for Catholics as the middle and upper classes were long dominated by Protestants.’²⁹⁵ When converting towards the end of the second decade of the nineteenth century one must argue that Carleton saw Protestantism as the only viable means through which he might secure social advancement. Given the positive outcome of his change of religion then, it may be acceptable to consider Carleton’s conversion as calculated, contrived, premeditated and strategic. One could argue, considering the above thesis, that Carleton was engaged in self-fashioning through his life and later through the literature he would produce.

IV. Carleton and Self-fashioning in the 1820s

William Carleton’s conversion to Protestantism can be seen as an aspect of the novelist’s self-fashioning. Carleton presented different versions of himself to the public, to publishers and to his peers at different junctures during his career. Self-fashioning, a concept pioneered by new historicist progenitor Stephen Greenblatt in the context of the Renaissance period, describes the forming, shaping or constructing of one’s identity in attempts to alter other people’s perceptions of one’s self. In *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare* Greenblatt examined six literary figures from the sixteenth century; More, Tyndale, Wyatt, Spenser, Marlowe and Shakespeare,²⁹⁶ and the manner in which they were involved in self-fashioning in their lives and through their literature. He explored the ‘elements of deliberate shaping in the formation and expression of identity’²⁹⁷ employed during the period by this selection of literary men. In choosing the Renaissance period for his study Greenblatt noted that about this time ‘there appears to be an increased self-consciousness about the fashioning of human identity as a manipulable, artful process.’²⁹⁸ Furthermore, of the verb fashion he stated that:

As a term for the action or process of making, for particular features or appearance, for a distinct style or pattern, the word had been long in use, but it is in the sixteenth century that fashion seems to come into wide currency as a way of designating the forming of a self.²⁹⁹

²⁹⁵ Curran, *The Protestant Community*, p. 112.

²⁹⁶ Sir Thomas More, philosopher, (1478-1535), William Tyndale, biblical scholar, (1492-1536), Thomas Wyatt, poet, (1503-1542), Edmund Spenser, poet, (1552-1599), Christopher Marlowe, playwright, (1564-1593), William Shakespeare, playwright, (1564-1616).

²⁹⁷ Stephen Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning: From More to Shakespeare*, (Chicago and London, 2005), p. 1.

²⁹⁸ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 2.

²⁹⁹ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 2.

The concept of self-fashioning may be used to contextualise Carleton's journey from rural origins, through his conversion to Protestantism, to middle-class living in metropolitan Dublin.

Self-fashioning as a concept has been used variously by other literary critics and historians. Richard Kirwan has applied self-fashioning to the history of the university in *Scholarly Self-Fashioning and Community in the Early Modern University* (2013).³⁰⁰ This study, concerned with the early modern period, examined 'the role of self-fashioning in the forging of academic communities whether at the local level of academic communities or university or more generally as a social category.'³⁰¹ It considered the representational model used by scholars in defining their cultural identity in opposition to non-academic social groups. Andrew Hopper has studied examples of self-fashioning amongst members of the gentry switching allegiances during the English Civil wars.³⁰² Hopper examined the self-defences produced by such figures in attempts to combat the negative public image their defection had earned them. He suggested that; 'gentry turncoats sought to "spin" their past actions to support a self-image of constancy, reliability, and untarnished honor.'³⁰³ Hans Rudolf Vaget applied the concept of self-fashioning to a more recent period of history and utilised Greenblatt's framework in examining Adolf Hitler's transformation from failed artist to political megalomaniac in twentieth century Germany.³⁰⁴ Vaget suggested that Hitler submitted to the absolute authority of German composer Richard Wagner and that 'Hitler's murderous hatred of "the Jews" can and must be traced back to Wagner.'³⁰⁵ Further he argued that 'for Hitler... the so-called *Ostjuden* streaming into the city to flee persecution in Russia and elsewhere became the threatening other.'³⁰⁶ Within Greenblatt's framework both an authority and an 'other' were necessary for self-fashioning to occur.

Greenblatt's new historicist approach is apt for the purposes of examining William Carleton's self-fashioning. The author's self-fashioning is revealed through his texts. New

³⁰⁰ Richard Kirwan, (ed.), *Scholarly Self-Fashioning and Community in the Early Modern University*, (London and New York, 2013).

³⁰¹ Kirwan, *Scholarly Self-Fashioning*, p. 10.

³⁰² Andrew Hopper, 'The Self-Fashioning of Gentry Turncoats during the English Civil Wars', in *Journal of British Studies*, xlix, no. 2 (April 2010), pp. 236-57.

³⁰³ Hopper, 'The Self-Fashioning of Gentry Turncoats', p. 241.

³⁰⁴ Hans Rudolf Vaget, 'Wagnerian Self-Fashioning: The Case of Adolf Hitler', in *New German Critique*, no. 101 (Summer, 2007), pp. 95-114.

³⁰⁵ Vaget, 'Wagnerian Self-Fashioning', p. 99.

³⁰⁶ Vaget, 'Wagnerian Self-Fashioning', p. 98.

historicism treats of literature as a product of society and culture and an author's works as an extension of the author's life. In considering the novelist's self-fashioning his writings can be situated within the reality in which they were produced thus revealing aspects of that culture and society; its intricacies and idiosyncrasies. This approach allows Carleton's writings to be seen as a product of nineteenth century Irish society and as revealing insights into contemporary thinking. In particular, Carleton's writings help to expose the views held by his readers on the issues of religion, violence and the British government's management of the Irish situation.

Greenblatt listed a set of ten 'governing conditions common to most instances of self-fashioning'.³⁰⁷ He suggested that self-fashioning was a middle-class phenomenon.³⁰⁸ He explained that:

Self-fashioning... involves submission to an absolute power or authority... God, a sacred book, an institution such as church, court, colonial or military administration.³⁰⁹

Greenblatt described several conditions that refer to the 'other' or the 'alien' that stand in opposition to the identity that is being fashioned or constructed:

3. Self-fashioning is achieved in relation to something perceived as alien, strange, or hostile...
4. The alien is perceived by the authority either as that which is unformed or chaotic (the absence of order) or that which is false or negative (the demonic parody of order)...
5. One man's authority is another man's alien.³¹⁰

One might conclude from the conditions above that an identity cannot exist or be fashioned in and of itself. There must exist an 'other', an alien, an opposite from which an identity can be constructed in contradistinction.

For the figures Greenblatt examined 'God, as revealed in scripture, represented that authority.'³¹¹ For Carleton, who converted to the Anglican faith, the absolute power or authority he submitted to was the Church of Ireland. However, within pre-famine Ireland

³⁰⁷ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, pp. 8-9.

³⁰⁸ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 9.

³⁰⁹ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 9.

³¹⁰ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 9.

³¹¹ Vaget, 'Wagnerian Self-Fashioning', p. 5.

that church acted not merely as a religion or faith, it also represented the upper classes, the educated, the wealthy and the powerful. During the period, religion acted as a badge or label of social identity. Stereotypically, Catholics were perceived as being of the rural lower classes; poor, uncivilised, uneducated tenants. Conversely, Protestants were identified as landowners of the upper and middle classes; well educated, wealthy and powerful. This was obviously a grievous generalisation and both Catholics and Protestants occupied positions within each tier of Irish society, however, such were the conceptions that prevailed. Therefore, by converting from Catholicism to Protestantism Carleton was not only submitting to the authority of the Established church in Ireland and all that it represented, he was also rejecting his original faith and identity. The Catholic community, its priests, people, customs and traditions, that it appeared Carleton was leaving behind became the ‘threatening other’³¹² or ‘alien’ against which the novelist would shape his new self. It can therefore be argued that Carleton met the basic conditions to satisfy Greenblatt’s framework for self-fashioning. How then did self-fashioning manifest itself in Carleton’s case?

Carleton ‘self-fashioned’ in several different ways. In the first instance, Carleton’s conversion to Protestantism can be read as an example of strategic conversion and as an element of his self-fashioning. Social mobility, as stated, amongst Catholics in the north of Ireland was rare. To progress within society, to gain the freedom of independent movement, Carleton had to shed the Catholicism of his identity and the stereotypical connotations of which it was comprised. The social identities of Protestants and Catholics, the two dominant faiths within pre-famine society, manifested themselves as ‘authority’ and ‘other’. Protestants forged their identity in opposition to their perceptions of the Catholic lower classes. They believed that in character they embodied traits wholly opposite to those they designated to their Catholic counterparts. Similarly, Catholics perceived Protestants as alien, settler oppressors and clung to their traditions and customs as a way of distinguishing themselves from these Protestant ‘others’. Edmund Spenser in his sixteenth century writings offered examples of these sentiments.³¹³ In both *The Faerie Queene* and *A View of the Present State of Ireland* he portrayed the native Irish Catholics as savage, barbaric, lawless and unruly. *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, consisted of

³¹² Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 9.

³¹³ Edmund Spenser, (1552-99), English poet and author of *The Faerie Queene* (1590-1596), and *A View of the Present State of Ireland, Discoursed by way of a dialogue between Eudoxos and Irenius* (1596). Patricia Coughlan, (ed.), *Spenser in Ireland: an interdisciplinary perspective*, (Cork, 1989). *Irish University Review*, xxvi, no. 2 (1996), pp. 203-353.

a dialogue between two Englishmen (Eudoxus and Irenius) that considered remedies that might be applied to refashion Ireland into an orderly and civilised colony of the British Commonwealth. The pair arrived at a solution consisting of a five-step plan that would tear down the existing establishment through physical force, build a new order led by English example and maintain this new regime with a set of rules or laws. As a step in this process, these architects suggested that the Irish population:

would be intermingled with English settlers who would instruct them, by word and example, in the ways of civil living, and acquaint them with manufacturing skills and improved agricultural methods.³¹⁴

Spenser envisaged English example as a means of civilising the savage Irish. He portrayed the Irish in his writings as wholly opposite to the English and the English in turn as completely superior and unlike the Irish.

Such perceptions originated in Ireland's colonial past. English colonisers engaged in the process of 'othering' when representing the colonised Irish and in defining their own people and nation. David Cairns and Shaun Richards have noted that:

colonial discourse established the colonized as the repressed and rejected 'other' against which the colonizer defines an ordered self and on which all potentially disruptive psycho-sexual impulses are projected (Bhabha, 1983; 1984; Nandy, 1980; 1983). The colonized are thereby constrained to assert a dignified self-identity in opposition to a discourse which defines them as, variously, barbarian, pagan, ape, female; but always subordinate and inferior.³¹⁵

Taking this concept to an extreme Declan Kiberd argued that:

The notion "Ireland" is largely a fiction created by rulers of England in response to specific needs at a precise moment in British history.³¹⁶

The colonised Irish acted similarly but fashioned their collective self in opposition to English Protestants, who they perceived as alien and other.

³¹⁴ Nicholas Canny, 'Reviewing "A View of the Present State of Ireland"' in *Irish University Review*, xxvi, no. 2 (1996), p. 263.

³¹⁵ David Cairns and Shaun Richards, *Writing Ireland: Colonialism, nationalism and culture*, (Manchester, 1988), p. 8.

³¹⁶ Quoted in, Cairns and Richards, *Writing Ireland*, p. 8.

Carleton's change of religion and consequentially his change of social identity would not, in and of itself, have allowed for his passage into Dublin's Protestant community. A second element of Carleton's self-fashioning related to the aesthetic; his behaviour and appearance. Merely adopting the faith of the class he wished to gain access to would not have sufficed was Carleton to be accepted and embraced, to become a peer, amongst Protestant society in Dublin. Besides changing his religious affiliation, Carleton would have had to adapt to the manners, customs and behaviours of those of the class he wished to join. One could argue that Carleton was also engaged in what Waleska Schwandt described when discussing Oscar Wilde and the stereotype of the aesthete as aesthetic self-fashioning. Schwandt stated that; 'Wilde deliberately emulated characteristics associated with the behaviour of 'aesthetes'.³¹⁷ She described an aesthete as 'somebody who utilises his own persona in order to objectify his fantasies of grandiosity, or in order to advertise his artistic product, or in order to advance socially.'³¹⁸ Schwandt explained that Wilde 'knowingly fulfilled the public's expectations of an aesthetic poet's behaviour and appearance',³¹⁹ all of which acted as a form of self-advertisement. Furthermore Thomas F. Plowman argued that 'Mr. Wilde laid himself out to play a certain *role*, and when he attitudinised he did it sufficiently well to make it pay.'³²⁰ Similarly, William Carleton set out to behave and dress in a manner that would have been perceived as acceptable to those of the station or status he wished to achieve. Carleton himself acknowledged the importance of aesthetic appearance in his autobiography, referring to it when describing the period when he first arrived in Dublin. He stated that:

I was now a well-dressed man, and I can assure the reader that a smooth outside, in such a world as this where outsides are so much looked to, is a strong letter of recommendation to a stranger who has little else to recommend him.³²¹

Within his autobiographic and semi-autobiographic writings Carleton described himself dressing in clothes that would have been considered respectable or gentlemanly. In "The Lough Derg Pilgrim" for instance, Carleton described himself 'dressed in a good suit

³¹⁷ Waleska Schwandt, 'Oscar Wilde and the Stereotype of the Aesthete: An investigation into the perspective of Wilde's aesthetic self-fashioning', in Uwe Boker et al (eds.), *The Importance of Reinventing Oscar: Versions of Wilde during the last 100 years*, (Amsterdam, 2002), p. 91.

³¹⁸ Schwandt, 'Stereotype of the Aesthete', p. 98.

³¹⁹ Schwandt, 'Stereotype of the Aesthete', p. 91.

³²⁰ T.F. Plowman, 'The Aesthetes: The Story of a Nineteenth-Century Cult', *Pall Mall Magazine*, (1895), pp. 41-2, Quoted in Schwandt, 'Stereotype of the Aesthete', p. 92.

³²¹ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 211.

of black cloth, with white shirt and cravat like snow.’³²² He recalled ‘Catholics taking me for a priest’³²³ as a result of his attire and that he was mistaken by two fellow pilgrims on the road towards Lough Derg as the same. He noted that ‘as soon as they noticed me they dropped a curtesy each, addressing me at the same time as a clergyman.’³²⁴ In his autobiography, Carleton noted that upon the receipt of his first payment for tutoring the children of Mr. Piers Murphy of Lowtown, Co. Louth he spent most of his earnings on new clothes:

I received my first quarter’s salary (three guineas) and went without loss of time to the town of Carrickmacross, where I expended the money in the purchase of some additions to my wardrobe.³²⁵

In a third example Carleton explained that having secured two tutorships in Dublin that:

I had a guinea a month, and in the course of about half a year was one of the best dressed young fellows in Dublin. By this I mean I was as becomingly and respectably dressed as any man could be – certainly without dandyism or vain and empty nonsense.³²⁶

This desire on Carleton’s part to be perceived aesthetically as respectable, as a priest in his youth and as a gentleman when he began to teach, signals aesthetic self-fashioning. Carleton dressed and behaved in a manner that was expected of a gentleman, so that coupled with his conversion to the faith of the Established church, he might be accepted into the class of men who occupied the middle tier of Irish society during the period.

The final and most important aspect of Carleton’s self-fashioning was that conducted through his writings. Greenblatt stated that ‘self-fashioning is always, though not exclusively, in language.’³²⁷ This is the most quantifiable, yet the most complex aspect, of Carleton’s self-fashioning. During the initial phase of his career Carleton engaged in the final stage of Greenblatt’s process of self-fashioning. He set out to destroy the other that he forged his new identity against; the Catholic peasant.³²⁸ In his writings for the *Examiner* under Otway, Carleton condemned and criticised the traits, traditions and customs of the

³²² Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 244.

³²³ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 244.

³²⁴ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 245.

³²⁵ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 151.

³²⁶ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 220.

³²⁷ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 9.

³²⁸ Greenblatt, *Renaissance Self-Fashioning*, p. 113.

Catholic lower classes that to a Protestant readership were barbaric, backward and uncivilised. In chastising those of the rural lower classes, Carleton appeared to be discarding the social identity he had previously held while simultaneously acceding to the new identity he had acquired. Carleton attacked the peasantry, the clergy and indeed Irish Catholicism in general when writing for the *Examiner*. “A Pilgrimage to Patrick’s Purgatory”, “The Broken Oath” and “Father Butler”, all of which appeared in the *Examiner* in 1828, illustrate the tone of Carleton’s early writings.

Carleton’s “A Pilgrimage to Patrick’s Purgatory” contained an account of the pilgrimage made by the author ‘when a Roman Catholic’³²⁹ to the penitential site. At the heart of his tale was a criticism of what was perceived as the superstitious nature of the Irish Catholic peasantry. Introducing the topic Carleton stated that; ‘there is no specimen of Irish superstition equal to that which is to be seen at St. Patrick’s Purgatory, in Lough Derg.’³³⁰ Within his introduction to the short story Carleton criticised the function and indeed the existence of sites of pilgrimage like that of St. Patrick’s Purgatory and the conduct of the Catholic clergy in Ireland during the period:

Superstition, that blind devotion, which draws the individual under its influence to the performance of external works, and unnecessary ceremonies, without being actuated by the spirit of pure religion, is as natural to the mind not enlightened by true knowledge, as weeds are to a field that has ceased to be well cultivated; for as the richest grounds produce the most vigorous thistles, so those remarkable for superstition might have been as eminent for piety, had the blessed knowledge of truth been communicated to them in due season.³³¹

Carleton cited ignorance and a lack of education as a source for such unquestionable belief in superstitions. He targeted the Roman Catholic clergy, spiritual teachers and leaders, and questioned their role in the process of confession and the absolution of sins that appear to have ended in trips to Lough Derg or other sites of this nature:

Has he committed a crime? – he is not taught to look with unfeigned repentance to Him who taketh away the sin of the world; to acknowledge his own vileness, as a sinful and corrupt creature; and to cast his burden upon Christ. Oh no! he must cast it upon some rotten prop – upon St. Francis, upon St. Anthony – upon the blessed Virgin – upon the power of his priest, or upon his own works; all of which rise up in impious competition with the blood of

³²⁹ William Carleton, ‘A Pilgrimage to Patrick’s Purgatory’ in *The Christian Examiner*, vi, no. 34 (1828), pp. 270-1.

³³⁰ Carleton, ‘A Pilgrimage’, p. 269.

³³¹ Carleton, ‘A Pilgrimage’, p. 268.

Jesus, rivalling, in the arrogance of human pride, the benefits of his redemption.³³²

Carleton detailed at length the penitential procedure involved when making a pilgrimage to St. Patrick's Purgatory within his tale. He also recalled an altercation he had with an unforgiving priest when on the island. Carleton's "A Pilgrimage to Patrick's Purgatory" and the revised version of this short story, "The Lough Derg Pilgrim", will be examined in detail in Chapter Three of this study.

Carleton tackled the Catholic sacrament of confession and described it as 'one of the sources of our country's evils',³³³ in his short story "The Broken Oath". He detailed the demise of a Catholic farmer, Harry Lacy, a drinker, an illicit distiller and a Whiteboy. Lacy was hanged for murder as the story concluded following a turn of events that saw him lose his wife, son and farm, all of which stemmed, according to Carleton, from the ease with which he was absolved from his sins by the local priest. Carleton explained that:

That which was fatal to poor Lacy's determinations, was the ease with which he could comply with these penitential exactions which the Church imposed on him for indulging in practices.³³⁴

Carleton noted that the effect of allowing Lacy to believe that he was relieved of his sins should he read a prescribed number of prayers or perform so many acts of faith, charity or contrition was that:

He continued to drink; he continued to distil; he continued a member of whiteboyism; but still he went to confession with a punctuality equalled by few; still he was guilty; still he confessed; and still he received absolution.³³⁵

Carleton suggested that such behaviour was not uncommon in Ireland during the period. He argued that one of the main reasons that men committed crimes of a heinous nature, murders and burnings, was a belief that:

His accountability for the crime before God, is removed when he confesses it to the priest.³³⁶

³³² Carleton, 'A Pilgrimage', p. 269.

³³³ William Carleton, 'The Broken Oath' in *The Christian Examiner*, vi, no. 34 (1828), p. 425.

³³⁴ Carleton, 'The Broken Oath', p. 431.

³³⁵ Carleton, 'The Broken Oath', p. 431.

³³⁶ Carleton, 'The Broken Oath', vi, no. 37 (1828), p. 36.

Within the short story, Carleton attacked the absolution of sin by the clergy, a practice not found in Protestantism. He criticised the peasantry's belief in the power and authority of their clergy and accused the priests of abusing that privilege. The conduct of the Roman Catholic clergy is also the subject of Carleton's "Father Butler".

In a preface to a later edition of the story, in *Father Butler, or, Sketches of Irish Manners* (1834), Carleton stated that:

The object... of the following pages, was to show the moral degradation in which some of the peasantry in Ireland are held, and the unlimited authority which their clergy, in the name of religion, exercise over them in all circumstance of life.³³⁷

"Father Butler" is the story of a young man, who when supposed fatally ill, is promised by his parents to the church should he recover. Butler's parents are persuaded by a Father A--- --, who it emerges desires the Butler's estate for his order,³³⁸ to dedicate their unknowing and unwilling son to take holy orders when he returns to health. James Butler does recover, is ordained a Catholic priest, and is forced to give up the woman he intended to marry, Ellen Upton. Ellen later dies, and Butler lives the remainder of his life unhappily in a declining state of health.

Carleton narrated the story from within, placing himself in the role of a local Protestant landowner who befriends Father Butler. Carleton and Butler engage in numerous conversations throughout the text, most of which discuss the errors of Catholicism in Ireland. They attack the peasantry and the manner in which they hold their clergy in such high regard:

Every priest... is absolutely a God, who they think could, if he wished, transform a Protestant congregation into a flock of goats; and if you knew the local superstitions and traditions which the peasantry relate, concerning the priestly power, you would weep to see humanity so far degraded, and ignorance so much abused and perpetuated.³³⁹

They argue that Protestantism, by encouraging the laity to read the scriptures, is the better religion:

³³⁷ Carleton, *Father Butler, or, Sketches of Irish Manners*, (Philadelphia, 1834), p. iv.

³³⁸ Religious order noted in the text to reside at the Seminary at C-----.

³³⁹ William Carleton, 'Father Butler', *The Christian Examiner*, vi, no. xli (1828), p. 358.

Now, which religion do you think ought to be the better one - the religion that opens that book to all people... or the religion that acknowledges its truth, and pretends to be according to it, yet will not allow the people to read it, or compare its creed with that book?³⁴⁰

Further they question the rites, rituals and practices associated with Catholicism in Ireland suggesting that they are antiquated and paganistic:

Are not the fastings, the whippings, and the other species of penances, the same which Christ condemned, when he told the Pharisees to make clean the inside of the platter, that the outside might be clean also?³⁴¹

What are their prayers and charms against certain diseases, their holy-water, their candles, gospels, rosaries, and cords, but the phylacteries of the same pharisees.³⁴²

This first trilogy of short stories, all published in 1828, set the tone for the remainder of Carleton's writings for the *Examiner*. He continued to chastise the Catholic peasantry for their belief in what were perceived as superstitions and ghost stories in "Lachlin Murray and the Blessed Candle" (August 1830) and "The Lianhan Shee" (November 1830). He continued to attack the clergy, highlighting instances in which they appeared to abuse their power and authority, in "The Station" (January, April, June 1829) and "Denis O'Shaughnessy" (September – November 1831). In destroying the 'other', Carleton was certainly submitting to the authority of Protestantism and the perceptions of his Protestant readers, however, there was also reason for the author not to completely reject and deny his Catholic origins.

Carleton did not want to completely shed his former Catholic identity, rather, he appeared to exaggerate and embellish his rural connections. Carleton forged a career in Irish literature by writing of the Irish Catholic peasantry as he knew them. His former Catholicism set him apart from others, Protestants and travel writers from England, who attempted to sketch the Irish. Carleton wrote from within, whereas others could only observe from without. He had lived amongst the Catholic rural poor, shared in their experiences and possessed an in-depth knowledge of their psyche. His Catholic origins allowed him command an authority and an authenticity over his subject. Carleton's former Catholic identity, his origins within the community that he portrayed, was his unique

³⁴⁰ Carleton, 'Father Butler', p. 362.

³⁴¹ Carleton, 'Father Butler', p. 365.

³⁴² Carleton, 'Father Butler', vi, no. xlii (1828), p. 423.

selling point. His sketches and short stories were saleable and indeed popular because they came from the pen of one who presented himself as a former peasant. So much so that Otway made certain that the readers of the *Examiner* were aware of the author's circumstances. In a note attached to the first of two parts of "A Pilgrimage to Patrick's Purgatory" the editor stated:

We wish to state that the foregoing article is the genius production of a person, who when a Roman Catholic, actually performed the pilgrimage to Lough Dearg; and we believe it to be a true and faithful transcript of what he saw and felt on the occasion.³⁴³

Therefore, Carleton did not want to and could not afford to fully nor completely deny, reject or abandon his former Catholic identity as it contributed towards his success as an author. Instead he ensured that the public saw him as a former peasant. Chapter One of this study has revealed that while Carleton lived amongst the rural peasantry in Tyrone that he was not of the lowest classes of Irish society. He enjoyed a relatively respectable upbringing and did not suffer in the same way as those living at a level of subsistence. During the early part of his career, however, Carleton identified himself with these lowly peasants. In "A Pilgrimage to Patrick's Purgatory" he presented himself as a peasant pilgrim engaging in the activities popular among that class of Catholics. Conversely, in "Father Butler" Carleton presented himself, the narrator, as a Protestant gentleman. It appears that during the early part of his career Carleton was attempting to straddle the social and ideological divide that existed between Catholic and Protestant in pre-famine Ireland, holding onto and indeed reinforcing the aspects of his former Catholic identity that allowed him to appear authentic yet ensuring to express Protestant perceptions of the peasantry he depicted.

Conclusion

William Carleton's decision to convert to Protestantism between 1818 and 1821 was highly controversial. It is one of the key aspects of the novelist's life and career that differentiate him from his peers. Although there is no evidence to suggest that Carleton converted to Protestantism for the purpose of becoming a writer, that he changed his religion certainly made a future career in Irish literature more likely given the Irish literary scene of the period. This chapter has examined the general question of conversion in

³⁴³ Carleton, 'A Pilgrimage', p. 286.

nineteenth century pre-famine Ireland, finding that it was neither common nor widespread for a Catholic to change his or her religion to that of Protestantism. Of the cases that were documented strategic conversion appears likely as those changing their religion are seen to benefit socially, politically or financially from their leap of faith. Regarded as traitors by those of the religion they left behind, and mistrusted by their new co-religionists, the position occupied by converts during the period was not one that was chosen lightly. Section II examined Carleton's conversion and the limited information that the novelist provided on his reasons for changing his religion. Although Carleton himself claimed that he left Catholicism as he disagreed with some of the doctrine of that faith, namely exclusive salvation, a variety of other personal, social and financial motives have been offered as more plausible explanations for the novelist's conversion. Carleton's conversion allowed him to move in social circles that his former Catholic identity would not have enabled him to access. Consequently, new opportunities for employment, and ultimately a position at the *Examiner*, allowed Carleton to enter upon the Irish literary stage in the 1830s. Section III charted the novelist's emergence as a writer while also examining the literary community in Protestant Dublin that Carleton was to join. The final section of this chapter examined Carleton conversion as the initial step in the author's self-fashioning, a process of identity shaping that allowed him to assimilate into Dublin's Protestant community and later to carve out a career within Irish literature as the authority on the rural peasant community in Ireland.

Many commentators have suggested that Carleton's conversion to Protestantism was less than genuine and lacked religious conviction and this thesis further supports these arguments. Having grown up in the sectarian north of Ireland, Carleton was acutely aware of the societal links that existed between religion and class and that the prospect of social advancement often eluded Catholics. That Carleton was eager to rise above his inherited social standing becomes obvious from the novelist's attempts first to enter into the priesthood and later to become a teacher. Choosing Protestantism allowed Carleton to not only change his religion but to change his social identity too and this consequently afforded the ambitious youth access to the middle tier of Protestant society in Dublin, as well as better prospects of employment. Given that Carleton benefited from his conversion, that it allowed him to advance socially, and that it made a career as a writer possible, it is reasonable to consider his change of religion strategic, calculated and as a device, in what this chapter has argued, was the author's self-fashioning.

It has been argued that Carleton's conversion was the initial aspect of an identity shaping process that extended to and impacted upon the novelist's behaviour, dress and appearance. Most importantly, it would extend to the writings he would produce during his career. That Carleton produced anti-Catholic propaganda for the *Examiner* during the early part of his career further supports the suggestion that the author was involved in a process akin to that described in Greenblatt's concept of self-fashioning. Only by destroying the other, the Irish Catholic peasantry, could Carleton accede to his new identity of conformist author. As will be seen in Chapters Three, Four and Five, however, Carleton's involvement with self-fashioning would continue throughout his career. The perspective from which he wrote would alter and shift to suit the changing political climate, the readers he had available to him and the patrons or publishers who were willing to pay for his pen at different junctures during his career. Financial pressure emerges as a major factor in Carleton's need to reinvent himself as his career advanced and this will be examined in detail in Chapter Three. The questionable nature of Carleton's conversion coupled with this need to refashion his public and literary identity can be considered to dilute the novelist's credibility and reliability as a witness. If treated as a product of the society and culture in which they were produced, however, the novelist's works can still be read to reveal prevailing perceptions and contemporary thinking on pertinent issues of the day. The remaining chapters of this study will examine the phases of Carleton's writings from his debut in literature in 1828 to his novels of the 1840s. They will chart the shifts in the perspectives offered by the novelist to his readers. The themes of religion and violence will be utilised for the purpose of revealing these shifts and the identities presented by the author at the key junctures in his career.

Chapter Three

Catholic Social Analyst or Protestant Propagandist?

Religion in pre-famine Ireland in the writings of William Carleton

William Carleton began his career in Irish literature as a religious propagandist. For this reason alone, it is impossible to overlook the theme of religion within his writings. Most of Carleton's early fiction had religion, specifically Irish Catholicism, as its main subject. Pre-famine Irish society was in many respects defined by religion and indeed by religious conflict. As stated in Chapter Two religion acted as a badge of social identity and traits of character were assigned to persons based on their religion rather than their social standing or profession. Religion also dominated the political sphere and contemporary political debate centered around religious issues. Catholics made up the majority of the population, 80.9 per cent, yet occupied an inferior social, economic and political position to their Anglican cohabitants.³⁴⁴ Although all but one of the repressive penal laws had been repealed by 1793, Irish Catholics remained aggrieved with circumstances in their country. Prior to 1829 no Catholic could sit in parliament unless they swore the oath of abjuration that denounced their faith. Catholics were obliged to make tithe payments to the local Church of Ireland rector until 1838. They found their country merged with Britain under the Act of Union (1801) and although this did not become a pressing issue for Catholics until later in the century all promises of emancipation at the time of Union were shelved with the passing of this act. Protestants on the other hand while enjoying more authority and prosperity feared their disgruntled Catholic neighbours. They had witnessed rebellions in 1798 and 1803, and although both failed, feared future risings. They recognised the vast superiority in numbers that the Catholic majority held over them and were all too aware of the fact that the land they occupied had in previous centuries been confiscated through plantations. During the 1820s their insecurities were not helped by the popular Catholic belief in the prophecies of Pastorini that foretold the destruction of Irish Protestantism by Christmas Day 1825. The granting of concessions to Irish Catholics and the prospect of further privileges being allowed by the British Government, to whom Irish Protestants looked for support, also heightened this insecurity. It is within this context that Carleton

³⁴⁴ S.J. Connolly, *Religion and Society in Nineteenth Century Ireland*, (Dundalk, 1985), p. 3.

entered upon the literary stage in 1828. As one who had experienced life amongst rural communities of Catholics and crossed the religious divide to position himself within the Protestant urban middle-classes he was uniquely situated to express both the grievances of Irish Catholics and the insecurities of Anglican Protestants within the writings he would produce. It was, however, at different stages in his career and within different political contexts that Carleton expressed the opposing perspectives of the Catholics and Protestants of pre-famine Ireland. Thus, a study of Carleton's writings on the theme of religion reveals the different versions or personas that the author presented to the public through his writings during the different phases of his career.

As noted in Chapter Two, Carleton began his career contributing to *Examiner* in April 1828. Carleton's contributions to this evangelical periodical were of an anti-Catholic flavor, in keeping with the overall tone of the magazine. During his employment with the *Examiner* the Catholic question, that of Catholic emancipation, was being debated in parliament and indeed in public. In April and May of 1828 when Carleton had his first story, "A Pilgrimage to Patrick's Purgatory", published in the *Examiner* the repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, a precursor to the granting of Catholic emancipation were being debated in the Houses of Parliament. The Test and Corporation Acts of 1673 and 1661 respectively imposed the necessity on all non-conformists, non-members of the Church of Ireland, wishing to participate in both local and national government of receiving the sacrament of communion in an Anglican church at least once a year and to make a declaration against transubstantiation by way of qualification for their position.³⁴⁵ Their repeal removed the barrier that had prevented Protestant Dissenters from entering parliament and it paved the way towards emancipation. Carleton's sketches of the pagan-like system of belief held by Irish Catholics and his portrayal of the clergy as manipulative and unruly reflected the fears and insecurities of the *Examiner's* Protestant readership amid the granting of further concessions to Irish Catholics. Having parted company with the *Examiner*, following Otway's departure from the magazine in 1831, Carleton continued to write of Irish Catholicism in this way. He produced two short story compilations, *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* in two series, the first in 1830 and the second in 1833,

³⁴⁵ For Test and Corporation Acts see: G.I.T. Maclin, 'Resistance to Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts, 1828' in *The Historical Journal*, xxii, no. 1 (1979), pp. 115-39. W.C. Lubenow, *Liberal Intellectuals and Public Culture in Modern Britain, 1815-1914*, (Woodbridge, 2010), p. 9. G.M. Ditchfield, 'The Parliamentary Struggle over the Repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts 1787-1790' in *The English Historical Review*, lxxix, no. 352, (1974), pp. 551-77.

and *Tales of Ireland* in 1834. *Traits and Stories* contained three of the stories previously published in the *Examiner* while *Tales of Ireland* contained four.

The perspective from which Carleton wrote on the theme of religion shifted slightly, however, as his career progressed. Carleton produced a two-volume revised edition of *Traits and Stories* labelled “*A New Edition*” in 1843-4 that was initially published in 25 parts between 1842 and 1843. In the two-volume, new edition Carleton added just two new stories to the series, “Neal Malone” and “The Lough Derg Pilgrim”. All the other short stories compiled in this new edition had appeared in previous iterations of the series. The addition of “The Lough Derg Pilgrim” originally published as “A Pilgrimage to Patrick’s Purgatory” in the *Examiner* is significant. The text that appeared in the 1842-4 version of *Traits and Stories* differed significantly to that which appeared in the *Examiner* in 1828. Carleton himself suggested that in revising the sketch he removed some of the more ‘offensive passages’³⁴⁶ that had appeared in the original. Indeed, some have argued, for example Daniel J. Casey and Darrell Figgis, that these passages were not of Carleton’s pen at all but rather of Otway’s. “The Lough Derg Pilgrim” was not the only short story to be revised by Carleton for the new edition of *Traits and Stories*. “The Station” originally published in the *Examiner* in 1829 is another example.

The alteration and revision of these texts signals a shift in Carleton’s writings on the theme of religion. That is not to say that the revised editions were liberated of anti-Catholic sentiment, but Carleton certainly diluted the bias. This shift can be explained in parts by the novelist’s financial insecurity, by the fact that the debate on emancipation was by then far behind, by an increasing nationalist sentiment amongst the Irish public and by a slight increase in literacy levels amongst Irish Catholics. Carleton’s appeal for Banim’s pension to be transferred unto him illustrated his financial need in the 1840s. Daniel O’Connell’s political campaigns for emancipation and Repeal had fostered nationalist feeling within the country. Some Protestants, like those of Young Ireland and those of ‘the urban professional and artisan classes’³⁴⁷ in Dublin and Belfast who later joined the Protestant Repeal Association, were eager to ensure that they could participate in any new Ireland that might emerge. These Protestants, although not a major group, had become increasingly disillusioned with a British government that was conceding to Catholic pressure. The extension of the National System of Education to Ireland in 1831 meant that by the 1840s

³⁴⁶ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 237.

³⁴⁷ Christine Kinealy, *Repeal and Revolution: 1848 in Ireland*, (Oxford, 2009), p. 184.

literacy levels were rising amongst the Catholics of Ireland. The first wave of students was emerging from this new system in the 1840s and they amounted to an, albeit modest increase in the readership available to Carleton. Both texts will be examined, the original and revised editions compared, and the context in which Carleton published the different versions of his stories will be analysed, later in this chapter.

A further shift was yet to come as Carleton's portrayals of the Catholic clergy in his novels *Valentine McClutchy* (1845) and *The Black Prophet* (1847) appear at odds with those originally found in his *Examiner* stories. Carleton's first novel, *Faradorougha the Miser, or, The Convicts of Lisnamona* (1839), was published serially in *The Dublin University Magazine* between February 1837 and February 1838. The novel appeared in book form in 1839. When he started publishing novels Carleton began to move away from the theme of religion. *Faradorougha the Miser* told the tale of a father so preoccupied with money that he failed to save his son from being wrongly convicted of a Ribbon crime. Carleton went on to publish *Rody the Rover, or, the Ribbonman* (1845) and *The Tithe Proctor* (1849) and appeared to have turned his attention to what was in the 1840s a more pressing evil; the governance of Ireland. Amidst the Great Famine Carleton attacked British legislators for failing to provide relief for the poverty stricken Irish and for allowing, through neglect, the Irish situation to decline during the first half of the century. But in his portrayals of Father Roche and Father Hanratty in *Valentine McClutchy* and *The Black Prophet* respectively, Carleton also illustrated a shift in his attitude towards Catholicism in Ireland. His perspective became more sympathetic towards Catholicism, the clergy and the laity in Ireland during the period. Given the context, as the Great Famine loomed large, it is perhaps unsurprising that the former Catholic felt for the class of people amongst whom he spent his youth and in *The Black Prophet* recalled what he claimed were 'pictures and scenes... he himself witnessed in 1817 and 1822, and other subsequent years.'³⁴⁸ His patrons too at this point in his career must be considered when examining this phase of Carleton's writing. Having contributed two articles to the pro-Repeal *The Nation* in 1843, "The Late John Banim" and "The 'Dublin University Magazine' and Mr. Lever", Carleton became associated with Young Ireland. Both *Rody the Rover* and *Valentine McClutchy* were published by the same firm that produced *The Nation*, that of the Catholic James Duffy. Such influences likely had a similar impact on Carleton's writing in the 1840s as Otway had had during the initial phase of the author's career.

³⁴⁸ William Carleton, *The Black Prophet: A Tale of Irish Famine*, (Belfast, 1847), p. vii.

Within this chapter the manner in which Carleton's perspective evolved from his evangelical, anti-papist, propagandist short stories, through the revisions of those stories, to a point at which he could empathise with the Catholics of Ireland will all be analysed. It will begin by returning to his stories for the *Examiner*, explored to some extent in Chapter Two, before proceeding to assess the revisions of these stories during the early 1840s, followed by his later novels.

I. The Christian Examiner

O'Donoghue suggested that it was when sharing their experiences of Lough Derg that it became clear to Caesar Otway that he and Carleton had similar opinions of the site and of the people who visited it.³⁴⁹ This was enough, according to O'Donoghue, to convince Otway that Carleton might prove useful to the anti-papist *Examiner*. Whatever the truth of this speculation, it is certain that to satisfy his editor and to appeal to his first readers, Carleton had to write from a certain perspective and to broach certain topics. As a result, the sketches and short stories produced by Carleton during the early part of his career, beginning with those published in the *Examiner*, explored religious themes and issues from an anti-Catholic perspective. Within this section the manner in which Carleton consented to do the services of the *Examiner* and 'advocate the cause of Protestantism against the Roman Catholic'³⁵⁰ will be analysed. This will be achieved by examining several of the short stories Carleton composed during the early part of his career, including "The Lough Derg Pilgrim", "Father Butler", "The Lianhan Shee", "Denis O'Shanughnessy" and "The Station". In these works, Carleton appeared to mimic or imitate the perspective from which his editor, Otway, wrote. Examples of Otway's writings can be found in the editor's own contributions to the *Examiner*, as well as in *Sketches in Ireland*. Moreover, Carleton employed, or rather adapted to an Irish setting, many of the popular plots and tropes found in traditional international anti-Catholic literature. "The Lianhan Shee", for example, can be seen as Carleton's take on the escaped nun's tale. Similarly, negative depictions of the clergy, attempting to snatch the Butler estate in "Father Butler", and dining extravagantly at the expense of the laity in "The Station", also borrow from this tradition.

³⁴⁹ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 3.

³⁵⁰ 'Preface', *The Christian Examiner*, ii, p. iii.

As stated in Chapter Two, the *Examiner*, established by Otway and J.H. Singer in 1825, was the instrument of the New Reformation Movement, an evangelical Protestant organisation that advocated the cause of the Established church in Ireland over Roman Catholicism. Otway (1780-1842), a Protestant cleric, born in Co. Tipperary, edited the *Examiner* from 1825 to 1831 at which point he resigned from the post. During this time, he also produced the aforementioned *Sketches in Ireland*, a travel diary in which he recalled observances and anecdotes that he had heard when travelling in Ireland during the 1820s. Prior to Carleton's recruitment no fiction had appeared in the *Examiner*. Instead, travel writings, sketches of Otway's experiences when visiting different parts of rural Ireland, appeared under the section entitled 'Miscellaneous Communications'.

Otway's sketches are useful in attempting to better understand the readership of the *Examiner*, and as illustrations of views and opinions of Ireland that prevailed during the period. He sought to describe and reveal Irish landscapes and Irish communities that his readers were unaware of and had never witnessed. Travel writings concerning Ireland were popular during the period. The Catholic question was very much at the forefront of public debate in Britain and Ireland during the 1820s, yet British readers knew little of the Irish Catholics, particularly those in the rural parts of the country, who were at this juncture seeking emancipation. Travel writings, along with the fiction of the Banim brothers, *Tales of the O'Hara Family* (1825), and Gerald Griffin, *Tales of the Munster Festivals* (1826), and Thomas Crofton Croker's folklore, *Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland* (1825), were satisfying the British public's curiosity during the period.

Otway was keen to expose what he perceived to be the erroneous and uneducated beliefs and habits of the Catholic Irish, and to contrast these with the more civilised ways of all those associated with the Established church. In effect, he portrayed Irish Catholics as 'others' and 'aliens' against whom Protestants could construct their own image of themselves. This collective self-fashioning was traditionally a feature of anti-Catholic literature and arguably its primary purpose. In "A Day at Cape Clear" Otway described the various 'superstitions' or beliefs associated with the island's residents³⁵¹ He drew distinctions between Cape Clear's Catholic and Protestant inhabitants, highlighting the fact

³⁵¹ Otway was told that Mount Gabriel, the highest peak on the island, was so called as it was believed that the angel Gabriel landed atop of the mountain on his return to heaven having delivered the happy message of mercy to the Virgin. A mark on the western peak of the mountain was believed to be the footprint he had left. Otway also learned of Conelis O'Driscoll, 'the biggest man that was ever born' and of the supernatural powers of a Catholic priest who once lived upon the island. Caesar Otway, 'A Day at Cape Clear', *The Christian Examiner*, ii, no. 12 (1826), pp. 456, 463.

that the only islanders not to give credence to these stories or legends were the Protestants. He explained that the Catholic ‘Priest is Prince here’ and suggested that the Catholic laity believed that the clergy possessed supernatural powers.³⁵² Furthermore, Otway described the local Catholics he met variously as ‘a fine savage’³⁵³ or as ‘a specimen of an uncaught and untutored savage.’³⁵⁴ In contrast the Protestants of Cape Clear were ‘an English family’³⁵⁵ and their home despite being cut into a cave ‘still retains the indelible character of superior civilization.’³⁵⁶ Otway’s sketch acts as a prime example of the attitudes that existed amongst English and Irish Protestants, the *Examiners* readers included, regarding Ireland, Irish Catholicism and the rural peasantry during the pre-famine period. The Catholic clergy too were depicted negatively. Popular Protestant opinion suggested that priests used their power and authority over the Irish peasantry to the detriment of their parishioners. They were accused of manipulation and extortion and examples of this critique can be found in another of Otway’s productions, *Sketches in Ireland*.

