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Author(s): John Morrow

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THOMAS CARLYLE, ‘YOUNG IRELAND’ AND THE ‘CONDITION OF IRELAND QUESTION’*

JOHN MORROW

University of Auckland

ABSTRACT. *This article reconsiders Thomas Carlyle’s views on the crisis facing Ireland in the 1840s and British responses to it. It argues that while Carlyle saw this crisis as being related to difficulties facing contemporary ‘English’ society, he treated it as a distinctive manifestation of a malaise that afflicted all European societies. Carlyle’s views on Ireland reflected the illiberal and authoritarian attitudes which underwrote his social and political thought, but they were not, as has sometimes been suggested, premised on anti-Irish prejudices derived from racial stereotypes. An examination of Carlyle’s writings on Ireland demonstrate that he attributed the parlous state of that country in the 1840s to widespread failures in leadership and social morality that were not unique to the inhabitants of Ireland and were also to be found in England. Carlyle’s works were not only admired by leading members of ‘Young Ireland’, but also generated ideas that framed their response to the economic, social, and political challenges facing Ireland.*

Although Thomas Carlyle’s social and political criticism was framed in terms of what he called ‘the condition of England question’, in the late 1830s and 1840s he periodically turned his attention towards Ireland. Following brief references to the plight of the Irish peasantry in *The French Revolution: a history* (1836) and *Sartor resartus* (1838), more extensive treatments appeared in *Chartism* (1839), in his edition of Oliver Cromwell’s letters and speeches (1845), and in a series of essays published in the *Examiner*, the *Spectator* and the *Nation* in 1848 and 1849. Carlyle made two visits to Ireland, the first in the summer of 1846 and a longer one in 1849, recording his impressions in correspondence and an unpublished reminiscence. At one point, he may have toyed with the idea of producing a book on the condition of Ireland and of including an essay on this theme in the ‘latter-day pamphlets’ of 1850.¹

Department of Political Studies, University of Auckland, Private Bag 92019, Auckland Mail Centre, Auckland, New Zealand j.morrow@auckland.ac.nz

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¹ *Collected letters of Thomas and Jane Welsh Carlyle*, Charles Richard Sanders, K.J. Fielding, Ian Campbell et al., eds. (Edinburgh and Durham, NC, 1970–), XXI, 48; cited hereafter as *CL*. MS Vault Carlyle 12:4 in the Beinecke Library at Yale University is made up of a series of fragmentary drafts, most probably dating from 1848–9. Some of this material was used in Carlyle’s ‘latter-day pamphlets’ of 1850. There are fragments on Sir Robert Peel’s scheme for Ireland (see below) and on Daniel

Carlyle's interest in Irish affairs was sparked by his sense of the enormity of the crisis precipitated by repeated failures of the potato crop and by the conviction that the crisis was a particular, advanced manifestation of a far broader movement in modern European history. Indeed, Carlyle believed that modern Ireland demonstrated the end point of the failings of contemporary society and set them in sharp relief: 'Ireland really *is* my problem; the *breaking* point of the huge suppurating which all British and European society now is. Set down in Ireland, one might at least feel, "*Here* is thy problem: in God's name, what *will* thou do with it?"'² His answers to this question were couched in language that may be offensive to modern readers and reflected the stridently illiberal cast of his social and political criticism. It is necessary, however, to resist claims that Carlyle's views on Ireland can be understood by reference to stock mid-century anti-Irish prejudices, including those that conceptualized Anglo-Irish relationships in terms of a hierarchy of racial types which degraded and marginalized the Irish and robbed them of independent agency.³ This interpretation is inconsistent with the perspectives on Ireland that emerge from Carlyle's writings from the 1840s. It also ignores the implications of Carlyle's relationship with members of the Young Ireland group.

The first section of this article provides a sketch of this relationship and of the role that it had in enlarging Carlyle's knowledge of Irish affairs. This is followed by an analysis of the basis of the ideas on Ireland in Carlyle's condition of England writings that initially attracted the attention of leading Young Ireland figures, and those which emerged from the mid-1840s when his interest in, and knowledge of, Ireland deepened. It is argued that Carlyle's views on the failings of

O'Connell. I am most grateful to Dr Kathryn James for locating this material and for supplying me with a copy of it. Quotations from this manuscript are made with the permission of the Beinecke Library.

² *CL*, xxiv, p. 54, n. 2, quoting material from Carlyle's journal.

³ Cf. Amy E. Martin, 'Blood transfusions: constructions of Irish racial difference, the English working class, and revolutionary possibility in the work of Carlyle and Engels', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 24 (2004), pp. 83–102; David Nally, "'Eternity's commissioner": Thomas Carlyle, the great Irish famine and the geopolitics of travel', *Journal of Historical Geography*, 32 (2006), pp. 313–35; Dorothy Thompson, 'Ireland and the Irish in English radicalism before 1850', in James Epstein and Dorothy Thompson, eds., *The Chartist experience: studies in radicalism and culture* (London, 1982), pp. 126, 143–4; and Hazel Waters, 'The Great Famine and anti-Irish racism', *Race and Class*, 37 (1995), p. 100. Roger Swift provides a more nuanced account of *Chartism*; see Roger Swift, 'Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism*, and the Irish in early Victorian Britain', *Victorian Literature and Culture*, 21 (2001), pp. 67–83. Perceptive asides on Carlyle's position are offered by David Fitzpatrick in his masterly survey, 'A "peculiar tramping people": the Irish in Britain, 1801–1870', in W. E. Vaughan, ed., *Ireland under the Union, II: 1801–1870, a new history of Ireland* (Oxford, 1989), v, pp. 624–5. Aspects of Carlyle's relationship with 'Young Ireland' figures have been considered in two valuable essays: Keith Fielding, 'Ireland, John Mitchel and his "sarcastic friend" Thomas Carlyle', in J. Schwend, S. Hageman, and H. Volkel, eds., *Literatur im Kontext/Literature in context: Festschrift für Horst Drescher* (New York, NY, 1992), pp. 131–43; Owen Dudley Edwards, "'True Thomas": Carlyle, Young Ireland, and the legacy of millennialism', in David Sorensen and Rodger L. Tarr, eds., *The Carlyles at home and abroad* (Aldershot, 2004), pp. 60–76. More recently, Julie M. Dugger has written a sophisticated comparative account of the role of race thinking in the writings of Carlyle and Young Ireland: 'Black Ireland's race: Thomas Carlyle and the Young Ireland movement', *Victorian Studies*, 48 (2006), pp. 461–85.

Irish society were not underwritten by assumptions concerning the inherent inferiority of the Irish people. To the contrary, Carlyle believed that these failings were widespread in contemporary European culture, and explained why it was in a state of more or less acute crisis. As in his writings on the ‘condition of England question’, Carlyle focused on failures of elite leadership and on the need to infuse modern cultures with values that would underwrite a restoration of authority that would promote his vision of human progress. The concluding section of this essay considers the way in which members of Young Ireland used ideas which they associated with Carlyle to frame a version of this vision which focused on Ireland and was aligned to their nationalist aspirations.

I

Before 1845, Carlyle’s knowledge of Ireland was derived from books, newspapers, and periodicals. When working on his edition of Cromwell’s letters and speeches in the early 1840s, and when preparing for his second visit to Ireland in 1849, Carlyle read a number of historical works on Ireland and on Anglo-Irish relations. Much of this material was written by non-Irish authors, but Carlyle was also a regular reader of the *Nation*, a weekly newspaper published in Dublin. This publication was a vehicle of ‘Young Ireland’, initially part of the movement to secure the repeal of the Act of Union, led by Daniel O’Connell MP.⁴ The *Nation* was owned and edited by Charles Gavan Duffy; other key figures in the group included William Smith O’Brien MP, Thomas Davis, and John Mitchel.⁵ Carlyle first met Duffy in the spring of 1845 when he and other members of Young Ireland visited Carlyle at home in Chelsea. Carlyle later wrote letters of support to the viceroy of Ireland, Lord Clarendon, when Duffy and Mitchel faced serious criminal charges arising from their political activities.⁶

⁴ Although ‘Young Ireland’ resisted being associated with ‘Young England’ (see Richard Davis, *The Young Ireland movement* (Dublin, 1987), pp. 1, 57), there was a commonality of outlook among at least some members of these groups. Young England was alarmed at the economic plight of the Irish peasantry, bemoaned the absence of paternalistic leadership in the Irish countryside and was sympathetic towards what it took to be their distinctive cultural and religious interests; see John Morrow, ed., *Young England: the new generation* (London, 1999), pp. 11–12, 58–9, 102–5. Lord John Manners, a leading Young England figure who visited Ireland in 1847 and published reflections on his travels, met members of ‘Young Ireland’ in the course of his tour; see Lord John Manners, *Notes of an Irish tour* (London, 1849), p. 84.

⁵ Carlyle had little time for O’Brien and argued with Duffy about his merits; see Thomas Carlyle, *Reminiscences of my Irish journey in 1849* (London, 1882), p. 90. His views were probably influenced by O’Brien’s obstruction of Sir Robert Peel’s moves to repeal the Corn Law in the early months of 1846, part of a strategy whose primary target was coercive measures directed at Irish unrest; see Richard Davis, *Revolutionary imperialist: William Smith O’Brien, 1803–1864* (Dublin, 1998), pp. 198–200. Carlyle never met Davis, who died in September 1845. He was impressed with Mitchel’s strength of character but was wary of his political extremism.

