

Defending Ireland or Attacking Woman? The Irish Riposte to Harriet Martineau

Julie Donovan

Nowhere is the complexity of Harriet Martineau's legacy more evident than in her writings on Ireland. Martineau traveled to Ireland in 1831, a visit she followed up with a more extensive stay in 1852, when, with her customary zeal, she covered twelve-hundred miles, taking in all four provinces (Conway and Hill 47). Martineau's first visit inspired "Ireland: A Tale" (1832), the ninth story in *Illustrations of Political Economy* (1832-34). Her second visit was instigated by Frederick Knight Hunt, editor of London's *Daily News*, who requested eye-witness reports of Ireland's post-famine socio-cultural recovery and economic progress, which Martineau would collate in her role as a traveling correspondent. Her findings from the 1852 visit were published in voluminous journalism, including *Letters from Ireland* (1852) and *Endowed Schools of Ireland* (1859), which formed part of her reporting for *Daily News*. In addition, numerous and formerly scattered pieces on Ireland, published in *Daily News*, *Household Words*, *Westminster Review* and elsewhere, have been collected in *Harriet Martineau and the Irish Question: Condition of Post-Famine Ireland*, edited by Deborah Logan.

Irish affairs permeated Martineau's fiction and non-fiction, demonstrating how cognizant she was of issues Ireland faced in the post-famine context and in terms of continuing systemic problems impeding recovery, such as absentee landlordism, which she had raised in "Ireland: A Tale." Throughout her decades of writing about Ireland, from pre- to post-

famine, Martineau cited religious conflict, divisive politics, and inefficient agricultural and business practices as particular issues that needed addressing. Her writings reflect not only a comprehensive knowledge of Irish affairs, but also her trenchant concern for the country's mishandling under British rule. But she remained adamant that repeal of the 1801 Act of Union, which abolished the old Irish parliament and pronounced that Ireland be ruled from Westminster, was not a viable solution to Ireland's imperial mismanagement. One motive for the Union responded to Ireland presenting a distinct threat to Britain—a country in close proximity that could collude with continental enemies, as Ireland had done with France during the 1798 United Irishmen Rebellion. Critics of the Act of Union highlighted its effective sequestering of the Irish—in particular, its exclusion of Catholics, comprising the majority of the Irish population—from political power, and the Act's impossibly nebulous nature (Ferris 1-2). As David Fitzpatrick has written, difficult questions loomed: “Was Ireland an integral part of the United Kingdom, a peripheral, backward sub-region, or a colony in all but name?” (494). Ireland's legislative conundrum only added to its pervasive social, economic, and political complexities. Martineau was sharply aware that her reporting from Ireland presented a serious and pressing undertaking.

In her own time, Martineau's observations on Ireland were framed within the term “political economy”; but in contemporary understandings of scholarly disciplinary divisions, her work constitutes sociology. Focusing on her writing about Ireland, Brian Conway confirms scholarship that demonstrates how Martineau “is increasingly recognized as a central founder of sociology” (8) and that she “remains a substantial force to be reckoned with empirically and theoretically” (10). Her salient concern lay in the effects of political economy on people's lives, where statistics and data facilitated understanding about impacts on living conditions. Indignation rather than understanding formed the tenor of some British officials writing about Ireland's reliance on the potato in the context of the Famine, drawing an acerbic observation from Terry Eagleton: “What scandalized these commentators was the apparent bovine content of the Irish with their humdrum, socially unaspiring existence” (*Heathcliff* 16). As a

newspaper correspondent, Martineau can be distinguished from Eagleton's officials: she sought to gather information about economic and socio-cultural recovery rather than to pontificate on it.

Contemporary criticism has taken Martineau to task about her approach to Ireland. Glenn Hooper charges her with vulgarizing classical political economy, envisioning science "as the solution to all of Ireland's difficulties" (67). Deborah Logan maintains that Martineau "cannot simply be dismissed as a thoroughgoing imperialist" (ix), citing her sympathy with Irish poverty, especially the predicament of girls and women; but Logan also observes that Martineau's belief in practicable reforms entailed an "insistence that Ireland's problems stemmed from social, rather than political, causes" (x). In his introduction to the 1979 reprint of "Ireland: A Tale," Robert Lee Wolff argued that Martineau invariably sided with the doctrines of laissez-faire and free-trade, and with the interests of the manufacturer (xii). Martineau's attitude was, in fact, more ambiguous in her industrial tales: although she remained skeptical about collective action and trade unions, she also represented the polarized viewpoints of both workers and owners in a bid to promote compromise and mutual understanding. In "Ireland: A Tale," laissez-faire and free-trade factor in the narrative's argument that government intervention to assist the poor only serves to reduce growing capital, encouraging unproductive consumption and discouraging industry and self-reliance. Wolff's comment shares points of contiguity with Deidre David's framing of Martineau within Antonio Gramsci's notion of the traditional *versus* organic intellectual: the traditional intellectual remains disinterested, whereas the organic intellectual speaks for the interests of a particular class (5). Elaine Freedgood states that by offering a feel-good version of classic political economy, Martineau injected "an inordinate amount of good news in the 'dismal science,'" one where "the pains of capitalism are due to misunderstanding and wrong action; obedience to the laws of the market will eventually lead to prosperity for all classes" (35).