In *Sketches in Ireland* Otway wrote of his experiences of the Irish Catholic peasantry and their clergy as he travelled throughout the country in the 1820s, visiting Co. Donegal in the north and the Munster counties of Cork and Kerry. Otway had been encouraged to undertake the project by his publisher William Curry Jnr., who was also publishing the *Examiner* at that time. Curry was a Dublin based publisher and bookseller. He published the *Examiner* while Otway was editor, as well as, *The Dublin Family Magazine* during 1829.³⁵⁷ Later he published the *DUM* from its inception in 1833 until 1846, when his partner James McGlashan took over.³⁵⁸ Curry was also Carleton’s first publisher, issuing *Father Butler*, *The Lough Derg Pilgrim* in 1829, the first series of *Traits and Stories* in 1830 and *Tales of Ireland* in 1834. Otway had been contributing travel writings of this type to the *Examiner* and Curry evidently saw such material as saleable. During his travels Otway visited St. Patrick’s Purgatory in September of 1826, the same site on which Carleton was to base his debut sketch. In “Letter IV” of *Sketches in Ireland* Otway described his perception of the popular site of Catholic devotion:

³⁵² Otway, ‘Cape Clear’, p. 460.

³⁵³ Otway, ‘Cape Clear’, p. 456.

³⁵⁴ Otway, ‘Cape Clear’, p. 463.

³⁵⁵ Otway, ‘Cape Clear’, p. 462.

³⁵⁶ Otway, ‘Cape Clear’, p. 462.

³⁵⁷ Brake and Demoor, *DNCJ*, p. 155.

³⁵⁸ Brake and Demoor, *DNCJ*, p. 156.

altogether I may briefly sum up my view of this place and say that it was filthy, dreary, and altogether detestable – it was a positive waste of time to visit it, and I hope I shall never behold it again.³⁵⁹

Otway visited the island outside of the season during which Catholics flocked in their thousands to the site of popular pilgrimage. Perhaps he was disappointed not to witness first-hand the traditional practices associated with the place, yet, he was able to collect enough evidence and information to portray Lough Derg in a negative way, as he had surely intended. Filthy and desolate, the island as Otway found it reflected his readers' stereotypical notions of the manner in which the uneducated Catholics of Ireland lived. Otway criticised what he perceived as the 'superstitious' nature of Irish Catholics throughout the text. Further, he criticised the clerical regime that maintained the island as greedy, corrupt and manipulative, taking advantage of all those who visited the island in search of spiritual healing.

In an attempt to illustrate the corruption he believed was annually occurring at Lough Derg, Otway unflatteringly likened the Catholic pilgrims that frequented the island to a flock of geese and the clergy maintaining the island to a bird of prey:

I think geese are very much belied when made the representatives of stupidity or folly; but in the common acceptance, they might be considered, in the absence of pilgrims, as fit substitutes to frequent this island... A black cormorant with outstretched neck, passed over our heads on his way to exercise his voracious propensities on some of his fishing haunts on the lake... it might be imagined that... this all devouring bird represented one of the old priors of this purgatory, who had lived on human credulity, and battered on the terrors and fears of man.³⁶⁰

Otway portrayed the clergy extorting money from the pilgrims, feeding off the belief that their acts of penance would be rewarded with the forgiveness they desired. Such a concept was alien to Otway, and his readers, who believed that the forgiveness of sin could only be achieved through direct consultation with God, not mediated through any earthly agent. To his critique, Otway added evidence revealing the financial benefit produced by the island for both the property owner and the priests who maintained the island. Otway claimed that:

³⁵⁹ Otway, *Sketches in Ireland*, p. 154.

³⁶⁰ Otway, *Sketches in Ireland*, pp. 174-5.

the number of pilgrims to this island may be estimated at 13,000... each pilgrim paid the priests from 1s. 8d. to 2s. 6d.; therefore we may suppose that the profit to the Prior of Lough Derg and his priests, was no small sum.³⁶¹

Finally, Otway when being ferried away from the island observed the priest's house that stood on the pier. A large window at the back of the house, Otway explained, commanded a view of the lake and the path to and from the island. Otway mused on the purpose that this large window served and the character of the clergymen who gazed outwards from it:

I observed that the priest's house which... had a large window that fully commanded the ferry, and from whence could be observed the whole line of march of the pilgrims, as they descended from the ridge of hills that surrounded the lake and approached the ferry... I busied my mind with supposing the various characters of priests and friars that have sat in that window... Another I fancied as one who gloated on the lucre of the craft, and who sat in his window, counting the coming pilgrims – his avaricious heart beating quick with delight, as he measured the boatfuls of people coming over to add to the store of money he was collecting, and which was to him as a God.³⁶²

Otway's critique fitted into a wider international anti-Catholic discourse that was popular in both the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. Anti-Catholicism would come to prominence in the 1830s following the granting of Catholic emancipation and a rise in Irish immigration to Britain and America.³⁶³ This literature, that often contained elements of the gothic, was based on traditional anti-Catholic plots that centred on suspicions relating to the clergy, monks and priests, the sacrament of confession and institutions like the convent.³⁶⁴ That monasteries and convents were closed to the public, and that clerics operated behind closed doors, was cause for concern among the Protestant sections of society. Susan Griffin stated of the various plots and themes contained in the tradition of anti-Catholic writing that:

If these tales were to be believed (and any number of them were), across the United States and Great Britain and throughout the nineteenth century, women were being kidnapped from confessionals, imprisoned and raped in convents; Inquisitors continued to maintain and use hidden torture chambers; Jesuits practiced their time-honoured treacheries; nuns posing as governesses corrupted Protestant children; priests hovered at deathbeds snatching away family fortunes; Papal emissaries plotted to overthrow government power;

³⁶¹ Otway, *Sketches in Ireland*, p. 153.

³⁶² Otway, *Sketches in Ireland*, pp. 175-6

³⁶³ Susan Griffin, 'Revising the Popish Plot: Frances Trollope's "The Abbess and Father Eustace"', in *Victorian Literature and Culture*, xxxi, no. 1 (2003), p. 280.

³⁶⁴ Griffin, 'Revising the Popish Plot', p. 280.

Mother Superiors tyrannized over helpless girls, barring all parental intervention.³⁶⁵

The purpose of such anti-Catholic fiction was a device through which the Protestant collective constructed their image of themselves. Diane Long Hoeveler stated that:

In order to modernize and secularize, the British Protestant imaginary needed an ‘other’ against which it could define itself as a culture and a nation with distinct boundaries. In Gothic literature, a reactionary, demonized and feudal Catholicism is created in order to stand in opposition to the modern Protestant individual.³⁶⁶

While Otway and Carleton’s writings preceded the popular anti-Catholic fiction of the mid-nineteenth century their aim and purpose was the same and they borrowed from the same store of traditional tropes and images. While their writings were tailored for a specific Irish and British readership, their works can also be seen to fit into this wider international anti-Catholic discourse.

In April 1828 the first half of Carleton’s “A Pilgrimage to Patrick’s Purgatory” was published as the campaign for Catholic emancipation drew to a successful conclusion. Within the same volume, in ‘A View of Public Affairs’, the hope was expressed that ‘no evil consequence’ and ‘no danger’ would come to the Church of England as a result of the repeal. It was also argued that ‘no legitimate argument for that repeal can be drawn.’³⁶⁷ It was within this political landscape that Carleton sent his first contribution to Irish literature out for public consumption. In the sections that follow Carleton’s anti-Catholic writings will be examined under the categories of the superstitious tendencies of the peasantry and the conduct of the Catholic clergy, the two major errors of Irish Catholicism as identified by Carleton in “A Pilgrimage to Patrick’s Purgatory”. These criticisms were to frequent Carleton’s early writings, particularly those published in the *Examiner*.

Superstitions

Angela Bourke noted that ‘superstition’ is ‘a problematic word’.³⁶⁸ This term is problematic because it is subjective. Within the context of pre-famine Ireland for example,

³⁶⁵ Susan Griffin, *Anti-Catholicism and Nineteenth-Century Fiction*, (Cambridge, 2004), p. 1.

³⁶⁶ Diane Long Hoeveler, *The Gothic Ideology: Religious Hysteria and Anti-Catholicism in British Popular Fiction, 1780-1880*, (Cardiff, 2014), p. 3.

³⁶⁷ ‘A View of Public Affairs’, *The Christian Examiner*, vi, no. 34 (1828), p. 314.

³⁶⁸ Angela Bourke, *The Burning of Bridget Cleary: A True Story*, (London, 1999), p. 134.

what an upper class Irish Protestant might have perceived as superstitious might not have been viewed in the same way by a Catholic peasant. By definition superstition is ‘a widely held but irrational belief in supernatural influences, especially as leading to good or bad luck, or a practice based on such belief,’³⁶⁹ or, ‘belief which is not based on human reason or scientific knowledge, but is connected with old ideas about magic, etc.’³⁷⁰ Similarly, Bourke noted that ‘‘superstition’ meant a system of reasoning which was alien to those in power.’³⁷¹ During the pre-famine period, a strata of Irish Protestants, the Ascendancy, were the elite. For Otway and the members of the New Reformation Movement, who were associated with that elite, the system of belief popular amongst Irish Catholic peasants was alien to their own and therefore superstition. Indeed, neither did the clergy, particularly reforming bishops such as James Warren Doyle of Kildare and Leighlin or Daniel Murray of Dublin, or Catholics of the middle-classes approve of this ‘popular religion’.³⁷² Although what Larkin termed ‘The Devotional Revolution’ did not achieve any sustained success until after the Famine, efforts were made among the Catholic ‘farmer-elite’ or ‘agricultural bourgeoisie’ and the clergy, in certain parts of the country, at reform during the first half of the nineteenth century.³⁷³ Beliefs associated with the oral tradition, although in decline during the period as British education and ideals usurped them, still held credence amongst the rural peasantry, regardless of how ridiculous or absurd they seemed to those of the middle and upper-classes. The ‘superstitions’ of their tradition acted as means to interpret, understand and deal both intellectually and emotionally with, occurrences that a limited education could not explain. Bourke explained that:

Beliefs and practices can appear bizarrely irrational when the system of which they were once part has begun to disintegrate... Calling something ‘superstition’ means declaring the currency to which it belongs worthless. Used among equals, the word expresses tolerance for illogical foibles; given a racist or sectarian edge, however, it can mark an unwillingness to consider those to whom it is applied as fully human.³⁷⁴

Obviously, the middle and upper-classes of Catholics and Protestant and the rural poor were not equal during the pre-famine period. Otway’s and subsequently Carleton’s use of

³⁶⁹ Oxford Dictionaries Online, ‘Definition for Superstition’ (www.oxforddictionaries.com/definition/superstition) (12 Mar 2014).

³⁷⁰ Cambridge Dictionary Online, ‘Meaning of “superstition”’ (dictionary.cambridge.org/dictionary/british/superstition) (12 Mar 2014).

³⁷¹ Bourke, *Bridget Cleary*, p. 34.

³⁷² Connolly, *Priests and People*, pp. 66-72.

³⁷³ Emmet Larkin, *The Historical Dimensions of Irish Catholicism, with a new introduction*, (Washington, 1984), pp. 7-9.

³⁷⁴ Bourke, *Bridget Cleary*, p. 134.

the term ‘superstition’ was both derogatory and sectarian. They were in effect, as Bourke explained, declaring the system of belief of poor Irish Catholics worthless.³⁷⁵

Carleton’s use of the term ‘superstition’ appears at odds with his rural Catholic origins and acts as an indicator of his transcending those social origins. Carleton referred to the peasantry’s beliefs as ‘nonsense’,³⁷⁶ yet, in his youth, he explained in “The Lough Derg Pilgrim”, that he himself engaged in what he could only have described in his later writings as an exhibition of ‘superstition’. Carleton noted that his father had told him an anecdote in relation to St. Patrick’s Purgatory on the island of Lough Derg. He explained that he:

had heard that a boat had been lost there about the year 1796, and that a certain holy priest who was in her as a passenger had walked very calmly across the lake to the island after the boat and the rest of the passengers in her had all gone to the bottom.³⁷⁷

In preparation for his own pilgrimage to Lough Derg, given what he described as a ‘strong disinclination to enter a boat’³⁷⁸ and a ‘particular prejudice against sailing’,³⁷⁹ Carleton made an attempt at the priest’s miracle. Carleton determined to conduct this experiment in a marl-pit located on his father’s farm. Having prepared himself for the feat by fasting for three days and praying for the power of not sinking Carleton made the attempt but failed and fell to the bottom of the pool. The anecdote suggests that Carleton was once a bearer of the system of belief of the Irish rural poor, that he had during his youth access to this worldview and was familiar with the legends and lore of the oral tradition.

This anecdote can be understood from two different perspectives. Either Carleton, following his conversion and assimilation into Protestant society in Dublin, abandoned the superstitions of his childhood when presented with an alternative set of beliefs, or, the anecdote was fiction and Carleton was attempting to establish his status as a former peasant. When Carleton arrived in Dublin in 1818 he claimed to have started ‘thinking for himself.’³⁸⁰ As stated in Chapter Two, having spent time exploring the different faiths practiced in the capital, he determined to convert to Anglicanism and subsequently began

³⁷⁵ Bourke, *Bridget Cleary*, p. 134.

³⁷⁶ William Carleton, ‘Irish Superstitions – Ghosts and Fairies (No. III)’, in *The Irish Penny Journal*, i, no. 34 (1841), p. 269.

³⁷⁷ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 241.

³⁷⁸ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 98.

³⁷⁹ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 241.

³⁸⁰ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 215.

fashioning a new identity for himself. Carleton's comments suggest that as a member of a rural Catholic community in the north of Ireland that he was not allowed to think for himself and that the worldview of the Irish peasantry was so contagious and repressive that he had to leave the confines of its reach before he could do so. His use of the term 'superstitious' and his depictions of such, like that in the anecdote above, was both negative and derogatory and should be considered as a rejection of the system of belief of the Irish peasantry. Therefore, one view of this anecdote establishes Carleton's abandoning of his former beliefs and simultaneously recognises his surrender to the Protestant mindset of his new co-religionists.

The potential of this anecdote to act as a device to enhance Carleton's credibility and claims to authenticity among his new readers cannot, however, be overlooked. Carleton presented himself to the readers of the *Examiner* as a peasant writer, as did Otway. This act of superstition was something a former peasant ought to have done or an experience his readers would have expected him to have had. Carleton's inner knowledge of peasant society was to be his distinguishing feature as a writer. Anecdotes of this type, accounts of his personal experiences as a peasant, acted to reinforce Carleton's peasant identity and must therefore be considered an element of the author's literary self-fashioning. The passage is but one example of how Carleton played up to, embellished and exaggerated his 'lowly' peasant roots. Regardless of whether the anecdote was of fact or fiction Carleton's use of the term 'superstition' with regard to the Catholic peasantry acts as an example of the prescribed terminology that was expected from a contributor to the *Examiner*.

The popular religion of the Irish peasantry appears decidedly twofold in character. Connolly noted that while the peasantry both believed in the doctrine and participated in the rites and rituals of the Roman Catholic Church their 'religion' also included a tendency towards what appeared pagan-like superstition and the supernatural.³⁸¹ Diarmuid Ó Giolláin noted that 'the Irish worshipped the gods of the *síbh*... until St. Patrick converted them'³⁸² to Christianity in the fifth century. Their conversion did not guarantee that they abandoned their original beliefs, rather, it gave them a structured religion to participate in and 'a new frame of reference in which to place'³⁸³ their original beliefs. Thus, the teachings of the Church and the 'superstitious' elements of the peasantry's beliefs

³⁸¹ Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 110.

³⁸² Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, 'The Fairy Belief and Official Religion in Ireland', in Peter Narváez (ed.), *The Good People: New Fairylore Essays*, (New York, 1991), p. 202.

³⁸³ Ó Giolláin, 'Fairy Belief', p. 202.

interweaved and intertwined in what would become the popular religion of the rural poor. By way of example Connolly stated that:

Pilgrims visiting a holy well combined the sympathetic magic of a piece of cloth tied to a nearby bush or tree with prayers learned from the Catholic Church... [and] the fairies were identified as angels who had fallen to earth during Satan's rebellion against God.³⁸⁴

Ó Giolláin explained that within traditional communities 'the supreme divinities', within an Irish context the Christian God, were often ignored and 'other sacred forces, nearer to man, more accessible to his daily experience, more useful to him, fill[ed] the leading role.'³⁸⁵ For the rural poor of pre-famine Ireland the clergy, God's agents on earth, and the fairies were these 'other sacred forces'.³⁸⁶ The Irish peasantry of the pre-famine period possessed easy access to an oral tradition of fairy legend and fairy belief, whereas the religious literature of the day eluded them. Most lower-class Roman Catholics were illiterate and lacking in any form of education. The census of 1841 revealed that 53 per cent of the population over the age of five were unable to read.³⁸⁷ Information and instruction on daily living and social behaviour was passed throughout communities by word of mouth. In the same way, the religion of the community evolved and was maintained, through this oral tradition, and fairy legends, 'superstitions' and ghost stories remained an integral part of the Irish peasantry's system of belief during the pre-famine period.

Fairy lore and the supernatural functioned for the rural Catholic peasantry as a means through which they could deal psychologically with the unknown and the unexplained (illnesses, premature deaths, adverse or extreme weather and misfortune). It also provided them with some sense that they could take precautionary or preventative action against such occurrences. Connolly explained that:

the attraction of Irish witchcraft beliefs was that they provided an explanation for the otherwise incomprehensible disasters of rural life, as well as the comforting sense that one could take some precautions against the occurrence of these disasters.³⁸⁸

³⁸⁴ Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 110.

³⁸⁵ Ó Giolláin, 'Fairy Belief', p. 202.

³⁸⁶ Ó Giolláin, 'Fairy Belief', p. 202.

³⁸⁷ Niall O Cosáin, *Print and Popular Culture in Ireland, 1750-1850*, (New York, 1997), p. 32.

³⁸⁸ Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 103.

In his short story “The Lianhan Shee: An Irish Superstition”, Carleton offered an example of how fairy tradition and superstition had fused with more formal Catholicism within the worldview of the Irish rural poor. He described a local peasant’s home furnished with an abundance of the accoutrements commonly kept by the Irish rural poor in the hope that these items might produce luck, provide protection, prevent or heal illnesses. Most of these items belonged to a pre-Christian tradition, however, holy water and a scapular, articles associated with the Catholic Church were also present:

Over the door and on the “threshel” were nailed, “for luck,” two horse-shoes... In a little “hole” in the wall, beneath the salt-box, lay a great bottle of holy water to keep the place purified... Lying on the top of the salt-box was a bunch of fairy flax, and sewed on the folds of her own scapular was the dust of what had once been a four-leafed shamrock, an invaluable specific “for seein’ the good people,” if they happen to come within the bounds of vision.³⁸⁹

Bourke explained that fairy belief also had a more mundane and practical function for these peasant communities:

Viewed as a system of interlocking units of narrative, practice and belief, fairy-legend can be compared to a database: a pre-modern culture’s way of storing and retrieving information and knowledge of every kind, from hygiene and childcare to history and geography. Highly charged and memorable images... are the retrieval codes for a whole complex of stored information about land and landscape, community relations, gender roles, medicine, and work in all its aspects: tools, materials and techniques.³⁹⁰

In many ways fairy legend or fairy belief also acted as a social code for the Irish peasantry of the nineteenth century. Patricia Lysaght detailed two superstitions or beliefs that illustrate this point. The first referred to the Irish term *Púca* meaning ghost; ‘stories of supernatural phenomena such as the Pooka (*Púca*) were only myths told to frighten children in order to get them in out of the dark and to keep them away from dangerous places.’³⁹¹ Lysaght also described a belief that appeared simply to promote or encourage good, hygienic housekeeping; ‘the belief that to leave the house untidy at night invites the intervention of the fairies or the dead.’³⁹² Evidently, these examples of fairy legend or ‘superstition’ suggested a practical purpose for such beliefs amongst the rural communities of pre-famine Ireland.

³⁸⁹ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, pp. 75-6.

³⁹⁰ Bourke, *Bridget Cleary*, p. 29.

³⁹¹ Patricia Lysaght, ‘Fairylore from the Midlands of Ireland’, in Narváez, *The Good People*, p. 28.

³⁹² Lysaght, ‘Fairylore from the Midlands of Ireland’, p. 32.

“The Lianhan Shee” is an important example of Carleton’s writing on the subject of the superstitious tendencies of the Irish rural poor. Within the short story, first published in the *Examiner* in November 1830 and later collected in the second series of *Traits and Stories*, Carleton resolved the narrative in a way that proved an aspect of the Irish peasantry’s worldview as both unnecessary and foolish. The short story acts as a prime illustration of the negative effect that, according to Carleton, fairy belief and the supernatural of the oral tradition had upon the rural poor. A mysterious woman sparks panic within a local community as the Catholic peasantry believe her to be the Lianhan Shee. Carleton explained the legend surrounding the Lianhan Shee in another article “Irish Superstitions – Ghosts and Fairies” published in the *Irish Penny Journal* in February 1841:

The Lianhan Shee is a malignant fairy, which, by a subtle compact made with any one whom it can induce by the fairest promises to enter into, secures a mastery over them by inducing its unhappy victims to violate it; otherwise, it is and must be like the oriental genie, their slave and drudge, to perform such tasks as they wish to impose upon it. It will promise endless wealth to those whom it is anxious to subjugate to its authority, but it is at once so malignant and ingenious, that the party entering into the contract with it is always certain by its maneuvers to break through his engagement, and thus become slave in its turn.³⁹³

Moreover, within the short story Carleton stated that the term was also used to signify a priest’s paramour, any woman who had fallen into the crime of engaging in an affair with a priest.³⁹⁴ The story might be seen as Carleton’s take on the popular anti-Catholic escaped or renegade nun’s tale. This trope was used in both Britain and America during the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries to expose the perceived wrongs within Catholicism. Sometimes autobiographical in style, the nuns having escaped their convents would reveal the tortuous and inhumane treatment they had been subjected to by monks, priests and their superiors. Griffin explained that within the genre ‘the renegade nun is a victim of and a witness to popery’s crimes.’³⁹⁵ Carleton’s tale is by no means as grim, dark or grotesque as Matthew Lewis’ *The Monk* (1796), Ann Radcliffe’s *The Italian* or Maria Monk’s *Awful Disclosures of Maria Monk* (1836), for example, yet it can be seen to fit within the same anti-Catholic discourse.

³⁹³ Carleton, ‘Irish Superstitions (No. III)’, p. 270.

³⁹⁴ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 96.

³⁹⁵ Griffin, *Anti-Catholicism*, p. 30.

Within the story the two usages of the term ‘Lianhan Shee’ merge. Carleton’s Lianhan Shee was formerly a nun. She had engaged in a forbidden relationship with a priest, Father Philip O’Dallaghy, and both were suspended from their order as a result. Father Philip had relocated to the village in which the story is set, and it appears the woman visits the village in an attempt to seek him out. The woman’s unusual appearance and strange behavior lead local peasant Mary Sullivan to believe that she is the Lianhan Shee. Carrying the robe or habit she had worn previously when a nun around her shoulders the woman appears deformed. She also confesses within the story to believing herself at times to be possessed by an evil spirit, owing to the guilt she felt following her illicit relationship with the priest. The initial reaction of the peasantry to this woman depicts their tendency towards the superstitious and the supernatural, while as the truth of her identity surfaces Carleton called into question the conduct of the suspended priest. Within the short story, Carleton was critical of both the worldview of the Irish lower classes and the role played by the priests, suspended or otherwise, in allowing their laity to continue in the practice of pre-Christian traditions of belief.

The story details the encounter between Mary Sullivan, the local parish priest’s niece, and the supposed Lianhan Shee and the effect that this unknown woman’s appearance and behaviour has upon the local community. Mary Sullivan is targeted by the woman as someone who is known to be deeply superstitious and actively engaged in the fairy tradition. When visiting Mary Sullivan, the mysterious woman offers her a bottle to drink, claiming that it will bring her wealth:

“You see this little bottle – drink it. Oh, for my sake and your own, drink it; it will give wealth without end to you and to all belonging to you. Take one-half of it before sunrise, and the other half when he goes down. You must stand while drinking it, with your face to the east in the morning, and at night to the west. Will you promise to do this?”³⁹⁶

During this exchange the woman plays the role of the Lianhan Shee. She acts out the popular superstition in an attempt to draw out the suspended priest. She succeeds in intimidating Mary who declines the bottle. Mary believes the woman to be the Lianhan Shee and refuses to make any bargain with her. The mysterious woman eventually gives up and departs, leaving Mary Sullivan distracted and traumatised by the encounter.

³⁹⁶ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 82.

When Mary's husband returns home, she tells him of the woman's visit and in a very short space of time the entire local community learns of the incident and is warned of the presence of the Lianhan Shee. Carleton noted that:

The next day the story spread through the whole parish, accumulating in interest and incident as it went. Where it received the touches, embellishments, and emendations with which it was amplified.³⁹⁷

The result of this exercise in Chinese whispers was widespread panic. Due to the local communities' acquaintance with the tale of the Lianhan Shee, and their pagan-like fear of this unknown entity Carleton explained that:

such families as had neglected to keep holy water in their houses borrowed some from their neighbours; every old prayer which had become rusty from disuse was brightened up; charms were hung about the necks of cattle, and gospels about those of children; crosses were placed over the doors and windows; no unclean water was thrown out before sunrise or after dusk.³⁹⁸

Having first interpreted this mysterious woman's identity through the fairy machinery of their oral tradition the peasantry then set about making use of their traditional safeguards to protect themselves against what they believed was a malignant fairy.

Having taken all actions prescribed by their tradition the peasantry ultimately turned to their parish priest, Father Felix O'Rourke, for aid in resolving the situation. They found their clergyman reluctant to engage with the mysterious woman, however, and he desired them to do the woman no harm and to return to their regular business. It is at this point that the peasantry turned to 'a suspended priest, called Father Philip O'Dallaghy, who supported himself, as most of them [suspended priests] do, by curing certain diseases of the people – miraculously!'³⁹⁹ The peasantry believed this former priest to have great power and Mary agreed to meet with him and tell him her story. Of suspended priests Connolly noted that a former Catholic priest, who had since turned to the Church of Ireland, stated that these priests 'arrogate of themselves the power of performing miracles, and the generality of the people are fully impressed that the priests are possessed of that power.'⁴⁰⁰

³⁹⁷ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 85.

³⁹⁸ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 85.

³⁹⁹ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 86.

⁴⁰⁰ Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 117.

Connolly also referred to suspended priests who were believed to possess miraculous powers:

There was also a widespread belief that ‘silenced’ priests – men who had been suspended from the exercise of their priestly functions on account of some misbehaviour – had powers of healing and other magical abilities not possessed by ordinary priests – a tradition which presumably reflects the element of mystery which inevitably attached to such individuals, to men who were priests and yet not priests.⁴⁰¹

That the peasantry turned to their priests, Father O’Rourke and the suspended Father O’Dallaghy, within the story establishes the position the Catholic clergy held within pre-famine society. Although held in different regard, the peasantry turned to both clergymen in their attempts to banish the woman they believed to be an evil fairy.

The priests played an intriguing role in the supernatural or ‘superstitious’ elements of the popular religion of the Irish rural poor during the period. As well as acting as spiritual leaders, as a medium through which the peasantry could communicate with their Christian God, the clergy were also believed or understood to be, as Ó Giolláin noted, ‘wise to the ways of the fairies.’⁴⁰² He explained that:

Priests could banish fairies... The priest, though obviously part of an official ecclesiastical organization, often played another role in popular religion until well into the nineteenth century... He officiated in the sacraments of the Church, but he also could be known to call maledictions from the altar... people believing that his power was not merely *ex officio*.⁴⁰³

That the clergy were familiar with fairy lore and the ‘superstitions’ of the peasantry during the period is no surprise given that a number of those serving at the time were drawn originally from rural communities. They became increasingly less willing, however, to facilitate such pagan-like and unchristian beliefs. While the influence and power this association with the fairies would have allowed the clergy exert over their congregations could have proven useful, as the century progressed the church hierarchy ordered that such traditional beliefs should no longer be encouraged. Indeed, this stance was part of a greater devotional revolution by the Catholic church in Ireland during the nineteenth century. The church began to modernise as early as the 1760s through the building of chapels intended

⁴⁰¹ Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 118.

⁴⁰² Ó Giolláin, ‘Fairy Belief’, p. 203.

⁴⁰³ Ó Giolláin, ‘Fairy Belief’, p. 203.

to replace the thatched mud-walled mass houses that preceded them. With the establishment of the seminary in Maynooth in 1795 it was hoped that a better calibre of priests could be produced and subsequently controlled by the bishops. Finally, the popular practices of stations and patterns, and indeed all public worship outside of the church, that had been particularly useful during the period of penal restrictiveness were to be phased out. Janice Holmes noted that:

The church was very keen to control these practices [stations and patterns] and spoke out repeatedly against them. The Synod of Thurles [1850] ruled specifically that these practices should be stopped.⁴⁰⁴

While fairy lore or fairy machinery was often sought out by the peasantry to explain the unexplained, the priests could also be called upon to interpret the supernatural or that which was attributed to the fairies. In Carleton's "The Lianhan Shee" the local clergy are called to the aid of the peasant community in this way. When faced with a stranger who is perceived as possessed by the fairies, the priests are asked to intervene and extend their role within the community to aid their congregation.

The tale ends on the following day as Father Philip visits Mary Sullivan. A large crowd gathers, aware of the meeting that is to take place hoping that the powerful suspended priest might resolve the issue that has unsettled the parish. In time the mysterious woman makes an unexpected appearance. Father Philip questions the woman and is eventually greeted with a shocking response:

"But no, you are my husband – though our union was but a guilty form, and I will bury that in silence. You thought me dead, and you flew to avoid punishment – did you avoid it?... there was nothing in this bottle but pure water... I at times conceive myself attended by an evil spirit, shaped out by a guilty conscience, and this is the only familiar which attends me, and by it I have been dogged into madness through every turning of life. Whilst it lasts I am subject to spasms and convulsive starts which are exceedingly painful. The lump on my back is the robe I wore when innocent in my peaceful convent."⁴⁰⁵

⁴⁰⁴ Janice Holmes, 'The Reform of Piety in Ireland, 1780-1920', in Anders Jarlert, (ed.), *Piety and Modernity*, (Leuven, 2012), pp. 82-3.

For the modernisation of the Catholic Church during the nineteenth century see: Emmet Larkin, 'The Devotional Revolution in Ireland, 1850-75,' in *The American Historical Review*, lxxvii, no. 3 (1972), pp. 625-52. D.W. Miller, 'Irish Catholicism and the Great Famine' in *Journal of Social History*, ix, no. 1, (1975), pp. 81-98.

⁴⁰⁵ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 92.

The woman's confession reveals that she is not the Lianhan Shee and she confesses to being deeply troubled because of the relationship she had had with the suspended priest. Carleton's treatment of the Catholic clergy will be discussed at length in the next section of this chapter. In "The Lianhan Shee", however, the fact that some clergymen acted to facilitate the peasantry's belief in unchristian and pagan-like traditions and 'superstitions' is illustrated while the suspended priest's illicit sexual relationship with the former nun is also alluded to.

In "Father Butler" Carleton continued his critique of the superstitious errors of the Catholic peasantry focusing on the widespread circulation of religiously themed prophecies within pre-famine society as yet another illustration of the system of belief of the rural poor. Within the short story, that was first published serially in the *Examiner* from August to November 1828, Carleton assumed the position of narrator and the persona of a local Protestant landlord. When visiting the home of Paddy Dimnick, the local voteen or religious fanatic, a staunch and devout believer in his Catholic faith, he finds a copy of Pastorini's prophecies of which he states:

I here perceived a book in the parlour window, which proved to be the far-famed Pastorini's history of the Church, and taking it up, I determined to amuse myself with it in the garden.⁴⁰⁶

David Hempton and Myrtle Hill have explained this millenarian phenomenon that became widespread throughout the rural communities of Ireland during the pre-famine period:

The Catholic cause was given added impetus by the reprinting and widespread circulation of the Prophecies of Pastorini – an interpretation of the Apocalypse of St. John, published originally in 1771 by the English Catholic bishop, Charles Walmsley. These writings, which predicted the overthrow of Protestantism on Christmas Day 1824, unexpectedly justified Protestant fears of a superstitious and essentially vengeful Catholic nation.⁴⁰⁷

Both Pastorini's prophecies and those of Colmcille were 'circulating in different versions from at least the 1790s'.⁴⁰⁸ Their popularity during the first three decades of the nineteenth century, and their widespread circulation, were for Carleton further examples of the superstitious tendencies of the Irish peasantry. Carleton choose to 'amuse' himself with the

⁴⁰⁶ William Carleton, *Father Butler, or, Sketches of Irish Manners*, (Philadelphia, 1834), p. 26.

⁴⁰⁷ Hempton and Hill, *Evangelical Protestantism*, p. 84.

⁴⁰⁸ Connolly, *Priests and People*, pp. 109-10.

text he picked up in the house of the local Catholic voteen. The author seemed to suggest that, as an educated Protestant, such prophecies and millenarian literature had no function but to entertain him. However, the author's dismissive attitude towards this popular text might also be construed as a masking of real fears and insecurities. Indeed, belief in these millenarian prophecies further united Irish Catholics against Protestants. The injustice of the plantations of the 16th and 17th centuries coupled with the distressed situation of the Irish rural poor led to an embittered and vengeful Catholic populace that threatened to explode violently against Irish Protestants.

In the aforementioned "The Lough Derg Pilgrim", Carleton narrating the story from within as a Catholic peasant, offered another example of the superstitions he himself claimed to believe in when a Catholic. At the beginning of the narrative, as Carleton set out upon his pilgrimage to Lough Derg, already anxious of the penal task that he had undertaken to perform, a hare scurried across his path. This was, he explained, considered a bad omen:

I paused, and my foot was on the very turn to the right-about, when instantly a thought struck me which produced a reaction in my imagination. Might not all this be the temptation of the devil suggested to prevent me from performing this blessed work? Might not the hare itself be some _____? In short, the counter-current carried me with it. I had commenced my journey, and every one knows that when a man commences a journey it is unlucky to turn back.⁴⁰⁹

Within the narrative Carleton was forced to make a decision between two competing 'superstitions' both of which belonged to a traditional system of belief that he had inherited from the rural community among whom he had grown up. To Carleton's readers this must have appeared as an authentic insight into the mindset of an Irish peasant. Like his attempt to walk on water, however, rather than authentic examples of the worldview of the Irish peasant, these passages may be seen as attempts by the author to consolidate his readers' view of him as a peasant writer. The success of Carleton's early writings depended upon his standing apart from his contemporaries and his identity as former peasant and insider witness ensured this success. That Carleton therefore played up to, even exaggerated and embellished, his lowly, rural origins in entirely plausible. This is not a feature common to all of Carleton's early writings, however, as is evidenced by his playing the role of a Protestant gentleman in "Father Butler". Rather, Carleton selected opportunities to display

⁴⁰⁹ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 243.

his peasant identity but made sure not to alienate his readers. While his insider knowledge of the peasantry undoubtedly added authenticity to his stories he also had to place himself in a position to empathise with his Protestant readers. Carleton's career depended in the 1830s on how well he could straddle and manipulate the line between these two positions. As stated the anti-Catholicism of Carleton's early writings was not limited to a criticism of the superstitious nature of the Irish peasantry, he also attacked the conduct of the Roman Catholic clergy. In the next section of this chapter Carleton's criticism of these clerics, constructed once again upon the perceptions of his Protestant readership, will be explored.

The Roman Catholic Clergy

The Roman Catholic priest of pre-famine Ireland occupied a position of authority and influence at the head of the local community. As well as being a spiritual, religious leader, the priest was often the most learned and educated man in the parish. Connolly noted that 'the Catholic priest was in most cases the educated man to whom his parishioners could most easily and most confidently turn for advice and assistance.'⁴¹⁰ The priests appear to have catered for many of their parishioners needs apart from those related to their religion:

'Besides being their spiritual comforters,' Bicheno⁴¹¹ observed in 1830, 'the priests are their physicians in remote districts, and the lawyers everywhere... In addition to this, they are very competent advisers in matters of business.'⁴¹²

The priest played a central role in the local rural community, made up predominantly of lower class Catholic peasants. The priest was treated with great respect, honoured because of the education they had received and feared because of the close connection they were believed to have had with God. During the 1820s and 1830s Daniel O'Connell made use of the clergy's high standing within rural Catholic communities. O'Connell utilised priests as agents and organisers in his campaigns for Catholic emancipation and Repeal and through the clergy was successful in mobilising the Irish rural poor as supporters of these campaigns. That the Catholic priests were pillars of society in pre-famine Ireland is

⁴¹⁰ Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 56.

⁴¹¹ James Ebenezer Bicheno (1785-1851) was an English author and colonial official. He visited Ireland in 1829 and later published *Ireland and its Economy* (1830). Bicheno sat on the commission that investigated the conditions of the Irish rural poor between 1833 and 1836. He disagreed with the report produced by the commission, however, that advocated extensive public works. A.G.L. Shaw, 'Bicheno, James Ebenezer (1785-1851)', (www.oxforddnb.com.jproxy.nuim.ie/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-2342?rskey=zXjcy&result=1) (17 Feb 2016).

⁴¹² Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 56.

reflected in Carleton's writings. The priest features prominently within Carleton's contributions to the *Examiner* and in the short story compilations, *Traits and Stories* and *Tales of Ireland*. Within these writings Carleton placed the Catholic clergy under particular scrutiny.

Connolly found in his study of the clergy of pre-famine Ireland that the priests were too few to minister to the Catholic population in Ireland at the beginning of the nineteenth century. The reasons for this were threefold; there were limited facilities for clerical education in Ireland prior to the establishment of St. Patrick's college Maynooth in 1795;⁴¹³ the cost of educating a prospective student to the required standard to enter Maynooth and then putting him through three years of study was significant;⁴¹⁴ and the Catholic population, although increasing during the period, did not have the capital available to support greater clerical numbers.⁴¹⁵ Examining the shortage of clergymen during the pre-famine period Connolly stated that:

Between 1731 and 1800 the number of priests serving in Ireland increased by only 12 per cent, compared with an 88 per cent increase in population. Between 1800 and 1840 a 35 per cent increase in clerical numbers still failed to keep pace with a 51 per cent increase in population. As a result, the number of Catholics for each parish priest and curate increased from 1,587 in 1731 to 2,676 in 1800 and to almost 3,000 in 1840.⁴¹⁶

Similarly, David W. Miller noted of the lack of priests relative to the parishioners they were to serve that the balance only shifted after the famine as the population decreased drastically owing to death and emigration:

up to the famine the ratio between priests and lay population had been deteriorating... In 1840 there were about 2150 priests to minister to 6,500,000 Catholics (1:3000). By 1900 there were 3700 priests for 3,300,000 Catholics (1:900).⁴¹⁷

St. Patrick's college, Maynooth, was 'established by an act of parliament in 1795 to provide for the education of priests for the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland,'⁴¹⁸ and to

⁴¹³ Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 34.

⁴¹⁴ Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 38.

⁴¹⁵ Connolly, *Priests and People*, pp. 34-5.

⁴¹⁶ Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 33.

⁴¹⁷ D.W. Miller, 'Irish Catholicism and the Great Famine', in *Journal of Social History*, ix, no. 1 (1975), p. 83.

⁴¹⁸ Emmet Larkin, 'Economic Growth, Capital Investment, and the Roman Catholic Church in Nineteenth Century Ireland', in *The American Historical Review*, lxxii, no. 3 (1967), p. 859.

deal with the lack of priests within the country. Before the foundation of the college in Maynooth candidates for the priesthood had to travel to Europe, often France, to receive their ecclesiastical training. During the French Revolution of 1789 to 1799 France was in a state of transition and upheaval. Irish ecclesiastical colleges in France suffered as a result. The Irish bishops began to campaign for a domestic based, government funded, seminary in Ireland. They argued that the continued education of Ireland's priests abroad could lead to such candidates being influenced by 'the destructive republican spirit'⁴¹⁹ then prevalent in France. They maintained that a domestic college would allow the church hierarchy to exercise greater control over the clergy produced to minister to the ever-increasing Catholic population in Ireland. They achieved their aim in 1795, however, 'the college was in large part a government compromise or peace offering in place of further relief',⁴²⁰ namely, Catholic emancipation. A bill for the same, the ultimate concession for Catholics, was rejected by parliament that same year.

Those priests who had attended seminaries in continental Europe were revered and thought a lot more highly of than those who began to emerge from Maynooth. Connolly noted that:

A priest of the older generation, it was argued, had received the education of a gentleman... An education at Maynooth, by contrast, was vastly inferior... The 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.⁴²¹

The social origins of those who attended these seminaries, both Maynooth and those abroad, were also examined by Connolly. He suggested that it was popularly perceived that the Catholic clergy were taken 'from the inferior and uneducated classes', 'from a very low class', 'generally speaking from the lower orders'.⁴²² Connolly challenged this perception, however, stating that these claims appeared to 'have been the result partly of simple prejudice and partly of a failure to understand the complex social distinctions which existed within that population.'⁴²³ In support of his argument, Connolly listed the occupations of the fathers of the candidates attending Maynooth seminary in 1808. The

⁴¹⁹ V.J. McNally, 'John Thomas Troy, Archbishop of Dublin, and the Establishment of Saint Patrick's College, Maynooth, 1791-95', in *The Catholic Historical Review*, lxxvii, no. 4 (1981), p. 572.

⁴²⁰ McNally, 'John Thomas Troy', p. 567.

⁴²¹ Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 43.

⁴²² Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 35.