⁶ Charles Gavan Duffy, *Conversations with Carlyle* (London, 1892), pp. 3–5; Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, p. 34; *CL*, xxiii, pp. 35–6, 137–9, 143–6. Duffy’s admiration for Carlyle withstood the test of reading impatient personal judgements on him included sporadically in the *Reminiscences*.

Young Ireland connections played a critical role in brokering Carlyle's first-hand engagements with Irish people. On 4 September 1846, he embarked at the Scottish port of Ardrrossan, landed at Belfast, and then travelled via Drogheda to Dublin. Carlyle spent five days in the city and its environs and was introduced by Duffy (or through Duffy's agency) to a range of people associated with Young Ireland.⁷ The visit in 1849 was much longer and Carlyle's travels far more extensive. He landed in Dublin at the beginning of June and did not leave Ireland until early August. During his stay in the capital, Carlyle fended off an invitation from Lord Clarendon to dine at Dublin Castle and deflected his offer of letters of introduction. The viceroy's gesture was partly a courtesy due to an eminent literary figure who had friends in official circles in London, and was a fellow supporter of the London Library.⁸ In addition, however, Clarendon hoped to keep Carlyle out of the clutches of Duffy's allies. He had no wish to see that 'double-barrelled coxcomb perambulating the provinces collecting abuses'.⁹

Carlyle's tour took in a significant part of the country, including some of the most severely distressed counties in the west of Ireland. As on his earlier visit, he was introduced to many of Duffy's friends and political associates, some of whom were fervent 'repealers', with family connections going back to Wolfe Tone's uprising of 1798. Many were Roman Catholics, but Carlyle also stayed with members of the Anglo-Irish gentry. He conversed with many ordinary people, including carmen, labourers, farmers, beggars, and paupers.

Before embarking on his second journey to Ireland, Carlyle told a correspondent that while he did not expect to learn much that was new, first-hand observations might help to 'clarify' and 'vivify' his perception of Ireland and of how its problems might be addressed. In the event, his experiences had a greater impact than he had anticipated. Duffy noted a hardening of Carlyle's attitude to Irish landlords during their tour and a sharpening of his sense of the desperate condition of large parts of the population. On his return from this second visit, Carlyle wrote that 'the empty theorems' were now clothed with a 'flesh-and-blood Body'; the experience was 'painfully impressive and oppressive'.¹⁰ The basis of Carlyle's position on the condition of Ireland question had, however, been forged long before he set foot in the country.

⁷ Duffy, *Conversations with Carlyle*, pp. 22–3.

⁸ Carlyle played a leading role in establishing the London Library; Clarendon was its president from its foundation in 1841 until 1870. In 1854, when Carlyle was working on *Frederick the Great*, he used his connections with Clarendon, by this time foreign secretary, to gain access to archival material on eighteenth-century diplomatic history; *CL*, xxix, pp. 152–3.

⁹ *CL*, xxiv, p. 101, n. 2. Since Carlyle had met Clarendon in England and referred to their mutual friends when he wrote in support of Mitchel and Duffy, he was in rather a delicate position; he may have been aware that Duffy saw attempts to secure his conviction over the winter of 1848–9 as episodes in a personal confrontation between him and the viceroy; see Charles Gavan Duffy, *My life in two hemispheres* (2 vols., London, 1898), I, p. 323.

¹⁰ *CL*, xxiv, pp. 58, 253–4. Nally's claim that Carlyle seemed indifferent to the physical condition of the Irish poor (Nally, "Eternity's commissioner", p. 320) cannot be reconciled with Duffy's account of the second tour, or Carlyle's written records of it.

In *Sartor resartus* and in *The French Revolution*, Carlyle's references to Ireland set the wretched condition of the ordinary people in the context of a more general breakdown of moral and political order in modern Europe and the increasingly sharp and unstable polarization of the wealthy and the desperately impoverished.¹¹ Carlyle employed the neologism 'sanspotato' to evoke a connection between the popular reaction to injustice in revolutionary France, 'sansculottism', and the moral and material state of contemporary Ireland.¹² The parallel was extended and developed in *Chartism*, where harshly phrased judgements on the impact of deprivation and injustice on the Irish people were matched by scathing denunciations of English rulers of Ireland and their clients, the Anglo-Irish gentry.¹³

Carlyle's treatment of Ireland in *Chartism* focused primarily on the impact of Irish emigration on the condition of England question. He likened the flood of Irish countrymen into the overstocked labour market to the furies of Aeschylean drama, provoking violent unrest among the English working classes, and harsh, more complex, reactions from the middle and upper classes. These tendencies were captured in the striking figure of a coachman who answers the appeal of a road side beggar by lashing at him with tongue and whip.¹⁴ As with the response of the French king to the Petition of Grievances presented by the peasantry in May 1775 – 'for answer two of them are hanged ... and the rest driven back to their dens' – this image of cruelty and impotence as an expression of unacknowledged guilt pointed to the dehumanizing effect of wrong conduct on the perpetrators of injustice.¹⁵

But while England's injustice to Ireland had an impact on contemporary England, Carlyle did not regard Ireland as the primary cause of England's troubles. Rather, chronic poverty and social dislocation in Ireland posed a threat to England because the moral condition of that country had been undermined by two centuries of internal misgovernment, and by a failure to address the intellectual and spiritual requirements of the modern world. As Carlyle noted when discussing the impact of Irish immigration on workers in his native Annandale, this was at most the 'proximate' cause, 'indeed ... not so much itself a "cause" as the symptom and general outcome of many sad causes'.¹⁶ The Irish were agents of retribution, not bearers of a contagion that poisoned an otherwise healthy body politic. Both countries were afflicted, but Ireland's distemper had

¹¹ Thomas Carlyle, *Sartor resartus*, *Works of Thomas Carlyle* (20 vols., London, 1893–4), p. 198. Unless indicated otherwise all references to Carlyle's writings are to this edition.

¹² Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, III, p. 265.

¹³ Thomas Carlyle, *Chartism*, in *Critical and miscellaneous essays*, VI, pp. 125–9. Roberto Romani notes that the term 'sanspotato' is not derogatory of the Irish; rather, as in the formulation applied to revolutionary France, 'sans' signifies an absence of effective elite leadership and control; see Roberto Romani, 'British views on Irish national character, 1800–1846: an intellectual history', *History of European Ideas*, 23 (1997), pp. 27–8.

¹⁴ Carlyle, *Chartism*, p. 127.

¹⁵ Carlyle, *The French Revolution*, I, pp. 30–1.

¹⁶ *CL*, xxiii, p. 162. Cf. Martin, 'Blood transfusions', pp. 83–4, where Ireland is treated as the 'source' of 'proletarian disaffection' in England.

reached an advanced stage: 'Ireland is in chronic atrophy these five centuries; the disease of nobler England, identified now with that of Ireland, becomes acute, has crises, and will be cured or kill.'¹⁷

Carlyle's views on the Irish dimensions of the condition of England question remained essentially unchanged in unpublished material written a decade after *Chartism*. 'Ireland is but the top of the boil; this detestable deadly sore has burst there, but the sore itself is everywhere: alas its roots lie deep in the vital organs of the body politic.' In a shift of metaphor, he described an Irish beggar on the streets of an English or Scottish town as a 'symbolical Messenger of the Destinies, since England would listen to no other, of a speaking or reasoning kind. Him you will have to listen to, for he come out of the depths of fact, and his name is legion.'¹⁸

When Carlyle wrote of the fate of 'nobler England', he referred to the idea that the Irish – in common with the original Celtic inhabitants of England, their Romano-British successors, and the Scots and the Welsh – did not have a distinctive and independent place in modern world history, and were not nations in the political sense of that term.¹⁹ Their role on the cosmic stage, like that of the various ethnic communities that Carlyle referred to simply as 'the English', was subsumed within 'England's mission'. This expression referred to Britain's industrial and imperial roles, both of which gave it responsibility for bringing order to a corner of the unformed universe, and provided a focus for self-affirming labour of successive generations.²⁰ Carlyle used the term 'English' to refer to a British phenomenon because he identified this ethnic group with character traits (nobleness, vigour, and a capacity for leadership) which he, along with a number of prominent Victorian writers, treated as characteristically 'Anglo-Saxon'. This belief was part of a racially grounded ideology that might serve to differentiate people's capacity for participating in progressive processes by reference to their ethnic origins.²¹ But while examples of this discourse appear in Carlyle's writings, they do not, except in the case of blacks in the West Indies and the southern United States, play a significant role in either his analysis or his prescriptions. They were not, as Julie Dugger points out, applied consistently in his writings on Ireland.²² This was partly because of the absence of direct black–white antinomies

¹⁷ Carlyle, *Chartism*, p. 132. Cf. Nally, "'Eternity's commissioner'", pp. 317, 332, n. 50.

¹⁸ MS Vault Carlyle 12:4, fo. 16v.

¹⁹ *CL*, xx, pp. 140–2.

²⁰ This is a key theme in *Chartism and Past and Present*; for a recent discussion, see John Morrow, *Thomas Carlyle* (London, 2006), pp. 105–19.

²¹ Hugh A. MacDougall, *Racial myth in English history* (Montreal, 1982), p. 95; Carlyle, *Chartism*, pp. 127–9, 134–5, 156–60.

²² Thomas Carlyle, 'Occasional discourse on the Negro question', first published in *Fraser's Magazine* in 1849 and included in *Latter-day pamphlets* of 1850; Dugger, 'Black Ireland's race', p. 469. Carlyle's engagement with arguments concerning the substantive impact of supposed racial differences between Celts and Saxons had something of the character which Dugger ascribes to Young Ireland's contributions to *The spirit of the nation*, an influential volume of poetry which Duffy edited in 1845: they 'responded to the claim that Celts were inferior to Saxons with both the argument that the distinction between the races was politically meaningless and with some overt Saxon-bashing too' (p. 477).

in the Irish context, but it was also a consequence of Carlyle's belief that capacity to contribute to 'England's mission' was largely conditioned by the character of authority and the quality of leadership in a community and their implications for its members' response to the 'gospel of labour'.