⁴²³ Connolly, *Priests and People*, pp. 46-7.

majority of these men were farmers (159 of 205),⁴²⁴ the amount of land they owned is not stated and variations in income between small farmers (up to 20 acres) and large farmers (upwards of 20 acres) could have been sizeable.⁴²⁵ The various other occupations listed that include; merchants, grocers, a land agent, a tax collector, a baker and a shoe and boot maker, suggest that candidates for the priesthood came from a wide cross section of Irish society, encompassing the lower and middle classes.⁴²⁶

The average wage or cash income of a parish priest was £65 at the beginning of the nineteenth century and £150 after 1825⁴²⁷ but Connolly explained that the Catholic clergy were also in receipt of certain 'customary entitlements'⁴²⁸ during the period:

Priests in different parts of the country regularly received payments in kind in addition to those made in cash... In 1835 priests in one parish in Co. Donegal were reported to receive from each family 'two shillings a year, one stook of barley and one hank of yarn', while in Errigal Truagh, Co. Monaghan, collections of oats appear as a regular item in the parish register, not only in the 1830s but into the 1860s and 1870s... Priests also commonly received the labour of their parishioners free of charge. According to a priest of the diocese of Cork, writing in 1806, it was custom 'that his turf should be cut, his corn reaped, his meadow mowed etc., gratis'.⁴²⁹

Similarly, Connolly noted that 'priests were entitled by custom to the hospitality of their parishioners, not only in the celebrations that might follow a christening or a marriage, but also after what was known as a 'station'.⁴³⁰ Stations were a form of Catholic household worship popular in Ireland in the second half of the eighteenth century and the first half of the nineteenth century. On such occasions the parish priest visited one of his parishioner's homes to hear confessions, say mass and engage in a celebratory meal afterwards. In his returns, in December 1800, the Bishop of Kildare and Leighlin stated that:

the stations... generally exceed, sometimes considerably, one hundred in a year, from which, of course, results a very capital saving in the article of house-keeping, especially in times like the present.⁴³¹

⁴²⁴ Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 39.

⁴²⁵ Clark, 'The Importance of Agrarian Classes', p. 27.

⁴²⁶ Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 39.

⁴²⁷ Connolly, *Priests and People*, pp. 48, 51.

⁴²⁸ Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 49.

⁴²⁹ Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 49.

⁴³⁰ Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 50.

⁴³¹ Viscount R.S. Castlereagh, 'I. Catholics. Abstracts of the returns of the several Roman Catholic Bishops of Ireland, relative to the state of their Church', in *Memoirs and Correspondence of Viscount Castlereagh*, (12 vols, London, 1849), iv, p. 154.

Many of Connolly's findings relating to the Roman Catholic clergy of pre-famine Ireland are reflected in Carleton's writings. In the short story "Denis O'Shaughnessy", first published in the *Examiner* between September and December 1831 and subsequently in the second series of *Traits and Stories*, Carleton described a candidate for the seminary at Maynooth drawn from a rural Catholic community. Old Denis O'Shaughnessy, the fledgling priest's father, rented a farm of approximately 18 acres, as Carleton's own father had. He was therefore considered a small farmer and occupied a position on the social ladder above labourer landholders or cottiers and just below the larger farmers of the middle class. Carleton highlighted the popular ambition that existed amongst rural farmers for one of their sons to enter the priesthood. Carleton's own father entertained this ambition for William and so it is fair to assume that Carleton drew upon his own personal experience in the construction of the character of Denis O'Shaughnessy. Within this short story, Carleton illustrated the attitude of the Irish peasantry towards their priests. Denis as merely a candidate for the priesthood is honoured and respected by the local community even before he leaves for Maynooth. In this sketch Carleton also represented 'stations' as a means through which the clergy exploited the laity and accused the clergy of using their influence over their parishioners for their own gain.

As noted, criticism of the clergy was a feature of international anti-Catholic literature. The celibacy of the Catholic clergy was perceived by Protestants as unnatural and contrary to their own beliefs and used to portray clerics as perverse and sexually dangerous.⁴³² Griffin states that the touchstones of Protestant anti-Catholicism centred around purgatory, the selling of indulgences and confession. That priests played such an active role in these practices made them targets for abuse and criticism. Priests were depicted variously as cruel, power-hungry, tyrannical, violent, abusive and as drunkards within the genre.⁴³³ Carleton's writings were by no means unique in this respect.

Such criticism was not confined to the Protestant sections of Irish society. Within Ireland the Catholic church hierarchy had made attempts to reform and exert better control over its clergy from the middle of the eighteenth century. The bishops highlighted avarice, women and drunkenness as the predominant vices that were found among their priests.⁴³⁴ Larkin noted that:

⁴³² Sandra Frink, 'Women, the Family, and the Fate of the Nation in American Anti-Catholic Narratives, 1830-1860', in *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, xviii, no. 2 (2009), p. 245.

⁴³³ Griffin, 'Revising the Popish Plot', p. 286.

⁴³⁴ Emmet Larkin, *The Historical Dimensions of Irish Catholicism*, (Washington, 1976), p. 64.

The seriousness of the problem of clerical avarice vis-a-vis the faithful, for example, was certainly reflected in early nineteenth century Ireland in the need of the bishops in the province of Dublin to set up by statute a uniform tariff for clerical dues at their diocesan synods in the summer of 1831.⁴³⁵

The practice of stations was frowned upon by Catholic reformers as ‘undignified if not unholy celebration[s] of sacred rites in profane places’⁴³⁶ and regarded as contributing largely to the problem of clerical avarice. Larkin stated that; ‘nearly all the synods, provincial and national, between 1830 and 1875 had statues disapproving of ‘stations’’.⁴³⁷ Drunkenness was also a problem amongst the clergy as it was amongst the rural population at large. Connolly noted that; ‘both Bicheno and Wakefield, in the course of otherwise favourable accounts of the Irish Catholic clergy, mentioned drunkenness as a fault to which some of their number were prone.’⁴³⁸ One prominent critic of those priests who abused alcohol at stations, wedding, christenings and funerals was Father Mathew who complained that the reason that a portion of the clergy did not support him in his temperance campaign was that they themselves were heavy drinkers.⁴³⁹ Protestants were therefore not alone in their criticism of the Roman Catholic clergy in Ireland during the period.

In “Denis O’Shaughnessy” Carleton introduced his readers to the character of the ‘priest-in-training’. When it had been determined that Denis O’Shaughnessy was destined for the priesthood he was treated differently than his siblings. He was not expected to work. His father kept a prize colt that was intended for him when he was ultimately ordained. The locals addressed him as ‘Sir’ and doffed their caps to him in passing. Carleton stated within the story that:

The highest object of an Irish peasant’s ambition is to see his son a priest. Whenever a farmer happens to have a large family, he usually destines one of them for the Church, if his circumstances are at all such as can enable him to afford the boy a proper education.⁴⁴⁰

⁴³⁵ Larkin, *Historical Dimensions*, p. 64.

⁴³⁶ Larkin, *Historical Dimensions*, p. 69.

⁴³⁷ Larkin, *Historical Dimensions*, p. 69.

⁴³⁸ Connolly, *Priest and People*, p. 66. Edward Wakefield (1774-1854), English philanthropist, land agent and statistician. Author of *An Account of Ireland, Statistical and Political*, (1812). David Moss, ‘Wakefield, Edward (1774-1854)’,

(www.oxforddnb.com.jproxy.nuim.ie/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-28414?rskey=KMUAwS&result=1) (14 January 2018).

⁴³⁹ Paul Townend, ‘Temperance, Father Mathew, and the Irish Clergy’, in *New Hibernian Review/Iris Éireannach Nua*, iii, no. 1 (Spring, 1999), pp. 111-22.

⁴⁴⁰ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 98.

In the character of Denis this ambition can be seen as a route towards upward social mobility. In his emulation of the behaviour of the local parish priest Denis expected a higher standard of living as one destined for the priesthood. To have their son ordained was a source of great pride and honour for Denis' parents. For the O'Shaughnessys Denis' becoming a priest would have led to greater respectability within their local community and an improved social standing. Carleton noted that:

Few circumstances prove the great moral influence which the Irish priesthood possess over the common people more forcibly than the extraordinary respect paid by the latter to such as are designed for the "mission".⁴⁴¹

Furthermore, Carleton stated that the education thought to be possessed by those within the priesthood added to the high regard in which they were held, since many of the peasantry were lacking in any form of education during the period in question:

The notions which the peasantry entertain of a priest's learning are as extravagant as they are amusing, and such, indeed, as would be too much for the pedantic vanity inseparable from a half-educated man to disclaim.⁴⁴²

Carleton detailed the transformation of Denis O'Shaughnessy's character from his lowly origins to prime candidate for the priesthood throughout the short story. As he advanced in his Classical education, studying Greek, Latin and English, and moved ever closer to departing for Maynooth Denis' popularity within the local community rose and he began to emulate the character of the local parish priest Father Finnerty. Carleton wrote of this parish priest that:

Father Finnerty was one of those priests who constitute a numerous species in Ireland; regular, but loose and careless in the observances of his church, he could not be taxed with any positive neglect of pastoral duty. He held his stations at stated times and places, with great exactness, but when the severer duties annexed to them were performed, he relaxed into the boon companion, sang his song, told his story, laughed his laugh, and occasionally danced his dance, the very *beau-ideal* of a rough, shrewd, humorous divine, who, amidst the hilarity of convivial mirth, kept an eye to his own interest, and sweetened the severity with which he exacted his "dues" by a manner at once jocose and familiar.⁴⁴³

⁴⁴¹ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 104.

⁴⁴² Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 111.

⁴⁴³ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, pp. 142-3.

Father Finnerty is portrayed as utilising his position within the local community to his own benefit. He ensures at stations, for example, that once he has performed the official or ‘severer duties’⁴⁴⁴ of saying mass and hearing confessions that he is well rewarded with the best of what food and drink his hosts can provide. He is rarely noted within the story to dine alone and takes every opportunity to secure a dinner invitation from one of his parishioners, saving himself such expense and instead burdening a local family with an extra mouth to feed. Denis is seen mimicking the conduct and behavior of Father Finnerty throughout the short story. He expects his own family to treat him in the same way they would the parish priest. He desires that he should dine as well as Father Finnerty and again signals that entry into the priesthood was perceived as a step upwards on the social ladder:

“it is neither dacent nor becoming that I should ate in the manner I have done, as vulgarly as themselves – that I should ate, I say, any longer without knife and fork. Neither, I announce, shall I in future drink my milk any longer, as I have, with all humility, done hitherto, out of a noggin; nor continue to disrobe my potatoes any longer without a becoming instrument. I must also have better viands to consume.”⁴⁴⁵

Denis also requested that his family address him as Dionysius rather than Dinny, the nickname they had become accustomed to using:

“It’s full time that I should be sirred; and if my own relations won’t call me sir instead of Dinny, it’s hardly to be expected strangers will do it... I’ll expect to be called Misther Dionysius... I wouldn’t for three ten-pennies that the priest would hear one of you call me Dinny; it would degradate me very much in his estimation.”⁴⁴⁶

Denis’ pretentious demands reveal him as a self-important youth while his insistence that he be called by the name of the Greek god of wine-making and excessive consumption reveals the satirical nature of Carleton’s tale. Denis’ requests were, however, informed by the way his community revered and honoured their parish priest. His expectations merely arose from the example that was set for him by Father Finnerty and by the way the laity submitted to the priest’s every request.

Carleton listed the rewards that motivated Denis’ desire to enter the priesthood, the life led by Father Finnerty being one of the major contributing factors. Denis determines to

⁴⁴⁴ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 142.

⁴⁴⁵ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, pp. 113-4.

⁴⁴⁶ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 114.

give up his sweetheart, Susan Connor, in favour of the life of a Catholic clergyman. He appears more concerned with the power the position of priest will afford him over the laity and the pleasure he might derive at their expense than with any religious or spiritual aspect of the role:

To be in the course of a few years a bond Jide [bona fide] priest; to possess unlimited sway over the fears and principles of the people; to be endowed with spiritual gifts to he knew not what extent; and to enjoy himself, as he had an opportunity of seeing Father Finnerty and his curate do, in the full swing of convivial pleasure, upon the ample hospitality of those who, in addition to this, were ready to kiss the latchet of his shoes – were, it must be admitted, no inconsiderable motives in influencing the conduct of a person reared in a humble condition of life.⁴⁴⁷

On the night before his scheduled interview with the bishop, who was to determine his suitability for a place in Maynooth seminary, a confident Denis outlined the manner in which he intended to use his position when he was ordained:

“Depend upon it, I’ll have them like mice before me – ready to run into the first auger-hole they meet. I’ll collect lots of oats, and get as much yarn every year as would clothe three regiments of militia, or, for that matter, of dragoons. I’ll appoint my stations, too, in the snuggest farmer’s houses in the parish, just as Father Finnerty, our worthy parochial priest, ingeniously contrives to do.”⁴⁴⁸

In Denis’ desire to become a priest there does not appear to be any sense of spiritual mission, calling or vocation. He is focused on the material rewards of the position, the increase in social status he will achieve and the authority he might command over the laity to feed his material desires. Carleton’s portrayal of Denis and indeed of Father Finnerty reflected poorly on the Roman Catholic clergy of the period. Writing in the *Examiner* for a Protestant readership Carleton highlighted the negative traits of the Roman Catholic clergy, their various abuses of power and their burdening upon the already distressed peasantry, who lived at a level of subsistence. At a later point in his career, in the short story “Life and Labours of a Catholic Curate” published in *Duffy’s Irish Catholic Magazine* (1847-8), Carleton wrote of these same vices but noted that these abusive priests were the exception rather than the rule. In “Denis O’Shaughnessy” he refrained from adding such a disclaimer and both Denis and the parish priest are held up as examples of the Irish Catholic clergy in general. Carleton’s remit when writing for these two contrasting magazines was very different as were their two respective readerships.

⁴⁴⁷ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 129.

⁴⁴⁸ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 136.

Carleton was critical of the conduct and behaviour of the Roman Catholic clergy of pre-famine Ireland on numerous levels. Two further instances of note appear in the short stories “The Lough Derg Pilgrim” and again “Denis O’Shaughnessy” in which Carleton described a priest refusing assistance to an unfortunate couple and then reacting violently when challenged; and a priest accepting a bribe to use his influence in favour of one of his parishioners. In “The Lough Derg Pilgrim” Carleton described a priest refusing charity to an old man and his son. The priest in question was hearing confessions in a cabin and stood outside it selling tickets to those seeking forgiveness. The old man of about sixty and his son of fourteen, approached the priest. In describing the pair Carleton noted that ‘they had a look of peculiar decency, but were thin and emaciated, even beyond what the rigour of their penance here could produce.’⁴⁴⁹ They both appealed to the clergyman for charity and assistance. The boy, the only survivor of seven children, had fallen ill in Petigo, the small town close by the island of St. Patrick’s Purgatory. Upon setting out on the pilgrimage the pair had the necessary funds to allow them to make the journey to their destination and back, however, the child’s illness had commanded the best part of their purse. The pair paid a sum of greater than five pence to see the priest. The priest listened to their dilemma and returned to them a five pence-piece, stating that it was as much as he could afford to give and that there were a great deal of poor in his own parish.⁴⁵⁰ The pair left the priest doomed and disheartened with less money than they had approaching him in the first instance. On witnessing this Carleton, narrating the short story from within, confronted the priest but to no avail. He extended his own charity to the father and son and was violently chastised by the priest for his interference.

In “Denis O’Shaughnessy” Carleton described an incident in which the parish priest, Father Finnerty, appeared to accept a bribe from Denis’ father. Father Finnerty covertly suggested that if Denis’ father was to give him his colt that he might be able in return to use his influence with the bishop to secure the young candidate’s position in Maynooth. Entry to St. Patrick’s seminary was subject to a nomination from the local bishop. The bishop would interview candidates and examine their classical learning to determine their suitability for entry.⁴⁵¹ Denis recalled the proposed agreement to his father stating:

Said I, “Father Finnerty, the colt, my paternal property, which you are pleased to eulogise so highly, is a good one; it was designed for myself when I should

⁴⁴⁹ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 256.

⁴⁵⁰ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, pp. 266-7.

⁴⁵¹ Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 38.

come out on the mission; however, I will undertake to say, if you get me into Maynooth, that my father on my authority will *lend* you the colt tomorrow, and the day of his claiming will be dependant upon the fulfilment of your promise, or *votum*.”⁴⁵²

Denis’ father agreed to the bargain, so that his ambition for Denis to become a priest might be realised, however, when Denis was interviewed by the bishop he was not immediately offered a place in Maynooth. He was instead sent home with a letter addressed to Father Finnerty in which the bishop reprimanded the priest for attempting to strike a deal with the O’Shaughnessys and for suggesting that he could be ‘influenced by anything but merit in the candidates.’⁴⁵³

The bishop desired to meet with the priest the following day and Father Finnerty invited Denis and his father along with him so that they might resolve the matter. The colt that the bishop desired to be returned to the O’Shaughnessys was brought to the meeting and was placed in the bishop’s stable. Denis’ father offered the colt to the bishop as an apologetic gesture for disrespecting him, but the bishop refused what he saw again as a bribe. At length Father Finnerty succeeded in calming the bishop by playing upon his passion for gardening, offering him a slip of a rare shrub. The parish priest later claimed that the bishop ‘would give the right of filling a vacancy in Maynooth any day of the year, for a rare plant or flower.’⁴⁵⁴ Denis ultimately secured the letter of recommendation from the bishop that had previously eluded him. The bishop put an end to the matter in his address to Father Finnerty, warning the priest of his future conduct, but in the same breath, stating, hypocritically, that he expected a slip of the plant the priest had mentioned on the following day:

“Now, this matter has ended in a manner satisfactory, not only to your young friend, but also to yourself. You must promise me that there shall be no more horse-dealing. I do not think jockeying of that description either creditable or just. I am unwilling to use harsher language, but I could not conscientiously let it pass without reproof. In the next place, will you let me have a slip of that flowering shrub you boast of?”⁴⁵⁵

Neither the bishop nor the parish priest emerged from this exchange with much credit. The bishop’s brother, a lawyer, also present at the meeting became the ultimate recipient of the

⁴⁵² Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 121.

⁴⁵³ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 153.

⁴⁵⁴ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 162.

⁴⁵⁵ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 163.

sought-after colt. Old Denis gifted the animal to the lawyer, stating that he could no longer keep it. The lawyer determined to speak positively of Denis to the bishop in return. All three men were seen to accept bribes of different kinds and Denis received his nomination for Maynooth on a basis that had little to do with his merits as a candidate. Carleton ended the incident returning to his earlier portrayal of the Roman Catholic clergy's desires for material possessions. Just as Denis had dreamt of the many duties in kind he would extract from his parishioners once a priest, the bishop and Father Finnerty are seen to have similar material yearnings.

The greatest example of Carleton's critique of the Catholic clergy lay, however, in his description of the aforementioned 'stations'. Carleton viewed these 'stations' as an extra burden on the already distressed peasantry of pre-famine Ireland. The population of Ireland doubled from 2.5 million in 1750 to 5 million in 1800.⁴⁵⁶ It continued to grow during the first half of the nineteenth century to approximately 8.2 million before the Great Famine of 1845-50.⁴⁵⁷ The increasing population led to widespread poverty. Two thirds of the population lived at a level of subsistence. As the population rose families were forced to live on smaller and smaller holdings of land through the process of subletting. The population was outstripping resources and bad harvests, like those experienced in 1817 and 1822, often proved fatal. The people could scarcely manage to feed themselves and yet at stations the hosts were expected to entertain their family, relatives, neighbours and the local clergy. Carleton described one such 'station' in the short story "The Station", first published between January and March 1829 in the *Examiner*, and later one of short stories included in the first series of *Traits and Stories*.

The formal visiting of the parish priest to one of his parishioner's homes to hear confessions, say mass and engage in a celebratory meal afterwards, so-called a 'station', was a very regular occurrence in pre-famine Ireland. Miller noted that stations came about in the second half of the eighteenth century as a result of the legislative impediments put in place by the British Government through the penal laws to suppress religious worship, as well as, a mass attendance rate amongst the Catholic population of less than fifty per cent:

Lacking the resources to bring about full weekly mass attendance, in many parts of Ireland the church invented a stopgap procedure that might at least

⁴⁵⁶ S.J. Connolly, 'Society and economy, 1815-70', in Ó Corráin and O'Riordan, *Ireland 1815-1870*, (Cornwall, 2011), p. 33.

⁴⁵⁷ Connolly, 'Society and economy, 1815-70', p. 34. Connolly, *Priests and People*, p. 20.

support compliance with the requirement of annual confession and communion, the practice of “stations,” by which the priest made semiannual or annual visits to homes throughout his parish to hear confessions from and serve communion to his host’s family and neighbors. The mass would be followed by a lavish (by rural Irish standards) dinner for the priest – a significant part of his income – and for the more respectable communicants.⁴⁵⁸

Stations continued into the early nineteenth century despite the repeal of most of the penal laws by 1793 and a relaxation of the laws that had previously barred the open worship of the Catholic religion. A lack of church buildings, poor infrastructure, extensive distances for people to travel to their nearest church and a lack of priests to cater for an increasing population meant that circumstances necessitated the continued existence of household-based ceremonies.

At Sunday mass the priest announced to his parishioners who would be required to host a station on specific days in the week to follow. While great honour was bestowed upon those who were to host these ‘stations’, a week of hard work and great expense accompanied this honour. The best of what food and drink could be afforded and often as Joseph Cunnane noted, better than what could be afforded, along with new suits of clothes for the whole family were required.⁴⁵⁹ Homes were cleaned from top to bottom and necessary repairs were made. Ultimately, the Irish peasant let no expense be spared as he prepared his home and family to receive the parish priest for a ‘station’.

The station described in the short story occurred in the home of Phaddy Sheamus Phaddy and his wife Katty. Shortly after arriving at the house the parish priest, Father Philemy, went to inspect Katty’s larder to determine what the station dinner was to consist of. Father Philemy was given the freedom of his parishioner’s home and allowed examine the extent of provisions the family had procured for the occasion. As in “Denis O’Shaughnessy”, the priest in “The Station” is portrayed as more concerned with what food and drink would be available to him rather than the religious duties he was there to perform. Father Philemy sat Phaddy down beside him by the fire and proceeded to play a ‘trick’ on him. Father Philemy had not discovered any fresh beef or mutton in Katty’s larder. The priest convinced Phaddy that he had better secure more rations for the dinner offering the absolution of his many sins as an incentive:

⁴⁵⁸ D.W. Miller, ‘Landscape and Religious Practice: A Study of Mass Attendance in Pre-Famine Ireland,’ in *Éire-Ireland*, xl, no. 1&2 (2005), pp. 100-1.

⁴⁵⁹ Joseph Cunnane, ‘The Neighbourhood Mass’, in *The Furrow*, xix, no. 10 (1968), p. 563.

‘A leg of mutton is a good dish, and a bottle of wine is fit for the first man in the land!’ observed his Reverence; ‘five years! – why, is it possible you staid away so long, Phaddy! how could you expect to prosper from five years’ burden of sin upon your conscience – what would it cost you -----?’

‘Indeed, myself’s no judge, your Reverence, as to that; but cost what it will, I’ll get both.’⁴⁶⁰

Father Philemy opened this exchange by asserting his authority over his parishioner declaring himself ‘the first man in the land,’⁴⁶¹ as the head of the local community. Essentially the cunning priest by threatening shame and fear secured for his dinner an extra leg of mutton and bottle of wine. Events like ‘stations’, weddings and christenings bore no expense to the priests and on such occasions they were extremely well fed. The parish priests of early nineteenth century Ireland earned, as stated, a wage of between £50 and £100 a year. Curates earned as little as £10 a year but both earned more than their parishioners, most of whom existed outside of the cash economy. Their income was, however, supplemented by the hospitality of their parishioners. As stated earlier in this chapter, Carleton’s criticisms of Catholicism were by no means unique. Parallels can be drawn between his writings and the wider catalogue of international nineteenth century anti-Catholic literature. His depictions of the clergy extorting the laity might be seen to mirror popular and traditional Protestant portrayals of the priest or monk as ‘the wine-guzzling gourmand who keeps a mistress and happily absolves any sin for a price.’⁴⁶² In the Irish context, stations acted as the ideal vehicle through which Carleton could illustrate this criticism of the Catholic clergy at large.

A further example of this appears in the short story “Denis O’Shaughnessy” as Denis explains to his family the manner in which he intends to conduct his ‘stations’ when he becomes a priest. On the night before his interview with the local bishop Denis, in high spirits and with confidence, described in detail the stations he would attend when ordained:

‘Thus we go on absolving in great style, till it is time for the matutinal meal – vulgarly called breakfast; when the whisky, eggs toast, and tea as strong as Hercules, with ham, fowl, beef-steaks, or mutton-chops, all pour in upon us in the full tide of hospitality. Helter-skelter, cut and thrust, right and left, we work away, till the appetite reposes itself upon the cushion of repletion; and off we go once more, full and warm, to the delicate employment of adjudicating upon sin and transgression, until dinner comes, when, having despatched

⁴⁶⁰ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 165.

⁴⁶¹ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 165.

⁴⁶² Griffin, ‘Revising the Popish Plot’, p. 281.

[dispatched] *as many as possible* – for the quicker we get through them the better – we set about despatching what is always worth a ship-load of such ruff-raff – videlicet, a good and extensive dinner.⁴⁶³

Again, through the character of the soon to be priest, Carleton depicted the clergy possessing the vices of greed and gluttony and showing complete disregard for their religious duties. He portrayed them as caring little for the spiritual wellbeing of their laity and merely concerned with what nourishment and refreshment they could extract from their hosts on such occasions. Denis continued:

Oh, ye pagan professors of ating and drinking, Bacchus, Epicurus, and St. Heliogabalus, Anthony of Padua, and Paul the Hermit, who poached for his own venison, St. Tuck and St. Tak'em, St. Drinkem and St. Eatem, with all ye other reverend worthies, who bore the blushing honours of the table thick upon your noses, come and inspire your unworthy candidate while he essays to chant the praises of a station dinner!⁴⁶⁴

Denis concluded his sermon stating; 'a station dinner is the very pinnacle of a priest's happiness.'⁴⁶⁵ His attitude suggests that the priests' behaviour was widely accepted amongst these rural communities. Carleton expressed, in these two accounts of stations, the immorality of such demands being placed upon the already distressed people of pre-famine Ireland by their clergy. Carleton portrayed the clergy getting fat through the exploitation of their parishioners, most of whom were driven to great expense to cater for such occasions as stations, weddings, and christenings. This point is further emphasised by the appearance of a rotund monk or friar in the short story "Shane Fadh's Wedding" published in the first series of *Traits and Stories*. Friar Rooney arrives, accidentally he suggests, at Shane Fadh's wedding dinner on horseback with a sack of oats for which he had been 'questin'. Carleton explained that 'when an Irish priest or friar collects corn or money from the people in a gratuitous manner the act is called 'questin'.⁴⁶⁶ Ultimately, through his accidental attendance at the wedding, the friar secures for himself a hearty dinner and upon leaving a generous wedge of wedding cake, two fat fowl and two bottles of whisky:

He [Friar Rooney] then called over my mother-in-law to the dresser, and after some collogin she slipped two fat fowl, that had never been touched, into one of his coat pockets, that was big enough to hould a leg of mutton. My father then called me over, and said, 'Shane' says he, 'hadn't you better slip Father

⁴⁶³ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 138.

⁴⁶⁴ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 138.

⁴⁶⁵ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 139.

⁴⁶⁶ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 73.

Rooney a bottle or two of that whisky; there's plenty of it there that wasn't touched, and you won't be a bit the poorer of it, maybe, this day twelve months.' I accordingly dropped two bottles of it into the other pocket for his reverence wanted a balance, anyhow.⁴⁶⁷

To add to his already substantial bounty the Friar, having had a conversation with the son of the landlord of the estate who had visited his tenants during the happy occasion, secured an invitation to the gentleman's home where he was to collect an additional sack of oats.

During the first phase or stage of his career, writing for the *Examiner* and publishing almost exclusively with William Curry Jnr. and Co., the same firm that produced the aforementioned periodical, Carleton's depictions of the Roman Catholic clergy of pre-famine Ireland were decidedly negative. The Catholic priests posed one of the greatest obstacles to the New Reformation Movement's evangelical crusades. The Catholic lower classes honoured, revered, and indeed, feared their spiritual leaders. The clergy were often free to exercise absolute authority over their parishioners. Drawing the laity away from their religion while the priests held such influence over the people would prove no easy task. Under the sanction of Otway at the *Examiner* Carleton was tasked with illustrating to the Protestant public the various abuses of power committed by the clergy against the distressed poor of rural Ireland. Carleton by drawing on the popular representations of priests found within anti-Catholic literature presented the clergy within his short stories of the period as personifications of the contrived saints that Denis O'Shaughnessy eulogised, 'St. Tuck and St. Takem, St. Drinkem and St. Eatem',⁴⁶⁸ whose desires for material possessions and luxurious nourishment outweighed any commitment to their religious duties. As with his treatment of the Catholic rural poor and their tendency towards superstition and fairy belief, the manner in which Carleton portrayed the priesthood would alter over time. As will be examined through this chapter, once away from the *Examiner*, Carleton's depictions of the clergy would become less negative and would ultimately become decidedly more positive when writing for nationalist patrons post 1845. The Roman Catholic clergy feature, albeit to a diminishing extent and in a less negative way in the second and third phases of Carleton's writing career.

⁴⁶⁷ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 82.

⁴⁶⁸ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 138.

II. Contributions to the *DUM*, *The Citizen* and *The Nation*

Carleton's last contribution to the *Examiner*, "Denis O'Shaughnessy", was abridged or cut short, as the departing Otway claimed 'it was necessary to complete all serial contributions with the end of the year.'⁴⁶⁹ Having discovered Carleton, Otway had the Tyrone native contribute to every subsequent issue of the *Examiner* until he himself left the magazine, but Carleton's employment at the *Examiner* was dependent on Otway's influence. Otway went on to found the *Dublin Penny Journal* (1832-7), first issued on 30 June 1832. This new weekly publication claimed to be 'unconnected with sect or party' and 'suited to the pockets of the poorer classes of society'.⁴⁷⁰ It aimed to be 'useful' and 'instructive' and excluded topics relating to 'politics or polemics, by which their [Irish] minds had been previously and almost exclusively occupied.'⁴⁷¹ It might therefore be argued that Otway had grown tired of the evangelical proselytising of the *Examiner*. It also appears, however, that Otway may have been forced out of his position. A reading of the leading article to the January 1832 edition of the 'New Series' of the *Examiner* reveals that the periodical had been struggling and that its popularity had decreased. A note at the end of the article suggests that its patrons may have become unhappy with Otway's editorship:

'the New Series of the Christian Examiner will display a marked superiority in its typographical execution and editorial arrangement.'⁴⁷²

Whatever the reason for their departure from the *Examiner* Carleton and Otway continued their working relationship as Carleton became a regular contributor to *The Dublin University Magazine* (1833-41) and *The Irish Penny Journal* (1840-1), two periodicals Otway was involved in founding.

Faced with poverty and distress it appears that Carleton reinvented himself throughout his career to survive. His financial struggles throughout the nineteenth century are evident from his applications to the Royal Literary Fund and in his pursuit of a state pension. It is surely no coincidence that Sir William Betham⁴⁷³ applied to the fund on

⁴⁶⁹ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 18.

⁴⁷⁰ 'Preface', *Dublin Penny Journal*, i, no. 1 (1832).

⁴⁷¹ 'Preface', *Dublin Penny Journal*.

⁴⁷² 'The Examiner and its Prospects', in *The Christian Examiner, New Series*, i, no. 1 (1832), p. 8.

⁴⁷³ Sir William Betham (1779-1853), antiquary, appointed Ulster King of Arms in 1820, acted as secretary to the Royal Irish Academy. J.T. Gilbert, 'Betham, Sir William (1779-1853)', (www.oxforddnb.com.jproxy.nuim.ie/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-2301?rskey=jFxTP4&result=1) (21 December 2017).

Carleton's behalf in August 1831. Crofton Croker was concerned that Carleton was experiencing difficulty and it appears that he had asked for Betham's assistance with the matter. Croker, who corresponded with Carleton on occasion, was an admirer of the author and offered in 1833 to review the second series of *Traits and Stories* upon its release.⁴⁷⁴ Betham stated in a letter to Croker that Carleton 'is too proud to solicit or even to make known his wants.'⁴⁷⁵ He mentioned giving Carleton money which the novelist would 'only receive as a loan'⁴⁷⁶ confident that his distress was only temporary. In applying to the fund authors submitted a list of their published works, stated the circumstances of their financial distress and provided letters from friends and colleagues to back-up their appeal. Cases were considered at monthly meetings where the applicants' literary merit, based on samples of their writings, was established and their financial positions were evaluated.⁴⁷⁷ At this point in his career Carleton had published six books, including the first and second series of *Traits and Stories* and was awarded the sum of £10 by the fund.⁴⁷⁸

Ten years later Carleton himself applied to the Literary Fund in December 1841. His distress at this time seemed even more pressing. He had added five volumes to his canon but complained of being 'poorly rewarded' and 'poorly remunerated'.⁴⁷⁹ He applied for the sum of £100 stating that he had eleven mouths to feed daily, seven children, two servants, his wife's and his own.⁴⁸⁰ On this occasion Carleton was awarded £40 but less than a year later he wrote to Prime Minister Robert Peel requesting that the pension of the deceased John Banim be transferred unto him. The novelist based his claim for a pension on 'the services which I had rendered Irish Literature'.⁴⁸¹ Carleton's financial struggles continued throughout his career. After years of appeals he was eventually awarded a pension of £200 in 1848. Condy Connellan, writing on behalf of the Lord Lieutenant, informed Carleton that his pension had been granted:

⁴⁷⁴ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 23.

⁴⁷⁵ Sir William Betham to Thomas Crofton Croker, 6 Aug. 1831, (British Library, Royal Literary Fund – Case Files, Loan 96 RLF 1/711/2).

⁴⁷⁶ Sir William Betham to Thomas Crofton Croker.

⁴⁷⁷ Janet Smith, 'A Short History', (www.rlf.org.uk/home/our-history/) (15 Feb 2018).

⁴⁷⁸ William Carleton to Sir William Betham, 8 Sept. 1831, (B.L., Royal Literary Fund, Loan 96 RLF 1/711/4).

⁴⁷⁹ William Carleton to the Committee of the Literary Fund, 29 Nov. 1841, (B.L., Royal Literary Fund, Loan 96 RLF 1/711/7).

⁴⁸⁰ William Carleton to the Committee of the Literary Fund.

⁴⁸¹ William Carleton to Sir Robert Peel, 21 Oct. 1842, (B.L., Peel Papers, Vol. CCCXXXVII (ff. 355), 13-31 Oct. 1842, Add MS 40517 ff. 171).

as an acknowledgment of the high position you have attained in literature, and the distinguished ability with which you have illustrated the character of your country.⁴⁸²

The award of a pension was of significant benefit to Carleton yet one quarter of it, £50, would go annually towards servicing an insurance policy the author had taken out on his life. The novelist blamed his financial insecurity on the fact that he had remained at home and published his works in Ireland. As stated he complained of being poorly remunerated for his efforts and Samuel Lover⁴⁸³ in a letter endorsing Carleton's 1841 appeal to the Literary Fund corroborated this claim:

Residing in Ireland, where the opportunities for publication are limited, and literary labours therefore inadequately paid, William Carleton has often been [reduced] to poverty and distress.⁴⁸⁴

O'Donoghue explained that Carleton was in the habit of selling the copyrights to his works outright to secure lump sums.⁴⁸⁵ This meant that he received no further payments for his novels based on sales. His poor management of his financial situation coupled with a large family meant that he was forced at times as the *Morning Post* put it in their obituary of Carleton into 'writing for Bread.'⁴⁸⁶

Such accusations of being a jobbing writer might be perceived negatively and Carleton's reliability as a witness may subsequently be called into question. By acknowledging the twists and turns in the author's career and considering the circumstances under which his different writings were produced, however, invaluable insights into contemporary thinking may be gleaned from Carleton's works. One must expect that Carleton would have denied all accusations of being a jobbing writer had they been put to him yet there is significant evidence to suggest that at certain points in his career the novelist was undoubtedly a pen for hire. For each commission Carleton was fulfilling a brief and those briefs were formed on the basis of contemporary perceptions

⁴⁸² O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 125.

⁴⁸³ O'Donoghue suggested that Carleton and Lover were friends. He stated that Lover had visited Carleton at his home in Dublin on several occasions and that the two met again in London in 1850 when Carleton had spent some time in the city attempting to find a publisher for his novel *The Black Baronet*. O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, pp. 155-6.

⁴⁸⁴ Samuel Lover to the Committee of the Literary Fund, 8 Nov. 1841, (B.L., Royal Literary Fund, Loan 96 RLF 1/711/5).

⁴⁸⁵ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 99.

⁴⁸⁶ Press cuttings on a pension provided for William Carleton (1866) and an obituary for him (1869), Jan. 1866-2 Feb. 1869, (B.L., Royal Literary Fund, Loan 96 RLF 1/711/13).

relating to a variety of aspects and issues of pre-famine Irish society. While Carleton may have shaped his depictions to suit each particular cause thus diluting the historical accuracy of his portrayals there are nonetheless societal truths, expositions of the perceptions that prevailed among the differing parties of readers he addressed, revealed within the author's works. Carleton's sketches might therefore be considered as unveiling as much about the readers they were addressed to as about the peasants they actually described.

Having been relieved of his duties at the *Examiner*, Carleton contributed two short stories to the short-lived *The University Review and Quarterly Magazine*, "Neal Malone" (March, 1833) and "The Dream of a Broken Heart" (April, 1833), before beginning an association with the *DUM* that would last eight years. The *DUM* represented 'the interests of Ireland's Protestant, Anglo-Irish educated class.'⁴⁸⁷ In total, Carleton contributed nine short stories to the *DUM* between 1833 and 1841.⁴⁸⁸ During this time Carleton also produced *Tales of Ireland* (1834), *Fardorougha the Miser*, (1839) and *The Fawn of Springvale, or, Jane Sinclair and other tales*, (1841) that comprised stories previously published in the *DUM*.⁴⁸⁹

Carleton's *DUM* stories differed from those published in the *Examiner*. The subject matter, the lives of the Irish peasantry, did not change but for the most part Carleton neglected the theme of religion when writing for the *DUM*. The anti-Catholicism that was characteristic of his *Examiner* stories did remain, yet, it did not occupy as prominent a position within these later sketches. Free from the propagandist remit of the *Examiner*, Carleton chose to write stories that were not exclusively concerned with religious matters. Each of "The Dead Boxer" (1833), "Lha Dhu, or, the Dark Day" (1834), and "Jane Sinclair, or, the fawn of Springvale" (1836), were romances in which the stories' protagonists had to overcome adversity, often opposition to their union from their families, to be together. "The Misfortunes of Barney Branagan" (1841) chronicled the life of an unlucky butter merchant while "The Resurrection of Barney Bradley" (1841) was a farce

⁴⁸⁷ Brake and Demoor, *DNCJ*, p. 183.

⁴⁸⁸ Carleton's contributions to *The Dublin University Magazine* between 1833 and 1841 included: "The Dead Boxer" (1833), "Lha Dhu, or, The Dark Day" (1834), "Jane Sinclair, or, The Fawn of Springvale" (1836), "Faradorougha the Miser, or, The Convicts of Lisnamona", "Richard the Rake, in three Snatches", "Barney Brady's Goose, or, Dark Doings at Slathbeg", "The Rev. Blackthorn McFlail" (1837-8), "The Three Wishes" (1839), "The Misfortunes of Barney Branagan" (1841).

⁴⁸⁹ Between 1828 and 1841 Carleton contributed to *The Christian Examiner*, *The Family Magazine*, *The National Magazine* originally *The Dublin Literary Gazette*, or, *Weekly Chronicle of Criticism, Belles-Lettres and Fine Arts*, *The University Review and Quarterly Magazine*, *The Dublin University Magazine*, *The Citizen*, or *Dublin Monthly Magazine*, *Chambers' Edinburgh Journal* and *The Irish Penny Journal*.

centring around a peasant barber who claimed also to have skill as a medical practitioner. “The Autobiography of the Rev. Blackthorn M’Flail” (1837), a satirical caricature of what Carleton termed the ‘hedge priest’⁴⁹⁰ was exceptional in this period as the only one of Carleton’s *DUM* stories that was overtly religious in theme. The tale, that related the festivities that occurred following a christening, was, however, rather more comic than it was negative, derogatory and critical. That said, Carleton’s depiction of the hedge priests was not positive. Carleton, therefore, did not alter his stance on Catholicism during the 1830s. He chose, however, not to display it in the same way as he had in the *Examiner*. While both periodicals drew their readers from a similar social demographic and both had political aims, the *DUM* had a rather more cultural focus than the *Examiner*. Whereas Carleton’s was almost the only fiction to appear in the *Examiner*, the *DUM* featured writing from many of the prominent literary figures of the period, including Charles Lever, Sheridan Le Fanu, Samuel Lover, Samuel Ferguson and James Clarence Mangan.⁴⁹¹ At the *DUM* it was expected, therefore, that Carleton should entertain rather than proselytise.

In 1840 and 1841 Carleton contributed two short stories to *The Citizen, or Dublin Monthly Magazine*, a nationalist publication founded by pro-repealers, Thomas Clarke Wallis and John Blake Dillon, the latter of whom would become a founding member of Young Ireland. That Carleton, whose ‘name was odious to Catholic publishers’,⁴⁹² was accepted or recruited to write for *The Citizen* can be explained by his popularity during that period, following the success of *Traits and Stories*, and indeed by the approach of the magazine. *The Citizen* can be seen as an antecedent to *The Nation*.⁴⁹³ Articles on Irish history, the United Irishmen and absenteeism, coupled with writings from Carleton and republications of the Banims’ and Griffin’s works saw it anticipate the cultural nationalism that would define Young Ireland’s organ.⁴⁹⁴ Writing for *The Citizen* was no insignificant departure for Carleton and it initiated a transitional phase in his writings. Neither of Carleton’s contributions to *The Citizen*, “The Parents Trial” (June 1840) or “Moll Roe’s Mariage” (March 1841), dealt with religious matters nor were they particularly offensive to the Catholic or Protestant religions. The significance of Carleton’s writing for *The Citizen* lay not in the content of his stories but in his willingness to write for a nationalist publication and in his attempts to reach out to a new demographic. During the same period,

⁴⁹⁰ William Carleton, “The Autobiography of the Rev. Blackthorn M’Flail, Late P.P. of Ballymachackem”, in *Dublin University Magazine*, x, no. 58 (1837), p. 410.

⁴⁹¹ Brake and Demoor, *DNCJ*, p. 183.

⁴⁹² O’Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 57.

⁴⁹³ Brake and Demoor, *DNCJ*, p. 120.

⁴⁹⁴ Brake and Demoor, *DNCJ*, p. 121.

Carleton also revised his *Traits and Stories* series. The first and second series of *Traits and Stories* had run through numerous editions, six and four respectively. He published the complete, 'A New Edition' between 1842 and 1844. As noted, in the revision of his stories Carleton removed some of the anti-Catholicism that defined his early work. These revisions began a process that saw Carleton shift away from the anti-papist propaganda of his early writings.

Carleton's shift was fully realised when he contributed two articles to *The Nation* in September and October 1843. *The Nation* was the organ or instrument of the anti-government, pro-repeal organisation, Young Ireland, and was founded in October 1842 by Thomas Davis, the aforementioned John Blake Dillon and Charles Gavan Duffy. The liberal, non-sectarian Young Ireland movement was made up of both Protestants and Catholics. They worried that the Repeal movement under Daniel O'Connell's leadership appeared to ally Irish nationalism with Roman Catholicism. They hoped that 'Protestants would retain a position of leadership in a free Ireland'⁴⁹⁵ and that the Protestant Ascendancy should not simply be usurped by a Catholic one. Alvin Jackson noted that 'deep practical and ideological divisions'⁴⁹⁶ existed between O'Connell and Young Ireland. O'Connell was an advocate for the use of moral force whereas Young Ireland believed that violence would eventually become necessary to achieve their aim. The Repeal camp was also divided on the 'University question' or Robert Peel's scheme to establish secular universities in Ireland. It was the issue of physical force, however, that proved the catalyst in a split in the leadership of the Repeal movement. Peel banned a monster meeting scheduled for Clontarf on 8 October 1843 and O'Connell cancelled it for fear of bloodshed.⁴⁹⁷ Young Ireland opposed O'Connell's decision but continued reluctantly to follow his lead before openly breaking with him in January 1847. Young Ireland established their own rival organisation, the Irish Confederation, under William Smith O'Brien, and attempted a rising in July 1848 that was easily quelled. Young Ireland brought a new brand of non-sectarian cultural nationalism to the political arena in the 1840s and despite their failed uprising their legacy lived on in Charles Gavan Duffy and John Mitchel. These exiled leaders continued to write and would influence 'not just the

⁴⁹⁵ Alvin Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998 War Peace and Beyond*, (West Sussex, 2010), p. 54.

⁴⁹⁶ Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998*, p. 54.

⁴⁹⁷ Kathleen Quigley, 'Daniel O'Connell and the Leadership Crisis within the Irish Repeal Party 1843-1845', in *Albion: A Quarterly Journal Concerned with British Studies*, ii, no. 2 (1970), p. 100.

succeeding generation of militant nationalist... [but] the generation that won Irish Independence.⁴⁹⁸

Carleton stated in 1848 that: 'I am not now nor have I ever been at any time a Repealer.'⁴⁹⁹ It was curious then that he chose to write for *The Nation* and become associated with Young Ireland. It is likely, however, that the non-sectarian focus of Young Ireland appealed to the author. During this phase of his career Carleton moved away from the anti-Catholicism of his earlier productions to write from a decidedly less conservative perspective. Rather than transfer his critique from Catholics to Protestants, however, he began to investigate the Irish situation in its entirety searching for the root causes that had led to the country's ills. A combination of events occurred about this time that help explain Carleton's shift. First, Otway died in 1842. There is no mention of Otway's death in Carleton's surviving papers and O'Donoghue does not make any reference to his passing in the continuation of Carleton's autobiography. The pair's relationship at this point is not clear, however, given the influence that Otway had had on Carleton's career up to this juncture it is entirely possible that his passing had some impact on his former recruit. Secondly, Charles Lever became editor of the *DUM* in 1842. Carleton did not contribute to the magazine during Lever's tenure. Indeed, in October 1843 Carleton would accuse Lever of plagiarising the works of Walter Scott, William Maxwell, and others, and it is clear that the pair did not get on.⁵⁰⁰ In his article in *The Nation*, Carleton accused Lever of selling out the people of Ireland through the stereotypical portrayals found within his fiction.⁵⁰¹ Thirdly, John Banim also died in 1842. Upon the novelist's death Carleton appealed for Banim's pension to be transferred to him in recognition of the contribution he had made to Irish literature. His appeal was rejected, but he was awarded a pension some years later in 1848. Carleton was at this point in his career struggling financially. Charles Gavan Duffy was a friend of Carleton's and it is likely that he was instrumental in recruiting Carleton to write, first for *The Citizen*, and later for *The Nation*. A small selection of correspondence between the two men during the period 1846-50 survives and Carleton's financial instability is evident in these letters.⁵⁰² Further, O'Donoghue suggested that Carleton was a regular visitor to *The Nation* offices.⁵⁰³ In the same way that Otway offered Carleton a

⁴⁹⁸ Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998*, p. 56.

⁴⁹⁹ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 133.

⁵⁰⁰ William Carleton, 'The "Dublin University Magazine" and Mr. Lever', *The Nation*, (7 October 1843).

O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, pp. 52, 61.

⁵⁰¹ Carleton, 'Mr. Lever'.

⁵⁰² (N.L.I., Gavan Duffy Papers, Mss. 5756).

⁵⁰³ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 258.

position at the *Examiner* in 1828, it appears that Young Ireland took advantage of the author's circumstances and offered him the opportunity to write for their cause and earn some much-needed cash in the 1840s.

Carleton contributed two articles to *The Nation* in 1843. The first entitled "The Late John Banim" appeared on 22 September while the second, "The "Dublin University Magazine" and Mr. Lever" was published on 7 October. Carleton's article on Banim, who had passed away the previous August, was a eulogistic piece. In his nationalism, writing for a predominantly Protestant and British readership, publishing his work solely in Britain, Banim was perceived as heroic by the cultural nationalists of Young Ireland. Carleton revered Banim as a man who loved his country and noted that he was politically aware of the plight of the lower orders in Ireland, which was a direct consequence of British rule, all despite the fact that his own early writings were almost antithetical in perspective to those of Banim. In praising Banim Carleton struck an abrasive comparison between Ireland's first Catholic novelist and Charles Lever:

Unlike Mr. Lever, he never tramples upon truth or probability, nor offers disgusting and debasing caricatures of Irish life and feeling as the characteristics of his country... He is, in every sense, self-dependent and original; nor will you find a stale or stolen joke in all his works. There is, in fact, more difference between Banim and Lever than there is between pantomime and the legitimate drama.⁵⁰⁴

A similar attack had been earlier initiated upon Lever in *The Nation* of 10 June 1843 by Charles Gavan Duffy. Gavan Duffy had accused Lever of plagiarism citing passages in *Charles O'Malley* (1842) that had been copied from William Maxwell's *Adventures of Captain Blake, or My Life* (1835). He also argued that Lever had plagiarised work from Walter Scott, Eyre Evans Crowe and Benjamin Disraeli. In October Carleton continued this assault on the then editor of the *DUM* in his second contribution to *The Nation*.

Lever began his career in literature in 1837 with the serialised publication of *The Confessions of Harry Lorrequer* (February - April 1837) in the *DUM*. His brand of comic military sketches, modelled on the works of his friend William Maxwell, particularly *Wild Sports of the West* (1832), proved popular but also succeeded in earning him the displeasure of Irish nationalists. Thomas Flanagan argued that Lever's comical, hard-

⁵⁰⁴ Carleton, 'John Banim'.

drinking, rowdy Irish caricatures enraged pro-repealers who believed that his stereotypical portrayals of Irishmen played up to the British perception of the stage Irishman and were damaging to their campaign.⁵⁰⁵ When Lever became editor of the *DUM* in April 1842, however, he had succeeded in increasing the circulation of the magazine to 4,000, an all-time high for the publication. He did this mainly through the serialisation of his own novels within the periodical, *Jack Hinton the Guardsman* (January – December 1842) and *Tom Burke of 'Ours'* (February 1843 – September 1844), but also by exporting it to Britain.⁵⁰⁶ In priming the magazine for sale in Britain, Lever began to engage British contributors and alienated some of those regular Irish contributors who had published in the *DUM* previously, Carleton included.⁵⁰⁷ He favoured fiction over some of the more polemical writings that had been a feature of the magazine prior to his appointment and instalments of his serial fiction typically fronted each issue.⁵⁰⁸

In his article attacking Lever, Carleton aligned himself firmly with Gavan Duffy, and arguably with a nationalist critique. It was a scathing attack on Lever, his fiction and the manner in which he was then conducting the *DUM*. Carleton accused Lever of being a ‘thief’⁵⁰⁹ and a ‘literary cheat’,⁵¹⁰ alluding to Gavan Duffy’s accusations of plagiarism. He also charged Lever with misrepresenting Ireland and the Irish people to his British readership. Carleton suggested that Lever; ‘panders to the English taste of the present day, which had been formed upon those disgusting libels that make us ridiculous to the world.’⁵¹¹ Carleton charged Lever with selling the Irish people ‘for pounds, shillings, and pence’⁵¹² and ‘for bearing false evidence against his country.’⁵¹³ His criticism of Lever appears hypocritical given the tone of his own early anti-Catholic writings. In many ways Lever was in the 1840s doing the same thing Carleton had done in the immediate aftermath of the granting of Catholic emancipation. Carleton in criticising Lever, however, was aligning himself with his patrons, Young Ireland. Through continued self-fashioning

⁵⁰⁵ Thomas Flanagan, ‘Literature in English, 1801-91’, in W.E. Vaughan, *A New History of Ireland, V: Ireland under the Union, 1, 1801-70*, (Oxford, 1989), p. 493.

⁵⁰⁶ Brake and Demoor, *DNCJ*, p. 184.

⁵⁰⁷ Carleton had already charged Lever with plagiarism prior to his 1843 article in the *Nation*. Lever’s first contribution to the *DUM*, in May 1836, was a short story entitled ‘The Black Mask’. Carleton claimed to have read the story before. Some years earlier Lever had entrusted the story to a friend who was to have it published in a British periodical. The story did appear in *The Story-Teller* in 1833 but not under Lever’s name. Lever obviously resented Carleton for the accusation. W.E. Hall, ‘The “Dublin University Magazine” and Isaac Butt, 1834-1838’ in *Victorian Periodicals Review*, xx, no. 2 (1987), p. 52.

⁵⁰⁸ Brake and Demoor, *DNCJ*, p. 360.

⁵⁰⁹ Carleton, ‘John Banim’.

⁵¹⁰ Carleton, ‘John Banim’.

⁵¹¹ Carleton, ‘The “Dublin University Magazine” and Mr. Lever’, *The Nation*, (7 October 1843).

⁵¹² Carleton, ‘Mr. Lever’.

⁵¹³ Carleton, ‘Mr. Lever’.

Carleton sculpted another new identity and again engaged in the process by destroying the other, in this instance the pedaling of negative Irish stereotypes to a British readership. At the time, Young Ireland were willing to pay for Carleton's pen and given his financial need the author adjusted accordingly. Carleton's writing for *The Nation* supplements the suggestion that he began to write from a less conservative perspective during this period of his career. As we shall see his revision of *Traits and Stories* will further support this claim.

III. Traits and Stories Revised

Carleton's association with Young Ireland and his contributing to *The Nation* may be explained by the author's dire need for financial security. His revision of *Traits and Stories* between 1842 and 1844, however, signals a subtle change in his attitude towards the Irish rural poor he had criticised so damningly within the original versions of his stories. Carleton was attempting, it appears, to expand his readership and take advantage of increasing literacy levels in Ireland. He may also have been mindful of an increase in nationalist feeling within the country following the granting of Catholic emancipation. O'Connell continued his assault on the government as he campaigned towards Repeal in the 1830s and 1840s, supported by the mass Catholic populace. Meanwhile, Irish Protestants were growing frustrated with a government they felt they could no longer trust following the repeal of the penal laws and the passing of successive reforms since then. They feared that their privileged position within Irish society was under threat, while some like, those who joined Young Ireland, were eager to align with the nationalist cause in the hope that they too would benefit from any further success that O'Connell might achieve.⁵¹⁴ This emerging nationalist following, both Catholic and Protestant and from across all classes, represented potential new readers for Carleton to acquire. In the novels that he produced post-1845 there was a definite shift in the focus of his writings. Whereas in his previous work he had focused on the rural poor, their habits, customs and ultimately their failings, in the era of the Great Famine Carleton targeted the British government and highlighted what he perceived as their crimes against Ireland. The 1842-4 editions of *Traits and Stories* act as a transitional step towards this greater shift. In these Carleton included a thoroughly revised version of the sketch that was originally his debut in literature. "The Lough Derg Pilgrim" formerly "A Pilgrimage to Patrick's Purgatory", appeared in *Traits and Stories* for the first time in 1842-4.⁵¹⁵

⁵¹⁴ Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998*, p. 54.

⁵¹⁵ *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry*, First Series, (First edition, Dublin, Curry, 1830):

“The Lough Derg Pilgrim” as well as “The Station”, another of Carleton’s original *Examiner* stories, act as two prime examples of the steps Carleton took at this point in his career to alter the public’s perception of his work and indeed to make his writings more appealing to Catholics and nationalists. During revision Carleton omitted a number of offensive passages that had appeared in the original stories. Daniel J. Casey has compared versions of “The Lough Derg Pilgrim” to highlight the influence of Otway over Carleton during his early career and in this section “The Station” will be afforded the same treatment.⁵¹⁶ Not only does a comparison of the different versions of these short stories reveal the pressure under which Carleton first wrote them for the *Examiner*, it also indicates a shift in the author’s career during the 1840s. Whether Carleton felt he had misrepresented Irish Catholics as Lever had, and felt remorseful, or adopted a less critical stance solely to please his patrons and with profit in mind, he nonetheless chose to soften the anti-Catholic elements of his writings within his new edition of *Traits and Stories*.

Having been recruited to write for the *Examiner* in 1828 Carleton prepared an article for Otway, in just four days, on his experience of St. Patrick’s Purgatory on the island of Lough Derg. It was modelled on the editor’s own account of the island from his *Sketches in Ireland*, with which Carleton was already familiar. More than that, Carleton noted that Otway had promised to edit the sketch and to, ‘dress it [Carleton’s narrative] up and have it inserted in the next edition.’⁵¹⁷ As discussed previously, the article was indeed published and constitutes Carleton’s debut in literature, however, in ‘dressing-up’ and preparing the

Vol. 1: “Preface”, “Ned McKeown – Introductory”, “The Three Tasks, or the Little House under the Hill; A Legend”, “Shane Wadh’s Wedding”, “Larry M’Farland’s Wake”, “The Battle of the Factions”.

Vol. 2: “The Funeral and Party Fight”, “The Hedge School, and the Abduction of Mat Kavanagh”, “The Station”.

Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry, Second Series, (First edition, Dublin and London, Wakeman &c., 1833):

Vol. 1: “Preface”, “The Midnight Mass”, “The Donagh, or the Horse Steelers”, “Phil Purcel, the Pig-Driver”, “An Essay on Irish Swearing”, “The Geography of an Irish Oath”.

Vol. 2: “The Lianhan Shee”, “The Poor Scholar”, “Wildgoose Lodge”, “Tubber Derg, or the Red Well”.

Vol. 3: “Denis O’Shaughnessy Going to Maynooth”, “Phelim O’Toole’s Courtship”.

Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry, Complete, ‘A New Edition’, (First edition, Dublin and London, Curry, Orr, 1843-44):

Initially published in 25 parts between 1842 and 1843.

Vol. 1: “General Introduction”, “Ned M’Keown”, “The Three Tasks”, “Shane Fadh’s Wedding”, “Larry M’Farland’s Wake”, “The Battle of the Factions”, “The Station”, “The Party Fight and Funeral”, “The Lough Derg Pilgrim”, “The Hedge School”, “The Midnight Mass”, “The Donagh, or the Horse-stealers”, “Phil Purcel, the Pig-Driver”.

Vol. 2: “Geography of an Irish Oath”, “The Lianhan Shee”, “Going to Maynooth”, “Phelim O’Toole’s Courtship”, “The Poor Scholar”, “Wildgoose Lodge”, “Tubber Derg, or, The Red Well”, “Neal Malone”.

⁵¹⁶ Casey compared “A Pilgrimage to Patrick’s Purgatory” published in *The Christian Examiner* in 1828 to “The Lough Derg Pilgrim” of the ninth edition of *Traits and Stories*, (1842-4).

⁵¹⁷ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 237.

article for publication Otway, allegedly, exercised his editorial influence on the narrative. Otway was keen to depict through Carleton's article what he perceived as the 'superstitious' character of Irish Catholics, 'the purgatorial aspects of the isle, the villainy of the priest-types, and the idolatrous rites performed there.'⁵¹⁸ Moreover, Otway and the New Reformation Movement disagreed fundamentally with the Catholic concept of the absolution of sin. The dressing up of Carleton's narrative according to Casey, amounted to textual additions of between eighteen and twenty per cent of the total text, that included a lengthy introduction that appeared in the *Examiner*.⁵¹⁹

In submitting articles to the *Examiner*, Carleton accepted that his texts would be edited by Otway had he not fully captured the message the publication aimed to convey. Carleton's contributions to the *Examiner* were thus susceptible to, what Darrell Figgis, termed 'Otwayism'.⁵²⁰ Figgis argued that Otway 'mutilated'⁵²¹ some if not all of Carleton's submissions so that they would serve the New Reformation Movement convincingly. Carleton revised the narrative originally published under Otway before including it in *Father Butler; The Lough Derg Pilgrim: Being Sketches of Irish Manners* (1829). He did so a second time for the new edition of *Traits and Stories*, removing what he then acknowledged were 'some of its offensive observations.'⁵²² The first two editions of the text are almost identical. This is not a surprise as *Father Butler; The Lough Derg Pilgrim* was published by William Curry Jnr. and Co., the same firm that produced the *Examiner*. It is likely that the publication of these short stories in book form then was facilitated by Otway. But Casey has conducted a textual analysis of that text with the *Traits and Stories* text to highlight Otway's influence on the original.

Casey cited hundreds of differences between the two texts but noted of one major omission from the second revised edition of the story that stood out as representative of Otway's influence over the original text. This propagandist and anti-papist passage, that was omitted from the story in 1842-4, treated of the perceived errors of Roman Catholicism while also highlighting some of the doctrinal differences between it and the

⁵¹⁸ D.J. Casey, 'Lough Derg's Infamous Pilgrim', in *The Clogher Record*, vii, no. 3 (1971/72), pp. 454.

⁵¹⁹ This introduction ran through three pages and highlighted the perceived errors of the Catholic rite of confession. The rituals associated with Catholic confession and penitential pilgrimage are described as insincere, habitual and as an invitation to the repetition of sin. William Carleton, 'A Pilgrimage to Patrick's Purgatory', in *The Christian Examiner*, vi, no. 34 (1828), pp. 268-71.

⁵²⁰ William Carleton, *Carleton's Stories of Irish Life, with an introduction by Darrell Figgis*, (Dublin, 1919), p. xxii.

⁵²¹ Carleton, *Carleton's Stories of Irish Life*, p. xix.

⁵²² O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 4.

Protestant religion. It is argued that the traditions of the Catholic Church including; scapulars, charms, indulgences, fasts, jubilees, absolutions, confessions and Lough-dearg,⁵²³ had the effect of distancing the laity from God rather than bringing them closer to him. Catholics were advised:

you have all these, but you have not Christ – these form the great idol which you have set up in this stead, these are the “strong delusion,” the “lie” which you are given to believe, and yet you call yourself of Christ!⁵²⁴

Further, Catholicism was criticised for not allowing the people to read and study the Bible, in the same way that Protestants were, for fear of their authority being challenged:

you wrap that guide from which you have departed, in darkness, lest it should testify against you – lest the people whom you have led astray, should find their error and return to the truth – lest they should perceive, that, like the Pharisees, whilst you have pretended to them to have the word of God as your standard, you have made it of “none effect by your traditions.”⁵²⁵

Finally, the Catholic clergy’s perceived ability to act as intermediaries between God and the people was challenged given that this was at variance with the Protestant commitment to the Bible as the true word of God: ‘Did Christ speak truth when he declared that there is no way unto the Father but by *Him*; that *He* is the *way*, the *truth*, and the *life*?’⁵²⁶

Casey argued that this entire passage was penned by Otway and added to Carleton’s original manuscript during the editorial process. The existence of this passage acts to establish Otway’s influence over those of Carleton’s writings that appeared originally in the *Examiner*, but it also suggests that the views and opinions attributed to ‘Carleton’s pen’ within the above periodical were perhaps not truly reflective of the author’s attitude towards the Catholic religion in Ireland during the period. Many of Carleton’s early writings suffered the faith of ‘Otwayism’ until in 1831 both men left the *Examiner*. The fact that Carleton chose to omit this and other passages from the revised, 1842-4, version of the story supports this theory and suggests that Carleton had chosen to disassociate

⁵²³ William Carleton, ‘A Pilgrimage to Patrick’s Purgatory’, in *The Christian Examiner*, vi, no. 35 (1828), p. 350.

⁵²⁴ Carleton, ‘A Pilgrimage’, p. 350.

⁵²⁵ Carleton, ‘A Pilgrimage’, p. 350.

⁵²⁶ Carleton, ‘A Pilgrimage’, p. 350.

himself from the views held by Otway and the New Reformation Movement at this later point in his career.

As in the case of “The Lough Derg Pilgrim”, Carleton revised and edited “The Station” before including it in the new edition of *Traits and Stories*. “The Station” first appeared in the *Examiner* in 1829. It also appeared in the first series of *Traits and Stories* in 1830. As with “A Pilgrimage to Patrick’s Purgatory” and “The Lough Derg Pilgrim” discrepancies exist between all three versions of “The Station”. Corrections to spelling and punctuation, the rephrasing or replacing of terms, and the addition of explanatory footnotes, where Carleton added context, clarified his meaning or defined terms perhaps foreign to his readers, ran into vast numbers as each text was progressively edited. There are also approximately eighteen lengthy or major textual alterations between the original and the final *Traits and Stories* version of the text. While Carleton made several additions to his 1842-4 text, it is the passages that he deleted or omitted that signal a mellowing of the author’s attitude towards Catholicism in Ireland. That said, the text remained anti-Catholic in nature.

In one passage that was not omitted until the 1842-4 edition of “The Station”, Carleton indicated the purpose for which he had penned the tale:

We trust that our object in delineating a Station, and the moral which lies upon the surface of the description, will be evident to our readers. The first was to exhibit the thing as it had been, and yet is – the second points out the deadening influence which the rite of confession had on the heart and feelings; an influence which is strengthened by the triteness of frequent repetition... He sins on without remorse, and throws the burden of his anxiety and apprehension on the absolution which he receives from the priest – so that while he lives in the commission of depravity, he is utterly unconscious of its danger.⁵²⁷

The extract above reveals that the sketch was originally written for the purposes of the *Examiner* and the New Reformation Movement, ‘our object’.⁵²⁸ Furthermore, it was written for a specific readership, ‘our readers’.⁵²⁹ While the conduct of the clergy regarding stations was called into question within the short story, the Catholic rite of confession was also put under particular scrutiny. As in “The Broken Oath”, examined in Chapter Two,

⁵²⁷ William Carleton, ‘The Station’, in *The Christian Examiner*, vii, no. 48 (1829), p, 432.

⁵²⁸ Carleton, ‘The Station’, p, 432.

⁵²⁹ Carleton, ‘The Station’, p, 432.

Carleton considered the manner in which Catholics were expected to confess their sins to their priest in “The Station”. In confessing to the priest and receiving absolution, it was suggested that the sinner was then enabled to reoffend safe in the knowledge that the priest would ever be there to cleanse their guilt. In exposing the perceived errors of Catholicism, in this instance their rite of confession, Carleton was reflecting the popular perceptions of the *Examiner*’s Protestant readership. The fact that such passages were removed by Carleton in the 1840s suggests that he was targeting a different readership and attempting to make his writings more appealing and accessible to a broader reading public.

Carleton initially edited his critique of the Catholic rite of confession found within “The Station” in 1830. This early revision suggests that Otway had written the passages omitted. In them confession is labelled ‘disgusting, abominable, and revolting’ and is considered to be ‘in direct violation of the liberty’ of subjects of the British constitution.⁵³⁰ He claimed that the Catholic laity attended confession with ‘the most unequivocal reluctance’ and only went at all because of the ‘superstitious belief, that the priest can absolve them from the guilt of their individual sins.’⁵³¹ Further, Otway described it as a ‘political maneuver’ cloaked in the name of religion.⁵³² Originally written amidst the campaign for Catholic emancipation, in which the clergy played a vital role, Otway appeared to suggest that the priests were able to utilise the information they had learned from their penitents in confession for political means. It is clear that Otway considered the Catholic clergy a very real threat to the Anglican church, given the power they held over the mass Catholic populace. He referred to the influence of the clergy again in concluding the passage stating:

This doctrine is, indeed, the fang which Popery sinks into the souls of her degraded followers, and by which she holds them under control.⁵³³

While the passage above was omitted in 1830 Carleton choose to allow other aspects of the anti-Catholic critique of confession to remained within the story until he further revised it for the new edition of *Traits and Stories*. The critique that remained was not as malicious as that allegedly penned by Otway. It maintained that the rite was ‘artificial’ and that penitents could not possibly feel sincere sorrow in their confessions as they were

⁵³⁰ Carleton, ‘The Station’ in *The Christian Examiner*, viii, no. 43 (1829), pp. 57-8.

⁵³¹ Carleton, ‘The Station’, pp. 57-8.

⁵³² Carleton, ‘The Station’, pp. 57-8.

⁵³³ Carleton, ‘The Station’, pp. 57-8.

merely participating in the rite out of a sense of duty or compliance.⁵³⁴ Owing to the form the Catholic rite took, that it lacked spontaneity, allowed Carleton to argue that the laity were more likely to fear the priest that they knelt before than the God that they were actually confessing to:

It is not God, then, but the priest, whom the penitent fears, because it is under his palpable eye that he must kneel down, and into his living ear, of flesh and blood, that he must pour the secrets of his heart, and relate his sins, one by one, whether of thought, word, deed, or omission.⁵³⁵

While Carleton felt that some of the more severe criticisms, particularly those concerning the clergy, were too offensive to include in his own versions of the story he still found cause to challenge the Catholic rite of confession as it existed during the pre-famine period.

In another omission, in which Carleton deleted an entire anecdote that ran through seven pages of the original *Examiner* text, the manner in which the Catholic church is run by the clergy in Ireland is called into question.⁵³⁶ The passage contains a detailed description of a confrontation that occurred between Jack Shields and the local parish priest Father Philemy. The priest had learned that Shields had in his possession both Catholic and Protestant versions of the Bible. Shields had not been to mass and was being accused locally of becoming a heretic. Shields is portrayed here as having a good knowledge and understanding of both books. A theological discussion ensues between the two where Shields advocates Protestantism and questions various doctrines and practices of the Catholic church that had come to puzzle him. He asks the priest why it is that the mass is conducted in a language foreign to the congregation and why he should seek absolution for his sins from a priest instead of seeking out God instead. The character of Shields acts to lay down the various errors of Catholicism perceived by the Protestant readership of the *Examiner*, to the priest, who fails to reply.

While the existence of these passages within the early versions of Carleton's "The Station" reveal Otway's, and the New Reformation Movement's, influence over Carleton during the early part of his career, their subsequent removal signals a shift in his writings in the 1840s. In his new edition of *Traits and Stories* he deleted offensive passages, diluted

⁵³⁴ Carleton, 'The Station', pp. 57-8.

⁵³⁵ Carleton, 'The Station', pp. 57-8.

⁵³⁶ Carleton, 'The Station' in *The Christian Examiner*, viii, no. 46 (1829), pp. 263-9.

the anti-Catholic sentiment of his writings, and removed the ultra, anti-papist propaganda that Otway had introduced into his *Examiner* stories. He then tailored his new writings for a more inclusive readership, addressing legislative measures and issues of governance that had contributed to the plight of the Irish rural poor during the pre-famine period.

IV. 1845 onwards

Amidst the onset of the Great Famine in 1845, Carleton turned his attention away from issues relating to religion and Catholicism in Ireland to combat what he perceived as a more pressing evil. In his revision of the *Traits and Stories* series in 1842-4 Carleton had signaled a shift in his writing away from the anti-papist propaganda that characterised his early productions. From 1845 onwards, he properly realised this shift and focused on the effect that the British government and British legislation had had on the country of Ireland from the turn of the century. As we shall see Carleton also focused on the violence that had engulfed the country during the pre-famine period, condemning the actions of the northern Orangemen in *Valentine McClutchy* (1845) and that of their southern, Catholic counterparts, the Whiteboys in *The Tithe Proctor* (1849). Religion ceased to dominate his work but did appear sparingly in several of his novels. The clergy, for example, appear in the novels, *Valentine McClutchy* and *The Black Prophet* (1847). Whereas Carleton had portrayed Roman Catholic priests negatively in his earlier writings, in those that he produced from 1845 onwards clerics were depicted in a more positive light.

In *Valentine McClutchy*, for example, Carleton described the parish priest, Father Roche, dissuading a group of Ribbonmen from exacting revenge on the novel's title character, a Protestant land agent, and the head of the local Orange lodge. In this instance, Carleton described the priest using his influence over the assembled peasants to convince them that their violent intentions were not the solution to their grievances. The men assembled proceeded to try McClutchy and his son Phil for their crimes against the local community and sentenced both to death while the priest watched on silently. Before the men departed, however, the priest interjected. In an emotional and passionate speech, Father Roche, succeeded in convincing the God-fearing peasants to rescind their vows of vengeance against the McClutchys:

‘Then, in the name of the merciful God, I implore, I entreat ... I command you to disavow the murderous purpose you have come to this night. ‘Heavenly Father,’ said he, looking up with all the fervour of sublime piety, ‘we entreat

you to take from these mistaken men the wicked intention of imbruing their guilty hands in blood; teach them a clear sense of Christian duty; to love their very enemies; to forgive all injuries that may be inflicted on them; and to lead such lives as may never be disturbed by a sense of guilt or the tortures of remorse!’ The tears flowed fast down his aged cheeks as he spoke, and his deep sobbings for some time prevented him from speaking. Those whom he addressed were touched, awakened, melted. He proceeded: ‘Take pity on their condition, O Lord, and in thine own good time, if it be thy will, let their unhappy lot in this life be improved! But, above, all things, soften their hearts, inspire them with good and pious purposes, and guard them from the temptations of revenge! They are my flock – they are my children – and, as such, thou knowest how I love [love] and feel for them!’⁵³⁷

Whereas the priests of his earlier short stories were seen to use their authority for their own personal benefit, Father Roche used his influence over his parishioners to save two men’s lives. There is a striking contrast between Father Roche and Father Philemy of “The Station”, for example, who used all his priestly power to acquire a leg of mutton and an extra bottle of wine for his dinner.

In another example, in *The Black Prophet*, Carleton described a horrific scene of starvation and death in which the parish priest, Fr. Hanratty, making a brief appearance in the narrative, discovers ‘a wretched cabin by the roadside.’⁵³⁸ The priest explained that; ‘this, I fear, is another of those awful cases of desertion and death that are too common in this terrible and scourging visitation.’⁵³⁹ Dismounting his horse, the priest entered the dilapidated cabin and was faced with the following scene:

The cabin in which they stood had been evidently for some time deserted, a proof that its former inmates had been all swept off by typhus... Stretched out in this wretched and abandoned hut, lay... a mother and her three children... Lying close to her cold and shivering breast was an infant of about six months old... Beside her, on the left, lay a boy – a pale, emaciated boy – about eight years old, silent and motionless... Beyond the infant again, and next the wall, lay a girl, it might be about eleven, stretched, as if in sleep.⁵⁴⁰

This scene of misery is ended as both the mother and her infant pass away. The priest asked the woman just before she died what the matter with her and her children was; ‘Is it sickness of starvation?’⁵⁴¹ The last utterance on the lips of the woman, that which the priest strove to hear, was the word ‘hunger’. Carleton used this scene to portray the almost

⁵³⁷ Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, pp. 441-2.

⁵³⁸ Carleton, *The Black Prophet*, p. 227.

⁵³⁹ Carleton, *The Black Prophet*, p. 227.

⁵⁴⁰ Carleton, *The Black Prophet*, p. 228.

⁵⁴¹ Carleton, *The Black Prophet*, p. 228.

inexpressible distresses of both disease and starvation that accompanied the famines of 1817 and 1822 in rural Ireland. His portrayal of the priest in this instance was decidedly more positive, however, than his earlier representations of the clergy. Carleton described the priest hauling the dead woman's son, the only individual to survive the horrific scene, from the house and transporting him to a neighbour's home where he was nursed back to health.

Carleton had "Life and Labours of a Catholic Curate", a five-part short story, published in *Duffy's Irish Catholic Magazine: A monthly review, devoted to national literature, the fine arts, ecclesiastical history, antiques, biography of illustrious Irish men, military memoirs, &c.* between November 1847 and March 1848. James Duffy (1809-71) was 'one of the most important Catholic publishers/booksellers in nineteenth century Ireland.'⁵⁴² He worked extensively with the Young Ireland movement and published their newspaper *The Nation*. He was also a 'prolific producer of Catholic works (prayer books, missals, Catholic biographies and journals)'.⁵⁴³ Duffy produced several short-lived magazines during the mid-part of the nineteenth century including *Duffy's Fireside Magazine*, the *Catholic Guardian, or the Christian Family Library*, the *Catholic University Gazette*, *Duffy's Hibernian Magazine* and the *Illustrated Dublin Journal*. The first of these magazines was *Duffy's Irish Catholic Magazine*. The 25-30-page magazine cost one shilling, was published monthly and ran for just over a year, from February 1847. Barbara Hayley explained that the magazine was:

ornately decorated with bishops' mitres, full of hymns, psalms and canticles, description of religious sites and "sculptural monuments," and articles such as, "The use and abuse of church bells." Its opening article claims it to be a "forerunner of a Catholic literature in Ireland," unfortunately, when it commissions Catholic literature it concentrates on religious rather than literary excellence.⁵⁴⁴

Carleton first worked with Duffy when he contributed two articles to *The Nation*. In 1845 all five of Carleton's productions, including the novels *Rody the Rover* and *Valentine McClutchy* were published by Duffy's firm. *Duffy's Irish Catholic Magazine* was almost the antithesis of the *Examiner*. That he contributed a short story to Duffy's magazine and

⁵⁴² Brake and Demoor, *DNCJ*, p. 184.

⁵⁴³ Brake and Demoor, *DNCJ*, p. 184.

⁵⁴⁴ Hayley, 'A Reading and Thinking Nation', pp. 45-6.

indeed that he struck up a working relationship with the Catholic publisher illustrates the extent of the shift that had occurred in Carleton's writings after the *Examiner*.

The short story itself, "Life and Labours of a Catholic Curate", detailed the life of a young curate from his youth as he prepared himself for entry into the Catholic priesthood, much like the aforementioned tale "Denis O'Shaughnessy". Within the preface to the story Carleton spoke positively and in a kindly manner of the Catholic clergy in Ireland. He noted the 'affectionate veneration with which the clergymen of the people are looked up to'⁵⁴⁵ by the rural peasantry of Ireland and suggested that the curates were very highly revered:

If there be, however, one class of the Catholic priesthood more lovingly enshrined in the general heart of the country than another, it is that of the working curates; and, indeed, it would most assuredly be very strange if it were otherwise; for we question whether any country in Europe or Christendom could present a class of men more zealously devoted to the lofty spirit of their mission, or who work out their long and labourious train of duties with a more heroic disinterestedness than the labouring curates of Ireland.⁵⁴⁶

As a result of the position that these clergymen held within Catholic society in Ireland Carleton suggested, however, that some of the weaker individuals among them succumbed to the power and authority that their post afforded them:

It is, indeed, difficult at all times for a man of this kind, [a man placed in a position of prominence and authority] tempted and made giddy as he is by the loud voice of popular applause, to avoid transfusing himself, as it were, more than he ought into the spirit, often thoughtless and precipitate, by which he is supported. The consequences are, that he runs great risk of forgetting the truthful solemnity of his original principles, and becoming, so to speak, the mere slave of his own worshippers... they are drawn away from those sincere impressions of public duty and love for their kind, with which they originally set out, and become almost unconsciously the creatures of those external forms and manifestations of popular feeling by which, at the sacrifice of truth and duty, no public man should ever suffer himself to be led.⁵⁴⁷

This critique is familiar but more nuanced. It reflected the criticisms of Carleton's earlier writings, however, in this instance he added a disclaimer:

⁵⁴⁵ William Carleton, 'Life and Labours of a Catholic Curate', in *Duffy's Irish Catholic Magazine: A monthly review devoted to national literature, the fine arts, ecclesiastical history, antiques, biography of illustrious Irishmen, military memoirs, &c.*, i, no. 11 (1847), p. 272.

⁵⁴⁶ Carleton, 'Life and Labours', p. 272.

⁵⁴⁷ Carleton, 'Life and Labours', p. 272.

We are far from saying, however, that such aberrations from the spirit of public virtue are always inseparable from public men, or that many public men, and truly great ones too, have not nobly stood the test of the temptations to which we have alluded.⁵⁴⁸

Whereas in “Denis O’Shaughnessy”, for instance, Carleton appeared to tar all Catholic clerics, and indeed prospective priests, with the one brush suggesting that they were all guilty of the same vices, at this later point in his career he noted that most Irish priests were innocent of such crimes. Elements of criticism remained, but Carleton adjusted his treatment of the clergy to cater for the perceptions of a broader readership and the requirements of a new set of patrons.

Conclusion

Much can be learned from a study of Carleton’s writings on the theme of religion. These writings offer an example of the shift that occurred within the author’s career as his early anti-papist sketches contrast strikingly with the fact that he contributed to *Duffy’s Irish Catholic Magazine* during the Great Famine. They also make it apparent that Carleton was engaged in literary self-fashioning and that he used his early short stories to establish his identity as a peasant writer. Narrating from within Carleton depicted experiences he claimed to have had as a youth, that allowed him to command authenticity and an authority over the subjects he described, despite the fact that these anecdotes were likely works of fiction. Simultaneously, however, Carleton also ensured that he aligned himself with the evangelical Protestant community from whom he drew his readers. Carleton did so by borrowing international anti-Catholic tropes, plots and images popular in Britain and America, and adapting these to an Irish setting. In the 1840s Carleton created new versions of his original *Traits and Stories*. Again, Carleton would mould a new version of himself. As demonstrated here, he attempted to shed his former anti-papist identity by removing some of the most hostile passages from the new editions of his early stories and by adopting a new tone in material produced during this later phase.

As stated in Chapter Two, the evidence suggests that Carleton’s motivation in changing his literary identity and shifting from one stance to another was financial. It suggests that Carleton wrote appropriately for whichever editor, patron or publisher was willing to pay for his services. Both Otway at the *Examiner* and Young Ireland at *The*

⁵⁴⁸ Carleton, ‘Life and Labours’, p. 272.

Nation offered Carleton lucrative opportunities at points in his career when his options were limited. Carleton returned to Dublin from Mullingar in 1828 and Otway offered him regular employment. Writing under the influence of the editor of the *Examiner* and its publisher William Curry, Carleton's writings were tailored for an exclusively Protestant readership. Later, no longer associated with the *Examiner* and having severed his relationship with the editor of the *DUM*, Lever, Carleton had few opportunities but to become an instrument of the Repeal campaign. Young Ireland's cultural nationalism coupled with a broadening reading public, that James Duffy was keen to take advantage of, meant that the author had to adjust his writings. A transitional phase led to an altogether less hostile approach to Catholicism. This same transition and shift can be seen in his writings on the theme of violence and this will be the subject of Chapter Four. An ever-changing political landscape, the distress of the rural poor and the perceived negligence on the part of British legislators towards the Irish situation undoubtedly impacted on Carleton in some ways as his career in Irish literature advanced, however, pecuniary necessity also emerges as a motivating factor in the various shifts made by the author, through self-fashioning, throughout his career.

Chapter Four

An Inherent Tendency Towards Violence: Violence and Agrarian Crime in Pre-Famine Ireland in the writings of William Carleton

Violence was one of the dominant themes in the novels and short stories that William Carleton produced between 1828 and 1850. As noted earlier, Carleton grew up in county Tyrone during the early part of the nineteenth century. The time he spent in Tyrone, and other counties in the region, began in the immediate aftermath of the 1798 Rebellion and ended just before Daniel O’Connell and Richard Lalor Shiel founded the Catholic Association in 1823. Then, Tyrone was one of the counties where Catholics and Protestants constituted similar shares of the population and, as such, it was an area in which sectarianism was likely to occur. While some scholars have questioned the image of pre-famine Ireland as a particularly violent place, clashes between Catholics and Protestants, outlined in Chapter One, were certainly a feature of Ulster society during this period.⁵⁴⁹ It is no surprise then that sectarian violence should feature in Carleton’s work. More than that, Carleton claimed to have been initiated into the Ribbonmen, a Catholic agrarian secret society, and that his home was raided by Protestant Yeomen. Thus, he maintained that his writings on the subject were authentic and informed by his own personal experience of the violence and agitation that characterised the period. Many of his pre-famine writings contain at least an allusion to some manifestation of violence; a murder, the burning of a dwelling, a riot or a fight. Given that the theme was so prominent in these works, the subject of violence is useful in charting the shifts that occurred in Carleton’s pre-famine career. This chapter will then examine Carleton and the issue of violence in the context of, sometimes sectarian, agrarian conflict, while the next chapter will examine fighting as a form of leisure.

Like his writings on the theme of religion, Carleton wrote from different perspectives on violence at different stages of his career. In those of his stories that dealt with violence Carleton’s resounding message to his readers was one of warning as to the inherent

⁵⁴⁹ Richard, McMahon, “‘The madness of party’: Sectarian homicide in Ireland, 1801-1850’, in *Crime, Histoire & Sociétés / Crime, History & Societies*, xi, no. 1 (2007), pp. 83-112.

tendency towards violence possessed by the Irish rural poor. The perspective from which he wrote, however, shifted over time. When commenting on the violent reactions of Carleton's famine victims in the novel *The Black Prophet* (1847), Declan Kiberd noted how the author was 'at once close to and distant from the people' he described.⁵⁵⁰ Kiberd suggested that Carleton wrote from two poles, simultaneously chastising, and yet empathising with the peasants of the novel. Kiberd's thesis might well be applied to Carleton's writings as a whole. Through the process of self-fashioning, Carleton assumed a new Protestant identity yet never fully shed his former Catholic guise. Consequently, two alternative perspectives struggled for expression within the novelist's collection of writings. During the early part of his career the anti-Catholic tone of Carleton's writing overshadowed any sympathy he may have had for the circumstances of the Irish peasantry. In his later novels, although that Protestant voice was still present, a reformist sympathy became evident within Carleton's writings. As was the case with his writings on the theme of religion, Carleton's financial struggles were to influence how the novelist was to shape his writings and, indeed, who he was to write for. The changing political climate also had a bearing on the perspectives from which he wrote. Legislative reforms, more democratic education, and a growth in the range of publications saw changes to the readers available to Carleton and in the appetites of those readers. This, as we shall see, was reflected in his writings on violence.

Many of the manifestations of violence that occurred in pre-Famine Ireland were attributed to particular oath-bound societies, and section I of this chapter will describe various such groups and organisations that operated across Ireland. Among these, Catholic Ribbonmen and Whiteboys, and Protestant Orangemen, all feature in Carleton's writings on the theme of violence and particular attention will be devoted to these. In addition to knowing of these groups, Carleton claimed to have, and his writing appeared to rest on, personal experience of the northern Ribbonmen and Orangemen. Section II will address this personal relationship with the violence of Irish society during the period. In section III Carleton's short story, "Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman", published in 1830 in the immediate aftermath of the granting of Catholic emancipation, will be examined. At this early stage of his career Carleton was still associated with the *Examiner* and was eager, and indeed required, to illustrate to his Protestant readers the violent threat posed by the Irish rural poor. The short story was written in a gothic style and the violence portrayed within

⁵⁵⁰ Declan Kiberd, *Irish Classics*, (London, 2000), p. 274.

was pronounced and horrific, calculated to heighten Protestant fears of the mass Catholic peasant populace that was perceived as uncivilised and barbaric. Carleton cast the victims Protestant in the original version of his story. He corrected this inaccuracy in revisions of the text yet retained the original sentiment of the tale. He implied that if Catholics were capable of subjecting one of their own to such unmerciful violence, that they were likely to inflict much worse on their Protestant enemies.