Carlyle regarded the gospel of labour as part of a universal creed and claimed that all humans were expected to respond to its appeal. The characteristics which the English derived from their Anglo-Saxon heritage explained why their mission had made such an impact in the past and held out so much promise for the future. Once launched, however, this mission ceased to be the exclusive property of 'the English'. It became a point of inspiration for all those who responded to the gospel of labour, providing a new sense of political and moral identity which focused the values which Carlyle identified with the 'English' in the British state. Carlyle's sharp and remorseless critique of the ethos of contemporary Britain did not assign responsibility on ethnic lines, or present ethnicity as a vehicle of salvation. Nor did his claims about the progressive role of English values mean that people of Anglo-Saxon ancestry could claim a privileged political or cultural position.

Carlyle's strongly hierarchical conception of authority attached political power to an idea of progress, and to an image of a morally viable community, rather than to a set of governmental structures, political relationships, or classes. This conception of authority was incompatible with democratic government, so questions of national character played no role in determining relative fitness for democracy; Carlyle did not think that this form of government was viable in any circumstances. It did not follow that the government of Britain needed to be highly centralized. To the contrary, decentralized systems of administration, attuned to the needs of different parts of the state, provided a way of recognizing the distinctive national communities from which the United Kingdom had been formed.²³ Moreover, although Carlyle did not believe that either the Scottish or the Irish could ever become independent actors on the world stage, he did not regard them as inferior to the English in any fundamental sense, and nor did he think that their role in the United Kingdom obliterated their cultural identity. As noted below, he remarked favourably on what he took to be the distinctiveness of the Irish people he met in 1846. He was also intrigued by examples of early Irish material culture that he saw in a collection of 'antiquities' at the Royal Irish Academy in 1849, commenting that 'everything has a certain *authenticity*, as well as national and other significance'.²⁴

While Carlyle was dismissive of the political aspirations of proponents of repeal of the union on the grounds that it would jeopardize 'England's mission', he did not discount the severity of the moral and material plight of the Irish, or regard them as beyond the pale of human improvement. Carlyle linked the salvation of the Irish with that of the English because he thought that a viable response

²³ See Phyllis Harnick, 'Point and counterpoint: Mill and Carlyle on Ireland in 1848', *Carlyle Newsletter*, 7 (1986), p. 30.

²⁴ Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, p. 63.

to the condition of Ireland question would mitigate the impact of injustice towards Ireland on the English: 'they sail together or sink together'.²⁵ The salvation of both countries necessitated a reform of elite attitudes and the abandonment of the view that class interest, the vagaries of the market, 'plausible management', and a combination of coercion and doles fulfilled its obligations. Carlyle claimed that the ordinary people of Ireland were the victims of a history of misgovernment that dated to the incursion into Leinster by the earl of Pembroke and Strigul in 1168: 'Alas, that it should, on both sides, be poor toiling men that pay the smart for unruly Striguls, Henrys, Macdermots, and O'Donoghues! The strong have eaten sour grapes, and the teeth of the weak are set on edge.'²⁶ Carlyle's vindication of Oliver Cromwell's Irish campaign and Irish policy as lord protector relied heavily on assumptions concerning the chaotic condition of the country in the 1640s, the failures of lay and secular leadership that had brought it about, and the resumption of the decline in lay and secular leadership in England and Ireland that followed the restoration of monarchy in 1660.²⁷

Daniel O'Connell and the whig leader, Lord John Russell, exemplified the shortcomings of current political leadership in Ireland and Britain. Carlyle was contemptuous of O'Connell's political style, dismissing him as the 'Prince of Humbug'.²⁸ This reaction was wholly consistent with Carlyle's belief that oratory and statesmanship were inversely related. He was especially critical of what he regarded as the transparent insincerity of O'Connell's promotion of repeal of the union as the panacea for all Ireland's ills, blaming him for the extravagant expectations held by otherwise sound Irish leaders such as Duffy.²⁹ Carlyle was equally hostile to Russell's Irish policy which he characterized as an incoherent mixture of constitutional tinkering, accommodation, coercion, and *laissez-faire*, damning both Russell and O'Connell on the dubious principle of guilt by association. Once seen in progressive circles in England as an admirable champion of the Irish people, O'Connell had become a despised opportunistic ally of the 'Foxite' whigs: 'Mark him who makes alliance with eloquent quacks; banish him forever from the attempt to govern Ireland, – a land whose malady it is to be the Mother of quacks ... where veracity, or even modest silence is rare.'³⁰

Carlyle's visceral reaction to O'Connell is likely to have been confirmed by claims about O'Connell's record as a landlord in County Kerry made by Thomas Campbell Foster, the self-proclaimed 'Times' Commissioner'. In one of a series of reports written during a tour of Ireland in 1845, Campbell gleefully noted the dilapidated condition of O'Connell's estate and his role as a sub-dividing tenant

²⁵ Carlyle, *Chartism*, p. 129. Cf. Martin, 'Blood transfusions'. ²⁶ Carlyle, *Chartism*, p. 129.

²⁷ Thomas Carlyle, *The letters and speeches of Oliver Cromwell, with elucidations*, II, pp. 142, 203–7.

²⁸ *CL*, XXI, p. 47. Owen Edwards credits Carlyle with playing an important role in encouraging Young Ireland to break with O'Connell in 1846 and in undermining its commitment to non-violence; see Edwards, "'True Thomas'", pp. 68–9, 72.

²⁹ *CL*, XXIII, pp. 140, 144.

³⁰ MS Vault Carlyle 12:4, fo. 17.

of property owned by Trinity College, Dublin.³¹ That the panacea of repeal was championed by one who had been exposed as a rack-renting middle man was consistent with Carlyle's view that the 'Great Liberator' was only the most recent purveyor of lies and delusions that had long been the currency of Irish politics. Carlyle's judgements on the dead were nearly always more balanced and generous than those passed on the living, but he did not spare O'Connell. On hearing of his death in June 1847, Carlyle wrote that O'Connell had 'been *lying* ... openly for fifty years. Preaching to the Irish that they were just about to get repeal from the English, and become a glorious people ... [H]e leaves them sinking into universal wreck, and nothing *but* their connexion with England between the whole mass of them and black death!'³²

In *Chartism* Carlyle upbraided the Irish for their apparent incapacity to talk truthfully: 'a people that knows not how to speak the truth, and to act the truth'.³³ 'Veracity' is a key theme in Carlyle's writings. It refers to truthfulness in the conventional sense, and also, more significantly, to an authenticity of character demonstrated by a willingness to confront the 'realities' of the human condition. Authenticity was active, rather than merely reflective, since it promoted effective engagement with the world and was central to Carlyle's idea of 'labour'.³⁴ Responses to the condition of Irish question that focused solely on the indisputable injustices of the English were, for Carlyle, 'unveracious' because the solution to Ireland's difficulties partly depended on the ways in which various sections of the population responded to worthwhile initiatives of policy makers in London. Carlyle made this point on a number of occasions when he toured Ireland. It also lay behind his mixed response to Aubrey de Vere's *English misrule and Irish misdeeds: four letters from Ireland addressed to an English Member of Parliament* (1848). Whilst Carlyle judged de Vere's condemnation of the English to be well directed, he also believed that it was necessary for the Irish squarely to confront their responsibilities.³⁵ In making this point about de Vere's work, Carlyle appealed to a universal notion of moral responsibility that would not entertain the idea that failures in some places excused or offset them elsewhere.

Although Carlyle accused the Irish of lacking veracity, he did not think that they were unique in this respect. Indeed, claims about the prevalence of untruthfulness and demands that this be recognized and corrected were central themes in Carlyle's mission to *all* of his contemporaries. In Ireland, '*Universal IMPOSTURE* (its own, ours, and all the world's) ... is fallen into palpable down-break ... and lies now the most detestably sordid mass of fetid ruin eyes ever saw, or thoughts ever dreamed of.' Carlyle used very similar language in conversation with Duffy, and in correspondence with the American writer, Ralph Waldo

³¹ 'The Commissioner's' reports were republished in Thomas Campbell Foster, *Letters on the condition of the people of Ireland* (London, 1846), with the exposé of O'Connell appearing on pp. 394–7. Some of Campbell's reports were reprinted in the *Nation* and subject to critical commentary there on 6 and 27 September and 4 October, 1845.

³² *CL*, XXI, p. 237.

³³ Carlyle, *Chartism*, p. 126.

³⁴ See Morrow, *Thomas Carlyle*, pp. 105–11.

³⁵ *CL*, XXII, pp. 239–40.

Emerson.³⁶ The ubiquity of untruthfulness became a major theme in the ‘latter-day pamphlets’: ‘never before did the creature called man believe generally in his heart that lies were the rule in the Earth; that in deliberate long-established lying could there be help or salvation for him, could there be at length other than hindrance and destruction for him’.³⁷ The fact that Carlyle thought that the Irish were not alone in their disregard for truth makes it difficult to interpret his criticism of their ‘unveracity’ as features of racially constructed stereotypes.