Finally, during the second phase of Carleton's writings on the theme of violence, spanning the 1840s, the author penned a trilogy of novels all of which examined the root causes that contributed to the violent nature of Irish society during the pre-famine period. *Valentine McClutchy* (1845), *Rody the Rover* (1845) and *The Tithe Proctor* (1849) exposed absenteeism, the government's use of informers and opposition to the payment of tithes, respectively, as catalysts in manifestations of peasant violence, each contributing to an overall disturbed society. Associated with Young Ireland and *The Nation* and working with the Catholic publisher James Duffy, Carleton shifted away from his earlier stance on peasant violence and attempted to explain, yet not excuse, the rural poor's propensity for violence. Amidst the Great Famine that was then decimating the rural population Carleton's depictions of peasant violence took on a more nuanced character, yet, that caution needed to be observed regarding the Irish peasantry also found expression within these novels. This trilogy of novels will be examined in detail in section III of this chapter.

I. Whiteboys, Ribbonmen and Orangemen

As noted, the Catholic Whiteboys and Ribbonmen, and the Protestant Orangemen, all feature in Carleton's writings on the theme of violence in pre-famine Ireland. In the short story, "Wildgoose Lodge", the home of Edward Lynch is attacked and burned to the ground by a band of local Ribbonmen. In "The Party Fight and Funeral", which will receive more attention in Chapter Five, Carleton described a violent battle between Ribbonmen and Orangemen at a fair in the north of Ireland. *Valentine McClutchy* is the tale of an ambitious and unscrupulous land agent who terrorises his tenantry with a corps of Orangemen. In *Rody the Rover* a group of conspirators succeed in infecting a once peaceful, humble, and industrious town with Ribbonism that leads to the parish's ultimate demise. *The Tithe Proctor* describes a peasant uprising of Whiteboys against their local tithe collector and his family. In this work, Carleton's writings reflected the realities of peasant life during the pre-famine period. Local groups formed to defend and protect their

families and properties. Some rose in opposition to oppressive agents, landlords and enforcers of the law while others formed in direct opposition to other agrarian bands. Prior to analysing Carleton's writings on agrarian crime, it will be useful to examine each of the different groups and organisations that featured in his fiction.

Organised agrarian protest and 'secret society' violence was a feature of Irish society during the century that preceded the Great Famine of 1845-50. Disgruntled groups mobilised in response to a wide variety of social, economic and political changes that each had a profound negative impact on their collective circumstances. Donnelly argued that an imbalance in the rural social structure of pre-famine Ireland, fueled by economic modernisation and the commercialisation of Irish agriculture, created a minority of large independent farmers and a majority of cottiers and landless poor and increased the likelihood of conflict.⁵⁵¹ Maura Cronin suggested that combinations attacked 'those offending against the rural 'moral economy' and popular 'law' by 'grabbing land, selling potatoes or milk at extortionate prices, displacing smallholders, underpaying workers, employing 'strangers' (from the next county), or demanding extortionate tithe or clerical dues.'⁵⁵² The extensive research that has been conducted on this phenomenon reveals the variation in motives among the many different agrarian movements of the period. Both Beames and David Fitzpatrick have argued that conflict within social strata was key to agrarian dispute while Roberts and Lee have suggested that conflict was more likely to occur across social divisions.⁵⁵³ Alternatively, Donnelly described the motives of agrarian conflict as protean and subject to the conditions and circumstances of respective movements' time and place.⁵⁵⁴ Elements of sectarianism and millenarianism also featured in some of the 'secret societies' of the period, the Ribbonmen and Rockites acting as two examples.

The social composition of agrarian 'secret societies' also varied with respect to each movements' time, place and economic conditions. While agrarian conflict traditionally occurred between the poorer sections of rural society and the more independent farmers of the middle-class, certain circumstances could unite these classes in wider agrarian protest. Donnelly argued that during times of prosperity it was the landless and the land poor that

⁵⁵¹ Donnelly, *Captain Rock*, pp. 10-2.

⁵⁵² Cronin, *Agrarian Protest in Ireland*, p. 14.

⁵⁵³ Donnelly, *Captain Rock*, pp. 12-4. Michael Huggins, 'Whiteboys and Ribbonmen: What's in a Name?', in Kyle Hughes and Donald M. MacRaild, *Crime, Violence and the Irish in the Nineteenth Century*, (Oxford, 2018), pp. 22-4.

⁵⁵⁴ Huggins, 'Whiteboys and Ribbonmen', p. 25.

rebelled ‘to restrain the inflation of conacre rents and food prices, to boost wages, and to frustrate the land-acquisitive tendencies of large farmers and graziers.’⁵⁵⁵ In contrast, offering the Rockites as an example, he suggested that during economic depressions wider social groups could be seen engaging in rural protest. Moreover, Cronin noted that certain grievances, like opposition to tithe and others relating to land, could breach both social and religious divisions and unite tenants and farmers, and Catholics and Protestants, in agrarian protest.⁵⁵⁶ Allan Blackstock offered Tommy Downshire’s Boys’ of the 1830s as an example of an agrarian movement that had both Catholic and Protestant members.⁵⁵⁷ The targets of agrarian crime varied too. Cronin noted that in the eighteenth-century rural protesters like the Whiteboys, Houghers and Levellers attacked property more so than people. Into the nineteenth-century, however, it was those individuals that had benefited from unpopular change, tithe proctors and farmers, who became the targets of violence.⁵⁵⁸ With such variation between the numerous outbreaks of agrarian crime during the period in question it is impossible to define the ‘secret society’ of the pre-famine period and indeed, Michael Huggins suggested that the only group that the term could properly be applied to was the Ribbonmen.⁵⁵⁹ Some of these gangs shared the characteristics of being oath-bound, of wearing costumes or disguises, of meeting at night and of operating under the cover of darkness but the origins and motives of their respective conflicts varied according to the social and economic circumstances of their region or locality.

Of the numerous Catholic secret societies that operated during the period in question Carleton mentions two within his writings, the Ribbonmen and the Whiteboys. Both were oath-bound secret societies and both were exclusively Catholic. The Ribbonmen, so called as ‘one of their signs of identification was the displaying of certain ribbons as part of their attire,’⁵⁶⁰ operated within the northern part of the country, in Ulster, the northern half of Leinster and parts of north Connaught. Beames noted that; ‘It [Ribbonism] was strongest in Dublin, the counties of the eastern seaboard and parts of Ulster,’⁵⁶¹ while Garvin stated that ‘much of Ulster, north Leinster and north Connacht came to be organized by Ribbon

⁵⁵⁵ Donnelly, *Captain Rock*, p. 15.

⁵⁵⁶ Cronin, *Agrarian Protest in Ireland*, p. 5.

⁵⁵⁷ Allan Blackstock, ‘Tommy Downshire’s Boys’, pp. 125-72.

⁵⁵⁸ Cronin, *Agrarian Protest in Ireland*, p. 7-8.

⁵⁵⁹ Huggins, ‘Whiteboys and Ribbonmen’, p. 21.

⁵⁶⁰ H.B.C. Pollard, *The Secret Societies of Ireland, their rise and progress*, (London, 1922). p. 32.

⁵⁶¹ M.R. Beames, ‘The Ribbon Societies: Lower-Class Nationalism in Pre-Famine Ireland’, in *Past & Present*, no. 97 (1982), p. 128.

networks during the 1815-45 period.⁵⁶² The movement rarely penetrated Munster, however Donnelly, Shunsuke Katsuta and Huggins argued that there were strong links between Ribbonism and the Rockite movement of the early 1820s.⁵⁶³ Garvin maintained that the Ribbonmen evolved from the Defenders of the late eighteenth century and were the predecessors to the Ancient Order of the Hibernians of the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.⁵⁶⁴ He suggested that there were two loosely connected Ribbon networks, one centered in Dublin, the other in Armagh.⁵⁶⁵ Jennifer Kelly revealed that there were definite hierarchical structures within these ribbon networks. Rank and file members reported to a body or parish master. The parish master was subordinate to the borough master who in turn took direction from the county delegate.⁵⁶⁶ Garvin and Beames both argued that the Ribbon organisation was somewhat politicised, that it was nationalistic in character, and that its fundamental aim was to rise up against British oppression in a 1798 style rebellion:

their intention was to rebel, to separate themselves from the English government, and put down the Protestant religion.⁵⁶⁷

Huggins has challenged this view, however, stating that:

Ribbon politics, so often cited as a forerunner of militant nationalism, appear to have offered little more than O'Connellism plus fraternity.⁵⁶⁸

Further, he described the Ribbonmen as a sectarian, protectionist, mutuality society that 'performed social and normative functions.'⁵⁶⁹ The oaths sworn by members reveal

⁵⁶² Garvin, 'Defenders, Ribbonmen and Others', p. 134.

⁵⁶³ Donnelly, *Captain Rock*, p. 21, Shunsuke Katsuta, 'The Rockite Movement in County Cork in the early 1820s', in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxxiii, no. 131, (2003), pp. 290-1. Huggins, 'Whiteboys and Ribbonmen' p. 29.

⁵⁶⁴ Garvin, 'Defenders, Ribbonmen and Others', pp. 134, 136.

The Defenders were an exclusively Catholic organisation founded in 1786 in Co. Armagh in direct opposition to the Peep o' Day Boys or Break of Day Boys who had been established in the same country a year earlier, 1785.

The Ancient Order of Hibernians emerged at the turn of the twentieth century, amidst the campaign for Home Rule, in rural south west Ulster. A nationalist, exclusively Catholic, sectarian, secret society, the AOH supported the Irish Parliamentary Party's campaign for Home Rule but ultimately desired the expulsion of Unionists from Ulster.

⁵⁶⁵ Garvin, 'Defenders, Ribbonmen and Others', p. 138.

⁵⁶⁶ Jennifer Kelly, *The downfall of Hagan': Sligo Ribbonism in 1842*, (Dublin, 2008), pp. 18-20.

⁵⁶⁷ Conclusion drawn by Michael Coffey, an informer, from conversations he had had with Michael Keenan, between September 1821 and June 1822, who had been tried for his involvement with Ribbonism. Keenan was tried on 2 November 1822 for the administering of an unlawful oath. Beames, 'The Ribbon Societies', p. 136.

⁵⁶⁸ Huggins, 'Whiteboys and Ribbonmen' p. 27.

⁵⁶⁹ Huggins, 'Whiteboys and Ribbonmen' p. 27.

motives of exclusive dealings, protection and aid of other members, and maintenance of the secrecy of the organisation.⁵⁷⁰ For the most part the Ribbonmen appear to have occupied themselves with addressing local grievances, maintaining the secrecy of their organisation and with clashing with Orange opponents.

As stated in Chapter One, the terms Ribbonmen and Ribbonism came to be used to denote much of the Catholic violence and aggression that occurred in the northern part of the country during the period. In the same way that ‘Whiteboyism’ appears to have been used in the south, the authorities in the northern half of the country tended to attribute crimes of a violent nature, committed by Catholic peasantry, to Ribbonism. This led to local agrarian gangs being mistakenly labelled Ribbonmen and associating them with a wider movement when in truth, as Beames explained, the Ribbon association lacked the structure to penetrate the country at large. Carleton himself can be accused of wrongly attributing crimes to Ribbonism, yet his mistake might also be considered a device in strengthening the message he aimed to convey. Carleton portrayed the assailants in “Wildgoose Lodge” as Ribbonmen. Terence Dooley revealed this as inaccurate, identifying the culprits as a local agrarian gang.⁵⁷¹ Carleton’s use of the Ribbonmen in this instance, however, allowed him to portray the rural Catholic peasantry as an organised, violent threat to his readers. A localised conflict would not have carried the same thematic weight. When this is considered along with the other inaccuracies apparent in the short story, it becomes clear that Carleton was writing with a specific purpose in mind.

Despite this attempt to portray the attackers in “Wildgoose Lodge” as part of a wider network of violence, in those of Carleton’s writings that feature the Ribbonmen it is the local activities of the association that are revealed. Two instances of Ribbon crimes are cited in “Wildgoose Lodge”. The so-called Ribbonmen initially attempt to raid the home of Edward Lynch for arms and return later to exact revenge upon Lynch who had turned informer following the first attack. In “The Party Fight and Funeral” Ribbonmen are described clashing with Orangemen at a local fair while in his autobiography Carleton himself swears an illegal oath intimidated by a local gang of Ribbon youths. In effect, Carleton’s depictions of the activities of Ribbonism appear to support Beames’ argument that although a desire to emulate their Defender/United Irishmen predecessors may have existed amongst the Ribbonmen they spent most of their time dealing with local,

⁵⁷⁰ Kelly, *Sligo Ribbonism in 1842*, pp. 20-2.

⁵⁷¹ Dooley, *The Murders at Wildgoose Lodge*, pp. 104-6

nonpolitically motivated, feuds and grievances. Carleton's portrayals of incidents of agrarian agitation perpetrated by the Ribbonmen will be examined in greater detail in sections II and III of this chapter.

The same might be argued of Carleton's depiction of Whiteboys in his novel *The Tithe Proctor*. The Whiteboys mobilised in opposition to the payment of tithes within the novel. Opposition to tithes was a common grievance of successive Whiteboy movements and may be considered characteristic of these southern-based agrarian secret societies. Sean Connolly suggested that agrarian protest during the pre-famine period was often a response to threatened change. For Whiteboys he stated that:

The demand was not for the abolition of rents or tithes, but for these and other forms of exploitation to remain within customary levels.⁵⁷²

The initial outbreak of Whiteboyism in the 1760s occurred in Co. Tipperary as a reaction to 'the enclosure of common lands and the extension of pasture at the expense of small scale tillage.'⁵⁷³ Pat Feeley noted that:

At first they were called Levellers, but when other grievances concerning rent and tithes were added, the movement spread and the men took to wearing white shirts. They then became known as Buachaillí Bána, or Whiteboys. The white uniform was adopted so that they might easily recognize each other.⁵⁷⁴

Connolly further explained that:

The Whiteboys of 1761-5 included urban craftsmen as well as countrymen, and had some support from small farmers. The majority of those involved, however, were labourers and cottiers. Large farmers and middlemen were more likely to be the victims than the perpetrators of a campaign whose main aim was to halt the expansion of stock rearing at the expense of small-scale tillage.⁵⁷⁵

Like 'Ribbonism' however, 'Whiteboyism' came to be used as a generic term for much of the agrarian crime and agitation that occurred after the original movement. Donnelly explained that the initial outbreak of 1761-5:

⁵⁷² S.J. Connolly, 'Jacobites, Whiteboys and Republicans: Varieties of Disaffection in Eighteenth-Century Ireland', in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland*, xviii, (2003), pp. 73-4.

⁵⁷³ Connolly, 'Jacobites, Whiteboys and Republicans', p. 73.

⁵⁷⁴ Pat Feeley, 'Whiteboys and Ribbonmen', in *The Old Limerick Journal*, iv (1980), pp. 23-4.

⁵⁷⁵ Connolly, 'Jacobites, Whiteboys and Republicans', p. 75.

gave rise to common use of the term “Whiteboyism” to denote the seemingly endless succession of agrarian disturbances for which Ireland became notorious in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth century.⁵⁷⁶

As a synonym for agrarian outrages in the southern half of the country then, Whiteboyism is difficult to define. Like the Ribbonmen local bands of Whiteboys organised to address local grievances particular to their place and time. What united the numerous Whiteboy groups of different periods and locations, however, was their common opposition to tithe.

Tithes, taxes on agricultural produce made payable to the local Anglican rector by all regardless of their religion, were a source of almost constant agitation, particularly in the southern half of the country, until the Tithe Commutation Act was extended to Ireland in 1838.⁵⁷⁷ Issues relating to the payment and cost of tithes were more prominent in Munster and its surrounding counties for two main reasons. Donnelly cited two anomalies within the tithe system that he suggests made the issue of tithes ‘the most persistent and widespread of all agrarian complaints’⁵⁷⁸ in the southern half of the country from the 1760s through the pre-famine period:

The first anomaly was the curious fact that the tithe of potatoes was generally restricted to the six Munster counties and to adjacent portions of Leinster... The second anomaly was that, of the various tithes due from the produce of the soil, the highest level of taxation by the Anglican church and its ministers generally fell on potatoes; the rates of tithes or tax, in other words, were invariably heavier for an acre of potatoes than for an acre of wheat, oats, barley, or hay.⁵⁷⁹

Similarly, Patrick O’Donoghue stated that:

The fact that the staple food of the people (potatoes) should be tithed south of a line drawn roughly from Arklow to Galway and practically not tithed at all in the rest of the country was another substantial cause for the continuous opposition of the peasantry to the tithe system.⁵⁸⁰

⁵⁷⁶ Donnelly, *Captain Rock*, p. 5.

⁵⁷⁷ An Act for the Commutation of Tithe in England and Wales, 6 & 7 Will. 4 c. 71, (13 Aug. 1836).

⁵⁷⁸ Donnelly, *Captain Rock*, p. 16.

⁵⁷⁹ Donnelly, *Captain Rock*, p. 16.

⁵⁸⁰ Patrick O’Donoghue, ‘Causes of the Opposition to Tithe, 1830-38’, in *Studia Hibernica*, no. 5 (1965), p. 8.

As a result, any crimes connected with tithes, murders of tithe proctors, process servers and bailiffs, were often attributed to Whiteboys. In *The Tithe Proctor*, a novel set amidst the tithe war of the 1830s, Carleton depicted two such outrages; the Carrickshock massacre, a tithe affray in which the peasantry clashed with local police, and the murder of Matthew Purcel the tithe proctor. Section III of this chapter will include a detailed analysis of Carleton's *The Tithe Proctor*.

Sectarian based agrarian agitation surfaced in the north of Ireland in the 1780s. Prior to this secret societies had been operating, however, they were concerned with local grievances relating to land and directed their aggression exclusively towards landowners.⁵⁸¹ From the mid-1780s, however, Protestant groups began to direct this hostility towards Catholics. Hereward Senior explained that during this period:

non-enforcement of the penal code made it possible for Catholics to acquire the arms of disbanded Volunteers. As the possession of arms would obviously strengthen the positions of Catholics Protestant Peep o' Day Boys raided Catholic homes in the early hours of the morning to search for arms.⁵⁸²

D.W. Miller noted that:

a bitter sectarian conflict between Protestant 'Peep-of-Day Boys' and Catholic 'Defenders' raged intermittently from 1784 to 1795.⁵⁸³

The Defenders, a Catholic secret society, were established in opposition to the Peep o' Day Boys and in reaction to the harassment of Catholics by these Protestant vigilantes. The hub where these clashes often occurred was county Armagh and the feud culminated at what became known as the 'Battle of the Diamond' which took place at a crossroads, the 'Diamond', near Loughgall on Monday 21 September 1795.⁵⁸⁴ Tom Bartlett noted that:

A large force of Defenders was vanquished by a mixed Protestant force of ex-Volunteers, Peep o' Day Boys, and presumably members of the Boyne Societies.⁵⁸⁵

⁵⁸¹ Hereward Senior, *Orangeism in Ireland and Britain 1795-1836*, (London, 1966), p. 5.

⁵⁸² Hereward Senior, 'The Early Orange Order 1795-1870', in T.D. Williams (ed.), *The Secret Societies of Ireland*, (Dublin, 1973), p. 36.

⁵⁸³ D.W. Miller, *Queen's Rebels: Ulster Loyalism in Historical Perspective*, (Dublin, 1978), p. 52.

⁵⁸⁴ Aiken McClelland, 'Orangeism in County Monaghan' in *Clogher Record*, ix, no. 3 (1978), p. 384.

⁵⁸⁵ Tom Bartlett, *The Fall and Rise of the Irish Nation: The Catholic Question 1690-1830*, (Dublin, 1992), p. 216.

The Boyne Societies were Protestant groups formed in the eighteenth century in commemoration of King William of Orange's victory over the Catholic King James in 1690.

Between sixteen and forty-eight Defenders were reported dead as a result of this battle.⁵⁸⁶ The Orange Order was formed in the immediate aftermath of the Protestant victory at the Diamond in 1795. The leaders of the Protestant forces concerned in the skirmish united to form an organisation whose immediate aim was the defense of their properties.⁵⁸⁷

The Orange Order was an exclusively Protestant, oath-bound society. They operated in the northern half of the country from the close of the eighteenth century and had a minimal influence in the southern provinces.⁵⁸⁸ The society was organised by a governing body, the Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, who initially sat at Portadown on 12 July 1797, but later moved their headquarters to Dublin. In 1797 members presented at the first general meeting from the counties of Armagh, Antrim, Tyrone and Fermanagh.⁵⁸⁹ A year later the Orange system had spread throughout Ulster and Leinster and had penetrated parts of Connaught and Munster.⁵⁹⁰ Curran explained that the Order's primary aim was; 'to protect the relatively privileged position that Protestants had enjoyed in society since 1690.'⁵⁹¹ The oath taken by members upon initiation into the Orange system reveals the character of the organisation. No Catholic or person who had previously been a member of the United Irishmen or any 'treasonable society'⁵⁹² was permitted entry. Allegiance was pledged to the British monarch but perhaps more importantly to the 'Protestant Ascendancy'. The pledge also contained an oath of secrecy within, as the maintenance of secrecy appears to have been as integral to the association as it was to its Catholic counterpart, Ribbonism. An Orange oath is quoted in full in Carleton's *Valentine McClutchy*, in a report written by the brother of the absentee landlord, Lord Cumber, when visiting Ireland to examine how McClutchy, the agent, was managing the estate.⁵⁹³ The oath is communicated to Cumber's brother during a meeting of the local Orange lodge, of which McClutchy was master. Unlike the Ribbon oath quoted in *Rody the Rover* that may well have been communicated to Carleton in person, this Orange oath appears to have been taken from official reports produced by the Grand Orange lodge of Ireland.

⁵⁸⁶ Senior, *Orangeism in Ireland and Britain*, p. 18.

⁵⁸⁷ McClelland, 'Orangeism in County Monaghan', p. 384.

⁵⁸⁸ Senior, 'The Early Orange Order 1795-1870', p. 45.

⁵⁸⁹ McClelland, 'Orangeism in County Monaghan', p. 384.

⁵⁹⁰ McClelland, 'Orangeism in County Monaghan', p. 385.

⁵⁹¹ Senior, *Orangeism in Ireland and Britain*, pp. 3-4.

⁵⁹² Grand Orange Lodge of Ireland, 'Report of the Orange lodge I' (1835), quoted in Senior, *Orangeism in Ireland and Britain*, pp. 298-301, and Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, p. 329.

⁵⁹³ Senior, *Orangeism in Ireland and Britain*, pp. 298-301. Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, p. 329.

Despite being officially disbanded in 1825 with the enactment of the Unlawful Societies Act the Order reformed in 1828 and continued to act as an important institution for Irish Protestants throughout the nineteenth century. Curran noted that membership of the Orange Order united, and was of benefit to, Irish Protestants of all classes:

for the lower classes, the need for instruction, guidance, belonging and legitimacy was answered by the upper classes who in turn benefited from their involvement by continuing to restrain the masses whom they could not possibly allow to run out of control.⁵⁹⁴

Over the course of the nineteenth century the Order stood in opposition to Daniel O’Connell’s campaigns for Catholic emancipation and Repeal while also opposing Home Rule from the 1870s onwards. Further, the Orangemen’s tradition of parading led to intermittent clashes with Catholic opponents, most notably at Maghera village Co. Armagh in 1830 and at Dolly’s Brae, Co. Down in 1849.⁵⁹⁵

II. Carleton, Ribbonism and Orangeism

Carleton confessed in his autobiography to being initiated into the Ribbonmen. Carleton was about nineteen or twenty when he attended a dance or ‘infare’⁵⁹⁶ in the townland of Caragh that lay adjacent to Springtown where his family was then residing. Between 1814 and 1816 Carleton attending a school in Donagh, Co. Monaghan that was being run by his cousin, Keenan, the local curate, however, Carleton attended the dance on one of his visits home to his family. During the celebrations, he was taken aside by a group of his peers and coerced into joining the Ribbonmen. This initiation is just one of two instances in which Carleton referred to his Ribbon membership in his autobiography. The second saw Carleton use his association with the organisation and his knowledge of its passwords and grips or secret handshakes to procure financial assistance from a group of fellow conspirators. Carleton had given up his position as tutor to Pierce Murphy’s children in Lowtown, Co. Louth. He travelled to Co. Monaghan in the hope of securing a position as a teaching assistant. No such position was then available, and Carleton turned his step towards Drogheda with Dublin set as his ultimate destination. He stayed a night in Dundalk but as he had no money was forced to trade his shirt for a bed in a local lodging

⁵⁹⁴ Curran, *The Protestant Community*, p. 158.

⁵⁹⁵ Curran, *The Protestant Community*, pp. 52, 155-6.

⁵⁹⁶ An infare was a dance held to celebrate the coming home of a newly married couple to their future residence.

O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 81.

house. The following day, having come across a group of sailors or labourers who were unloading oats off a ship that had come from England, Carleton succeeded in selling his handkerchief to one of the men for two shillings. Carleton later returned to the sailors having come up with a cunning plan:

I bethought me of the fact that I was a Ribbonman, and had never once reflected that the circumstance might be valuable to me. I resolved to therefore try it with the sailors, who seemed beyond doubt to sympathize with me.⁵⁹⁷

Carleton targeted the man who had bought his handkerchief and ‘resolved to give the sign; this I did by tapping the point of my nose twice with the top of my middle finger.’⁵⁹⁸ All four of the sailors responded to Carleton’s gesture and he found that they were all initiated members of the Ribbon system. One of the tenets of the Ribbon oath sworn by members upon initiation stated that members were obliged to look after one another in times of need and as a result Carleton claimed that he left the sailors ‘with the vast sum of eight-and-sixpence in my pocket.’⁵⁹⁹

This second incident seems to have had the purpose of confirming for readers Carleton’s familiarity with the rituals and benefits of Ribbonism and so confirm the credibility of his claims in their eyes, but it was the first incident, the initiation process, which was both more prominent in his autobiography and versions of which were deployed in his fiction. It should be noted, however, that though subsequent generations have tended to take his description of the initiation at face value, his autobiographical account did not appear till some fifty years after its alleged occurrence. Neither of Carleton’s encounters with the Ribbon society can be traced to fact. His autobiography is the only source available that accounts for his involvement with the secret society and it is difficult given the author’s involvement with self-fashioning throughout his career to rely completely upon his word. Writing at the latter stage of his career these incidents, were they fiction, certainly enhanced the story of the author’s life and acted to make his rise from peasant origins appear more triumphant. Furthermore, it is worth noting that throughout his writings on the theme of violence Carleton was critical of the violent nature of Irish society and particularly critical of the violent outrages committed by agrarian secret societies, the Ribbonmen included. Carleton’s depictions of Ribbonism, including his portrayal of his

⁵⁹⁷ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 163.

⁵⁹⁸ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 163.

⁵⁹⁹ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 163.

initiation, were therefore informed by a personal hatred of secret societies and secret society violence.

Carleton recalled the process of his being initiated into the Ribbon organisation in detail. He joined, he remembered, in the celebrations at the dance at Caragh. He danced with the bride and some of the other local girls and claimed to have taken two glasses of poteen with the bridegroom. In what might be seen as an attempt to excuse his subsequent actions, Carleton suggested that the drink had had an effect on him; ‘as I was not in the habit of drinking anything in the shape of spirits, [the poteen] had got a very little into my head.’ As the celebrations proceeded, Carleton noticed some of his peers, the younger men in attendance, gathering in groups and looking at him as they conversed. Ultimately, Carleton was confronted by a young man, Hugh Roe McCahy, who the author described as:

a red-haired fellow... who lived in the townland of Cloghleim... He was one of those important individuals who make themselves active and prominent among their fellows, attend dances and wakes, are seldom absent in fair or market from a fight, and, I may add, lose no opportunity of giving rise to one when everything else fails them.⁶⁰⁰

Carleton portrayed McCahy as boisterous and volatile, uneducated and illiterate, comfortable with violence and as a prime example of those Irish peasants he described within his writings as possessing an inherent tendency for violence. The young Ribbonman challenged Carleton:

‘William,’ said he, ‘aren’t you ashamed to be ignorant of what is going on about you over the whole country?’ He had a prayer book, or what is called a *manual*, a book of Roman Catholic devotion, in his hand as he spoke – a fact which greatly puzzled me, as I was perfectly aware that he could not read.⁶⁰¹

Carleton asked McCahy to explain what he meant but supposedly before he knew what was happening he had been initiated into the Ribbon system:

“Why,” said I, “what is going in the country?”
“I will tell you,” he replied; “but first take this *manual* in your hand, and repeat after me what I will say.”
He then went over the oath of Ribbonism, which he had got by heart, until he concluded it; after this he made me kiss the book.

⁶⁰⁰ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 81-2.

⁶⁰¹ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 82.

“Now,” said he, “you’re *up* – you’re a Ribbonman; all you want is the words and signs – and here they are.”
He then communicated them to me, and, although but a schoolboy, I went home a Ribbonman.⁶⁰²

Carleton claimed that he was not fully cognisant of what was happening during his initiation owing first to the fact that he had taken a drink and second to the manner in which the intimidating McCahy conducted the ritual. Carleton further claimed that his experience was by no means unique:

Here was a new view of life opened to me, and that with such dexterous rapidity, that I found myself made a member of a secret society by this adroit scoundrel, before I had time to pause or reflect upon the consequences. In this manner were hundreds, nay thousands, of unreflecting youths seduced into the senseless but most mischievous system.⁶⁰³

Jennifer Kelly noted that this was a popular criticism levelled at the Ribbon system during the 1830s and 1840s. Kelly explained that during the trials of men charged with Ribbon crimes that prosecutors ‘often portrayed the leaders of the Ribbon society as vultures who preyed on young innocent Catholic boys who did not know any better.’⁶⁰⁴ Carleton’s depiction of his own initiation into the system might be seen to fit into this popular anti-Ribbon discourse. In the title of his first short story that addressed the theme of violence, Carleton the narrator claimed the status of being a reformed Ribbonman: “Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman”. In his later autobiographical text he claimed to have been coerced into joining the society in the first place. Within the context of the novelist’s ongoing self-fashioning, his former identity as an Irish Catholic peasant and a Ribbonman proved useful during the early stages of his career. No other Irish writer at that time could write from his unique perspective. In later life, the novelist’s association with Ribbonism served no advantageous purpose and he therefore chose to portray himself as a victim instead.

In *Rody the Rover* a novel detailing the dangers of Ribbonism, Thomas McMahon, a young Catholic peasant, is duped, in the same way that Carleton claimed he was, into joining the system of Ribbonism. The novel is set in the townland of Ballybracken, a small mining community. Mr. Sharpe, a local magistrate and former Orangeman, is eager to take possession of the valuable townland controlled by its landlord Mr. Ogle. Sharpe employs

⁶⁰² O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 82.

⁶⁰³ O’Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 82-3.

⁶⁰⁴ Jennifer Kelly, *‘The downfall of Hagan’: Sligo Ribbonism in 1842*, (Dublin, 2008), p. 8-9.

Rody, a spy, to infect the parish with Ribbonism in an attempt to raise the tenantry up against their landlord, Mr. Ogle, and in this way convince him to sell his property to the magistrate. Thomas McMahan is selected by Rody as his initial victim. Rody planned to recruit McMahan and have him swear the other men of the parish into the illegal combination. Having lured McMahan into his confidence, Rody proceeds to initiate the young man into the system of Ribbonsim. McMahan is first sworn to secrecy by 'The Ribbonman' before what is termed the '*Oath of the body*'⁶⁰⁵ is communicated to him. McMahan is required to then repeat the oath after his initiator to complete the ceremony. Thomas McMahan's initiation appears based upon what Carleton claimed was his own personal experience. Both accounts cite a strong character persuading or pressuring a young man to join the Ribbonmen and both reflect badly on the agrarian secret society. Carleton offered an insight into the agrarian secret societies' operations that appeared to be based on personal experience, however, the Tyrone native's perspective was also coloured by strong bias against violence, and agrarian crime in particular. *Rody the Rover* will be examined in detail in section III of this chapter.

In the preface to *Valentine McClutchy* Carleton noted his intention to treat of Orangeism as it existed in Ireland during the pre-famine period. The novel reflected Carleton's intention to detail to a wide readership, British included, the suffering that the Irish Catholic peasantry had been subject to at the hands of Irish Protestants:

To our friends across the Channel it is only necessary to say, that I was born in one of the most Orange counties in Ireland (Tyrone) – that the violence and licentious abuses of these armed civilians were perpetrated before my eyes – and that the sounds of their outrages may be said still to ring in my ears.⁶⁰⁶

Indeed, reared in the north of Ireland Carleton experienced first-hand Protestant manifestations of violence as well as those perpetrated by Catholics. On one occasion Carleton's own family were subject to a raid upon their home by Protestant Yeomen. As explained in Chapter One the Orange Order and the Yeomanry were two separate groups.

⁶⁰⁵ William Carleton, *Rody the Rover, or, The Ribbonman*, (Dublin, 1845), p. 69. [Carleton's emphasis] The Ribbon Oath is cited in full in both Carleton's autobiography and *Rody the Rover*: O'Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 83-5. Carleton, *Rody the Rover*, pp. 69-71. The version of the oath reproduced by Carleton consists of an opening pledge of allegiance, ten articles and a final declaration. The articles cover variously; the Catholicism of the association, the maintenance of secrecy, rules and regulations for members and meetings, and rules prohibiting members from dealing or trading with Protestants or Orangemen. For Ribbon oaths see Garvin, 'Defenders, Ribbonmen and Others', p. 145. Beames, 'The Ribbon Societies', p.134.

⁶⁰⁶ Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, preface.

The Orangemen were a secret society whereas the Yeomanry was a government funded force. Links did exist between the two but Carleton chose not to make any distinction between them. He explained in his autobiography that his father decided to move his family from their home in Towney and take another farm in Nurchasy as a direct result of this nocturnal raid upon their home.

On the night in question, a loud banging was heard upon the Carleton's door. A group of the local Yeomanry demanded to be let into the house to confiscate the arms they suspected were being held within. Carleton's father opened the door but insisted that there was no gun in the house. One of the men forced his screwed bayonet in James Carleton's direction while three others, one with a candle, began to search the house for weapons. Upon entering William's sister's room, one of them put the point of his gun into the girl's side until she screamed in pain. William's mother then produced a small tin gun that Sam Nelson, one of William's schoolmates, had given him as a present. She insisted that it was the only gun within the house and this ultimately satisfied the intruders. Carleton insisted firstly that his father was in no way involved in politics or the agrarian disturbances of the time and secondly that his family knew intimately each member of the gang who forced their way into their home that night. Within his construction of the event he firmly believed that the men knew that the tin gun was the only weapon within their house but such was the conduct of these Protestant groups at that time within the country.

III. "Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman"/"Wildgoose Lodge"

The first of Carleton's productions that dealt directly with the theme of violence was a short story entitled "Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman". The short story appeared in two parts in *The Dublin Literary Gazette, or, Weekly Chronicle of Criticism, Belles Lettres, and Fine Arts* in January of 1830. It later appeared as one of the short stories in the second series of *Traits and Stories of the Irish Peasantry* (1833) as "Wildgoose Lodge." Carleton was at this early stage of his career writing almost exclusively for the *Examiner*. He also contributed to another publication *The Dublin Family Magazine* that became *The Dublin Monthly Magazine* and was a sister periodical of the *Examiner*. As stated in previous chapters Carleton's early writings were anti-Catholic and exposed the perceived errors of Irish Catholicism to an Anglican readership. Carleton was to carry this anti-Catholicism through to those of his writings that dealt with the theme of violence and agrarian crime in Ireland during the period. "Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman" first appeared in the

immediate aftermath of the granting of Catholic emancipation in 1829. Carleton was eager to reveal to his readership the threat posed to persons and property by this newly emancipated mass Catholic populace. The short stories that will be examined in this section, “Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman”, later “Wildgoose Lodge”, and two which will be discussed in the next chapter - “The Battle of the Factions” and “The Party Fight and Funeral” - all portray a tendency amongst the Irish rural poor towards violence. Each of the short stories contain elements of sectarianism and although the victims of these stories are not exclusively Protestant, it is the ease with which the Irish peasantry resort to violence that Carleton signaled as the greatest threat to Irish society at large. As we shall see in the next chapter, however, the tone which Carleton used in relation to violence and the nature of the threat differed somewhat when the violence was recreational and, apparently, non-sectarian.

Within these short stories Carleton displayed a deep inner knowledge of agrarian violence yet he also ensured to maintain a distance between himself and those within the communities he described. Carleton’s presenting of himself as close to and distant from this peasant violence must be seen as a device in the author’s literary self-fashioning. During the early part of his career Carleton created what might be described as a dual-identity. His conversion to Protestantism ensured that he could find employment, while his former Catholicism allowed him to be successful in his new role. By utilising this peasant aspect of his public persona Carleton could write of the rural poor in a way that none of his contemporaries could. Carleton’s anti-Catholic message was clear within the aforementioned short stories, yet he appeared to maintain a certain bond or ‘closeness’ with the peasants he described. Carleton narrated from within in both “Wildgoose Lodge” and “The Party Fight and Funeral”. He played an active part in the narrative of “Wildgoose Lodge” watching on as a member of the local Ribbonmen as the home of Edward Lynch was burnt to the ground while the narrative structure of “The Party Fight and Funeral” saw the story related to him by his brother. He also acted, however, to maintain a distance from the peasant violence he depicted. Carleton described two different types of fighting in “The Battle of the Factions” and “The Party Fight and Funeral”. He approached these two modes of fighting in contrasting ways treating of faction fighting less severely than of sectarian party fighting. Carleton appeared close to the peasantry as he described the carnival-like atmosphere that surrounded faction fights yet distanced himself from the violence at the story’s fatal conclusion.

All three short stories illustrate the manner in which Carleton represented himself as both close to and distant from the violence he described, but in this section “Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman”, in particular, will be examined. Even as a cautionary note to the Protestant communities in Ireland was sounded within the story glimpses of the bond Carleton maintained with the people among whom he grew up seeps through his texts. The author’s conversion from Catholicism to Protestantism and his self-fashioning renders any study of his writings, particularly those produced in the early stages of his career, complex as the two competing perspectives and viewpoints fight for expression within his stories.

In “Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman” Carleton depicted a group of Ribbonmen exacting their revenge upon a man who had ‘successfully prosecuted three men under the Whiteboy Act 1776 for breaking into his home in search of arms.’⁶⁰⁷ Carleton renamed the story “Wildgoose Lodge” before inserting it into the second series of *Traits and Stories* in 1833. The original and the revised edition are almost identical but for one significant revision. Carleton originally cast Edward Lynch as a Protestant:

Our conjectures were correct, for on leaving the chapel we directed our steps to the house in which this man (the only Protestant in the parish) resided.⁶⁰⁸

In the subsequent version, however, Lynch, who was in fact Catholic, was instead described as ‘this devoted man.’⁶⁰⁹ Carleton originally intended the crime depicted in the story to be sectarian but he was forced to correct the inaccuracy of Lynch’s religious affiliation. In renaming the story “Wildgoose Lodge”, however, Carleton counteracted the effect of this forced revision and maintained the emphasis on sectarianism within his tale. One could argue that the house’s title suggested Big House or Protestant Ascendancy connotations. The scene that occurred at the conclusion of the story as the mass of Ribbonmen circled Lynch’s home as it was consumed by flames was perhaps intended to be illustrative of the situation faced by the Protestant population of Ireland during the period.

“Wildgoose Lodge” is a chilling tale that depicts the events of the night of the 29th/30th of October 1816 when the home of Edward Lynch and his family, known locally

⁶⁰⁷ Donnelly, *Captain Rock*, p. 3

⁶⁰⁸ William Carleton, ‘Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman’, in *The Dublin Literary Gazette, or, Weekly Chronicle of Criticism, Belles Lettres, and Fine Arts* no. 5, (1830), p. 66. [Carleton’s brackets]

⁶⁰⁹ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 356.

as Wildgoose Lodge, was attacked and burnt to the ground by a local gang of Catholics. Terence Dooley's study of the murders and the trials of those accused thereafter revealed that the perpetrators of this crime were part of a local agrarian gang rather than any wider Ribbon conspiracy.⁶¹⁰ The attack on Wildgoose Lodge was one of revenge as Lynch, labeled an 'informer', had three men hanged for attempting to raid his home for arms earlier that year.⁶¹¹ The initial attack, Dooley explained, was one of eleven raids that occurred in the area in April 1816 as part of a wave of agrarian agitation that swept the county that spring.⁶¹² Carleton became acquainted with the event that he was to base his short story upon when travelling through the county of Louth. He claimed to have noticed the bodies of the men charged with and sentenced for the crime hanging from gibbets by the roadside. The murders were attributed to Ribbonmen in a letter, penned by a Louth local, that had appeared in the *Freeman's Journal* that November.⁶¹³ That the incident had been popularly accepted as a Ribbon crime undoubtedly suited Carleton as it allowed him situate his tale within the context of wider anti-Protestant protest and agitation. Moreover, the crime was somewhat characteristic of the Ribbon movement in Ulster and its surrounding counties during the period. One of the Ribbonmen's main aims was to maintain the covert nature of their organisation. They employed oaths and passwords and sought out persons who threatened the secrecy of their association. The character Edward Lynch, as an informer, threatened the existence of the local Ribbon gang. This supposed Ribbon involvement lent itself to Carleton's narrative exposition of the secret society within "Wildgoose Lodge" and further to his representation of the peasantry as a violent threat to his Protestant readers.

Terence Browne noted that Carleton employed gothic tropes when depicting the heinous crime committed by the Ribbonmen in "Wildgoose Lodge". Browne suggested that Carleton distanced both himself and his readers from the atrocious peasant violence of the story portraying the villains as possessed and their actions as abnormal, supernatural, and otherworldly:

The world of the sublime, the world of the Gothic, and the world of Irish demonic possession, is a different reality to the normal one. It is as if the peasantry are possessed, so remote are they from rationally explicable

⁶¹⁰ Dooley, *The Murders at Wildgoose Lodge*, pp. 104-5.

⁶¹¹ Donnelly, *Captain Rock*, p. 3

⁶¹² Dooley, *The Murders at Wildgoose Lodge*, p. 89.

⁶¹³ Dooley, *The Murders at Wildgoose Lodge*, p. 17.

behavior. They are addicted to a cult of violence and vendetta which can only be accounted for in terms indeed of some kind of demonic possession.⁶¹⁴

Yet Carleton also narrated from within, taking part in the narrative as an on-looking Ribbonman and he added a note at the end of the short story asserting the factual basis of the tale. Presenting himself as a former peasant, who was perfectly acquainted with such peasant savagery, Carleton could claim to write of it with a level of authenticity. His middle-class Protestant readers, however, would have seen such brutality as alien. Carleton had to empathise with these readers but maintain his authority over the text. Consequently, the gothic competed with the reality of the events depicted as the young author searched for a mode to accurately explain the violent nature of the Irish peasantry to his Protestant readers. In the same way that writers of anti-Catholic literature employed the gothic to distance themselves from the operations of the Catholic church and its agents, discussed in Chapter Three, Carleton's use of gothic tropes enabled him to warn his readers of the imminent threat the peasantry posed while also allowing him, as a former Catholic, to distance himself from their violence.

Carleton set the short story amidst a storm. He created an atmosphere of fear and mystery, characteristic of the gothic style of writing. The local Ribbonmen, Carleton as narrator included, met in a dark damp chapel in the dead of night. Each of the men assembled was required to swear an oath of allegiance followed by an oath of secrecy. Carleton described in detail the appearances of several characters present at this midnight meeting; the Captain and the relatives of the men convicted for the initial attack on Wildgoose Lodge. When describing the Captain, Carleton stated:

But in the course of his meditation I could observe, on one or two occasions, a dark shade come over his countenance that contracted his brow into a deep furrow, and it was then, for the first time, that I saw the Satanic expression of which his face, by a very slight motion of its muscles, was capable.⁶¹⁵

The relatives of those charged with the initial attack were depicted in a similar vein:

The countenances of these human tigers were livid with suppressed rage; their knit brows, compressed lips, and kindled eyes fell under the dim light of the taper with an expression calculated to sicken any heart not absolutely diabolical.⁶¹⁶

⁶¹⁴ Terence Browne, 'Carleton and Violence', in Brand, *The Authentic Voice*, p. 195.

⁶¹⁵ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 353.

⁶¹⁶ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 355.

The imagery used by Carleton in these descriptions, the satanic or demonic and the animalistic, was calculated to further the sense of fear and horror within the story. It also acted to distance Carleton and his readership from the violence that ensued. Throughout the short story Carleton walked a tightrope between the peasants he described and the Protestant readers he addressed. Carleton had to channel his intimate knowledge of the Ribbonmen and peasant violence for his readers to believe his tale yet could not present himself as aligned with Ribbonism for fear of alienating those same readers.

The Ribbonmen assembled at the chapel subsequently proceeded to the home of Edward Lynch where the Captain of the group led an assault on Wildgoose Lodge and those within the dwelling. The house was set alight and a guard was formed around the perimeter of the home to prevent anyone from escaping the flames. The brutality which ensued was emphasised by the Captain's cries for, 'No quarter – no mercy,'⁶¹⁷ as well as, an incident involving the Ribbonmen's leader. Carleton stated that:

The captain noticed this, and with characteristic atrocity, thrust, with a sharp bayonet, the little innocent, along with the person who endeavoured to rescue it, into the red flames, where they both perished.⁶¹⁸

This incident, Terence Dooley suggested was borrowed by Carleton from Richard Musgrave's account of the Scullabogue massacre.⁶¹⁹ The Scullabogue massacre, a sectarian attack on a group, predominantly Protestant, during which 126 people were killed, occurred during the United Irish rebellion of 1798. The image of the helpless child being piked back into the flames was one that became popular in nineteenth century representations of sectarian crimes, the murders at Wildgoose Lodge included. Dooley noted of George Cruickshank's 1845 drawing of the Scullabogue massacre that 'one of the focal points of this illustration is a savage-looking pike man holding an impaled child up to the burning thatch.'⁶²⁰ Carleton, like his contemporaries, used this image to emphasise the violent and brutal nature of the heinous crime and thus portrayed the Ribbonmen and their leader as heartless and unmerciful.

⁶¹⁷ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 359.

⁶¹⁸ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 360.

⁶¹⁹ Dooley, *The Murders at Wildgoose Lodge*, p. 38. Richard Musgrave, *Memoirs of the different rebellions in Ireland from the arrival of the English*, (2 vols, Dublin, 1802).

⁶²⁰ Dooley, *The Murders at Wildgoose Lodge*, p. 45.

The scene depicted at the end of this tale may be seen as an image of the violent, sectarian nature of Irish society in the nineteenth century. The house was surrounded by a sea of violence which, the audience were intended to read as aptly illustrative of the situation that faced the Protestant population in Ireland during the pre-famine period:

The hills and country about us appeared with an alarming distinctness; but the most picturesque part of it was the effect or reflection of the blaze on the floods that spread over the surrounding plains. These, in fact, appeared to be one broad mass of liquid copper; for the motion of the breaking waters caught from the blaze of the high waving column, as reflected in them, a glaring light, which eddied and rose and fluctuated as if the flood itself had been a lake of molten fire.⁶²¹

As stated the story was published in the immediate aftermath of the granting of Catholic emancipation. As a consequence of O'Connell's campaign of mass meetings, Irish Protestants and the British Government were forced to take notice of the potentially violent threat posed by the Catholics of rural Ireland. O'Connell inferred that if Catholic emancipation was not granted he would unleash his Catholic army and could not be responsible for their violence. Following the concession of emancipation, Protestants in Ireland feared that the government would again concede to Catholic pressure in the event of further protests and that the power and privilege they enjoyed within Irish society would be further reduced. Informing these fears were memories of the failed uprising of 1798, including the Scullabogue massacre. These helped to convince Irish Protestants that the Catholic Irish were not only disloyal, but brutally violent. If Daniel O'Connell's mass political campaign for emancipation heightened their worst fears, it did so not only in the context of the memory of 1798 but also more recent events such as the brutal Rockite rebellion in Munster between 1821 and 1824. Donnelly noted that:

The Rockites became the most violent agrarian movement that Ireland had yet witnessed; they were especially remarkable for the frequency of their retort to murder and incendiarism as weapons of warfare.⁶²²

The movement was both sectarian, akin to the nature of Ribbonism, and fuelled by the millennialism of Pastorini whose prophecy became increasingly popular amongst the rural poor in the 1820s as it neared its suggested fulfilment. More than that, come the story's publication in *Traits and Stories* the country was in the grip of a sometimes brutal Tithe

⁶²¹ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, ii, p. 361.

⁶²² J.S. Donnelly, 'Captain Rock: The Origins of the Irish Agrarian Rebellion of 1821-24', in *New Hibernia Review*, xi, no. 4 (2007), p. 47.

War. The Tithe War of 1830-1838 began in County Kilkenny and mainly affected Munster and the counties in the southern half of Leinster. Widespread opposition to tithe took the form of ‘constitutional agitation and passive resistance,’⁶²³ but such resistance also turned violent at times. Tithe proctors and process servers were murdered while clashes between the people and the authorities often produced fatalities.⁶²⁴

As stated the attack on Wildgoose Lodge was not an isolated incident. The sheer brutality of the crime and the high number of fatalities produced, however, rendered the Wildgoose Lodge atrocity exceptional. Donnelly noted that Wildgoose Lodge was ‘unique as a “multitudinous murder” (in Carleton’s phrase).’⁶²⁵ That eight people, men, women and children, died made the incident ripe for Carleton’s purposes. For a British, primarily Protestant readership, the brutal, unmerciful murders of Wildgoose Lodge allowed Carleton to illustrate, apparently accurately and authentically as this was a ‘true story’, the threat posed by the Catholic peasants of rural Ireland. Even if that attack was one by Catholics on Catholic victims it posed the question: what might the Ribbonmen do to their natural Protestant enemies if they were capable of inflicting such cruelty upon members of their own creed?

IV. A new perspective in Carleton’s novels of the 1840s

Following the transitional period outlined in Chapter Three, when Carleton revised and republished his original *Traits and Stories* series, the second phase of his writings on the theme of violence began with the publication of the novel *Valentine McClutchy* in 1845. Carleton followed this novel with another in the same year entitled *Rody the Rover*. In all, these novels along with *Art Maguire, or, The Broken Pledge*, *Parra Sashta, or, The History of Paddy Go-Easy and his Wife Nancy* and *Tales and Sketches illustrating the Character, Usages, Traditions, Sports and Pastimes of the Irish Peasantry*, brought to five the total number of works produced by Carleton in 1845. Roger McHugh suggested that Carleton ‘worked spasmodically’⁶²⁶ producing his writings in bursts, fits and starts. Moreover, O’Donoghue noted that Carleton was ‘often hard pressed for money and was

⁶²³ Patrick O’Donoghue, ‘Opposition to Tithe Payment in 1832-33’, in *Studia Hibernica*, no. 12 (1972), p. 77.

⁶²⁴ Patrick O’Donoghue, ‘Opposition to Tithe Payment in 1830-31’, in *Studia Hibernica*, no. 6 (1966), pp. 69-98. O’Donoghue, ‘Opposition to Tithe Payment in 1832-33’, p. 77-108.

⁶²⁵ Donnelly, *Captain Rock*, p. 4.

⁶²⁶ Roger McHugh, ‘A Portrait of the Artist as Propagandist’, in *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, xxvii, no. 105 (1938), p. 61.

indeed in such a chronic state of pecuniary embarrassment⁶²⁷ during this period of his career. Carleton applied to the Royal Literary Fund for financial assistance in December 1841 and upon the death of John Banim in August 1842 he wrote to Robert Peel appealing for Banim's state pension to be transferred unto him. While he received £40 from the Literary Fund his appeal for a state pension was refused. In 1845 he applied for a pension a second time during the same period in which he churned out works so frantically. This was obviously no coincidence and clearly the novelist was working hard to service his financial needs.

The Tithe Proctor published in 1849 completed a trilogy of novels that dealt specifically with agrarian crime and violence in Ireland during the pre-famine period. Whereas his short stories of 1830 - most importantly "Confessions of a Reformed Ribbonman" - focused on the threat posed by the Irish Catholic peasantry, within these later novels Carleton turned his attention towards the social and political circumstances that had forced the Irish rural poor to turn to violence so frequently during the period. During the 1840s then, Carleton's critique of rural unrest became more nuanced and less anti-Catholic. He began to criticise those with power in Ireland and the way they had contributed to agrarian protest. As explained in Chapter Three Carleton became associated with *The Nation* in 1843. O'Donoghue argued that in the same way that Carleton was pressured into writing from an anti-Catholic perspective for the *Examiner* in the late 1820s and early 1830s that at this later point in his career he was urged to write from a more nationalistic perspective by the members of Young Ireland. He suggested that:

It was the pressure of the Young Irelanders which caused Carleton to write books of a really Nationalist character.⁶²⁸

Carleton, however, claimed that he did not share in the political ideals of his new associates. He insisted in an 1848 letter addressed to the editor of the *Evening Mail*, who had criticised the government for granting his pension, that 'I am not nor have I ever been at any time a Repealer. I am not a Young Irelander'.⁶²⁹ Moreover, he stated in the preface to *The Tithe Proctor* that he disagreed fundamentally with the aims of Young Ireland's repeal campaign:

⁶²⁷ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 57.

⁶²⁸ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 57.

⁶²⁹ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 133.

I have myself been a, strong anti-repealer during my whole life, and though some of the Young Irelanders are my personal friends, yet none know better than they do, that I was strenuously opposed to their principles, and have often endeavoured – need I say unsuccessfully? – to dissuade them from the madness of their agitation.⁶³⁰

Carleton's personal political opinion did not, however, prevent him from becoming an instrument of the Repeal campaign. While he may not have favoured outright Repeal his novels of the 1840s do suggest that he did support O'Connell and Young Ireland in their criticisms of the British government and their insurances that further reforms were necessary for Ireland. Indeed, Carleton's dedication of *The Black Prophet* in 1847 to then Prime Minister Lord John Russell can be seen as characteristic of his novels of the 1840s.⁶³¹ In charging the British government with neglect of the Irish situation his political stance during the period was anti-government, and if not pro-Repeal then pro-reform.

Whether Carleton supported Repeal or not, or agreed with the policies of O'Connell and Young Ireland, had little bearing on the writings he was to produce during this period. Letters written by Carleton to Charles Gavan Duffy between 1846 and 1850 reveal that the author was labouring under significant financial pressure, ultimately explaining his shift towards a more reformist and somewhat nationalistic position. Carleton complained to Gavan Duffy that he knew 'not on what hand to turn'⁶³² and that 'every earthly circumstance – and every earthly hope goes against me.'⁶³³ Further, he asked Gavan Duffy not to wish upon his worst enemy that 'God should make them a Man of Genius in Dublin.'⁶³⁴ As stated, Carleton's difficulties were financial and he referred to them consistently in these letters to Gavan Duffy. In 1846 Carleton stated that 'it is all we have to put us to the end of next month',⁶³⁵ referring to a remittance he was due to receive. Most of this remittance he suggested would be used to repay creditors he had borrowed money from.⁶³⁶ In 1847 he forwarded a letter to Gavan Duffy that he had received from Lord Morpeth, then Chief Secretary of Ireland, that advised Carleton on how best to make an application for a pension.⁶³⁷ A year later, Carleton told Gavan Duffy that 'there are in my writing desk no less than two writs and a summons and my landlord threatens an

⁶³⁰ Carleton, *The Tithe Proctor*, preface.

⁶³¹ Seamus Deane, (ed.), *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, (2 vols., Derry, 1991), ii, pp. 124-5.

⁶³² William Carleton to Charles Gavan Duffy, 1848, (National Library of Ireland, Gavan Duffy Papers, Mss. 5756/91-3).

⁶³³ William Carleton to Charles Gavan Duffy', 1848.

⁶³⁴ William Carleton to Charles Gavan Duffy', 1848.

⁶³⁵ William Carleton to Charles Gavan Duffy', 1846, (N.L.I., Gavan Duffy Papers, Mss. 5756/257-60).

⁶³⁶ William Carleton to Charles Gavan Duffy', 1846.

⁶³⁷ William Carleton to Charles Gavan Duffy', 8 May 1847, (N.L.I., Gavan Duffy Papers, Mss. 5756/31-3).

expectation for his rent.⁶³⁸ Evidently, Carleton's financial strife forced him into writing for *The Nation*. Moreover, the novelist may not have had any other opportunities available to him at the time as Charles Lever, for instance, was not going to allow him to contribute to the *DUM* following their quarrel. While Carleton, therefore, appeared to switch allegiances, the Protestant anti-Catholicism of his early productions was not completely absent from these later writings. The duality of Carleton's voice remained, yet the balance shifted and while the novels he produced from 1845 onwards boasted elements of contemporary nationalist rhetoric the novelist still maintained an aversion towards the violent behaviour of the Catholic rural poor.

In his novels of the 1840s Carleton addressed issues relevant to the social and economic circumstances of the Irish rural poor during the pre-famine period, issues that were also being engaged with by the Repeal campaign. In *Valentine McClutchy*, a novel set at the beginning of the nineteenth century, he criticised absenteeism, the trend that saw Irish landowners spend most of their time residing abroad and leaving the management of their estates to agents. Carleton recognised the suffering of the tenantry under ruthless, unfeeling land agents that focused on extracting as much money as possible from the rural poor to feed their landlords' extravagance while also securing for themselves a healthy profit. Carleton also critiqued the Orangemen, as well as the government funded and almost exclusively Protestant Irish Yeomanry within the novel, detailing their abuses of power and violence towards the peasantry in the same way he did the Catholic Ribbonmen in his earlier stories. In *Rody the Rover* Carleton exposed the governmental spy system and the employment of informers detailing a conspiracy whereby a magistrate succeeded in having Ribbonism introduced into a once humble and industrious parish that subsequently descended into chaos. Carleton alleged in the novel that the authorities were in some way responsible for the spread of Ribbonism within the country during the 1820s in attempts to derail the campaign for Catholic emancipation. While this plot had little contemporary relevance given that emancipation had already been granted, the significance of the novel lay in Carleton's suggestion that the authorities had actively contributed to the agrarian tensions of the period. Finally, *The Tithe Proctor* offered an example of the violent opposition to the payment of tithes that was a feature of the 1830s in the southern half of the country. While the payment of tithes had been reorganised and effectively reduced through legislation in 1838, and prior to Carleton's issuing of *The Tithe Proctor*,

⁶³⁸ William Carleton to Charles Gavan Duffy, 1848.

opposition did remain and the issue was addressed by the Repeal campaign. The peasantry mobilised in opposition to the local tithe proctor during the novel and succeeded in murdering him before the story's conclusion. Carleton depicted the realisation of the threat posed by the Catholic peasantry within the novel, but also recognised the role of the agents of the tithe system in provoking rural protest. The Great Famine decimated the rural peasant population of Ireland, of whom the majority were Catholic, between 1845 and 1850. Through a more nuanced critique, in these novels of the 1840s, Carleton appeared more empathetic towards the plight of the peasantry, yet he made sure to remind his readers of the potentially violent threat posed by the rural poor. A more reformist Carleton implied that the government needed to recognise that their laws and systems in Ireland had been abused and had subsequently contributed to rural unrest. Carleton initiated attempts to draw a fuller picture of the violent nature of Irish society during the pre-famine period, examining the issues that aggravated the Irish peasantry, and therefore putting into context their subsequent acts of retaliation.

Valentine McClutchy, the Irish Agent

In *Valentine McClutchy*, published by James Duffy in three volumes in 1845, Carleton attacked absenteeism and the effect that neglectful landlords had upon properties in Ireland during the pre-famine period. Moreover, within the novel Carleton attempted to expose the system of Orangeism as it existed at the beginning of the nineteenth century in the same way that he had Ribbonism in his short stories of 1830. Working with Duffy, Carleton signaled his intent to write from a different perspective and for a different readership. Duffy was a Catholic and a nationalist publisher. He started his business in the 1830s and in 1843 published *The Spirit of the Nation*, an anthology of verse that had appeared in Young Ireland's newspaper, *Speeches by John Philipot Curran*, edited by Charles Gavan Duffy, and *O'Connell's Memoir on Ireland Native and Saxon*, by Daniel O'Connell. Duffy published all five of Carleton's works in 1845, each of them being addressed to an increasingly Catholic and nationalist readership. By the middle of the century those Catholics who had benefitted from the national system of education, introduced to Ireland in 1831, were gradually becoming a part of the reading public. Duffy specialised in cheap, affordable chapbooks that he made available to the masses. Facilitated by Duffy and encouraged by Young Ireland, Carleton began to write for 'the people' and not just of the narrower audience of earlier part of his career. It was nationalist readers, both Catholic and Protestant supporters of Repeal that Carleton was targeting with

these novels. He attempted to appeal to the middle-class Catholics who had been politicised by O'Connell's campaigns for emancipation and Repeal and, perhaps, in an apparent contradiction, to some Irish Protestants who had become disillusioned with the government's succumbing to Catholic pressure. Following O'Connell's victory in 1829, the government passed a succession of Acts which had the effect of weakening the Protestant Ascendancy's control over Irish affairs. Successive reforms in government, the administration of the Church of Ireland, tithes, and in municipal corporations, coupled with the extension of the education and poor law systems to Ireland were seen to improve the position of Irish Catholics and were thus met with Protestant opposition.⁶³⁹ Irish Protestants held the view that the government was 'busily conceding to 'clamour, turbulence, and threats,'⁶⁴⁰ and George Boyce explained that the Protestant groups in Ireland felt increasingly helpless:

As always, then, British policy was received policy, in the sense that no Irish political group had the final say in its drafting and implementation, however, much they might strive to influence its shape. And this could introduce a sense of helplessness, resentment and betrayal on the part of the various groups in Ireland; ever anxious about their future and their relative position towards each other.⁶⁴¹

As a result, there existed an anti-government feeling amongst some Protestant groups in Ireland and Carleton's novels of the 1840s can be seen to have had some appeal for them as well as the Catholic nationalists they were primarily targeted at.

Carleton followed fellow novelists Maria Edgeworth and Lady Morgan in tackling the issue of absenteeism in pre-famine Ireland.⁶⁴² An absentee landlord was defined as a land owner residing outside of Ireland for more than six months in the year. Absenteeism was criticised variously as, an economic drain upon Irish society, as a system that allowed unsympathetic land agents to exploit the rural tenantry for their own benefit, and as an obstacle to the improvement of the lands, and of the people, of Ireland. Absenteeism was one of the issues addressed by the Repeal campaign that dominated Irish politics in the

⁶³⁹ Representation of the People Act, 2 & 3 Will. IV, c. 45, (7 June 1832), Church Temporalities Act, 3 & 4 Will. IV, c. 37, (14 Aug. 1833), Tithe Act, 2 & 3 Will. IV, c. 100, (9 Aug. 1832), Municipal Corporations (Ireland) Act, 3 & 4 Vict., c. 108, (10 Aug. 1840), Poor Relief (Ireland) Act, 37 & 38 Vict., c. 96 (31 July 1838).

⁶⁴⁰ George Boyce, *Nineteenth Century Ireland: The search for stability*, (Dublin, 2005), p. 65.

⁶⁴¹ Boyce, *Nineteenth Century Ireland*, p. 73.

⁶⁴² Maria Edgeworth, *Tales of Fashionable Life*, (6 vols, London, 1812), Lady Morgan, *Absenteeism*, (London, 1825).

1840s. A proposed tax on absentees was supported by the campaign. In 1844 in *The Nation*'s "New Repeal Dictionary" absenteeism was defined as:

A crime for which the proprietors of Irish estates have been for centuries remarked. It is a curse to which every dependent country is liable.⁶⁴³

In 1845, in the same year that Carleton published *Valentine McClutchy*, various articles appeared in *The Nation* commenting on the issue of an absentee tax and outlining the problems that arose from absenteeism. In one example, an article entitled "An Absentee Tax", the commentator argued that 'A landed gentry, born and bred at home, might supply the People with an important element of peace – government and civilization,'⁶⁴⁴ before illustrating the alternative:

Fancy such a griping aristocracy – rarely born more rarely bred on the soil – taught successfully from childhood to scorn the history, to ridicule the manners, and to dread the spirit of the country – not disciplined to war, to statesmanship, to agriculture – not really versed in art or literature, but fitted out with the slang of both – never living with, or loving or leading the People – interposing between themselves and their tributary serfs, a middleman, or an agent, or both – reducing the People to rags, hovels, and wet roots that may have his thousands wherewith to mimic the show; or, to share the vices of foreign nobles; or resuming his Nationality, vote against the little rights and to speak against the aspersed character of his country.⁶⁴⁵

The reformist argument of the day against absenteeism was multifaceted. The economic drain it produced on the country was a major concern but so too was the mismanagement of estates by land agents and middlemen and the neglect suffered by the people in the absence of good influence, instruction, and encouragement from their landlords. The absentee tax was seen as a way of forcing landlords either, to pay for the luxury of residing abroad or, into selling their properties to men who had more interest in Ireland. Carleton tackled the issue of absenteeism in *Valentine McClutchy* from this perspective.

Carleton's tale, set in the 1800s prior to the granting of Catholic emancipation, detailed a series of events that occurred upon the Castle Cumber property. The estate, situated in Ulster, in an area where the population was equally split between Catholics and Protestants, was owned by Lord Cumber or Tom Topertoe, an absentee landlord who

⁶⁴³ 'New Repeal Dictionary', *The Nation*, 1 June 1844.

⁶⁴⁴ 'An Absentee Tax', *The Nation*, 5 April 1845.

⁶⁴⁵ 'An Absentee Tax'.

resided in England. Carleton explained that old Tom Topertoe had sold his country for his title, voted in support of the Act of Union and left his home for England following the passing of the act into law. His heir, his eldest son Tom, succeeded him but remained in England leaving the management of the estate in the hands of Mr. Hickman, the family's agent.

The plot of Carleton's novel is similar to that of Maria Edgeworth's *The Absentee*. Carleton admitted in his autobiography to having read Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* (1800).⁶⁴⁶ He did not mention reading *The Absentee* but given the similarities between *Valentine McClutchy* and Edgeworth's novel it is most likely that he did.⁶⁴⁷ In both novels the extravagant and excessive lifestyles that the absentee families have become accustomed to and the financial demand necessary to sustain such comforts are brought to bear upon their respective properties in Ireland. These estates are initially managed in both instances by good and fair land agents. Mr. Burke of the town of Colambre on the Clonbrony estate in *The Absentee*, and Mr. Hickman on the Castle Cumber property in *Valentine McClutchy*, are examples of good agents. Mr. Hickman is described as 'an honest and humane agent'⁶⁴⁸ who 'made it a point of principle to lend the young Lord no money under any circumstances'⁶⁴⁹ thus not putting the tenantry under unnecessary hardship. Similarly, Mr. Burke is described by the local publican of Colambre as a good agent and lists his qualities as follows:

he is the man that will encourage the improving tenant... show no favour or affection, but justice... residing always in the country... and going continually among the tenantry... no duty work called for, no presents, nor glove money, nor sealing money even, taken or offered... no screwing of the land to the highest penny, just to please the head landlord.⁶⁵⁰

While such estate management allowed both estate and tenantry to thrive it did not yield the ready money requested by the absentees in each instance. As a result, both 'good' agents were replaced by men willing to press and squeeze the tenants in order to make available such funds as their landlords required.

⁶⁴⁶ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 174.

⁶⁴⁷ Carleton and Edgeworth shared a correspondence when Carleton was seeking support in his application for a state pension in 1847. Edgeworth obliged and penned a letter to aid Carleton's cause. There is no evidence to suggest that they were acquainted prior to this correspondence. O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 104-39.

⁶⁴⁸ Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, p. 24.

⁶⁴⁹ Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, p. 24.

⁶⁵⁰ Edgeworth, *Tales of Fashionable Life*, vi, 129-30.

Again, in both novels the ‘bad’ land agents and the means by which they extract money from their estates are found out by a member of each absentee family visiting the estate in disguise, unbeknownst to the agents. Lord Colambre, heir to the Clonbrony estate, and Richard Topertoe, the brother of Lord Cumber, visit their respective family properties to discover the manner in which each has been run in their absence. Lord Colambre discovers that the Garaghtys, Old Nick and the ironically named St. Dennis, have allowed the estate to deteriorate into ruin. He finds the tenantry living in squalor, the practice of illicit distilling to be in operation, and a tendency for drinking and drunkenness to be prominent amongst the peasantry.⁶⁵¹ He also witnesses the eviction of a widow and her family from their home despite their compliance with the agent’s requirements.⁶⁵² McClutchy too is found to be pressing and squeezing his tenants in order to feed the extravagances of Lord Cumber and also to provide for himself and his son Phil. He turns two honest tenants out whose leases have expired with the intention of letting their properties to his son and the local magistrate but at inferior rents. He is forced to recruit a corps of Orangemen for his own protection during the novel as a result of his mistreatment of the Catholic tenantry and a series of threats they have issued him as a consequence of his actions towards them. Both novels offered examples of good and bad estate management. Both authors warned against the neglect of properties through absenteeism and of the consequences of trusting the management of estates to land agents. Both stories concluded with the landlords of each property returning to reside upon their estates.

While Edgeworth concentrated on Lord Colambre and his trials to persuade his family to return to Ireland, Carleton examined more closely the effect that Lord Cumber’s absenteeism had upon his property. Valentine McClutchy’s tyrannical reign upon the Castle Cumber estate was illustrated as an example of bad estate management but it also allowed Carleton to include a critique of Protestant, sectarian violence, as it existed in the north of Ireland during the pre-famine era, in his narrative. Valentine McClutchy or ‘Val the Vulture’⁶⁵³ as the tenantry called him, was a Protestant and an Orangeman. In naming the characters within this novel, and indeed some of his other writings, Carleton engaged in crude stereotyping to make it blatantly obvious to his readers who the villains of his texts were. During the novel McClutchy recruits a corps of Orangemen to police the property and to carry out executions and exterminations, but also for his own personal protection as

⁶⁵¹ Edgeworth, *Tales of Fashionable Life*, vi, 146-52.

⁶⁵² Edgeworth, *Tales of Fashionable Life*, vi, 209-12.

⁶⁵³ Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, p. 7.

the most despised man on the estate. McClutchy, in a ploy to raise the corps, suggested that Lord Cumber be Colonel. Carleton furthered his critique of absentee landlords as Cumber gratefully accepted the title and the responsibilities of the position despite the fact that he would take no active part in leading the corps given his non-residence in Ireland. McClutchy was Captain and paymaster and effectively led the corps without reproach while his son, Phil, was lieutenant. The corps becomes known on the property as ‘McClutchy’s Bloodhounds.’⁶⁵⁴

Within the novel Carleton used an eviction scene to describe the character of McClutchy’s conduct towards his tenants and, by implication, the manner in which he wishes his audience to see the behavior of Protestant forces operating in Ireland during the early nineteenth century. These evictions, although not carried out by the Bloodhounds, were the catalyst in bringing the corps into existence. Carleton suggested that the conduct of the Orangemen and those concerned in these evictions, ‘Deaker’s Dashers,’⁶⁵⁵ was typical of Orange violence in Ireland during the pre-famine period.

One of McClutchy’s first actions in his new office as head agent was to deal with a small community living in the mountain village of Drum Dhu. The families amongst this little community, led by a man named O’Regan, had all refused to promise their votes to the brother of Lord Cumber and instead intended to vote for Mr. Hartley who was a supporter of Catholic emancipation. During Daniel O’Connell’s campaign for Catholic emancipation one of the deciding factors in its success was the mobilisation of the forty-shilling freeholders, those that satisfied the property qualification to vote. During the period tenants were expected to vote for their landlords or for the candidate of their landlord’s choosing. Voting otherwise would have secured the displeasure of their landlords and could have resulted in increases in rent or worse: eviction. O’Connell successfully persuaded many Catholics to vote against their landlords and for emancipation candidates during the elections of 1826 and 1828. O’Connell himself was elected in Clare in 1828 in this way, as were emancipation candidates in Waterford, Louth, Monaghan, Cavan and Westmeath in 1826.⁶⁵⁶ McClutchy’s object was, Carleton explained, ‘to remove them from the property, in order that he might replace them with a more obedient and less conscientious class.’⁶⁵⁷ It was determined that the evictions were to be carried out on the

⁶⁵⁴ Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, p. 117.

⁶⁵⁵ Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, p. 108.

⁶⁵⁶ Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998*, p.32.

⁶⁵⁷ Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, p. 103.

morning of Christmas Eve and this particular morning Carleton explained was ‘ushered in by storm.’⁶⁵⁸ In an attempt to add to the horror and despair of the scene Carleton stated that:

There had been above a fortnight’s snow, accompanied by hard frost, and to this was added now the force of a piercing wind, and a tremendous down pouring of hard dry drift.⁶⁵⁹

Carleton continued in his description of the scene stating:

Misery in all its shapes was there – suffering in its severest pangs – sickness – disease – famine – and death – to all which was to be added bleak, houseless, homeless, roofless desolation. Had the season been summer they might have slept in the fields, made themselves temporary sheds, or carried their sick, and aged, and helpless, to distant places where humanity might aid and relieve them.⁶⁶⁰

Aware of McClutchy’s intentions, those of the tenants who were able abandoned their properties prior to the morning in question for fear of suffering at the hands of the agent. O’Regan, his wife and two sons, were forced to remain at home, however, as their son Torley was fatally ill. Thus, the O’Regans were present when McClutchy made his appearance:

Entering the northern end of this wild collection of sheelings was seen a posse of bailiffs, drivers, constables, keepers, and all that hard-hearted class of ruffians that constitute the staff of a land agent upon occasions similar to this. Immediately behind these followed a body of Orange yeomanry, dressed in regimentals, and with fire-arms – each man carrying thirty rounds of ball cartridge.⁶⁶¹

These Yeomen were known locally as Deaker’s Dashers and Carleton described the group explaining that:

They were to a man guided by the true Tory principle, not only of supporting Protestantism, but of putting down Popery; and yet with singular inconsistency, they were seldom or never seen within a church door, all their religion consisting in giving violent and offensive toasts, and their loyalty in playing party tunes, singing Orange songs, meeting in Orange lodges, and executing

⁶⁵⁸ Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, p. 104.

⁶⁵⁹ Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, p. 104.

⁶⁶⁰ Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, pp. 104-5.

⁶⁶¹ Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, p. 107.

the will of some such oppressor as McClutchy, who was by no means an exaggerated specimen of the Orange Tory.⁶⁶²

The Irish Yeomanry and the Orange Order were two different organisations yet Carleton did not appear to make a distinction between them. The Yeomanry was raised in the years preceding the United Irish Rebellion of 1798. They were a government funded militia used to supplement the British armed forces in Ireland. The Orange Order was formed after the Battle of the Diamond in 1795 to protect the position enjoyed by the Protestant, as explained in section I of this chapter. Within *Valentine McClutchy* Carleton appeared to portray the two forces as one or at least suggested that the Yeomanry was composed exclusively of Orangemen. This appears to have been mostly, but not fully, true. The Yeomanry was strongest in Ulster, as was Orangeism. Allan Blackstock noted that ‘in Orange areas, some landlords deliberately selected their Yeomen directly from the local lodge.’⁶⁶³ Links between the Orange Order and the Irish Yeomanry certainly existed, from the Yeomen’s inception in 1796 to their disbandment in 1834, and Carleton portrayed these links as being inherent. Carleton’s depiction of the Yeomanry as fundamentally Orange was a damning critique of the government funded militia. It made the situation faced by the Catholic peasantry appear futile when the force charged with policing the country were purportedly biased and anti-Catholic.

Carleton did not describe each eviction in detail but rather summarised the work of the Yeomanry in a short passage stating:

But how shall we dwell on this miserable work? The wailings and screams, the solicitations for mercy, their prayers, their imprecations and promises, were all sternly disregarded; and on went the justice of law, accompanied by the tumult of misery. The old were dragged out – the bedridden grand-mother had her couch of straw taken from under her. From the house of death, the corpse of an aged female was carried out amidst shrieks and imprecations of both men and women! The sick child that clung with faintness to the bosom of its distracted mother, was put out under the freezing blast of the north; and on, on, onward, from house to house, went the steps of law, accompanied still by the increasing tumult of misery. This was upon Christmas eve – a day of “joy and festivity!”⁶⁶⁴

Carleton depicted the powerlessness of the Irish peasantry of the pre-famine period in these scenes, unable to prevent the Yeomanry from evicting them from their homes. They

⁶⁶² Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, p. 108.

⁶⁶³ Allan Blackstock, ‘A Forgotten Army: The Irish Yeomanry’, in *History Ireland*, iv, no. 4, (1996), p. 29.

⁶⁶⁴ Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, p. 112.

could have no appeal to justice as the Yeomen acted as officers of the law. There is a sense of sympathy towards the peasantry, a sympathy that had been absent from Carleton's writings up until this juncture in his career.

Ultimately, the Yeomanry arrived at O'Regan's door. Torley's mother and father pleaded with the commanding officer of the Yeomanry whose name was Grimes. They explained that to remove their son from his bed and from the house would mean his death but all mercy had abandoned the Yeomen. These cries of mercy echoed those of the Lynch family of the Wildgoose Lodge atrocity. Moreover, the barbarity of the Yeomen mirrored that of the Ribbonmen in Carleton's "Wildgoose Lodge". Whereas Carleton's anti-Catholic writings of 1830 saw him focus upon the Ribbonmen, for the most part, as the villains of Irish violence, his increasingly nationalistic stance of the 1840s saw him extend his critique to the Orange sections of Irish society. This shift did not see the Ribbonmen escape Carleton's chastisement, as will be seen in *Rody the Rover*, rather, Carleton rendered both Ribbonmen and their Orange counterparts equally abhorrent and held them both accountable for the violent nature of Irish society during the pre-famine period.

At length, the dying boy was removed from the house by his parents who refused to allow the guards to handle their child. Wrapped in bedclothes and sat on a chair outside the residence, Torley looked upon his brother and parents and smiled before taking one last breath. O'Regan's sorrow quickly turned to anger as he fixed his eye upon the leader of the Yeomen, Grimes, and said:

"Now listen," ... "listen all of you that has wrought this murder of my dying boy! He is yet warm... and here beside him, I pray, that the gates of mercy may be closed upon my soul through till eternity, if I die without vengeance for your death, my son!"⁶⁶⁵

As a direct result of this incident, McClutchy wrote to Lord Cumber to request that he might assemble his own corps for fear of unrest amongst the tenantry. Having searched the eaves of the houses at Drum Dhu he also found illegal papers that pointed to the existence of a conspiracy amongst the Roman Catholic population within the country, papers that McClutchy had organised to be planted for the sole purpose of strengthening his case with Lord Cumber on the point of raising his own personal army. This conveniently allowed McClutchy to earn the backing of the Castle for his new corps, as well as, implicating

⁶⁶⁵ Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, p. 113.

O'Regan amongst others, making him a wanted man. Carleton noted, bringing the event to a close that:

Most of those in whose houses these papers were placed, fled the country, among whom was O'Regan, whose dying son Deaker's Dashers treated with such indefensible barbarity; and what made everything appear to fall in with good fortune, it was much about this period that Grimes, the unfeeling man whom O'Regan appeared to have in his eye when he uttered such an awful vow of vengeance, was found murdered not far from his own house, with a slip of paper pinned to his coat, on which were written, in a disguised hand the words – "Remember O'Regan's son, and let tyrants tremble."⁶⁶⁶

O'Regan fled the locality, wanted by the authorities, suspected of both Grimes' murder and involvement in the Ribbon society. He remained in hiding, free from the Bloodhounds' grasp for about a year until ill-health brought him home to his wife and child. He later died as did his other son Brian following a second attack upon his home by McClutchy's Bloodhounds.

Valentine McClutchy, published by James Duffy and initially intended for issue in Young Ireland's *The Nation*, addressed one of the major issues tackled by the campaign for the Repeal of the Act of Union. Both Daniel O'Connell and Young Ireland saw Repeal as a blanket solution for all of Ireland's woes. O'Connell modelled the campaign upon his ultimately successful pursuit of Catholic emancipation. To rally support and to make his campaign appeal to the masses O'Connell addressed individual issues pertinent to the Irish people during the period. The total extinction of tithes, abolition of the poor law, fixity of tenure for occupiers of the land, democratic suffrage for all by means of a secret ballot and absenteeism were each presented as grievances that could be resolved by Repeal.⁶⁶⁷ Repealers supported a proposal for an absentee tax hoping it would force non-resident landlords to sell their properties to men more interested in Ireland's situation. While Orangeism is heavily criticised within the text, the absentee landlord is presented as the real villain of the story. Carleton bemoaned the fact that absentees, like Lord Cumber, trusted the management of their estates to unfeeling, greedy agents like McClutchy. The Irish Catholic peasantry, the people Carleton had presented as backward, uncivilised and uneducated in his writings of the 1820s and 30s, are depicted as the victims of such agents, exploited, pressed and subjected to unnecessary hardship, as a direct consequence of

⁶⁶⁶ Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, pp. 115-6.

⁶⁶⁷ Lawrence McCaffrey, *Daniel O'Connell and the Repeal Year*, (Kentucky, 2015), pp. 32-3.

absenteeism.

McClutchy is murdered towards the end of the novel. The attorney McSlime who had aided the agent in his extortion of the tenantry, is brought to justice, stripped of his license, and dies thereafter. Lord Cumber dies following a duel with another gentleman fought out following a disagreement over the principles of proper and correct estate management. Carleton appeared to issue a warning to the Irish landed classes in the comments that followed his account of Cumber's death:

His errors as a landlord were the errors of his time, and represented principles of his class. These were contempt for, and neglect of, the condition and comfort of his tenantry, of the very individuals from whose exertions and struggles he derived his support. Strange, indeed, it is that men placed as his lordship was, should forget a principle, which a neglect of their duties may one day teach them to their cost – that principle is the equal right of every man to the soil which God has created for all. The laws of agrarian property are the laws of a class, and it is not too much to say, that if the rights of this class to legislate for their own interests were severely investigated, it might appear upon just and rational principles that the landlord is nothing more nor less than a pensioner upon popular credulity, and lives upon a fundamental error in society created by a class to which he belongs. Think of this, gentlemen, and pay attention to your duties.⁶⁶⁸

Valentine McClutchy was the first of Carleton's novels in which he attacked a group other than Irish Catholics. In his criticism of absentee landlords, Orangemen, and the government that allowed both groups to operate in the way they did. Carleton confirmed his shift away from the exclusively anti-Catholic stance of his early career. Indeed, Carleton's writings became more sympathetic to the Catholic rural poor. Both *Rody the Rover* and *The Tithe Proctor* would reaffirm this shift and continue this trend, yet, the Protestant perspective that defined his previous stories would not disappear completely. His writings of the 1840s began to examine in detail the circumstances of the Irish Catholic peasantry and the factors that forced them to react violently to those in authority. He continued to warn, however, of their inherent tendency towards violence and the threat this posed to law and order. Absenteeism was the first problem the novelist examined, to which he offered little solution but called, as Edgeworth had, for a more conscientious and paternalistic landed class.

⁶⁶⁸ Carleton, *Valentine McClutchy*, pp. 543-4.

Rody the Rover, or The Ribbonman

Carleton's *Rody the Rover* was published by James Duffy as part of his 'Library of Ireland' series in September 1845. Carleton had originally intended the novel to be the second part of his 'Tales for the Irish People' series that he had begun with *Art Maguire* earlier that year. He was persuaded, however, to have it published as part of this new series. Young Ireland's Thomas Davis instigated the series. It consisted of monthly volumes that were priced at one shilling each. By making the works cheap and affordable it was hoped that they would be accessed by the widest possible readership. With the series, Davis hoped 'to give the country a National Library, exact enough for the wisest, high enough for the purest, and cheap enough for all readers.'⁶⁶⁹ Moreover, the project was started due to 'the increased education and nationality of the people of Ireland.'⁶⁷⁰ Carleton's novel, a tale that warned of the disruptive influence that illegal combinations, namely Ribbonism, could have upon Irish society, was the third in Duffy's series. *The History of the Volunteers of 1782* written by Thomas MacNevin and Charles Gavan Duffy's *The Ballad Poetry of Ireland* published in July and August 1845 preceded Carleton's volume. It was followed in October, November and December by *Life of Wolfe Tone*, *Life of Hugh O'Neill* and *The Rebellion of 1798* written by Thomas Davis, John Mitchel and M.J. Barry respectively. Each of these writers, Carleton excepted, were members of Young Ireland and all their works were nationalistic in sentiment. The 'Library of Ireland' series was an outlet for the cultural nationalism that characterised Young Ireland's pursuit of Repeal. The novel received criticism from some quarters, notably the Protestant journalists at the Dublin-based *Evening Packet*. They labelled Carleton corrupted and a sell-out, and argued he had become an instrument of the Repeal campaign. The novel was not, however, as far removed from his earlier writing as *Valentine McClutchy*. In it Carleton returned to his former criticisms of peasant violence and particularly the violence of the Catholic agrarian secret societies of the pre-famine period. Indeed, *Rody the Rover* was particularly reminiscent of Carleton's stories of 1830 but with an added element of understanding rooted in the situation and circumstances that pushed the Irish peasantry towards violence.

⁶⁶⁹ Rolf Loeber and Magda Strouthamer-Loeber, 'James Duffy and Catholic Nationalism', in Murphy, *The Oxford History of the Irish Book*, iv, p. 118.

⁶⁷⁰ 'Duffy's Library of Ireland', *The Freeman's Journal*, 24 June, 1845.

Set in the 1820s, prior to the granting of Catholic emancipation, within the novel *Ribbonism* is introduced into a civil and industrious community by a former spy who is employed by a Protestant magistrate with parliamentary connections. While warning the Catholic peasantry against secret societies, Carleton also suggested that the government may have been responsible in some way for the spread of what he called ‘the curse of Ribbonism’⁶⁷¹ within the country. He alleged that this scheme was an attempt to persuade British legislators that Catholics were not suitably equipped to engage in political matters and that to grant Catholic emancipation would be a mistake. This plot lacked contemporary relevance, given that emancipation had been granted, however, Carleton’s suggestion that a government spy system was operational was not without foundation. That paid spies had been utilised to infiltrate the Ribbon system became apparent following the arrest of James Hagan in September 1841.⁶⁷² Hagan, Ribbon county delegate for Sligo, was released on bail in October 1842 and continued in his role within the secret society while feeding the authorities with information.⁶⁷³ Hagan was rearrested in 1842 and acted as the government’s main approver at the summer assizes in Armagh and Longford. Five men were sentenced to seven years transportation as a result of the evidence Hagan provided during the assizes.⁶⁷⁴ The government was criticised by O’Connell and Shiel for their use of Hagan and was accused of entrapping innocent men.⁶⁷⁵ O’Connell stated in the House of Commons that:

Nothing could justify the employment of men to commit crimes for the purpose of inveigling others into the commission of similar crimes.⁶⁷⁶

Carleton appeared to have based his novel on the authorities’ use of paid spies, informers and approvers like James Hagan and the plot of his novel reflected some of the anti-establishment and anti-union rhetoric of the Repeal campaign.