Nor is it always appropriate to deduce anti-Irish biases from the language Carlyle used in his discussions of the state of Ireland question. The widespread distress that Carlyle witnessed on his second visit to Ireland, and the complete inadequacy of official and non-official responses to it, sometimes provoked him to use harsh, inhumane expressions in recording his responses to the poverty and degradation which overwhelmed the population. The same is true, however, of Carlyle’s reactions to the breakdown of effective authority in other parts of Britain. It is also necessary to bear in mind that his language varied according to time, circumstance, and audience. Carlyle’s differing accounts of his impressions of Ireland in 1846 provide a striking example of its chameleonic tendencies. In a letter to Thomas Spedding from Dublin, Carlyle wrote that in the course of his visit he had seen ‘many a strange Irish aspect of affairs, which will be a picture in my gallery for the future: Daniel O’Connor in his green Repeal Cap, haranguing yesterday in Conciliation Hall. Poor Daniel, Conciliation Hall and he seemed verging to their consummation, and not long for this world without a change!’ Four months later he described the same scheme in more extreme terms. Ireland was ‘a country cast suddenly into the melting pot, – say into the Medea’s-Cauldron; to be boiled into horrid *dissolution* ... Daniel O’Connell stood bodily before me, in his green Mullaghast Cap; haranguing his retinue of Dupeables: certainly the most *sordid* Humbug I have ever seen in this world’.³⁸ The second of these passages appeared in a letter to Ralph Waldo Emerson and, as was common in their correspondence, reflected Carlyle’s wish to shock a thinker who he thought was insufficiently clear-eyed about the uncomfortable realities of human existence.³⁹

Carlyle was often savagely critical of Irish conditions and of the implications of the forms of life he saw there in relation to his sense of humanity’s mission. At the same time, however, he retained the sympathy for the plight of the Irish lower classes that had been expressed in *Sartor resartus* and in *The French Revolution*. Duffy noted that Carlyle’s critical attitude towards Irish landowners had been reinforced by the evidence of systematic suppression of the peasantry that he had witnessed in the Irish countryside.⁴⁰ Moreover, Carlyle’s hostile comments on

³⁶ *CL*, xxiv, p. 261; Charles Gavan Duffy, ‘Conversations and correspondence with Thomas Carlyle. Part second’, *Contemporary Review*, 61 (1892), p. 295.

³⁷ Carlyle, *Latter-day pamphlets*, p. 12.

³⁸ *CL*, xxi, pp. 46–7, 112–13.

³⁹ Carlyle discussed his views on Emerson with Duffy; Duffy, ‘Conversations and correspondence. Part second’, p. 290.

⁴⁰ Duffy, *Conversations with Carlyle*, p. 120.

O'Connell and Irish 'chancers' who he encountered in London – latter-day 'rakes of Mallow' – did not signal a general contempt for Irish people. On the contrary, he saw a community of aspiration and interest between well-disposed people on both sides of the Irish Sea, and in a letter to Duffy he referred to the Irish as 'my own brethren'.⁴¹ It is significant that comparisons that Carlyle drew between the Irish and people from other parts of the United Kingdom did not always favour the latter. Shortly before leaving for his first Irish visit, Carlyle complained of the reckless bestiality of English navvies working on railway projects in Scotland, contrasting their conduct with that of more sober and provident Irish co-workers.⁴² When he passed through Ayr on his way to Ireland, Carlyle was appalled at the dirt, drunkenness, and squalor on display at the town fair, scenes that were in marked contrast to the calm and orderly state of the countryside and small towns through which he travelled as he made his way from Belfast to Dublin. While he found Ireland 'strange', the term was not intended to signify criticism. Rather, he was struck by the interest of the unfamiliar and reported that the people were 'gentle and simple'.⁴³ Even during his second visit, when Carlyle's outlook was jaundiced by anger and despair, he wrote sympathetically about a wide range of people, reserving his sharpest criticisms for political and social elites.⁴⁴

II

Carlyle's understanding of the practical issues raised by the condition of Ireland question, namely, landlord–tenant relationships, the structure of landholding and land ownership, the condition of the rural economy, and the relationship between the land system, poverty, and over-population, largely corresponded with the terms of British public debate on Irish affairs in the 1840s.⁴⁵ In September 1846, for example, Carlyle welcomed the establishment of a public works scheme under the Labour Rate Act. It was anticipated that this scheme would provide work for the rural poor and enhance the country's infrastructure. Of equal importance for Carlyle, however, was the signal that it gave to Irish landlords regarding their responsibility for ensuring that the peasantry did not starve.⁴⁶

⁴¹ Duffy, 'Conversations and correspondence ... part fourth', *Contemporary Review*, 61 (1892), p. 455; MS Vault Carlyle 12:4, fo. 1: 'Spendthrift Rakes of Mallow are *not* the Captains Irishmen can prosper under'; *CL*, xx, pp. 36, 106.

⁴² *CL*, xxi, p. 33. Carlyle did not regard drunkenness as a vice peculiar to members of the Irish working classes. In 'The finest peasantry in the world' it is mentioned in connection with both the Irish and the working classes of Glasgow; Martin ignores the non-Irish reference point; see 'Blood transfusions' p. 91, and see *Chartism*, p. 132. Drunkenness plays no role in Carlyle's account of extreme poverty in Ireland.

⁴³ *CL*, xxi, pp. 41, 43.

⁴⁴ Carlyle's views on this question were in accord with those of whig politicians in England who, in the 1830s and early 1840s, promoted a policy of justice for Ireland; see Romani, 'British views', p. 196. In other respects Carlyle was a sharp critic of the whig's Irish policy.

⁴⁵ See Peter Gray, *Famine, land and politics: British government and Irish society, 1843–1850* (Dublin, 1999), pp. 3–4.

⁴⁶ *CL*, xxi, pp. 66, 104.

A different form of this concern was reflected in his reaction to a proposal made by the Tory leader, Lord George Bentinck, in February 1847. Bentinck tried to persuade parliament to support a loan of £16 million to Irish railway companies, part of which would make provision for land purchases on terms favourable to Irish landowners. In common with many of those who opposed Bentinck's proposal, Carlyle thought that it typified an approach in parliamentary and official circles in London that favoured 'wretched spendthrift *Landlords*' and ignored the plight of the Irish poor.⁴⁷ His views on this proposal may also have been influenced by earlier reflections on the moral implications of the railway-building boom in Scotland.⁴⁸ Railway projects provided only short-term employment and did so under conditions that debauched and demoralized the labourers involved. They were not an effective response to the challenges posed by the gospel of labour.

Carlyle believed that neither the threat of famine, nor the issues of underdevelopment that produced famine, would be removed until Ireland had a 'capitalized' agricultural economy capable of sustaining crops such as wheat and barley. While he thought that the failure of the potato crop was a providential warning, it was aimed at landlords, rather than the peasantry: 'if the Potatoo [sic] will but *stay* away! Your Irish Governing Class are now actually brought to the bar; arraigned before Heaven and Earth of *misgoverning* this Ireland.'⁴⁹ In adopting this stance, however, Carlyle was brought face-to-face with a dilemma shared by all those whose humanitarian sympathies were not refracted through the icy prism of providential political economy. As he noted, a belief in the salutary implications of the potato blight was difficult to sustain when confronted by a clear picture of the terrible toll inflicted on the poor: 'I have almost lost the heart to continue my old prayer on that point, That the potatoo [sic] might *continue* dead.'⁵⁰ As in other aspects of Carlyle's treatment of the condition of Ireland question, the issues were framed by reference to a larger context. In this case, the expectation that the failure of the potato would prompt reform of the agricultural sector was part of a critique of inept landlordism throughout Britain and Ireland. Hence in correspondence with his brother, Alexander, he anticipated that the potato blight would also result in the demise of the most irresponsible English and Scottish landlords and their replacement with a new class of 'improvers'.⁵¹

By the early months of 1847, Carlyle's enthusiasm for public work schemes had evaporated and he joined a growing chorus of critics of the Labour Rate Act. Depressed and provoked by reports in the *Nation* of the dire condition of the population, he railed against the impotent response to its immediate plight and

⁴⁷ *CL*, p. 159; Gray, *Famine, land and politics*, pp. 271–2.

⁴⁸ *CL*, XXI, p. 159.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 167. Carlyle's critique was thus more closely and radically targeted than that of providentialists discussed by Boyd Hilton, *The age of atonement* (Oxford, 1988), pp. 108–14.

⁵⁰ *CL*, XXIV, p. 112.

⁵¹ *CL*, XXI, p. 104. On this issue, at least, Carlyle's views were at one with those of the philosophical radicals, of whom he was usually so critical; see Gray, *Famine, land and politics*, pp. 197–204.

stressed the need to embark on fundamental remedial measures.⁵² ‘Encumbered estates’ legislation was necessary so that land would pass into the hands of those capable of making farming a source of regular, worthwhile employment for at least some of the rural population.⁵³ Carlyle believed that there was also scope for developing Irish industry once the dead hand of landlordism was cast aside: ‘To relieve Ireland from this; to at least render Ireland *habitable* for *Capitalists*, if not for *Heroes*; to invite *Capital*, and *Industrial Governors* and *Guardians* (from *Lancashire*, from *Scotland*, from the *Moon*, or from the *Ring of Saturn*): what other salvation can one see for Ireland?’⁵⁴ People who could not find employment in Ireland on the land might find work and moral purpose in the context of the imperial aspects of ‘England’s mission’. Like other commentators on Irish affairs, including both Duffy and Smith O’Brien, Carlyle viewed the colonies (rather than the British mainland) as a source of promising opportunities for the Irish and he urged the government to take responsibility for promoting and facilitating emigration.⁵⁵

It is a mistake to regard Carlyle’s support for capitalist investment in Irish agriculture as marking a retreat from the critique of *laissez-faire* that featured in his condition of England writings.⁵⁶ This claim flies in the face of Carlyle’s ongoing rejection of what he termed ‘The Gospels of Political Economy, of *Laissez-faire*, No-Government.’⁵⁷ In addition, however, it seems to rest on a misunderstanding of Carlyle’s views of the role of social and political leadership and of why *laissez-faire* and kindred ‘gospels’ were incompatible with it. While Carlyle’s critique of *laissez-faire* challenged some contemporary perceptions of the implications of market economics, it never entailed the rejection of capitalism or private property rights per se. Carlyle believed the search for responsible human authority was frustrated by the ideology of *laissez-faire* because this doctrine promoted reliance on mechanical outcomes of the market, and of agencies such as workhouses which acted on similar principles. In the economic sphere, the

⁵² See *CL*, xxii, pp. 239–40. Critics of the Act included Aubrey de Vere, *English misrule and Irish misdeeds: four letters from Ireland, addressed to an English member of parliament* (London, 1848), pp. 8–12, and the political economist George Paulette Scrope, *How to make Ireland self-supporting; or, Irish clearances, and improvements of waste lands* (London, 1848), who likened it to the ‘national workshops’ set up after the revolution in France in 1848.