The aforementioned *Evening Packet*, a Protestant pro-government newspaper,⁶⁷⁷ carried a review of *Rody the Rover* that suggested that the purpose of the novel was to:

⁶⁷¹ Carleton, *Rody the Rover*, preface.

⁶⁷² Kelly, *Sligo Ribbonism in 1842*, p. 47.

⁶⁷³ Kelly, *Sligo Ribbonism in 1842*, p. 36.

⁶⁷⁴ Kelly, *Sligo Ribbonism in 1842*, p. 46.

⁶⁷⁵ *The Irish Examiner*, 3, 10 August 1842.

⁶⁷⁶ *The Connaught Telegraph*, 10 August 1842.

⁶⁷⁷ Desmond Keenan, *Pre-Famine Ireland: Social Structure, Ireland as it Really Was*, (2001), pp. 403-8.

‘palliate the atrocities of Ribbonism, and to lay at the door of Government, by the employment of paid spies of circulating its doctrines, all the crimes which have steeped in hue incarnadine this unhappy country.’⁶⁷⁸

They saw the novel as an attack upon the government and chastised Carleton for ‘prostituting the gift which GOD had given him.’⁶⁷⁹ The article stated that Carleton had ‘become *the property* of the Repeal Association’⁶⁸⁰ and that the novel had been ‘issued under the pay and sanction of the Repeal Association.’⁶⁸¹ The piece also described *Valentine McClutchy* as ‘abominable.’⁶⁸² Many other reviews, however, were positive and praised Carleton for attempting to deter the Irish rural poor from Ribbonism. Even the *Examiner* considered Carleton to be doing the country a service in warning the lower orders of the dangers of Ribbonism and other secret societies and suggested that it was ‘the most faultless of the author’s later works.’⁶⁸³

In truth Carleton’s intentions in writing the novel may have rested somewhere between the view of the *Evening Packet* and the more popular perceptions of the novel. He was clearly looking to point out the dangers of Ribbonism. When the novel is considered in conjunction with Carleton’s other writings of the 1840s it appears that the author was also keen to expose the social conditions that led to unrest amongst the rural Catholic population and to hold the government somewhat responsible for the circumstances of the people. Carleton began the novel describing the village of Ballybracken and the filth, poverty and despair in which its inhabitants lived. Set upon mountainous and barren land the people had become slovenly, idle and displayed no desire to improve their situation. The arrival of a mining company, however, was to alter the village dramatically. The locals were provided with employment and an example to follow that had previously been lacking from their resident landlord. Through the influence of the agent managing the mines, a good agent like Burke in Edgeworth’s *The Absentee*, the village of Ballybracken underwent a transformation. The people became industrious, standards of housing and cleanliness improved, education was provided for with the building of a school and the

⁶⁷⁸ ‘Literature. Rody the Rover; or, The Ribbonman by William Carleton (From the Evening Packet)’, *The Nenagh Guardian*, 17 September 1845.

⁶⁷⁹ ‘Literature. Rody the Rover’.

⁶⁸⁰ ‘Literature. Rody the Rover’. [Emphasis in original]

⁶⁸¹ ‘Literature. Rody the Rover’.

⁶⁸² ‘Literature. Rody the Rover’.

⁶⁸³ ‘Library of Ireland’, *The Nation*, 1 November, 1845. The article contained a series of reviews of the work from a variety of sources including *The Cork Examiner*, *The Spectator*, *The Waterford Chronicle*, *The Belfast Vindicator* and *The Critic*. Each of the reviews were positive in their assessment of Carleton’s novel.

village began to prosper. Carleton here described the benefit that a positive example or model could have when shown to a rural community.

Carleton then introduced the character of Rody the Rover. As stated Rody was the means through which Ballybracken was infected with Ribbonism. Despite the improvement in the local tenantry's situation Rody convinced them that they were underpaid and that their landlord was not treating them fairly. Nightly meetings, threatening letters, drunkenness and violence ensued as the situation in the village deteriorated. The Ribbon activity culminated in a strike amongst the community against low wages paid by the mining company. The agent was murdered and following an attempt on his life, the landlord, Mr. Ogle, determined to sell the property and leave the vicinity. Thomas McMahon, the young man who Rody first initiated into the Ribbonmen and made his instrument in effecting the spread of Ribbonism within the community, was wrongly accused and hanged for the murder. The violence of the Ribbon crimes that occur within the novel was not detailed. Whereas in "Wildgoose Lodge" and, as we shall see, in "The Party Fight and Funeral" the violence was graphically depicted, in *Rody the Rover* Carleton chose instead to focus more closely on the plot and the conspiracy to destroy the village with Ribbonism. In so doing Carleton was effectively shifting the focus from the peasantry towards the social circumstances that led to outbreaks of violence in pre-famine Ireland, and indeed towards the establishment who, he implied, were responsible for the circumstances of the people.

Rody, a spy, who had betrayed his fellow Irishmen during the 1798 rebellion for a 'pension,'⁶⁸⁴ was the agent of Mr. Sharpe, a Protestant magistrate and Orangeman. Sharpe had employed Rody to infect Ballybracken with Ribbonism so that the village might descend into chaos. It emerges that Sharpe, who had been promised a government position, had been charged by his associates in parliament with effecting this scheme in an attempt to persuade members of parliament in Westminster that the Irish Catholic people were unfit to participate in political affairs. Speaking to Rody he stated:

Do you not know, my good, easy, simple fellow, that so long as we can attach a character of insubordination, violation of law, disregard of life and property, and habits of bloodshed and murder to the Roman Catholic inhabitants and Roman Catholic districts of the country, England and her legislation will look

⁶⁸⁴ Carleton, *Rody the Rover*, p. 219.

upon them as unfit to be trusted with civil privileges or political power. Do you not understand that?⁶⁸⁵

Rody and Sharpe were successful in their endeavors. The district was proclaimed under the Insurrection Act of 1822 and placed under martial law and many of those involved in the local Ribbon gang transported. Sharpe bought the property from Ogle and the village descended into its former state of destitution. While the Catholic peasantry of Ballybracken were castigated for incredulously accepting Ribbonism into their lives in this novel, Carleton also offered an insight into some of the factors that motivated the rural poor to turn to violence during the period. Whereas the peasant bandits of his earlier works were portrayed as inherently violent, the Ribbonmen of Ballybracken are described as being forced towards violence as a result of their social circumstances. The fact that they were encouraged to protest by the agent of a corrupt magistrate acting on behalf of his parliamentary friends directs some criticism towards the government that may have resonated with those critical of the authorities' use of paid spies to infiltrate local agrarian combinations.

The Tithe Proctor

The Tithe Proctor was published in 1849 as part of Belfast publisher, Simms and McIntyre's, 'Parlour Library' series. The firm had been in business since 1808 and concentrated almost solely on publishing school text books up until they introduced their 'Parlour Novelist' series in 1846.⁶⁸⁶ The Banim Brothers' *Tales of the O'Hara Family* was among the first fiction published by the firm. In 1847 they introduced a new series labelled the 'Parlour Library'. These novels were priced at 1s. for boards and 1s. 6d. for cloth bound, compared to the average of 5s. or 6s. charged by many British publishers at the time.⁶⁸⁷ The 'Parlour Library' was described as 'a series of novels and tales by the most distinguished authors, at a price which will place them within the reach of the whole reading public'⁶⁸⁸ and advertised as 'THE BOOK FOR ALL'.⁶⁸⁹ Carleton contributed four novels to the series *The Black Prophet* (1847), being the first volume in the series, *The Emigrants of Ahadarra* (1848, no. xi), *Faradorougha the Miser* a republication of his 1839

⁶⁸⁵ Carleton, *Rody the Rover*, pp. 122-3.

⁶⁸⁶ Roger Dixon, 'Belfast Publishing', in Murphy, *History of the Irish Book*, iv, p. 75.

⁶⁸⁷ Dixon, 'Belfast Publishing', p. 76.

⁶⁸⁸ J.R.R. Adams, 'Irish Booklore: Simms and M'Intyre: Creators of the Parlour Library', in *The Linen Hall Review*, iv, no. 2 (1987), p. 13.

⁶⁸⁹ Rolf Loeber and Magda Stouthamer-Loeber, 'Popular Reading Practices' in Murphy, *History of the Irish Book*, iv, p. 224.

novel (1848, no. xxi), and *The Tithe Proctor* (1849, no. xxiv). Re-publications of Banim's *Crohoore of the Bill-hook, and the Fetches* (1848) and Gerald Griffin's *Tales of the Munster Festivals* (1848) and *The Rivals, and Tracy's Ambition* (1851) also featured in the series that ran until 1853. Set amidst the tithe agitation of the 1830s somewhere in the southern half of the country Carleton detailed a rising amongst the peasantry against the local tithe proctor and his two sons. An assembly of Whiteboys, consisting of the local band along with other groups from the surrounding counties, succeeded in murdering the proctor before the novel's conclusion. Like his other novels of the period, in *The Tithe Proctor* Carleton attempted to illustrate the particular circumstances that forced the Irish rural poor to violence in the southern half of Ireland during the pre-famine period. He depicted the tithe system, like absenteeism and the governmental spy system, as a source of aggravation amongst the Irish rural poor during the period. He did not, however, condone the violent reactions of the Catholic agrarian secret societies, in this instance the Whiteboys, who were held up for criticism within the novel. The violent protests of these Whiteboys were reactionary, like those of the Ribbonmen in *Rody the Rover*, and were motivated by the sufferings that the local peasantry had endured. Unlike the inherently violent peasants of Carleton's short stories this community were portrayed as having just cause, albeit unlawful, for their violent actions. *The Tithe Proctor* was not a success. It was not as well received as the three other novels he contributed to the 'Parlour Library' series, given that it addressed an issue, tithes, that had by 1849 been resolved. It effectively ended his relationship with Simms and McIntyre.

The novel was based, albeit loosely, upon factual events. Carleton explained in the preface to the novel that it was based upon two separate incidents; the murder of the Bolands of Croom, County Limerick in 1800 and the massacre at Carrickshock, County Kilkenny in 1831. Carleton used a considerable amount of artistic license in situating his fictional representation of the murder of the Bolands during the tithe war of the 1830s. He stated that:

It was consequently impossible for me to have availed myself of the annexed "Narrative" [an account of the Boland murders] and brought in the "Massacre" [Carrickshock] in the same story, without bringing down the murder of the Bolands to a more recent date.⁶⁹⁰

⁶⁹⁰ William Carleton, *The Tithe Proctor*, (Belfast, 1849), preface.

The horrific nature of the incident and the fact that it produced a significant number of deaths served Carleton's purpose as it exposed the violence that surrounded tithe and the peasantry's opposition to it during the pre-famine period. Carleton based his depiction of the murder of the Bolands on a narrative that he annexed to the novel's preface. Carleton did not name the author of this article but stated that it had come 'from the pen of a gentleman whose unassuming character and modesty are only surpassed by the distinction which his name had already gained in one of the most difficult but useful departments of our native literature.'⁶⁹¹ The details supplied in the narrative prove slightly inaccurate. The murder of the Bolands appears to have occurred eight years previous to the date cited in the annexed narrative, 1808. John Boland, his brothers, James and Edmund, and two sons, James and Mat, were murdered in Manister, not far from Croom, in Co. Limerick on 7 March 1800. *The Limerick Chronicle*, a journal aimed at the 'Protestants Loyalists of Munster',⁶⁹² carried a number of reports relating to the incident from 1800 to 1803, revealing that the Bolands were executed by Whiteboys as a result of seizures they made acting in their roles as tithe proctors. In "A Letter for Posterity" Michael McCarthy referred to the first report of the incident carried by *The Limerick Chronicle* of 12 March 1800:

It appears that at a late hour on Friday night, a great number of civilians arrived with muskets, swords and pikes, attacked the house of Mr. John Boland, of Manister, and demanded his arms... Mr. Boland, with his brother James, were in the house in bed (as were Mrs. Boland and her two daughters) and determined to defend their house and property, with that spirit which is Yeoman and Loyalists they were most remarkable; after firing a number of shots amongst the barbarous assailants (several of whom there is good reason to believe done execution)⁶⁹³ – unfortunately for this brave family the house was thatched, and the wretches set the room on fire, which caused them to come out, in consequence of which Mr. John Boland, his brother James, his two sons, James and Mat, were butchered in a manner shocking to relate: the latter lived until next morning, but died without giving an account of his murderers... Edmund Boland, brother to Mr. John Boland... was coming to the assistance of his family and was murdered between the bridge of Manister and the house which was burned down.⁶⁹⁴

The Limerick Chronicle's Protestant sympathies are obvious in the initial report of the incident. The Bolands were depicted as bravely attempting to fight off their savage

⁶⁹¹ Carleton, *Tithe Proctor*, preface.

⁶⁹² Dixon, 'Belfast Publishing', p. 59.

⁶⁹³ There is no mention of any deaths amongst the Whiteboys that attacked the Bolands in the contemporary newspaper reports. Had men been killed or injured they were likely carried off and their deaths concealed by their colleagues.

⁶⁹⁴ Michael McCarthy, 'A Letter for Posterity', in *The Old Limerick Journal*, xxi (1987), pp. 43-4.

attackers. The paper's subsequent coverage was written from the same perspective. Reports carried three years later reveal details relating to the outrage, those convicted for it, and the reason for its occurrence, that were absent from the initial report. The agrarian bandits are labelled as United Irishmen and consequently portrayed as rebels, disloyal to the crown. Moreover, the paper makes little of the origins of the issue between Boland and his aggressors, citing the selling of a cow as the proctor's only offence and placing the law firmly behind his actions. The most conclusive of these articles appeared in *The Limerick Chronicle* of 12 March 1803:

The real motive of this gruesome murder by Whiteboys or United Irishmen, or whatever they call themselves has now come to light. On Wednesday Murtoth Ahern was convicted of the murder of Messrs. Boland (John, James, Matthew Edward and James Junior) on the night of the 7th March 1800. This man appeared to have been principal in that bloody scene... his defence is that he is forced to the massacre by Patrick Ahern who sought revenge against Boland, then a tithe proctor, Boland having sold a cow of Ahern's under decree for tithes against him obtained in the Civil Bill Court.⁶⁹⁵

Three more men, Henry Stokes, Paul Slatery and Patrick Sheenan were also reported, in the *Freeman's Journal*, 8 April 1800, to have appeared at the Limerick assizes and were charged with being present at the attacking and burning of Boland's home on the night in question. A year later, Stephen Brow was sentenced to be hanged for the crime also.⁶⁹⁶ Like the Wildgoose Lodge atrocity, the murder of the Bolands was not an isolated incident. McCarthy explained that the murders were part of a wave of secret society violence that swept Co. Limerick in 1800. He cited sheep stealings, the destruction of pasture lands, beatings and the administering of illegal oaths among the crimes of agrarian agitators in Limerick during 1800.⁶⁹⁷ Such violence was not unique to Limerick during the period either. James G. Patterson explained that a similar atmosphere prevailed in Cork county in the years leading up to the turn of the century. In Carrigrohanebeg, Co. Cork, Timothy McCarthy, a tithe farmer, was murdered 'in a most barbarous and savage manner' on 19 January 1799.⁶⁹⁸ Patterson also noted that 'near Blarney in early March [1799] 'rebels' burned three houses, two at Grenagh and one belonging to a tithe proctor at Knockilly.'⁶⁹⁹ Whether these successive movements in opposition to tithe payment, Cork 1798-9 and

⁶⁹⁵ *The Limerick Chronicle*, 12 March 1803.

⁶⁹⁶ *The Freeman's Journal*, 9 April 1801.

⁶⁹⁷ McCarthy, 'A Letter for Posterity', pp. 41-4.

⁶⁹⁸ J.G. Paterson, 'Educated Whiteboyism': The Cork Tithe War, 1798-9', in *History Ireland*, xii, no. 4 (2004), p. 26.

⁶⁹⁹ Paterson, 'Educated Whiteboyism', p. 28.

Limerick 1800, were linked is difficult to determine, however, throughout the first half of the nineteenth century in the Munster counties and those in the southern half of Leinster, tithes were a prevalent issue and a constant source of agitation.

Tithe proctors, agents who collected tithe payments for the local Anglican rectors, were the subject of attacks throughout the first half of the nineteenth century in the southern half of the country. John Ivis, proctor to Major Richard Going who himself was murdered on 14 October 1821 on the road between Limerick City and Rathkeale, subsequently suffered the same fate as his employer at the hands of the Rockites.⁷⁰⁰ The Rockites were also deemed responsible for the murder of John Corneal or Corneille, again a tithe proctor, in Kiltien on 21 September 1821.⁷⁰¹ William Blood, a land agent, was murdered amidst the Terry Alt movement in Co. Clare of 1829-31. Blood was murdered on 21 January 1831 in his own home at Applevale near Corrofin.⁷⁰² Finally, the death of a proctor named Drohan who was employed by Reverend Dr. Butler of Burnchurch, Co. Kilkenny was mentioned in a report on the Kilkenny Assizes for July in the *Freeman's Journal*, 1 August 1831.⁷⁰³ This list of murders relating to tithe grievances perpetrated in the pre-famine period is by no means exhaustive and is instead merely representative of the fatal effects of tithe agitation in the southern half of the country during the period.

Within Carleton's novel *Matthew Purcel*, the tithe proctor, and his two sons John and Alick are sentenced to death by the local Whiteboys as a result of their treatment of the peasantry and of their being collectors of the much-despised tithe. In a threatening letter sent to the tithe proctor by the leader of the vigilantes, who signed his name Captain Terror, the various charges set against Purcel are outlined:

You took farm afther farm over the heads of the poor an' them that wor strugglin'... you made use of the strong purse against the wake man; an' if any one ventured to complain, he was sure to come in for a dose of the horsewhip from your tyrannical sons, or a dose of law from yourself... but it is for your conduct as a Tithe Proctor that you and your sons must die.⁷⁰⁴

⁷⁰⁰ Donnelly, *Captain Rock*, pp. 49-51, 254, 256

⁷⁰¹ *Finn's Leinster Journal*, 27 March 1822

⁷⁰² Donnelly, 'The Terry Alt Movement', p.33.

⁷⁰³ *Freeman's Journal*, 1 August 1831.

⁷⁰⁴ Carleton, *Tithe Proctor*, p. 91.

Carleton explained that Purcel ‘extracted with a heartless and rapacious hand the last penny due to him.’⁷⁰⁵ He was said to have outbid ‘poor but solvent tenants’⁷⁰⁶ for land that he turned to grazing land, adding to his already large farm. When some members of the tenantry refused to pay him their tithes he threatened them with the law and promised to bring down a troop of police or military upon them to ‘take the tithe due out of your marrow, if we can get it nowhere else.’⁷⁰⁷ Purcel’s sons were known within the locality to verbally abuse and flail those who met them with defiance. The Whiteboys in the novel stood in opposition to the tithe system. They believed that by withholding the payment of these dues they would send the Established church to ruins:

Take the protesting church or the parsons... deprive them of the mains [means] of support... deny them their tithes, then you know the establishment must stirve [starve] and die of femine [famine] and distitootion [destitution], as a contributive jidgment [judgment] for its sins.⁷⁰⁸

Moreover, as one of the Whiteboy members argues within the tale, it did not seem fair or just that as Catholics they should pay money to the Protestant cleric who was of a different creed to their own:

I never trouble the parson in religious matters, I don’t see what right the parson has to trouble me for my money.⁷⁰⁹

The conduct of Purcel and his sons, coupled with their professions as tithe proctors was enough to satisfy the Whiteboys that they deserved to die. An assault upon the proctor’s home in which he and his two sons are murdered and the house set ablaze occurs towards the end of Carleton’s tale. Carleton depicted the tithe proctors more negatively than *The Limerick Chronicle* had. He reserved his greatest criticism for the violent activities of the Catholic Whiteboys but ensured not to render the tithe collectors blameless. The Purcels act as an example of the type of men who became authoritative local figures as a consequence of the tithe system and who, if unchecked, could use their relative power to abuse the peasantry, thus attracting violent opposition.

⁷⁰⁵ Carleton, *Tithe Proctor*, p. 25.

⁷⁰⁶ Carleton, *Tithe Proctor*, p. 273.

⁷⁰⁷ Carleton, *Tithe Proctor*, p. 53.

⁷⁰⁸ Carleton, *Tithe Proctor*, p. 5.

⁷⁰⁹ Carleton, *Tithe Proctor*, p. 55.

Before drawing his tale to a close by detailing the Whiteboy assault on the home of Purcel the tithe proctor, Carleton added a depiction of the Carrickshock massacre as a realisation of the threat posed by those who combined to virulently oppose the payment of tithe during the period. His portrayal of the tithe affray did not involve any of the characters concerned in the novel's main plot but set the tone for the remainder of the story. On 14 December 1831 at Carrickshock, in south Co. Kilkenny, a process-server when attempting to fulfill his duty, guarded by a troop of police, was attacked by a horde of the local peasantry. Seventeen people were left dead on the occasion as, forced into a narrow lane, the process-server and his body-guards were brutally assaulted by a throng of pitch-fork wielding peasants. One of the first reports of the incident was published in the *Evening Freeman* on 15 December 1831. A letter written by a correspondent from Kilkenny at six o'clock on the evening of the massacre was republished in the *Freeman's Journal* of 16 December 1831:

A party of forty policemen went out this morning, under the command of Captain Gibbons, chief constable, with a man named Butler, a process server, to serve subpenas for the Rev. Doctor Hamilton's tithes on the union of Knocktopher. They were attacked, about the hour of one o'clock in the afternoon, at Kilkeasy, by about two thousand persons. Captain Gibbons, Butler the process server, and twelve of the police were killed, and four more so wounded that there is little hope of their recovery. There are many more badly wounded – all the arms of the police were broken into pieces, and left with the slaughtered bodies... The assailant party were armed with pitchforks, prongs, spades, &c. The police were only able to fire about ten shots. Three of the mob are said to have been killed. The attack was made suddenly in a lane, or *bohreen*, with a wall at each side of it, and the arms of the police were at once rendered useless.⁷¹⁰

Patrick O'Donoghue provided some context to the incident explaining why the peasantry of the district determined to attack Butler on the day in question:

Dr. Hamilton, the incumbent of the union of Knocktopher, had differences with his parishioners over composition⁷¹¹ and also over the building of a new church. His flock had refused to pay him when he turned down their petition for a reduction in tithes and so he decided to move against them. Having obtained decrees from the court of exchequer for the non-compounded parishes and latitats from the assistant barrister's court for those under composition, he secured the services of a process server named Butler, who was extremely unpopular in the district. Butler began his work on December 12, and that day

⁷¹⁰ 'Tithes – Dreadful Massacre in the County of Kilkenny', *The Freeman's Journal*, 16 December 1831.

⁷¹¹ The tithe system was reorganised in 1823 with the Composition of Tithes (Ireland) Act. This measure saw tithes become a monetary payment. Tithes had prior to 1823 been collected as a percentage of the agricultural produce generated by tenants, usually 10%.

and the next passed off quietly enough. On the third day a large crowd gathered and followed the process server and the police on their rounds... Towards the end of the day police and people clashed in a narrow road after the constabulary had refused to hand over the process server. For the first time members of the constabulary were killed in a tithe affray.⁷¹²

O'Donoghue's account stated that Dr. Hamilton's Anglican parishioners were unhappy with the amount of tithe being charged in the locality. Those that assembled at Carrickshock, however, were 'mostly Catholics' according to Gary Owens.⁷¹³ While the Anglicans may have disagreed with the cost of the tithe, the Catholics opposed it in principle, refusing to pay for a church of a different creed. Evidently, Butler's work had the effect of aggravating the majority of the tenantry, Anglican and Catholic alike, within the district.

Unlike Carleton's account of the murders at Wildgoose Lodge, that Terence Dooley revealed was gratuitously fictionalised, his relation of the Carrickshock massacre appears mostly accurate and faithful to factual accounts of the incident. He claimed that it occurred in 1832 instead of 1831, that there were 40 policemen instead of 38 and that 'twelve men lay butchered on the spot'⁷¹⁴ as opposed to the seventeen recorded.⁷¹⁵ The incident was widely reported upon in contemporary newspapers and the public were aware of the circumstances of the affair. The massacre was horrific enough to fit Carleton's purpose of displaying the consequences of the tithe system without the need for exaggeration or embellishment.

Again, like the burning of Wildgoose Lodge, the Carrickshock massacre was not an isolated incident and was flanked by two very similar affrays, each also relating to the opposition of tithe payment in the south Leinster, Munster area during the 1830s. On the 18 June 1831 between fourteen and nineteen people of an assembled crowd were killed in a clash with a detachment of police and Yeomanry in Newtownbarry, Co. Wexford. The police accompanied by the Yeomen were transporting confiscated cattle into Newtownbarry and the crowd attempted to thwart their design. Five Yeomen were committed and between 18 and 20 more warrants were issued as a result of the

⁷¹² O'Donoghue, 'Opposition to Tithe Payment in 1830-31', pp. 80-1.

⁷¹³ Gary Owens, 'The Carrickshock Incident, 1831: Social Memory and an Irish *cause célèbre*', in *Cultural and Social History*, i, (2004), p. 37.

⁷¹⁴ Carleton, *Tithe Proctor*, p. 256.

⁷¹⁵ 'The Slaughter at Carrickshock', *The Freeman's Journal*, 12 December 1831.

massacre.⁷¹⁶ On 3 June 1833 at Rossmore near Carrigtwohill, Co. Cork, an assembled crowd again clashed with police and military. The fatalities on this occasion appear to have been minimal when compared to the other incidents detailed above:

In a clash at a place called Rossmore a soldier was shot by one of his own men and some police injured. Stones, pitchforks and spades were in this encounter as in others the weapons of the tenantry.⁷¹⁷

That a process-server and members of the police force, the officers of the British legislative system in Ireland during the period, were the victims of the Carrickshock massacre rendered it unique. While similar tithe affrays had occurred during the same period, the fatalities and casualties produced had affected the assailing Catholic sides. The deaths of Butler, Gibbons and twelve other constables allowed Carleton to present the threat posed by the Irish rural poor to be realised.

The incident was portrayed variously within the newspapers of the day as a ‘dreadful scene’,⁷¹⁸ an ‘unfortunate affair’,⁷¹⁹ ‘slaughter’,⁷²⁰ an ‘atrocious massacre’⁷²¹ and a ‘frightful and deplorable catastrophe’.⁷²² Some reporters, however, used the affray as an opportunity to call the British government to action and to address the legislation that was leading to violent scenes of this nature across the southern half of the country during the 1830s. It was argued that if nothing was done by those in legislative power that similar scenes of bloodshed would continue to occur:

let our rulers do as their predecessors have ever done, and the church militant continue as rapacious, insolent and domineering as at present, and the mountains’ sides of Ireland must, often again, we fear, become the theatres of the bloody drama.⁷²³

⁷¹⁶ O’Donoghue, ‘Opposition to Tithe Payment in 1830-31’, p. 77. *Freeman’s Journal* 21, 28 June 1831, 16 July 1831.

⁷¹⁷ O’Donoghue, ‘Opposition to Tithe Payment in 1832-33’, p. 107. Brian Ó Cuiv, ‘A Contemporary Account in Irish of a Nineteenth-Century Tithe Affray’ in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy, Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature*, lxi (1960/61), pp. 1-21.

⁷¹⁸ ‘The Slaughter at Carrickshock’.

⁷¹⁹ ‘The Slaughter at Carrickshock’.

⁷²⁰ ‘The Slaughter at Carrickshock’.

⁷²¹ ‘Carrickshock Affair’, *The Belfast Newsletter*, 27 July 1831.

⁷²² ‘Dreadful Occurrence Consequent on the Tithe System’, *The Freeman’s Journal*, 19 December 1831.

⁷²³ ‘Dreadful Occurrence’.

Similarly, in a report stating that additional troops had been sent to Carrickshock and the surrounding area in the aftermath of the massacre, it was suggested that an alternative to extra guards and extra policing needed to be considered:

but it cannot be doubted that the power capable of restoring or maintaining peace between the parsons and the people of Ireland must be sought for, not in barracks, or police stations, but within the walls of St. Stephen's – not armed with gun and bayonet, but with equity and wisdom – and not guarding the tithe-proctor and process-server, but taking from the oppressive and hateful occupation which makes it necessary that they should be guarded.⁷²⁴

Had Carleton's novel been written in the 1830s alongside these contemporary newspaper reports it may have been possible to argue that he was calling for reform, calling upon the government to act to prevent future incidents of unnecessary bloodshed. Published over a decade after the system had been re-organised, however, it appears that Carleton had another purpose in mind. Carleton was perhaps offering a more nuanced critique of peasant violence than that which had appeared earlier in his career. Carleton did not condone the actions of the peasantry and presented their resorting to violence, and their membership of illegal organisations, for criticism throughout the novel, however, he also called for a consideration of the circumstances under which they labored. The crimes of Matthew Purcel the tithe proctor and his sons are held up against those of the peasantry within the novel. As in his other novels of the 1840s, Carleton asked his readers to consider the socio-economic circumstances that drove the Irish peasantry towards membership of secret societies like the Ribbonmen and Whiteboys and ultimately towards violence.

Carleton's *The Tithe Proctor* did not receive the critical acclaim that *Valentine McClutchy*, *Rody the Rover* or *The Black Prophet* did during the period. In one of the very few reviews *The Belfast Newsletter* suggested that it was 'not one of Carleton's best tales'.⁷²⁵ It performed so poorly that it ended Carleton's connection with the publishing firm. The subject of the novel did not perhaps possess the poignancy to succeed at a time when the Great Famine had ravaged the country. Furthermore, the issue of tithes had been somewhat resolved through The Tithe Rent Charge Act of 1838 that saw the payment of tithe amalgamated with tenants' rent.⁷²⁶ It remains unclear why Carleton chose to discuss a topic that could have little relevance at the time of its publishing. Carleton had, however,

⁷²⁴ 'The Slaughter at Carrickshock'.

⁷²⁵ 'Reviews', *The Belfast Newsletter*, 13 February 1849.

⁷²⁶ Jackson, *Ireland 1798-1998*, p. 41.

already addressed many of the issues that had impacted upon the peasantry during the period before the famine. Perhaps he was attempting to complete the picture of Irish peasant life he had so effectively draw throughout the 1840s. Simms and McIntyre paid him the considerable sum of £160 to produce the novel and he duly obliged, Carleton was never one to turn down money.⁷²⁷

All three of these novels, *Valentine McClutchy*, *Rody the Rover*, and *The Tithe Proctor*, produced by Carleton in the 1840s, examined the theme of peasant violence in the pre-famine period but also offered an insight into the sufferings of the Catholic peasantry and indicated that these sufferings were, at least in part, due to misgovernment or malign outside influences. Carleton cited absenteeism, Protestant violence and the collection of tithes as factors that drove the peasantry to rebel and often react violently to the laws of the land and its agents. Carleton appeared to empathise with the rural peasant communities of the period but did not condone their actions and held up the systems of Ribbonism and Whiteboyism for criticism. The villains of Carleton's novels were both Catholic and Protestant, Whiteboys and Ribbonmen, landlords, Orangemen, tithe proctors and magistrates. Few within the society he depicted escaped his condemnation. Writing for a wider readership during the period, two of the three novels were sold at just a shilling a piece, Carleton's focus was less narrow than it had been in his earlier writings. While his works on peasant violence in 1830 had singled out the peasantry for their uncivilised barbarity, in the 1840s he broadened his lens to encapsulate others who contributed, in different ways, to the violent nature of Irish society during the period.

Conclusion

Despite claiming to have been intimately acquainted with the inner workings of the Catholic agrarian secret societies of the pre-famine period and of their Protestant opposition, the Orangemen, William Carleton was perhaps not the most reliable witness upon the subject. His claims to Ribbon membership might be called into question while a variety of factual inaccuracies appear in those of his writings that deal with the theme of violence. What Carleton's novels and short stories do offer, however, are examples of the perspectives and prevailing notions that were held by those he hoped would read his tales. Due to Carleton's shift from anti-Catholic propagandist to associate of Repealers, the

⁷²⁷ Dixon, 'Belfast Publishing', p. 76.

perspectives offered are numerous and at times conflicting. This shift, although influenced by financial pressure, can be seen to mirror changing attitudes within an evolving political context. Following the granting of Catholic emancipation, Carleton wrote in the 1830s for a Protestant readership. In warning his readers of the violent threat posed by the inherently violent, rural poor, Carleton channeled and spoke to the fear and insecurity characteristic of Protestant attitudes toward Catholics during the period. That the violence in Carleton's stories was engaged in by vast numbers of peasants further mirrored aspects of some Protestants' siege mentality and reflected the strength of support that O'Connell had raised in his campaign for emancipation. Over a decade later, amidst the campaign for the Repeal of the Act of Union, Carleton's novels became more concerned with the social and political causes of that violence. Written in the same period as Carleton's most famous novel, *The Black Prophet* (1847) that was dedicated to Prime Minister Lord John Russell and inadvertently criticised the government for their ineffectual response to the onset of famine in 1845, the author's writings can be defined as more socially engaged and pro-reform. These novels chimed with a variety of nationalist criticisms of British legislation under the Union but can also be seen to have embodied Irish Protestant frustration at a government that had seemed to repeatedly concede to Catholic pressure post-emancipation. Like Carleton's writings on other topics, the author's tales of violence and agrarian crime can be seen to have revealed as much about his readers as they did about the vigilantes actually described in the texts.

The author's writings on the theme of violence also act to illustrate the various devices used by Carleton in his literary self-fashioning. That Carleton presented himself as close to and distant from the peasants he described, to varying extents, must be seen as an element of the author's construction of his public identity, indeed identities. Carleton presented himself as a reformed peasant, one who had actively shared in the Catholic peasant's experience of violence in rural pre-famine Ireland. He narrated from within and claimed to possess intimate knowledge of the Ribbon secret society. Simultaneously, however, he maintained a distance from the peasants he described through his use of the gothic and of illustrations of the inevitable consequence of violence; death. In distancing himself from the characters of his stories, Carleton was aligning himself, at first, with his Protestant readers and empathising with their view of peasant violence. Later Carleton would maintain his distance but sought to explain to his readers why the rural poor resorted to violence so frequently in what may be seen as more sympathetic portrayals of the peasantry's circumstances. As such, he was speaking to a new, reform-minded and

respectable, Catholic audience. Through self-fashioning Carleton successfully adapted his novels and short stories to the social and political contexts in which they were to be consumed. Further, he manipulated his own personal image and aligned himself with one cause or another in order to secure patrons and readers at different junctures in his career. These aspects of Carleton's literary self-fashioning are particularly obvious in those of his writings that dealt with the theme of agrarian crime and violence in pre-famine Ireland.

Chapter Five

The Fighting Irish: Faction fighting as leisure in the writings of William Carleton

Having considered in Chapter Four Carleton's portrayal of violence in the context of agrarian secret societies and the perceived threat that this constituted, this chapter will examine Carleton's exploration of a different form of violence, fighting. In doing so it will explore Carleton's approach to two forms of fighting - faction and party - and his differing attitudes to these. Fighting in these different forms features in two of the short stories included in the first series of *Traits and Stories* (1830). "The Party Fight and Funeral" acts as a representation of the, often fatal, sectarian bloodshed that occurred in the north of Ireland during the early nineteenth century when Catholic and Protestant parties clashed locally. The story fit neatly into Carleton's critique of the 1830s painting the Catholic rural poor as inherently violent, disloyal to the crown and as a threat to persons and property in Ireland amidst the granting of Catholic emancipation. Conversely, "The Battle of the Factions" offered an altogether different perspective on peasant violence. When describing faction fights Carleton appeared less concerned, even amused, with fighting he suggested was leisure for the Irish rural poor. Only Catholics could be the victims of factional violence and these fights only proved fatal when their rules or code were not observed. Moreover, the social implications of such violence did not reach beyond their respective localities. Ultimately, however, it is unlikely that Carleton's readers shared in the ease with which the novelist allowed this form of violence to pass as leisure. It is likely that Carleton's depiction of faction fighting merely intensified fears of an inherently violent peasant populace that too frequently sought the mechanism of violence to address their grievances.

Within these two short stories Carleton distinguished between faction fighting, fighting between rival Catholic factions, and party fighting, fighting involving parties of the two opposing religions that prevailed within Ireland during the period. Carleton endeavoured to differentiate between these two forms of fighting and treated of them in different ways. In 'The Battle of the Factions' he described faction fighting as

‘recreation’⁷²⁸, as ‘sport’⁷²⁹, as ‘our national amusement’⁷³⁰ and furthermore as the acumen of an Irish man’s enjoyment⁷³¹. Whereas in ‘The Party Fight and Funeral’ Carleton defined party fighting by the ‘compressed vengeance’⁷³² and ‘hope of slaughter’⁷³³ therein. Both short stories signal the violent nature of Irish society during the pre-famine period. Both illustrate the violent tendencies of the Irish rural poor, however, while both modes of fighting produce fatalities at their conclusions Carleton treated of faction fighting in ‘The Battle of the Factions’ significantly less severely than of party fighting in ‘The Party Fight and Funeral’. This chapter will argue that through Carleton’s contradistinctive depictions of faction fighting and party fighting the novelist presented the former as a form of leisure for the Irish rural poor but the latter as wholly unrelated to any form of recreational activity. Thus, this chapter will examine the recreational qualities of faction fighting, utilising Carleton’s fiction the aforementioned short stories included, as well as excerpts from that of his contemporaries in signalling faction fighting as a leisure pursuit.

I. Leisure

Leisure is defined variously as ‘the time which work leaves free’⁷³⁴, as ‘the antithesis of work’⁷³⁵ and as ‘time not to be used at the direction of others; but rather time during which the individual is, or may be, master of his own living.’⁷³⁶ Leisure is the time left over after time allocated for work and time used for the menial tasks of eating, sleeping, washing, etc. have been taken from an individual’s total time, the twenty-four hours of one’s day. During leisure time an individual is free to use their own resources for their own enjoyment. Leisure can be any activity an individual freely chooses to engage in. Unger and Kernan have argued that there are a series of six conditions present in all leisure; intrinsic satisfaction, perceived freedom, involvement, arousal, mastery and spontaneity.⁷³⁷ These conditions help to define leisure and activities considered to be leisure. A leisure activity must produce feelings of pleasure, gratification or satisfaction for the participant. The participant must choose to engage in the activity of their own free will. An individual

⁷²⁸ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 132.

⁷²⁹ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 133.

⁷³⁰ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 132.

⁷³¹ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 133.

⁷³² Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 134.

⁷³³ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 134.

⁷³⁴ Justin Voss, ‘The Definition of Leisure’ in *Journal of Economic Issues*, i, no. 1/2 (1967), p. 97.

⁷³⁵ Voss, ‘Leisure’, p. 97.

⁷³⁶ Voss, ‘Leisure’, p. 99.

⁷³⁷ Lynette Unger and Jerome Kernan, ‘On the Meaning of Leisure: An Investigation of Some of the Determinants of the Subjective Experience’ in *Journal of Consumer Research*, ix, no. 4 (1983), p. 382.

must properly engage or involve themselves in the activity and must be aroused or challenged, physically or intellectually, in the pursuit. There should be a level of skill or mastery involved and there should also be some spontaneity within some aspects of the activity.

Within this chapter it will be argued that faction fighting was a form of leisure, a recreational activity, that satisfies the conditions outlined above, engaged in by the Irish peasantry of the pre-famine period. According to Carleton peasants derived pleasure, amusement and enjoyment from the activity. Participants were physically and intellectually aroused or stimulated by faction fighting and their involvement in these battles may have acted as an escape or distraction from the reality of their everyday lives. The skill or mastery of faction fighting, cudgelling or stick fighting, and the somewhat organised nature of the activity also allows parallels to be drawn between it and sport, also a leisure pursuit or recreational pastime.

II. Faction Fighting By Definition

In “The Party Fight and Funeral” Carleton pointed out the differences between faction fights and party fights, the latter being sectarian battles fought by Catholics on one side and Protestants on the other, typical of the period in areas where adherents from both religions lived in close proximity to one another. Carleton wrote:

I have often had occasion to remark... the differential symptomatics between a Party Fight, that is, a battle between Orangemen and Ribbonmen, and one between two Roman Catholic Factions. There is something infinitely more anxious, silent, and deadly, in the compressed vengeance, and the hope of slaughter, which characterise a *party fight*, than is to be seen in a battle between *factions*. The truth is, the enmity is not so deep and well-grounded in the latter as in the former. The feeling is not political nor religious between factions; whereas, in the other, it is both, which is a mighty great advantage; for when this is adjuncted to an intense personal hatred, and a sense of wrong, probably arising from a too intimate recollection of the leaded black-thorn, or the awkward death of some relative, by the musket or the bayonet, it is apt to produce very purty [pretty, *sic*] fighting, and much respectable retribution.⁷³⁸

Carleton described party fights as being both religiously and politically motivated. Party fighters on both sides entered into such brawls with the intent to kill. They armed

⁷³⁸ Carleton, *Traits and Stories* i, p. 134.

themselves with bayonets and muskets, weapons designed to produce fatal injuries. The fair day at Maghera Co. Derry on the 12 June 1823 acts as an example of such party fighting. A report of the incident was carried in *Finn's Leinster Journal* on the 21 June of the same year:

Last Thursday, the 12th instant, was Maghera Fair-day; and, about half past six in the evening, a row commenced between those two well-known factions, Orangemen and Ribbonmen, but which side commenced is not yet discovered, the one being as ready and willing as the other. The Ribbon party continued to keep the streets for about two hours, namely, till about half-past 8 o'clock, when they were beaten off by the superior numbers of the Orange party; who had by this time got themselves armed with muskets and ball-cartridge, and, melancholy to relate, 5 men were shot dead on the spot, and in the course of the night three others died of their wounds. Besides these the numbers that were wounded are not yet known. Upwards of 20 were dressed, several having lost legs and arms. It does not appear that any of the Orange party suffered, as their opponents had no fire arms.⁷³⁹

Faction fights in contrast might be characterised by the absence of all of the above, neither politically nor religiously charged, void of malicious intent and fought out with sticks and stones as opposed to other more clinical weaponry. Moreover, factions were organised through familial ties and bonds of friendship or based upon geographical location. Carleton concluded:

Now a faction fight doesn't resemble this, at all, at all. Paddy's at home here; all song, dance, good humour, and affection. His cheek is flushed with delight, which, indeed, may derive assistance from the consciousness of having no bayonets or loaded carabines to contend with... It is the *acumen* of his enjoyment; and woe to him who will adventure between him and his amusements.⁷⁴⁰

Clearly Carleton treated of faction fighting and party fighting differently within his writings. Party fights were depicted as vicious and sinister, a symptom of the unhappy relationship that existed between Catholics and Protestants in Ireland during the period. Faction fights in contrast were depicted as celebratory occasions, joyously participated in by the fighters on both sides, enveloped in a carnival-like atmosphere.

In "Whiteboys and Faction Fighters in Pre-Famine Ireland" Lochlainn Ó Tuairisg defined faction fighting as:

⁷³⁹ *Finn's Leinster Journal*, 21 June 1823.