⁵³ Thomas Carlyle, ‘Legislation for Ireland’, in R. H. Shepard, ed., *Memoirs of the life and writings of Thomas Carlyle* (2 vols., London, 1881), II, pp. 388–9.

⁵⁴ *CL*, xxi, p. 169.

⁵⁵ See Jennifer Ridden, ‘Britishness as an imperial and diasporic identity: Irish elite perspectives, c. 1820–1870s’, in Peter Gray, ed., *Victoria’s Ireland? Irishness and Britishness, 1837–1901* (Dublin, 2004), pp. 88–105. The figures discussed by Ridden include Duffy, de Vere, and Sir Richard Bourke, all of whom were known to Carlyle. Given Carlyle’s hostility to Smith O’Brien, it is ironic that he was also an imperialist, in the sense that he promoted immigration to the colonies; see Davis, *Smith O’Brien*, pp. 369–70; and Davis, *Young Ireland*, pp. 201–14. Mitchel’s hostility to British imperialism and his rejection of the view that it provided benefits for Ireland was spelled out in ‘England’s colonial empire’, *Nation*, 26 Dec. 1845, p. 182.

⁵⁶ Nally, “‘Eternity’s commissioner’”, pp. 328–9.

⁵⁷ *CL*, xxiv, pp. 192–3. This point was repeated in material which Carlyle was drafting at about this time (MS Vault Carlyle 12:4, fo. 1). In 1855 he remarked that *laissez-faire* was a ‘litany to indolence’; *CL*, xxx, p. 260.

counter to *laissez-faire* was a model of responsible capitalism, rather than an appeal to socialistic ideas of workers' co-operatives, communes, or public ownership of productive resources. Carlyle employed a military analogy in developing an appropriate model. He appealed to capitalists to become 'captains of industry', that is, leaders committed to using their resources in ways which recognized the moral imperatives of the gospel of labour, and the need for members of the working classes to have opportunities to respond to them. Even enlightened, moralized capitalism of this kind was not considered by Carlyle as an alternative to active, intelligent government. Carlyle envisaged that the initiatives of 'captains of industry' would be buttressed by an active and extensive state, one that set and maintained standards of order and responsibility to which capitalists would be obliged to conform.⁵⁸

Shortly before his second visit to Ireland, Carlyle was heartened to see that at least one prominent English statesman was prepared to respond to the challenge that he had issued in *Chartism*: 'Plausible management, adopted to this hollow outcry or to that, will no longer do; it must be management grounded on sincerity and fact, to which the truth of things will respond – by an actual beginning of improvement to these wretched brother-men.'⁵⁹ This hope was prompted by speeches by Sir Robert Peel on 18 February and 30 March 1849.⁶⁰ Peel emphasized the responsibilities of Irish landlords and urged the House of Commons to promote policies that focused on measures of real improvement – drainage, roading, and other infrastructural development – and on facilitating the transfer of land from insolvent proprietors to those with resources to exploit it effectively. Parliament should also encourage emigration from Ireland and resist demands for schemes that provided gratuitous relief for the unemployed in that country.⁶¹ This programme, which mirrored Carlyle's views on Irish development, reflected an approach that was quite at odds with the conventions prevailing in contemporary parliamentary politics.⁶² Carlyle would have been even more impressed with this speech had he known that Peel had privately proposed to the viceroy, Lord Clarendon, that these options should be investigated by a special commission empowered to assume ownership of 'encumbered estates' and to manage them as improving examples for landholders.⁶³

In an article published in the *Spectator* a fortnight after Peel's second speech, Carlyle claimed that the 'official manner' of dealing with Ireland was the 'truly

⁵⁸ Carlyle, *Latter-day pamphlets*, pp. 134, 140–1.

⁵⁹ Carlyle, *Chartism*, p. 128.

⁶⁰ Carlyle described the second of these speeches as 'perhaps the most important event even of the last revolutionary year'; *CL*, xxiv, pp. 7–8.

⁶¹ Charles Stuart Parker, *Sir Robert Peel from his private papers* (3 vols., London, 1899), iii, pp. 483, 509.

⁶² See Peter Ghosh, 'Gladstone and Peel', in Peter Ghosh and Lawrence Goldman, eds., *Politics and culture in Victorian Britain: essays in memory of Colin Matthew* (Oxford, 2006), pp. 52–5. On Carlyle's admiration for Peel see John Morrow, 'The paradox of Peel as Carlylean hero', *Historical Journal*, 40 (1997), pp. 97–110. Ghosh relates Peel's penchant for strong leadership to his fears of insurrectionary dangers in modern society. While Carlyle also expressed this fear, he more often presented these dangers as a metaphor of moral collapse.

⁶³ Parker, *Sir Robert Peel*, iii, pp. 513–16. See also Gray, *Famine, land and politics*, pp. 212–15.

frightful element in the condition of Ireland'. He applauded Peel for signalling an end to a reliance on 'palliatives', 'makeshifts', and 'routine tinkerings', and for exhibiting qualities of foresight, honesty, and courage needed to respond effectively to the momentous challenge posed by the present crisis in Irish affairs.

New æras, changed circumstances – universal Bankruptcy of Imposture, beneficent Doom of the Potato, – do actually come; the world's history since its creation, is that of their coming. Recognise them; look with man's eyes into them; they too can be dealt with, they too are *blessings* of the Supreme Power ... [T]hey will grind you to pieces if you do not get to recognise them, and so conquer them too!⁶⁴

Carlyle's reaction to Peel's speeches provides the key to understanding his responses to those he met in Ireland on his second visit and to what he saw during the course of that tour.

III

Carlyle's cool deflection of Clarendon's invitations was consistent with his general dislike for what he was later to dismiss as 'protocoling establishments'.⁶⁵ The failings of the British administration in Ireland were symbolized in the very seat of its power. When he had visited Dublin in 1847, the Young England stalwart Lord John Manners jibbed at the sight of a capital without a palace, and recoiled from the architecture and ambiance of the city because he thought it symbolized the subjugation of the interests of the Irish people to those of a Protestant oligarchy established by 'Dutch' and 'English' arms.⁶⁶ Carlyle's reaction was equally critical but had a different focus. For Carlyle, Dublin symbolized the failure of a succession of English administrations in Ireland to come to grips with the reality that confronted them.

Here are no longer lords of any kind; not even sham-lords with their land-revenues come hither now. The place has no manufactures to speak of; except of ale and whisky, and a little poplin-work, none that I could hear of. All the 'litigation' of Ireland, whatever the wretched Irish people will still pay for the voiding of their quarrels, comes hither; that and the sham of Government about the Castle and Phoenix Park, – which could as well go anywhere if it were so appointed. Where will the future capital of Ireland be! Alas, *when* will there any real aristocracy arise (here or elsewhere) to need a Capital for residing in!⁶⁷

During the course of his tour, Carlyle recorded examples of the pitiful fruits of the Labour Rate Act which confirmed his views on the futility of recent attempts to revive economic activity in country districts.⁶⁸ These failures were a consequence of the symbiotic decrepitude of the government at Westminster, its outpost in Dublin Castle and its clients among the Anglo-Irish gentry. The

⁶⁴ [Thomas Carlyle], 'Ireland and Sir Robert Peel', *Spectator*, 14 Apr. 1849, p. 343.

⁶⁵ Carlyle, *Letter-day pamphlets*, p. 77.

⁶⁶ Manners, *Notes*, pp. 3–4.

⁶⁷ Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, p. 55; his view of the city of Cork was far more positive: 'a beautiful bright City, wearing more an air of *business* than any I have yet seen in Ireland'; *CL*, xxiv, p. 130.

⁶⁸ Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, pp. 177–8, 222.

uncultivated state of most of the Irish countryside bore painful, if mute, testimony to the shortcomings of the latter. One of the consequences of Carlyle's 'gospel of labour' was that he regarded the landscape as a joint venture between God and man. In Ireland, the human contribution to this endeavour was fitful at best. Stretches of the countryside reminded Carlyle of the desolation of Craigenputtock, an isolated moorland farm in Dumfriesshire, where he and his wife had spent a series of lonely winters in the late 1820s and early 1830s. The impact of this comparison was heightened by counter-examples of beauty and fertility which demonstrated wasted potential. He noted, for example, that while much care was lavished on the Curragh of Kildare, a fine stretch of country that might provide employment for 10,000 people, it was dedicated to horse racing. Carlyle claimed that effective cultivation was the exception rather than the rule. 'Ireland is one of the barest, raggedest countries now known; far too ragged a country, with patches of beautiful park and fine cultivation, like shreds of bright scarlet on a beggar's clouded coat – a country that stands decidedly in need of shelter, shade, and ornamental fringing.'⁶⁹

Sir William Beecher's estate at Ballygiblin, County Cork, was a rare exception to the general pattern of neglect but Carlyle's visit to it prompted other, more fundamental reservations about the Protestant ascendancy. Lady Beecher had been a famous professional actress, and, while not denying her past, seemed to be unconsciously compensating for it by a chilly demeanour, excessive propriety, and great piety. When Carlyle accompanied the family to church, the first-hand experience of Anglo-Irish Anglicanism prompted reflections on its redundancy:

I felt how decent English Protestants, or the sons of such, might with zealous affection like to assemble here once a week, and remind themselves of English purities and decencies and gospel ordinances, in the midst of a black howling Babel of superstitious savagery – like Hebrews sitting by the streams of Babel:- but I feel more clearly than ever how *impossible* it was that an extraneous son of Adam, first seized by the terrible conviction that he had a soul to be saved or damned, that he must read the riddle of this universe or go to perdition everlasting, could for a moment think of taking this respectable 'performance' as the solution of the mystery for him! Weep ye by the stream of Babel, decent clean English-Irish; weep for there is cause, till you can do something *better* than weep; but expect no Babylonian or any other mortal to concern himself with that affair of yours! And on the whole I would recommend you rather gave up 'weeping', – take to working out your meaning rather than weeping it. No sadder truth presses itself upon one than the necessity there will soon be, and the call there everywhere already is, to *quit* these old rubrics and give up these empty performances altogether.⁷⁰

Unlike some of his contemporaries, Carlyle did not interpret the condition of Ireland question in sectarian terms. His Calvinist upbringing rendered him

⁶⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 75; Thomas Carlyle, 'Trees of liberty', *Nation*, 1 Dec. 1849, p. 217.

⁷⁰ Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, pp. 160–1. This reaction contrasts sharply with that of Lord John Manners who regarded the quality of ritual in Church of Ireland as a litmus test of propriety; Manners, *Notes*, pp. 13, 72–3, 123–4.

unsympathetic to Anglicanism and hostile to Roman Catholicism, but, as his reaction to the Beechers' religious practice made clear, he was concerned with the political, social, and moral implications of religious faith, rather than with doctrinal questions.

The outward expressions of the condition of Ireland problem were manifest most obviously in the miserably wretched condition of ordinary country people. Beggars were a common sight on the streets of English and Scottish cities and were mentioned, in passing, in Carlyle's writings and correspondence. Nothing in Britain, however, prepared him for what he saw in Ireland. As he travelled through Kildare, Carlyle was struck by the large number of beggars who assailed townspeople making their way to Sunday service: 'every-where round them hovered a harpy-swarm of clamorous mendicants, men, women, children: – a village *winged*, as if a flight of harpies had alighted on it! In Dublin I had seen winged groups, but not *much* worse than some Irish groups in London that year: here for the first time was "Irish beggary" itself!⁷¹ Variations on this scene occurred throughout Carlyle's tour in towns, villages, at coach stops, and by the side of desolate country roads, leading him to remark that begging seemed to be the 'only industry *really* followed by the Irish people'.⁷²

The dehumanizing impact of unemployment and prolonged, chronic deprivation appeared most forcefully in the Irish workhouses, particularly those of the western counties. During the winter of 1846–7 visitors to Ireland were appalled by the squalor of the workhouses in the south. Poor relief seemed better organized by 1849 but Carlyle did not find this consoling.⁷³ Long a critic of what he regarded as the mechanistic world view that underpinned official attitudes to poor relief, Carlyle nevertheless acknowledged that unless the British government was prepared to let large sections of the Irish working classes perish through want, a version of the English system would need to be maintained in Ireland for the time being. He recoiled violently, however, from the sight of Irish pauperism.

Towards the end of his tour Carlyle visited Westport, County Mayo, which was reputed to have 30,000 paupers out of a total population of 60,000. The fact that the labour in which some of the workhouse inmates were engaged turned out to be purely illusory spurred Carlyle to pose a version of a rhetorical figure that he had applied to English paupers in *Sartor resartus* and *Chartism*: 'Can it be a *charity* to keep men alive on these terms? In face of all the twaddle of the earth, shoot a man rather than train him (with heavy expense to his neighbours) to be a deceptive human *swine*.'⁷⁴ As in the earlier deployments of this trope, Carlyle was not promoting the extermination of paupers.⁷⁵ Rather, he was satirizing

⁷¹ Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, p. 70.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 223.

⁷³ 'Famine in the south of Ireland', *Fraser's Magazine*, 35 (1847), pp. 491–504.

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, pp. 201, 202; Carlyle, *Sartor resartus*, pp. 15–59; Carlyle, *Chartism*, p. 120.

⁷⁵ Cf. Martin, 'Blood transfusions', p. 86; and Cora Kaplan, 'White, black and green: racialising Irishness in Victorian England', in Gray, ed., *Victoria's Ireland?* pp. 61–2; this issue aside, Kaplan offers a balanced assessment of aspects of Carlyle's responses to the condition of Ireland question,

the dehumanizing implications of prolonged and gross failures of political and social leadership in Britain and Ireland.

In *Past and present* (1843), Carlyle depicted unemployed agricultural labourers in the workhouse at St Ives in Huntingdonshire as being reduced to a condition of bemusement by their purposeless existence. The paupers sat ‘pent up, as in a horrid kind of enchantment; glad to be imprisoned and enchanted, that they may not perish starved ... There was something that reminded me of Dante’s Hell in the look of all this.’⁷⁶ This image was far less harsh than that evoked by Irish pauperism but it reflected the same concern with the dehumanizing effect of worklessness. Significantly, Carlyle attributed beggary, desperate poverty, and resultant acts of callous brutality to degrading features of the moral and material environment for which elites were responsible, rather than to fundamental flaws in the Irish character. In his comments on an instance of infanticide as part of a fraud against an insurance company, the fact that the parents were Irish was purely incidental. The point of the discussion was to highlight the dehumanizing effect of chronic deprivation: as Carlyle noted, the parents were ‘driven to it’.⁷⁷ Other sections of the community, including the peasantry of Carlyle’s native Annandale, exhibited similar tendencies. In this case, a once ‘brave, industrious, religious, excellent and happy’ people were sinking into a condition of ‘beggary, vice, and every species of human degradation’.⁷⁸

Although Carlyle thought that the resolution of the condition of Irish question necessitated the modernization of the rural economy, he saw this as a precondition rather than *the* solution. As in England, the opportunities made possible by economic development needed to be realized through appropriate moral and political effort. The key issue was the ‘organization of labour’, a term that seemed to echo contemporary socialism but was used by Carlyle to refer to the obligations imposed on those who controlled productive resources by the gospel of labour, rather than to attempts to mobilize the working classes for political or co-operative purposes. Considered more widely, the organization of labour necessitated the adoption of an ethos that restored appropriate leadership to social and political relationships.

One of Carlyle’s essays in the *Spectator* prior to his second visit to Ireland contrasted the pains taken to ‘regiment’ members of the Irish working classes for military purposes with the lack of attention paid to the infinitely more important challenge of organizing them as an effective workforce. As in other references to the ‘organization of labour’, Carlyle noted that those who declined opportunities to work should be forced to do so. The provision applied to English as well as to Irish paupers. The effective regimentation of labour had to be introduced into ‘all Scotch [sic] and all English and all European affairs; if this quagmire of

noting that *Chartism* pointed to a community of interest between the working classes of England and Ireland (pp. 62–3).

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, pp. 3–4.

⁷⁶ Carlyle, *Past and present*, p. 2.
⁷⁸ *CL*, xxiii, p. 162. Cf. Dugger, ‘Black Ireland’s race’, p. 467.

an existence is ever to become firm land for us again!⁷⁹ Compulsion did not, however, loom large in Carlyle's writings, largely because he did not attribute pauperism to a working-class propensity to shun gainful employment. The organization of labour was to be a central feature of a radically reformed political and social culture that provided guidance and education for the general population, as well as ensuring continuity of employment on tasks and terms that satisfied Carlyle's requirements for human fulfilment.

During his second Irish tour, Carlyle's glowering observations on the condition of Ireland were sporadically leavened by more hopeful glimpses of the future. He thus recorded examples of properly managed estates and spoke warmly of the character of Lord George Hill, a landlord who was devoted to the well-being of his dependants.⁸⁰ Elsewhere, Carlyle noted with evident approval the contented and dignified demeanour of smallholders at King Williamstown, County Cork: 'they looked healthy, hearty, swift and brisk, and even joyful, as we saw them in their labours'.⁸¹ After visiting a farm school in Glasnevin, Carlyle praised the student teachers, describing their future role as that of 'anti-chaos missionaries',⁸² and in a letter sent to Clarendon at the conclusion of his visit, he remarked on the signs of earnestness and dedication that he discerned in many of those whom he had met. Subsequent outbursts of impatience and despair need to be considered alongside more hopeful and sympathetic remarks. A year after returning from Ireland, he told Duffy that 'everything Irish has got a new impressiveness since I saw the poor old Land with my eyes. Depend upon it, I have by no means forgotten poor old Ireland, nor the people that dwell there.' He encouraged Duffy to work to inaugurate a 'new era' in his country, something which Carlyle thought also needed to be achieved on the other side of the Irish Sea.⁸³

IV

When Duffy and his colleagues visited Carlyle in Chelsea in 1845, they were partly prompted by a desire to challenge statements in *Chartism* that appeared to denigrate the Irish people. Duffy believed that such statements reflected Carlyle's ignorance of Irish matters and he sought to correct this deficiency by supplying him with accurate information. Despite Young Ireland's best efforts, Carlyle remained implacably opposed to repeal. As noted earlier, Carlyle also rejected interpretations of the Irish crises which laid all blame at the door of successive British governments. He was particularly irritated by John Mitchel's increasingly strident anti-English pronouncements, and by their hostility to

⁷⁹ Thomas Carlyle, 'Irish regiments (of the new era)', *Spectator*, 13 May 1848; *CL*, xxiii, pp. 86–8, 112, 162–3, *CL*, xxiv, pp. 39–40. Carlyle returned to this theme in *Latter-day pamphlets*, pp. 33–40.