⁷⁴⁰ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 134.

a practice whereby scores, sometimes hundreds, occasionally thousands of men (and women) assembled at fairs, markets, patterns and other large gatherings, to engage in semi-ritualised combat, usually with sticks and stones, for no readily discernible purpose other than that of fighting and defeating the opposing side.⁷⁴¹

Similarly, Patrick O'Donnell described faction fighting as:

fights at fairs and markets, funerals, race meetings and patterns (parish patron days) between armies of country people, factions whose weapons were usually sticks and stones. Large numbers fought, hundreds, even thousands, and it was neither political nor sectarian considerations that moved them to fight... It is probable that most faction fights had no strongly-compelling motive, but even where none could be found or remembered the factions fought anyway.⁷⁴²

Faction fighting appears to have been most prevalent in the first half of the nineteenth century. Gary Owens noted that faction fights were not officially reported or recorded prior to 1837, when 18 were documented, however, many riots were and he suggested that many of these riots may have involved factions:

reports of 'riots' (a large portion of which were faction fights) ... streamed regularly into Dublin Castle from provincial magistrates during the 1820s. Between 1824 and 1828 the number of reported incidents rocketed from 358 to 1,001.⁷⁴³

Among the factions that fought during the period were the Caravats and Shanvests who began their feud in Clonmel, Co. Tipperary in 1805.⁷⁴⁴ Other factions of the nineteenth century included 'the Three Year Olds and the Four Year Olds, as well as the Keeraghs and the Graces, the Gate and the Pudding Lane Boys, Guag Boys, Poleens and Gows, Hickeys and Hogans, Rosoultys and Gortacloughs, Pallets and Bawns, and Black Hens and Magpies'.⁷⁴⁵

Faction fighting cannot be confined to the nineteenth century, however, and James Kelly argued that this phenomenon originated in the country's urban centres in the eighteenth century:

⁷⁴¹ Michael O'Neill, Clara Cullen, and Coleman Dennehy, (eds.), *History Matters*, (Dublin, 2004), p. 97.

⁷⁴² Patrick O'Donnell, *The Irish Faction Fighters of the Nineteenth Century*, (Dublin, 1975), p. 9.

⁷⁴³ Gary Owens, "'A Moral Insurrection': faction fighters, public demonstrations and the O'Connellite campaign, 1828", in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxx, no. 120 (1997), p.520.

⁷⁴⁴ Roberts, 'Caravats and Shanvests', pp. 66-101.

⁷⁴⁵ O'Donnell, *Irish Faction Fighters*, p. 25.

the 18th century also witnessed changes in the pattern of recreational activity as the combination of rapid urban growth, and the diminishing capacity of the traditional guardians of behaviour – family and social networks with deep roots in long-established areas, the guilds and the churches – to regulate the activities of young men, permitted the latter to ventilate their energies in a more rambunctious and violent fashion.⁷⁴⁶

Kelly noted of two factional rivalries that occurred during the eighteenth century, the Liberty and Ormond Boys in Dublin and the Blackpool, Fair Lane and Blarney Lane Boys in Cork. Kelly explained that the Liberty and Ormond Boys clashed intermittently throughout the century in Dublin city while the Cork factions fought during the 1760s and 1770s attracting ‘audiences to the number of two thousand and upwards’⁷⁴⁷ at their battles. Kelly also stated of faction fighting in the eighteenth century that:

It was not equally prevalent in all parts of the country, but reports of factional activity, sometimes involving many hundreds of people, at Portumna, Co. Galway, and Beltra, Co. Sligo, in Connacht; on the banks of the Lagan Canal, Co. Down; Mullingar and Kilcock in the north midlands; Kilcavan, Co. Wicklow; Killaloe, Co. Clare; Clonmel, Co. Tipperary; Urlingford, Co. Kilkenny, and Ring in west Co. Cork provide an indication of its geographical range.⁷⁴⁸

Evidence suggests that faction fighting was common and indeed a feature of Irish society during the period of the eighteenth and early nineteenth century. By definition faction fights appear to have been large scale battles, fought by two opposing gangs, groups or teams at community-based gatherings with sticks and stones as weapons. There does not appear to have been any tangible prize for the victors nor any political aim to be achieved by the fighting. Wars were waged as a result of localised rivalries, trivial disagreements or perhaps solely for the sport of a fight.

III. Recreational Violence

Carolyn Conley labelled faction fighting the ‘most obvious example of recreational violence’⁷⁴⁹ in Ireland in her study of recreational violence in the second half of the nineteenth century. Conley explained that ‘recreational violence is distinguished by clearly

⁷⁴⁶ James Kelly, *The Liberty and Ormond Boys: Factional riot in eighteenth-century Dublin*, (Dublin, 2005), p. 11.

⁷⁴⁷ Kelly, *The Liberty and Ormond Boys*, p. 11.

⁷⁴⁸ Kelly, *The Liberty and Ormond Boys*, p. 10.

⁷⁴⁹ Carolyn Conley, *Melancholy Accidents: the meaning of violence in post-famine Ireland*, (New York, 1999), p. 20.

defined rules, willing participants, a sense of pleasure in the activity and an absence of any malicious intent.⁷⁵⁰ Furthermore Conley stated that ‘under these conditions fighting can be seen as the far end of a spectrum of play or sport.’⁷⁵¹ Indeed faction fighting can easily be compared to sport, particularly modern organised team sports in which groups of equal numbers compete against one another on a chosen playing field under the constraint of a predefined set of rules using standardised equipment if necessary. Conley claimed that ‘more than any other form of recreational violence, factions resemble organized sports... Such organized violence provides entertainment, a path to status and an outlet for communal loyalties.’⁷⁵² Charles Townshend furthered this point drawing similarities between faction fighting and sport, concluding that:

for the most part, faction fights were purely local, private conflicts. Their vicious character notwithstanding, it may be suggested without levity that they represented a form of communal recreation... The grounds for allegiance to one group rather than another, were they not obviously familial, were as obscure or idiosyncratic as are, today, the grounds for loyalty to football teams in Britain.⁷⁵³

A reading of James Kelly’s *Sport in Ireland 1600-1840* reveals that the sports popular in Ireland during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries were very different to those popular now in the modern era. Indeed, hurling appears to be the only team sport to have remained popular through the centuries. Horse-racing, hunting, bowling and tennis were popular amongst the middle and upper classes of Irish society during the period while the lower classes enjoyed cockfighting, throwing at cocks, bull-baiting, hurling, commons and pugilism.⁷⁵⁴ While cudgelling or stick fighting, that which faction fighters engaged in during their battles, might be perceived as crude, violent and barbaric when compared to modern sports, against the equally crude and uncivilised blood sports of bull-baiting, cockfighting and pugilism it may not be considered all that different. Kelly accepted that cudgelling might be seen as ‘a quintessential example of controlled recreational violence’⁷⁵⁵ and argued that it may even belong to ‘the same category of fighting sports as pugilism, since a properly conducted cudgelling contest was not a

⁷⁵⁰ Carolyn Conley, ‘The Agreeable Recreation of Fighting’ in *Journal of Social History*, xxxiii, no. 1 (1999), p. 58.

⁷⁵¹ Conley, ‘The Agreeable Recreation of Fighting’, p. 58.

⁷⁵² Conley, ‘The Agreeable Recreation of Fighting’, p. 20.

⁷⁵³ Quoted in Conley, *Melancholy Accidents*, p. 44.

⁷⁵⁴ James Kelly, *Sport in Ireland 1600-1840*, (Dublin, 2014), p. 28.

⁷⁵⁵ Kelly, *Sport in Ireland*, p. 284

physical free-for-all.⁷⁵⁶ However, he did not appear convinced that cudgelling should be fully accepted as a sport stating:

it either straddled the permeable line that separates the history of sport from the history of recreational (and specifically factional) violence, or, because it was reliant on a weapon, that it crossed that line and is better located with the history of factional violence.⁷⁵⁷

Although not a sport, Kelly accepted that cudgelling, and by extension faction fighting, contained recreational qualities and might therefore be considered as leisure.

Like sports, faction fights were subject to certain rules. Although a code of practice might not have been documented each fighter was aware of what was acceptable and unacceptable and what they were to expect when entering into a faction fight. Teams of fighters were expected to consist of approximate equal numbers, participants willingly entered into fights and were accepting of the consequences of their actions, finally, the weapons used were supposed to be somewhat standardised. Conley noted that: ‘a decision to fight did not require a specific grievance. A challenge to see who the better man was would usually suffice.’⁷⁵⁸ This challenge often took the form of what was termed wheeling. Again, Conley explained that: ‘a formal faction fight... usually began with the ritual of wheeling which included chants, stylised gestures and insults. In the traditional wheel, the chant included the name of the faction issuing the challenge as well as the intended opponent.’⁷⁵⁹ Carleton offered an example of such wheeling in his short story as the O’Hallaghans and O’Callaghans prepared for battle at the fair in Knockimdowney:

Immediately a man of the O’Hallaghan side doffed his tattered frieze, and catching it by the very extremity of the sleeve, drew it with a tact, known only by an initiation of half-a-dozen street days, up the pavement after him. On the instant, a blade from the O’Callaghan side *peeled* with equal alacrity, and stretching his *home-made* at full length after him, proceeded triumphantly up the street to meet the other... ‘Where’s the rascally *O’Callaghan* that will place his toe or his shillely on this frieze?’ ‘Is there no blackguard *O’Hallaghan* jist to look *crucked* at the coat of an O’Callaghan, or say black’s the white of his eye?’⁷⁶⁰

⁷⁵⁶ Kelly, *Sport in Ireland*, p. 284.

⁷⁵⁷ Kelly, *Sport in Ireland*, p. 284.

⁷⁵⁸ Conley, *Melancholy Accidents*, p. 25.

⁷⁵⁹ Conley, *Melancholy Accidents*, p. 20.

⁷⁶⁰ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, pp. 135-6.

The wheel represented a challenge and when reciprocated was deemed to have been accepted. The challenge having been laid down, all participants who subsequently entered into the faction fight were presumed willing and accepting of the consequences their participating in the fight might produce. Magistrates also took wheeling into account when sentencing reported incidents of faction fighting or brawls. Conley noted that:

the courts routinely began enquiries into assaults by determining whether any of the participants had wheeled. Making such a challenge rendered the legal consequences less serious regardless of physical injuries. Pat Derrane's sentence for hitting Pat Hannon in the head with a chair was reduced to two months after Hannon admitted wheeling.⁷⁶¹

Another unwritten rule referred to the type and style of weapons used during faction fights. The faction fighters' weapons of choice were the stone and the cudgel, shillelagh or alpeen, all terms used to describe a fighting stick. In 'The Party Fight and Funeral' Carleton explained that as a schoolboy he was the member of one of 'two tiny factions,'⁷⁶² and that during the pre-famine period, in which he grew up, that fighting was 'an integral part of an Irish peasant's education'⁷⁶³. Carleton also claimed to have been 'early trained in cudgelling' and proceeded to explain how one should go about selecting a stick or branch suitable to be transformed into the choice weapon of the Irish peasant:

Our plan of preparing them was this: we sallied out to any place where there was an underwood of blackthorn or oak, and, having surveyed the premises with the eye of a connoisseur, we selected the straightest root-growing piece which we could find: for if not root-growing, we did not consider it worth cutting, knowing from experience that a mere branch, how straight and fair soever it might look, would be apt to snap in the twist and tug of war. Having cut it as close to the root as possible, we lopped off the branches, and put it in the chimney to season.⁷⁶⁴

Carleton then detailed the lengthy process or ritual involved in preparing the selected stick for battle:

When seasoned, we took it down, and wrapping it in brown paper, well steeped in hog's lard or oil, we buried it in a horse dunghill, paying it a daily visit for the purpose of making it straight by doubling back the `bends or angles across the knee, in a direction contrary to their natural tendency. Having daily repeated this until we had made it straight, and renewed the oiled wrapping

⁷⁶¹ Conley, "The Agreeable Recreation of Fighting", pp. 61-2.

⁷⁶² Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 182.

⁷⁶³ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 185.

⁷⁶⁴ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, pp. 184-5.

paper until the staff was perfectly saturated, we then rubbed it well with a woollen cloth, containing a little black-lead and grease, to give it a polish. This was the last process, except that, if we thought it too light at the top, we used to bore a hole in the lower end with a red-hot iron spindle, into which we poured melted lead, for the purpose of giving it a knock-down weight.⁷⁶⁵

While cudgels, sticks and stones were deemed acceptable weapons to use in faction fights, knives and guns were not. Conley noted of the late nineteenth century statistics relating to convictions and incarcerations that knife crime and shootings were dealt with significantly more severely than brawling with sticks or stones, even if the consequences were similar:

Persons convicted of homicides in which either no weapon was used or the assailants used a rock or a stick were released on recognizance or punished by sentences of less than six months 47 percent of the time. Only 18 percent of them were sentenced to penal servitude or death. In the 10 percent of homicides in which a knife was used less than 20 percent of those convicted served less than six months and 33 percent were sentenced to penal servitude or death.⁷⁶⁶

O'Donnell suggested the reason why these knives and guns were not used by faction fighters on a frequent basis was that, 'only a very small minority of faction fighters can have answered the call to battle with homicidal intent.'⁷⁶⁷ Similarly Kelly noted that:

Fatalities were not unusual, but the limited violence to which the protagonists had recourse was consistent with the character of a factional culture; that is, fighting was a test of strength and not per se a life or death struggle, and it was resorted to in order to establish which of the two contending and antipathetic factional interests was the stronger.⁷⁶⁸

Although the use of sticks and stones as weapons could indeed lead to fatalities, these weapons were considered less lethal than either a knife or gun. Faction fights were characterised by the absence of any malicious intent and the faction fighter did not enter into a fight with the intention of killing his opponent, however, that this was a potential outcome was accepted. Carleton illustrated the fatal potential of faction fighting at the conclusion of 'The Battle of the Factions'. Two lives are lost as the story closes as one fighter availed of a scythe and beheaded his opponent. He was then murdered by his sister

⁷⁶⁵ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, pp. 184-5.

⁷⁶⁶ Conley, 'The Agreeable Recreation of Fighting', p. 63.

⁷⁶⁷ O'Donnell, *Irish Faction Fighters*, p. 18.

⁷⁶⁸ Kelly, *The Liberty and Ormond Boys*, p. 11.

as she avenged the murder of her lover, her brother's initial victim. Carleton noted that having become conscious of her actions the unfortunate girl was driven out of her senses and lived the remainder of her life without speaking a word. The man narrating the tale of this great battle to Carleton concluded by commenting that:

With regard to my grandfather, (who had initially related the story to him) he says that he didn't see purtier [prettier, sic] fighting within his own mermory; But, to do him justice, he condemns the scythe and every other weapon except the cudgels; because, he says, that if they continue to be resorted to, nate fighting will be altogether forgotten in the country.⁷⁶⁹

IV. Factional Rivalry

In 'The Battle of the Factions' Carleton detailed the origins of a dispute between the O'Callaghan and O'Hallaghan families that went unresolved, became a feud or grudge, was passed on from generation to generation and culminated in the battle which occurred towards the close of the story. The feud Carleton explained, was land related. A river divided the lands of these neighbouring families and consequently the lands of their respective landlords. A small island of twelve yards in diameter lay in the way of the river. As the river divided around the island a greater portion of its waters lay on the side of the O'Hallaghan property and as a result the O'Callaghan's claimed possession of the island. The case was to alter, however, as Pat Frayne a member of the O'Callaghan faction explains in the story:

One wet winter, however, it [the river] seemed to change its mind upon the subject; for it wrought and wore away a passage for itself on our side of the island, and by that means took part, as it were, with the O'Hallaghans, leaving the territory which had been our property for centhries, in their possession.⁷⁷⁰

The feud thus erupted as both families laid claim to possession of the island, the O'Hallaghans claiming the island was then geographically closer to their land and consequently theirs, the O'Callaghans arguing the fact that the island had been in their possession for such a period of time as made it theirs. The dispute carried on unresolved with both families standing their respective ground neither willing to settle the matter peaceably. Ultimately, however, the original feud was forgotten. The original dispute between the families produced a rivalry which was fought out at any given opportunity, be

⁷⁶⁹ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 144.

⁷⁷⁰ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 119.

it market, fair, wedding or funeral, the great battle at the end of the short story at the fair at Knockimdowney being a prime example.

Carleton's fictional representation of a factional rivalry was not without foundation. Some faction fights appear to have been the result of contemporary feuds, notably 'The Battle of Rushveala' where two Catholic landowners in Oughterard, Co. Galway sent their tenants out on 8 December 1837 to fight over the possession and ownership of a portion of land, a patch of bog of approximately twenty acres, which lay between the properties of the neighbouring landlords. However, other factional rivalries had lost all consciousness of the original feud that had turned them against one another and some were based on the most trivial of disagreements. W.R. LeFanu in *Seventy Years of Irish life: Being Anecdotes and Reminiscences* (1893), recalled of the feud between two Limerick factions, the Coffeys and the Reaskawallahs, that, 'the origin of their feud was, as in most other cases, lost in antiquity.'⁷⁷¹ While two other Limerick factions known as the Three Year Olds and Four Year Olds fought over the age of an animal. Carolyn Conley explained that the factions' names, 'stemmed from a fight held decades earlier over the age of either a colt or a cow. The feud had lasted so long nobody remembered which.'⁷⁷²

V. Faction Fighting Vs. Party Fighting

By comparing Carleton's two stories it becomes obvious that he treated of the fighting, faction and party, in their respective stories in different ways. Both stories contain battle scenes of almost equal length, however, the approach taken by Carleton in describing each is decidedly different. In 'The Battle of the Factions' Carleton appeared to lessen the violence of the fighting whereas in 'The Party Fight and Funeral' the violence of the encounter between the Orangemen and Ribbonmen was described in horrific detail. In 'The Battle of the Factions' Carleton utilised playful colloquial dialogue and onomatopoeic phrases to echo the sounds of the battle:

'Here yer sowl – (crack) – there yer sowl – (whack.) Whoo for the Hallaghans!' - (crack, crack, crack.) 'Hurroo for the O'Callaghans! – (whack, whack, whack.) The O'Callaghans for ever!' – (whack) 'The O'Hallahgnas for ever!' – (crack.) 'Murther! murther! (crick, crack) – foul! foul! – (whick, whack.) Blood and turf! – (whack, whick) – tunther-an-ouns' – (crack, crick.)

⁷⁷¹ W.R. LeFanu, *Seventy Years of Irish Life: Being Anecdotes and Reminiscences*, (London/New York, 1893), pp. 33-34.

⁷⁷² Conley, *Melancholy Accidents*, pp. 20-1.

‘Hurroo! my darlings! Handle your kippeens – (crack, crack) – the O’Hallagans are going!’ – (whack, whack.)⁷⁷³

Furthermore, when the battle concludes so too does Carleton’s story. There are two deaths at the end of his tale but he refrained from dwelling upon this fact unlike within his story of ‘The Party Fight and Funeral’.

As the title of the short story suggests a funeral follows the party fighting within the tale. Carleton, as narrator, returns to his hometown having been for some time absent to find that a former friend and classmate has died as a result of his participation in a party fight. A battle had taken place between Orangemen and Ribbonmen at the local market or May fair. An account of the battle is related to Carleton within the short story. The business of the fair day had concluded about the hour of four o’clock and the town was deserted as those who had been present at the market took suitable shelter. Thousands of men lined up, Catholic Ribbonmen on one side Protestant Orangemen on the other, in preparation for battle. Initially a duel between the leaders of the respective parties was fought out in the middle ground. Denis Kelly, the deceased, led the Ribbonmen while a man named Grimes fought for the Orangemen. This duel was fought out with cudgels and as the masses joined in the fight they too were equipped with these fighting sticks:

A mutual rush instantly took place; but ere the Orangemen came down to where Grimes lay, Kelly had taken his staff, and handed it to one of his own party. It is impossible to describe the scene that ensued. The noise of the blows, the shouting, the yelling, the groans, the scalped heads, and gory visages gave both to the eye an impression that could not easily be forgotten. The battle was obstinately maintained on both sides for nearly an hour, and with a skill of manoeuvring, attack, and retreat, that was astonishing.⁷⁷⁴

As the fight advanced the Ribbonmen, owing to their skill in cudgelling, gained an advantage and the Orangemen began to retreat. As they fell back the Orangemen reorganised on top of a nearby hill upon which a mound of stones had been collected. The Orangemen rallied firing stones at the Ribbonmen forcing them back. As in the scene described of the party fight at Maghera fire-arms were then obtained and the fight took on a more brutal and fatal guise.

⁷⁷³ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, pp. 136-7.

⁷⁷⁴ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 216.

The Orangemen ultimately seized the day as the Ribbonmen were forced to retreat at the points of bayonets and pistols. Denis Kelly was dealt his life-threatening injury by a blow he received from the butt-end of Grimes' Volunteer gun. Carleton dedicated a significant portion of his short story to a description of the party fight scene. He detailed, in particular, each move made by the two fighters in the initial duel between the leaders of the respective parties:

Kelly sprung over to him; and making a feint, as if he untended to lay the stick on his ribs, he swung it past without touching him, and, bringing it round his own head like lightning, made it tell with a powerful back-stroke, right on Grimes's temple, and in an instant his own face was sprinkled with the blood which sprung from the wound. Grimes staggered forward towards his antagonist, seeing which, Kelly sprung back, and was again meeting him with full force, when Grimes, turning a little, clutched Kelly's stick in his right hand, and being left-handed himself, ere the other could wrench the cudgel from him, he gave him a terrible blow upon the back part of the head which laid Kelly in the dust.⁷⁷⁵

Carleton ensured that his readers were aware of the violence involved in such encounters. Furthermore, he dedicated the final portion of his tale to the funeral of Denis Kelly illustrating the inevitable consequence of such heated battles. That Carleton meant to condemn the peasantry of his tale for their participation in party fighting becomes glaringly obvious at the conclusion of the story. Through the wife of Grimes, the man who murdered Kelly, Carleton called for an end to the needless bloodshed that resulted from the sectarian conflict prevalent in Ireland during the period. In response to Kelly's wife cursing her family Mrs. Grimes cries:

'Don't curse me and my innocent childher, for we never harmed you, nor wished you ill! But it was this party work did it! Oh, my God!' she exclaimed, wringing her hands in bitterness of spirit, "when will it be ended between friends and neighbours, that ought to live in love and kindness together, instead of fighting in this blood-thirsty manner!"⁷⁷⁶

Carleton appeared to lessen the violence of his faction fight, masking the strikes inflicted by cudgels on the various participants in 'whicks', 'whacks' and 'cracks'. In contrast within his depiction of the party fight the damage inflicted by these fighting sticks is realised and described in detail. The recourse to firearms and the sectarianism involved in party fighting set it apart from faction fighting, however,

⁷⁷⁵ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 212.

⁷⁷⁶ Carleton, *Traits and Stories*, i, p. 227.

Carleton sought to further differentiate between the two forms of fighting by glossing over the violence of faction bouts. Carleton himself accepted faction fighting as a form of leisure or recreation but it appears he felt it necessary to convince his readership of this. Both stories signal the violent tendencies of the Irish rural poor and the potential threat they posed to Protestant society in Ireland. It is unlikely that Carleton's Protestant readership felt any less disturbed by the diluted violence in 'The Battle of the Faction' than the more pronounced and obvious violence in 'The Party Fight and Funeral' but it is clear that Carleton, as a former peasant, recognised the differences between these two forms of fighting.

VI. Other Voices

Carleton was not alone in portraying faction fighting as a form of leisure, a pastime peculiar to the peasantry of rural Ireland. Jonah Barrington (1760-1834) writing in his *Personal Sketches of His Own Times* (1830), described the faction fight annually held at the fair in Dysart Co. Laois. He portrayed the fighting there as something of a spectator sport insisting that he himself 'seldom missed attending for several years, solely in order to see the fight which was sure to conclude it.'⁷⁷⁷ Barrington noted that the only weapons used in the fighting were the cudgel or shillelagh: 'Their weapon was almost exclusively an oaken cudgel: - neither iron, steel, not indeed any deadlier substances, so far as I ever saw, was in use among them.'⁷⁷⁸ Barrington also maintained that once the battle had subsided, so too did the heated rivalry and determination to beat one another amongst the participants: 'No animosity was cherished; and until next fair day they would do each other any kind office.'⁷⁷⁹

John Banim (1798-1842) at the beginning of his novel *The Peep O' Day, or, John Doe* (1835), cited festival days, fairs, funerals and village hurling matches, as opportunities for those of the peasantry 'feverish for sport'⁷⁸⁰ to partake in skirmishes or fights. He later described two English officers stationed in Clonmel attending a pattern not far from their post in the hope of witnessing an Irish row. Gerald Griffin (1803-1840) too wrote of faction fighting in his short story, 'The Blackbirds and the Yellow Hammers' which featured in his *Tales of my neighbourhood* (1835). In the same way that Carleton appeared

⁷⁷⁷ Jonah Barrington, *Personal Sketches of His Own Times*, iii, (London, 1830), p. 253.

⁷⁷⁸ Barrington, *Personal Sketches*, p. 255.

⁷⁷⁹ Barrington, *Personal Sketches*, p. 257.

⁷⁸⁰ John Banim, *The Peep O' Day, or, John Doe*, p. 2.

to gloss over the violence in 'The Battle of the Factions' John Cronin suggested that Griffin, by introducing the military into his fight scene, produced a comical and farcical end to his story: 'The faction fight which climaxes the story is an odd mixture of brutality and hilarity, with members of the rival factions killing and maiming each other while, at the same time, leading the military, who have intervened, a merry dance through bog and briar.'⁷⁸¹ Carleton's contemporaries appeared to mirror his portrayal of faction fighting as sport and as leisure. There is a sense that those participating in these battles derived pleasure from their endeavours and this appears to be reflected in the light-heartedness with which Carleton and his contemporaries approached the subject.

Conclusion

The findings of Carolyn Conley act to establish strong connections between the faction fighting of the pre-famine period and sport, leisure and recreation. Conley presented faction fighting as an outlet or form of exercise for the rural poor and as a precursor of our modern Irish sports. William Carleton's contemporary account of faction fighting supports these findings. Throughout his writings Carleton openly criticised the violent nature and tendencies of the Irish peasantry of the pre-famine period. Carleton condemned the savagery, brutality and barbarity of the Irish rural poor in the short story 'Wildgoose Lodge' and the novel *The Tithe Proctor*, to give just two examples. The jovial tone of 'The Battle of the Factions', however, suggests that Carleton viewed faction fighting as a wholly unrelated entity. In the trivial origins of the feud between the O'Hallaghans and the O'Callaghans, a disagreement over a practically useless island of just twelve yards in diameter, the playful naming of the fair at which the battle occurs, Knockimdowney, and the masking of the violence exhibited in boisterous colloquial dialogue, Carleton depicted faction fighting as recreation, sport and as a mirthful, pleasurable experience. Unlike the other manifestations of violence that prevailed in early nineteenth century Ireland Carleton treated of faction fighting as an activity bearing no threat or consequence to his predominantly Protestant and middle-class readership, although it is unlikely that his readers accepted this view. While Carleton appeared to see no harm in faction fighting the fatal conclusion to his short story did, however, allow him to add a caveat. Recreational faction fighting was subject to certain rules and when these rules were broken or ignored the recreational or sporting qualities of such fighting were

⁷⁸¹ John Cronin, *Gerald Griffin, 1803-1840: A Critical Bibliography*, (Cambridge, 1978), p. 120.

diluted. Ultimately, in comparison to his other writings that condemned the violent nature of Irish society during the pre-famine period, Carleton appeared to treat of faction fighting less severely and thus portrayed it as a form of leisure. His treatment of party fighting in contrast is significantly more characteristic of his wider writings on the theme of violence. The focus shifts in 'The Party Fight and Funeral' from the sport of the fight to the fatal consequences produced as the reality of death pervades the tale. Through William Carleton's sketches of the Irish peasantry we gain an authentic insider perspective into life during the pre-famine period. In 'The Battle of the Factions' we learn that faction fighting was leisure for the rural poor of early nineteenth century Ireland.

Conclusion

In 1847 Carleton openly attacked the British Government through what would become his most famous novel, *The Black Prophet*. Initially published serially in the *DUM* between May and December of 1846, when produced in a single volume Carleton dedicated his tale to Lord John Russell, then British Prime Minister. Carleton argued that he could not:

help thinking that the man who, in his ministerial capacity, must be looked upon as a public exponent of those principles of Government which have brought our country to her present calamitous condition, by a long course of illiberal legislation and unjustifiable neglect, ought to have his name placed before a story which details with truth sufferings which such legislation and neglect have entailed upon our people.⁷⁸²

The Black Prophet was a fictional murder mystery story set against the backdrop of a famine that occurred in Ireland in late 1816 and throughout 1817. Written during 1846, as the effects of the Great Famine (1845-50) were beginning to be felt across the country, the novel had immediate contemporary relevance. So much so that O'Donoghue noted that:

Many thought he was picturing the scenes of the moment, when in fact his mind had been merely dwelling on his own experiences of nearly twenty years before.⁷⁸³

In 1847 the country was experiencing the worst year of the Great Famine. While the narrative revolved primarily around the mystery of two murders committed in a rural locality it was Carleton's depiction of the plight of the Irish rural poor that became the focus of the novel. Throughout the novel Carleton's newly assumed reformist identity poured through as he criticised the government and their predecessors for allowing a situation whereby famine and food shortages had become a regular occurrence in Ireland throughout the first half of the nineteenth century.

The Black Prophet was characteristic of Carleton's writings of the 1840s. As we have seen in Chapters Three and Four of this study Carleton had adopted a less conservative, reformist political stance at this point in his career. While Carleton's short stories of the 1830s had focused almost exclusively on the Irish peasantry, a decade later the author employed a more wide-ranging lens and attempted to draw a fuller picture of

⁷⁸² Deane, *The Field Day Anthology of Irish Writing*, pp. 124-5.

⁷⁸³ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 85-6.

Irish life and society. As part of this new critique Carleton suggested that legislative neglect had played a role in the plight of the lower classes, yet, he treated of the Irish peasantry, their tendencies towards violence in particular, with the same caution he had done earlier in his career. The difference in the 1840s was that the violent, gullible, superstitious Catholic peasantry were not the only targets of Carleton's criticism. Instead, legislators and landowners were asked to answer for the parts they had played in creating a situation in Ireland that stimulated poverty, violence and ignorance.

Taken in conjunction with Carleton's other novels of the 1840s the authors anti-government and pro-reform political stance becomes obvious. Through *Valentine McClutchy*, *Rody the Rover*, *The Black Prophet* and *The Tithe Proctor* Carleton addressed a variety of issues that contributed to the disturbed state of the Irish countryside during the pre-famine period. Charging the government with legislative neglect, whether Carleton personally supported the campaign for Repeal or not, his writings reflected the rhetoric of the popular nationalist movement. In dedicating *The Black Prophet* to Lord John Russell Carleton publicly declared the purpose of his writings of that period. Collectively these novels can be seen to illustrate the major grievances that Repealers had with Britain's governance of Ireland under the union.

Carleton's literary career continued beyond the Great Famine. He continued to write until his death in 1869 and the author's unfinished autobiography was to be his final project. Despite being granted a literary pension of £200 a year in 1848 Carleton continued to struggle financially.⁷⁸⁴ He had a large family to support and had taken out an insurance policy on his life at a premium of £50 per annum.⁷⁸⁵ He complained throughout his career that as an Irish author publishing in Ireland that he was not remunerated adequately for his efforts.⁷⁸⁶ That he often sold the copyrights to his novels outright in order to secure large initial lump sums, however, had a major bearing on his financial circumstances. Were his novels successful he did not receive any share of the profits made from additional sales. Consequently, Carleton's career followed a similar pattern post 1850 as it had during the pre-famine period. He wrote for those willing to pay for his copy. As he approached the latter stages of his career, however, fewer and fewer publishers declared interest in his

⁷⁸⁴ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 123.

⁷⁸⁵ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 291.

⁷⁸⁶ 'William Carleton to the Committee of the Literary Fund', 29 November 1841, (B.L., Royal Literary Fund – Case Files, Loan 96 RLF 1/711/7).

works. Twice John Francis Waller⁷⁸⁷ at the *DUM* refused to publish novels proposed by Carleton. The author would finish his career publishing almost solely with James Duffy. O'Donoghue argued that the author had no other option:

Henceforth, [1858] he wrote only for James Duffy – or, at any rate, only James Duffy published his future works.⁷⁸⁸

The writings he produced for Duffy were of an increasingly Catholic flavour. Duffy's cheap books and magazines were firmly aimed at a Catholic, family readership, increasingly literate having reaped the benefits of an established school system. *Duffy's Hibernian Magazine* (1860-4) became the vehicle for Carleton's late fiction. A cheap, unillustrated periodical 'aimed at a domestic audience, the monthly magazine cost 9d. in 1860 for almost 48 pages of fiction (most of it signed), poetry, and articles of general interest, all with an Irish focus.'⁷⁸⁹ "The Man with the Black Eye. Being a Satirical Allegory upon Life" appeared in its first number while two novels - *Redmond Court O'Hanlon*, *the Irish Rapparee: An Historic Tale* and *The Double Prophecy; or, the Trials of the Heart* - appeared serially within the magazine in 1860 and 1861 respectively. Duffy published both novels in book form in 1862, while *The Evil Eye, or the Black Spectre. A Romance* appeared earlier in 1860. "The Miller of Mohill", a short story, appeared in a separate publication, the *Illustrated Dublin Journal* (1861-2) in 1862, but this too was run by Duffy.

Carleton finished his career writing for the people from whom he himself arose and his later writings can be seen to contrast strikingly with the anti-Catholic propaganda he produced when he first came upon the literary stage. To compare the author's original stories to those he published late in his career, however, ignores the gradual evolution of the perspective from which Carleton wrote and the variety of views and opinions contained in his vast body of work. This study, focusing on Carleton's pre-famine writings has acted to highlight the varying perspectives found in the author's stories in respect of the themes of religion and violence. In so doing it has revealed Carleton's fiction to possess evidence

⁷⁸⁷ John Francis Waller, (1809-94). A writer and poet, Limerick born Waller was one of the founder members of the *Dublin University Magazine* and contributed to the periodical for 40 years. Waller took over as editor of the magazine from Lever in 1845 and later in 1870 bought the *DUM* from Sheridan Le Fanu. Among his works were two volumes of poetry, *Ravenscraft Hill* and *St. Patrick's Day in My Own Parlour* (both 1852). Katherine Mullin, 'Waller, John Francis (c.1809–1894)', *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, (www.oxforddnb.com), (28 April 2016).

⁷⁸⁸ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 262.

⁷⁸⁹ Brake and Demoor, *DNCJ*, p. 185.

that acts to supplement modern understandings of the mindsets of the Catholic and Protestant communities of pre-famine Ireland.

Tom Dunne argued that the author of fiction is ‘a historian of his own time and society’⁷⁹⁰ and this is certainly true of Carleton. Moreover, the author’s texts must be considered as products of the culture in which they were created. Carleton’s fictions were each written for a particular purpose, for specific readers and often with a political or propagandist aim. Consequently, Carleton’s writings were biased and often discriminated against one group or another. Given these prejudices Carleton can never be relied upon as the most credible of witnesses, instead, his writings can be seen to reveal most about the readers to whom the texts were addressed. Although Carleton revealed the intimacies and intricacies of Irish peasant life through his stories, the historian gains a greater insight into the minds of those that would read these texts than those described within. Writing exclusively for Protestant readers in the 1830s Carleton’s short stories reflected the fears that Irish Protestants held toward their newly emancipated Catholic neighbours. Suspicions surrounding the clergy, then one of the most powerful and influential cohorts in pre-famine society, mirrored international trends in anti-Catholic literature. Depictions of Catholic peasants congregating in large numbers, be it at a fight, a fair or a funeral, were representative of the Protestant siege mentality that recognised the fragility of their position of privilege within Irish society. Later in the 1840s Carleton’s novels spoke to those who had become increasingly frustrated with the British government. His writings, situated within the context of the Repeal campaign, argued that legislators had contributed to the disturbed condition of the country through neglect. Absenteeism, tithes, the alleged governmental use of paid spies and a lack of proper safeguards to protect against famine were charges against the government that each contributed to the anti-establishment and reformist stance presented by Carleton at that time. During the period before and during the Great Famine Carleton gave voice to the frustrations of an increasingly nationalist Irish public aggravated by the conduct of the British parliament.

Carleton wrote from different political perspectives at different junctures in his career. To do this and to be accepted by the different readers he addressed Carleton had to present different versions of himself to the public as his career progressed. The evolution of Carleton’s public identity has been explained in this study through the concept of self-

⁷⁹⁰ Dunne, ‘Murder as Metaphor’, p. 64.

fashioning. Carleton's self-fashioning, the reshaping of his public persona, was multifaceted and embodied alterations in his aesthetic appearance, his behaviour and ultimately in his literature. Carleton's controversial conversion to the Protestant religion, before 1820, has been presented in this study as calculated, contrived and as the initial step in the author's self-fashioning. Carleton did not explain in depth the reasons for his conversion within his autobiographical writings. Neither is there any evidence to suggest that the author changed his religion in an attempt to begin a literary career. Yet, Carleton undoubtedly benefited from his conversion to Protestantism and this allows for it to be considered an aspect of his self-fashioning. Further, before making his literary debut, Carleton altered his behaviour and aesthetic appearance to aid his assimilation into Protestant middle-class society in metropolitan Dublin. This newly acquired public identity allowed the author to move in social circles that no Catholic peasant would have had access to and subsequently afforded him the opportunity to enter upon the literary stage.

The writings that Carleton produced during the different phases of his career are the aspect of the author's self-fashioning which are most amenable to critique. Writing within different political contexts, for different readers and under the pay and sanction of different patrons, the views and opinions expressed within the author's fiction during the distinct stages of his career were varied and at times contradictory. The evolution of these perspectives with respect to the prevailing themes of religion and violence has been examined in detail in Chapters Three and Four of this study. The manner in which Carleton presented himself to the public through his writings also changed through his career. Initially Carleton presented himself to his readers as a former peasant, as one who had an intimate knowledge of peasant life, and as a reformed Ribbonman. His deep inner knowledge and experience of rural peasant life allowed him to stand apart from his contemporaries and to write with an unrivalled level of authenticity upon his subject matter. It has been proven in Chapter One of this study that although of rural stock, Carleton enjoyed a relatively respectable upbringing. His writings, however, describe his origins as humble and lowly. Further, Carleton's writings are the only source available that account for his Ribbon initiation or his visit to Lough Derg. It is plausible and indeed likely that Carleton exaggerated and embellished the experiences of his youth in order to cement his place as the foremost writer on peasant life to an intrigued Protestant readership.

Later Carleton would distance himself from the anti-Catholicism of his earlier writings through the revision of his short stories. Away from Otway and the evangelical *Examiner*, dropped by Lever at the *DUM*, Carleton had to adapt to secure a return to employment. He removed the more offensive and derogatory passages from his sketches and repackaged his most popular series, *Traits and Stories*, to make it appeal to a wider demographic. In this way Carleton sustained a career in Irish literature for forty years. He shaped and refashioned both his writings and public identity to appeal to each different section of the reading public that emerged. Within the context of the author's aesthetic self-fashioning, Carleton who early in his career described himself as 'one of the best dressed young fellows in Dublin',⁷⁹¹ was described in the 1840s as 'genuine bit of old Ireland'.⁷⁹² In 1847 Young Ireland's Martin MacDermott noted of the novelist's appearance that he was 'the very ideal of a Northern peasant farmer',⁷⁹³ while O'Donoghue added that:

Carleton's appearance at this time suggested that of an Irishman who would not seem completely equipped without a shillelagh grasped firmly by the middle.⁷⁹⁴

It would appear that Carleton played several different roles throughout his career. These roles incorporated aspects of appearance, behaviour and language. He tailored each to suit the image or identity he wished to present to the readers he addressed at different junctures in his career. The success and indeed sustainment of the author's career must be attributed to his ability to adapt and shift accordingly with the changing social and political contexts of his time.

Although an ambition to better his inherited social standing may have influenced Carleton's initial decision to convert to the Protestant religion the subsequent shifts made by the author appear motivated by financial need. As stated, Carleton struggled financially throughout his career. Successive applications to the Royal Literary Fund coupled with a prolonged pursuit for a literary pension act as evidence of the author's pecuniary strife. Each time that Carleton appeared to change or alter the perspective from which he wrote he was financially unstable. When offered a position at the *Examiner* Carleton had just returned to Dublin with his wife and two children following an unsuccessful stint in a

⁷⁹¹ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, i, p. 220.

⁷⁹² O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 127.

⁷⁹³ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 127.

⁷⁹⁴ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, 127.

school in Carlow. When he revised *Traits and Stories* between 1842 and 1844 Charles Lever had taken over the editorship of the *DUM* and was unwilling to keep Carleton as a contributor. During his association with *The Nation* and Young Ireland Carleton was appealing for a government pension and complained to Charles Gavan Duffy of his financial need.⁷⁹⁵ Even after his pension was granted O'Donoghue noted that Carleton was £300 in debt and that he had then ten children depending upon him.⁷⁹⁶ Ultimately, Carleton's talents brought him fame both at home and abroad but fortune eluded him.

Through his novels and short stories William Carleton documented the oral tradition of the Irish peasantry that may have otherwise been forgotten as it fell into terminal decline after the Great Famine. Carleton was not alone in delineating the lives of the lower classes who would suffer most during the famine but none of his contemporaries had risen from the peasantry in the same way, nor could they write with the same level of authenticity as the Tyrone native. Carleton presented himself throughout his career as the leading chronicler of Irish peasant life and society in the pre-famine period. He claimed to have 'risen up from a humble cottage and described a whole people'.⁷⁹⁷ What he failed to recognise, however, was that in the way that he described these people he was simultaneously revealing as much, if not more, about those who would read his tales. This study has shown how valuable Carleton's fiction can be as a historical source. While his writings are flawed, often biased, written from calculated perspectives and for specific purposes they still reveal insights into life and society during what was a tumultuous period of Irish history. Existing studies have proven the value of Carleton's writing often using extracts of the author's writings or utilising particular novels or short stories to supplement historical examinations of the period and this thesis acts to expand on that framework. Examining a significant portion of Carleton's works and putting those texts at the forefront of this study, the contrasting perspectives found within the novelist's work help to paint a wide picture of Irish life and society during the period. Examining the themes of both religion and violence, Carleton's fiction adds to existing information on the popular religion of the Irish Catholic peasantry, their superstitious belief, their inherent tendency towards violence and their involvement in factional, agrarian and sectarian violence. Moreover, these same writings expose the insecurities of a threatened Protestant community and chart the rise of nationalist feeling within Ireland amidst the campaign for

⁷⁹⁵ (N.L.I., Gavan Duffy Papers, Mss. 5756/31-3, 91-3, 257-60).

⁷⁹⁶ O'Donoghue, *The Life*, ii, p. 107.

⁷⁹⁷ William Carleton to Charles Gavan Duffy', 8 May 1847, (N.L.I., Gavan Duffy Papers, Mss. 5756/31-3).

the Repeal of the Act of Union. While charges of his being a jobbing writer are most certainly warranted, that his stories are void of historical value as a consequence has been proven inaccurate throughout this study. The fact that Carleton wrote from more than one perspective and for more than one creed or cause adds to his worth and makes him perhaps the most important Irish writer of the nineteenth century.

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