⁸⁰ *CL*, xxiv, pp. 176–7; Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, p. 249. Although Carlyle admired Hill, he did not think that his attempt to keep the peasantry on the land provided an answer to the problems facing Irish society.

⁸¹ Carlyle, *Reminiscences*, p. 149.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 57.

⁸³ *CL*, xxiv, p. 173; *CL*, xxv, pp. 214–15. Cf. Nally, "'Eternity's commissioner'", p. 326: 'Ireland is unregenerate because the Irish are incorrigible.'

imperial expansion.⁸⁴ These aspects of Carlyle's position were closely related to his belief in 'England's Mission'. Since Carlyle identified 'the English' with a uniquely progressive tendency in European history, he could not accept Mitchel's demonization of English culture or his hostile characterization of its 'mission'.

Despite these important differences of opinion, however, Carlyle and his Young Ireland associates shared a significant commonality of general outlook which encouraged Duffy and his friends to search Carlyle out as a potential ally. Carlyle's support for Mazzini, and his detached and critical view of the religious and social establishment in England, had impressed members of Young Ireland.⁸⁵ Their political commitments were invigorated by Carlyle's portrayal of the revolution in France as an inevitable outcome of the failure to confront a long train of injustice and to address its causes. Duffy was inspired by Carlyle's demonstration that 'right' would sooner or later be endowed with 'might', while Mitchel's reflections on Carlyle's account of the French Revolution fuelled his belief that Irish liberation required a 'blood sacrifice'.⁸⁶ After Carlyle's second visit, Duffy printed a passage from *Sartor resartus* in the *Nation* that was intended to encourage his readers to see Ireland's travails in a larger, more optimistic framework: 'What changes are wrought, not by time but in time ... Cast Forth thy act, they word, into the ever-living, ever-working universe; it is a seed that cannot die.'⁸⁷

Carlyle's relationship with Young Ireland was underwritten by shared romantic perceptions of the basis of human existence, and of the challenges that confronted nineteenth-century societies. Thomas Davis's writings, collected and republished posthumously by Duffy, presented a trenchant critique of utilitarian political and moral philosophy and of theories of free market, '*laissez-faire*' capitalism identified with the 'Manchester school' of liberalism and with the science of political economy more generally. These ideas gave a mechanical and inhuman cast to modern political and ethical discourse and were contrasted with ideals of human engagement that Davis associated both with the ancient history of Ireland, and with modern romanticism. In a manner reminiscent of Carlyle's early essays, he urged his readers to give priority to confronting the pervasive mechanical ethos in pursuing personal, social and national regeneration.⁸⁸

⁸⁴ *CL*, XXI, p. 169. Christopher Morash sees Mitchel's views on these issues as part of a fundamental rejection of Enlightenment; see *Writing the Irish Famine* (Oxford, 1995), pp. 59–75.

⁸⁵ Fielding, 'Ireland, John Mitchel', pp. 132–3.

⁸⁶ Jules Seigel, 'Carlyle's Ireland and Ireland's Carlyle', in Steven R. McKenna, ed., *Selected essays on Scottish language and literature* (Lewiston, NY, 1992), pp. 198–9. Mitchel was particularly impressed with the *French Revolution*; see William Dillon, *Life of John Mitchel* (2 vols., London, 1888), I, 37. Edwards argues that Carlyle's treatment of the revolution played an important role in radicalizing members of Young Ireland; Mitchel, in particular, is seen as having been inspired by Carlyle's treatments of heroic violence in both the French and English Revolutions to adopt an attitude towards insurrection that was formulated into the myth of the 'blood sacrifice' by Padraig Pearse; Edwards, "'True Thomas'", p. 67.

⁸⁷ *Nation*, 8 Sept. 1849, p. 18, from *Sartor resartus*, p. 26.

⁸⁸ Davis, *Young Ireland*, pp. 189–91; Charles Gavan Duffy, *Thomas Davis: the memoirs of an Irish patriot* (London, 1890), p. 84. Carlyle 'Characteristics' (1831), *Critical and miscellaneous essays*, IV, pp. 1–38. Davis

Young Ireland had broken away from O'Connell's repeal movement in 1847 but even when they were still allies, O'Connell and Young Ireland retained quite distinct conceptions of the basis and character of a free Ireland. While Young Ireland's romantic inclinations promoted a conception of the nation as an organic community, O'Connell's vision reflected the influence of enlightenment thinking. That is, the nation was as an aggregate of free individuals. Like Carlyle, Young Ireland linked social and political regeneration to a general reorientation of the moral perspective of the community, and they appealed to Carlyle's name when framing statements on the challenges facing their compatriots.⁸⁹ Leaving repeal aside, the most significant of these challenges concerned rural poverty, political and social leadership and 'practical' reform, and the agency of the Irish people.

Duffy's reaction to extreme poverty in the Irish provinces in the summer of 1849 was expressed in terms very similar to those used by Carlyle. Thus in a passage from a diary that was printed in an article in *Nation*, Duffy emphasized the deracinating and dehumanizing impact of chronic poverty and unemployment by evoking images of material and moral degradation that were as harrowing as those used by Carlyle.

The famine and the landlords have actually created a *new race* in Ireland. I have seen in the streets of Galway crowds of creatures more debased than the Yahoos of Swift – creatures having only a distant and hideous resemblance to human beings. Grey-headed old men, whose idiot faces had hardened into a settled leer of mendicancy, simeous and semi-human; and women filthier and more frightful than the harpies, who at the jingle of a coin on the pavement swarmed in myriads from unseen places, struggling, screaming, *shrieking* for their prey, like some monstrous and unclean animals.⁹⁰

Like Carlyle, Duffy believed that enforced idleness exacerbated the animalistic characteristics of workhouse life. Shortly after the end of their tour, Duffy wrote of paupers 'sitting in dumb, sour, sweltering idleness'.⁹¹ But while he attributed the pauperization of the Irish working classes to prolonged failures of English statesmanship in Ireland, Duffy nevertheless looked to government to take the lead in responding to the crisis. He opposed O'Connell's demands for the immediate abolition of the Irish system of poor relief because he thought it was the only short-term solution to the humanitarian vacuum created by ineffectual

and other Young Irelanders admired German writers (Fichte, Lessing, the Schlegels) whom Carlyle had praised in his early essays; see Oliver MacDonagh, 'Ideas and institutions', 1830–1845', in Vaughan, *A new history*, p. 198.

⁸⁹ See Oliver MacDonagh, 'O'Connell's ideology', in Laurence Brockliss and David Eastwood, eds., *A union of multiple identities: the British Isles, c. 1750–c. 1850* (Manchester, 1997), pp. 147–61; Duffy, *Thomas Davis*, pp. 76, 83, 99. Davis was impressed with Carlyle's critique of *laissez-faire* (see Davis, *Young Ireland*, p. 20) while Mitchel had a deep antipathy towards materialism and ideas of progress that he associated with it; see Bryan McGovern, 'John Mitchel: ecumenical nationalist in the old south', *New Hibernia Review*, 5 (2001), pp. 102–3. Carlyle and Mitchel harboured racially based anti-emancipationist views that were quite at odds with O'Connell's commitment to universal liberation. For an account of Young Ireland views on race see Dugger, 'Black Ireland's race'.

⁹⁰ *Nation*, 1 Sept. 1849, p. 8.

⁹¹ *Nation*, 8 Sept. 1849, pp. 24–5.

leadership by the gentry.⁹² This view echoed Carlyle's, as did Young Ireland's demand that in addition to organizing immediate relief, government should dedicate its intelligence and resources to foster opportunities for labour in agriculture, industry and fisheries.⁹³

As in Carlyle's prescription for the rest of Britain, the future well-being of Ireland depended on the state being recast into an agency of active reform. In 'latter-day pamphlets', written shortly after Carlyle's return from his second visit, he made a case for the radical reform of British government, the focal point of which would be a 'new Downing Street', staffed by expert administrators acting under the direction of a heroic statesman who would not be hindered by the distractions and trammels which Carlyle associated with parliamentary government. Like Peel, Carlyle believed leadership, rather than constitutional probity, was the key to good government. The old Downing Street would be superseded by a new 'State' with a distinctive structure and ethos. 'Dim pedantries and traditions' would be eclipsed by a 'luminous vitality permeating with its light all provinces of our affairs'.⁹⁴

When Carlyle applied this conception of government to Ireland, he wedded it to an agrarian version of the partnership with 'captains of industry' which he had advanced in the context of his consideration of the condition of England question. Although some Young Ireland figures had espoused traditional forms of paternalism in the early 1840s, their emerging views on a democratic future were accompanied by a strengthening commitment to an idea of a nation of freeholders.⁹⁵ By the late 1840s, 'land reform' was given priority, displacing repeal, at least for the time being. Changes to the legal basis of tenancies, the release of encumbered estates and land redistribution would foster a stable, vigorous and self-dependent peasantry able to utilize the land efficiently and banish the spectres of famine and pauperism.⁹⁶ Immediately after Carlyle's second visit, Duffy published an essay on this topic in the *Nation* and privately urged Carlyle to 'insist upon a permanent settlement of the land question as will save us from eternal new famines'.⁹⁷ Carlyle showed some interest in this issue, and, since he considered questions of ownership in relation to the requirements of the gospel of labour, he was unlikely to object on grounds of principle. At the same time, however, Carlyle believed that, as with other reforms, questions of

⁹² *Nation*, 12 July 1847, p. 568; see also Charles Gavan Duffy, *Young Ireland: a fragment of Irish history, 1840-1850* (London, 1880), p. 172.

⁹³ *Nation*, 12 June 1847, p. 568. In *Past and Present* Carlyle had described the extension of the poor law to Scotland as a 'temporary measure, an anodyne, not a remedy' (p. 3).

⁹⁴ Carlyle, *Latter-day pamphlets*, pp. 84, 108-45; Ghosh, 'Gladstone and Peel', p. 52: 'Peel, as much as Carlyle, believed in one person rule ... and that was notoriously how he governed.'

⁹⁵ Davis, *Young Ireland*, pp. 189-91; Duffy, *Thomas Davis*, p. 100; Charles Gavan Duffy, *The creed of the 'Nation', a profession of confederate principles* (Dublin, 1848), pp. 7-8.

⁹⁶ *Nation*, 8 Sept. 1849, p. 25.

⁹⁷ National Library of Scotland, MS 1773, fo. 235v; cited with the permission of the Trustees of the National Library of Scotland; Duffy, *Conversations with Carlyle*, p. 130.

land ownership had to be considered in relation to the people's capacity to take proper advantage of it.

Carlyle was, however, far more enthusiastic about Duffy's evolving views on leadership. In an essay published in the *Nation* in September 1849, Duffy appealed to his countrymen in terms that echoed Carlyle's views on this issue, and was warmly applauded by him for doing so.⁹⁸ 'Wanted: a few workmen' referred to the need to fill the gaps in Young Ireland's ranks left by the death of Thomas Davis in 1845, and the imprisonment or transportation of those arrested after the failed insurrection of 1848. Duffy made it clear, however, that he was not looking for conventional revolutionaries: 'Although we begin our work in the midst of social disorganization, our main task is not to combat and resist, but to found and create.'⁹⁹ He attacked Daniel O'Connell as a representative of the futile political posturing which was the bane of Ireland, and commented disparagingly on the plethora of literary responses to Irish problems: 'Spouting, speeching, and operations of that sort can be performed by a large proportion of the adult population of this island. The facility of writing sonorous and swelling sentences is nearly as common.'¹⁰⁰ Ireland needed to capture the talent of 'practical men' that was now wasted in useless professions such as the law (long a Carlylean bugbear), or dissipated by those who regarded idleness as a mark of social distinction. Duffy concluded his testimony to Carlyle's doctrine of labour by referring to the transformative role of Friedrich Wilhelm of Brandenburg, a figure who was to loom large in the first volume of Carlyle's monumental biography of his son, Frederick the Great.

Duffy returned to this theme when he reviewed the first three 'latter-day pamphlets' in the *Nation*, setting Carlyle's vision of a reformed 'New Downing Street' in the context of a radical approach to political and social issues. Duffy identified Carlyle with a new current in European thinking that rejected the corruption and jobbery of contemporary politics and looked to a transformed world of honest efficient government that capitalized on the real talents of the community.¹⁰¹ Carlyle's thinking on such matters was congenial to Young Ireland because the movement shared his views on the failings of the Irish aristocracy, and had long regarded Irish administration as an object lesson in misgovernment. One of the many injustices that the English had inflicted on Ireland was extreme partiality in filling political, administrative, and legal posts. These appointments inevitably went to candidates whose only qualifications seemed to be that they were neither Catholic nor Irish. This point had been brought to the attention of the House of Commons by Duffy's Young Ireland colleague William Smith O'Brien. In a speech in early 1843, O'Brien castigated Irish governments for their

⁹⁸ *CL*, xxiv, pp. 254–5.

⁹⁹ *Nation*, 29 Sept. 1849, p. 72.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.* This theme was also addressed in 'Work not words', *Nation*, 1 Dec. 1849, p. 210.

¹⁰¹ 'Latter-day pamphlets', *Nation*, 13 Apr. 1850, p. 522. A subsequent issue printed a long extract from the pamphlets to illustrate the necessity for 'trusting and promoting honest men'; 'Carlyle on the Catholic Church', *Nation*, 25 May 1850, p. 620.

systemic indifferent to Irish interests, and their hostility to the appointment or advancement of Irish personnel.¹⁰² Duffy clearly expected that an elitist reform of Irish government along Carlylean lines would solve this longstanding grievance and ensure that Ireland was well governed.

While Carlyle's writings provided a source to which Duffy might appeal in constructing a case for leadership in Irish society, they also served to reinforce a distinctive Young Ireland position on the need for the Irish to assume responsibility for their own fate. In advancing this idea, Young Ireland responded to a mounting wave of adverse English commentary on the cost of Irish relief and the lack of gratitude allegedly shown by those dependent upon it. As with the leadership issue, Carlyle's writings seemed to promote ideas of self-reliance and self-determination and encouraged Irish reformers to be resolute in their own cause. In *Past and Present*, Carlyle had argued, somewhat oddly, that while the resistance of patriots such as William Wallace had not prevented the eventual union of England and Scotland, it had helped to ensure that Scotland's place in the United Kingdom would be honourable and beneficial. Carlyle's views on this point rested on his belief in the moral significance of the emergence of 'England' as an imperial power, but Young Ireland gave it a distinctive interpretation. The passage was quoted in the *Nation* along with a commentary that emphasized the need for Irish patriots to develop the strength of moral character that would enable them to seize control of their own destiny: 'No miracle will be worked for you, for you are not worthy. When you shall be so, you will "aid" yourselves, and then, and then only, "God will aid you."' ¹⁰³

A commitment to elite leadership is a dominant theme in all Carlyle's writings. Less often noticed is his insistence that the impact of heroic figures was most beneficial where heroism was widespread. This requirement played an important role in Carlyle's treatment of Cromwell in relation to the ethos of English Puritanism. It appeared also in the appeal to ordinary Englishmen which he made in the 'latter-day pamphlets': 'Tell me what kind of a man governs a People, you tell me with much exactness, what the net sum-total of social worth in that people has for some time been.' ¹⁰⁴ Carlyle's idea of elite leadership found an echo in Young Ireland writing and so too did his more general appeal to the population at large. As Duffy insisted in a piece significantly entitled 'Ireland not the bravest', 'The nation's moral strength and character is found in the strength and character of each man within it, in his public acts as a citizen and member of society.' ¹⁰⁵ The idea that elite responsibility was a necessary feature of an organic community gave rise to a conception of concerted, meritocratic leadership that

¹⁰² See Thomas Davis, 'Ireland's people, lords, gentry and commonalty', in Thomas Davis, *Literary and historical essays* (Dublin, 1846), pp. 198–203, reprinted from the *Nation*; William Smith O'Brien, *Speech ... on the causes of discontent in Ireland, delivered to the House of Commons on 4th July, 1843* (Dublin, 1843), p. 37.

¹⁰³ *Nation*, 29 May 1847, p. 537.

¹⁰⁴ See Morrow, *Thomas Carlyle*, pp. 157–8, and Philip Rosenberg, *The seventh hero: Thomas Carlyle and the theory of radical activism* (Cambridge, MA, 1974), pp. 188–93.

¹⁰⁵ 'Ireland not the bravest', *Nation*, 29 May 1847, p. 537.

was far removed from what has been described as the 'kindly but slovenly paternalism' that exposed O'Connell's practice as a landlord to the censure of the 'Times Commissioner'.¹⁰⁶

Young Ireland's utilization of Carlyle's ideas conform to a pattern that was common with contemporary readers of his works. Rather than giving rise to rigid discipleship, admiration for Carlyle as a person, and interest in his writings, furnished readers with a distinctive perspective from which to address their particular religious, social and political concerns.¹⁰⁷ It was thus possible for Carlyle's name to be invoked in a range of different contexts by those who disagreed with him on key matters.

In the case of Young Ireland, sharp, irreconcilable differences of opinion on the Union, the Empire, and the political and constitutional implications of nationhood, did not obliterate a strong sense of common interest and sympathy that sprang from perceptions of shared moral authenticity, and from a common commitment to ideas associated with early nineteenth-century romanticism. Oliver MacDonagh believed that Young Ireland and Daniel O'Connell stood on either side of a European-wide divide between romanticism and enlightenment.¹⁰⁸ In this respect, at least, they stood on the same ground as Carlyle and, like him, their romantic antecedents were applied to a distinctive ideology of reform. This ideology informed Young Ireland's response to issues of public debate in Ireland in the 1840s and it did so in ways that paralleled Carlyle's engagement with the condition of England question. It produced a perspective on national regeneration marked by a focus on the moral ethos of the community, on the need for a new approach to leadership which was informed by this ethos, and by a conception of social and political order that was deemed necessary if the needs of the members of an integrated community were to be addressed.

¹⁰⁶ The phrase comes from Macdonagh, 'O'Connell's ideology', p. 151.

¹⁰⁷ See Morrow, *Thomas Carlyle*, p. 201. ¹⁰⁸ Macdonagh, 'Ideas and institutions', p. 198.