At times, Martineau might well have been obtuse in respect to the permutations of how to approach Irish problems; however, her vantage point

was not, as with contemporary criticism, unmoored from what she perceived as an immediate need to provide solutions. She was, for the most part, enmeshed in first-hand evidence of Irish misery; however flawed, her proposals for Ireland sought to disentangle the country from that misery. Extrapolating remained unavailable to this nineteenth-century writer, who might stand amazed at the globalized economy of today's independent Republic of Ireland, which functions as part of the European Union rather than the British Union. In fact, given the travails of Brexit, seasoned Irish commentators like journalist Fintan O'Toole (*Irish Times*) claim that, "for the first time since Henry II invaded in 1171, Ireland has more power than England." Delivering a speech in Washington D.C. in March 2018, Leo Varadkar, Ireland's Taoiseach (prime minister), declared how Ireland views itself today: "We see ourselves as a global country, not so much an island behind an island at the edge of a continent, but rather an island at the centre of the world." Hindsight, as they say, is a wonderful thing.

The passage of time has permitted modern critics to remark on Martineau's lack of prescience about Ireland in two areas: first, her narratives of improvement misconceived the burden of history depressing Irish optimism about progress; and second, her opposition to repeal of the Act of Union underestimated the majority of Irish convictions that there could be no advancement under rule from Westminster. In her own time, of course, Martineau certainly attracted criticism. Contempt for a woman daring to live and write outside socially dictated female parameters drove much nineteenth-century writing against her, mostly meted out by male authors. However, there was also a decidedly Irish aspect to criticisms of Martineau, a topic that deserves more exploration and analysis. This essay examines challenges by three nineteenth-century Irish writers—Thomas Moore, William Maginn, and John Wilson Croker—to Martineau's prescriptions for their country. Responses to her writing reflect the multifaceted nature of Irish writing in the nineteenth century, which nevertheless united against her views. She was attacked by authors from nationalist and pro-Union perspectives, from Tory and Whig, from Catholic and Protestant. Despite their differences, making Martineau a common

target revealed not only the misogyny of her male critics, but also how she unwittingly became a galvanizing force in their arguments for a shift in public attitudes about Ireland. The collective indignation of Moore, Maginn, and Croker concerning Martineau's attitude toward Ireland was, nevertheless, frequently upstaged by their rampant opposition to an alarmingly successful and transgressive woman writer. In this, Martineau bore the brunt of a cynical treatment that ridiculed her sex as a means to air Irish grievances.

In her *Autobiography*, published posthumously in 1877, Martineau wrote of a particular person to whom she refused to be introduced: the Irish writer, Thomas Moore. She was appalled by Moore's poem, "Love Song," dedicated to a "Miss —," which was inspired by Christopher Marlowe's "The Passionate Shepherd to his Love" (1599) and began with the line "Come live with me and be my love." Moore's poem was published in *The Times* in 1833, when Martineau was being lionized in London society for the unprecedented success of *Illustrations of Political Economy*. According to Jane Moore, he later added the poem to his *Poetical Works* (1840-41), amending the title to "A Blue Love Song" and altering the first line to "Come wed with me and be my love" (Introduction 328-29).

The modifications assuaged general notions of impropriety, but no modifications were made to assuage the poem's personal attacks against Martineau. Satirizing bluestockings, the narrator of "Love Song" imagines producing progeny with his "Blue" (l. 2) in the form of books rather than children; such is the romance of a "Malthusian dear" (l. 13). Would it not be more practical to hear, "'How is your book?'" than "'How's your baby?'" (l. 16). The risqué tone increases when the narrator invites readers to imagine "how two Blue lovers/ Can coalesce, like two book-covers" (ll. 31-32), followed by the aside "(Sheep-skin, or calf, or such wise leather)", referring to book covers, but also implying materials used in contraceptive devices. Because Moore's footnote to "Love Song" cites "Ella of Garveloch" (from *Illustrations of Political Economy*), there is no mistaking his target; his footnote also elucidates the allusion in the main body of the poem—"even prolific herring-shoals/ Keep pace not with our erring souls" (ll. 27-28)—

since the tale features the herring-fishing industry and the author's sympathy with Malthusian ideas.

Featuring a strong and proud Scotswoman who competently and courageously manages the sparse farming and industrial resources available to her, "Ella of Garveloch," as Lana L. Dalley has observed, "legitimizes women as economic writers and agents" (n.p.). In "Weal and Woe in Garveloch," the sequel to "Ella of Garveloch," Ella, faced with famine, must reconcile her prolific family of ten children with the Malthusian reality of inadequate resources. She is certain about a solution: "we have the power of limiting our numbers to agree with the supply of food. This is the gentle check which is put into our hands" (Martineau, "Weal" 111). During a conversation between Ella and Widow Katie Cuthbert, both women agree that men must abide by the "mild preventive check" (136) of staying unmarried if resources are too scarce to support children. Ella's dutiful brother, Ronald, declines to marry the Widow, who already has four children she cannot adequately support. That the proposition of removing the male prerogative of sexual desire and marriage was voiced by admirable female characters and written by an unmarried woman represented an abomination to the likes of Moore and, judging by the success of "Love Song," many of his readers.

Already aghast at Moore's "ribald song addressed to me" (*Autobiography* 237), Martineau was even more mortified about its popularity: "The song was copied everywhere," she noted (including *The Times*, where her mother read it), adding that "there was not a trace of wit to redeem its coarseness" (237-38). Moore had a history of parodying bluestockings, who appear in his work as pedantic women, although Martineau made clear that she avoided "blue-stocking evenings" (280). Her reticence about the predominantly female gatherings of intellectual exchange characterizing blue-stocking events may have derived from the ridicule they attracted from male writers affronted by female intellectual advancement. Dismissive labels like "blue" sought to evoke images of dull, humorless, unattractive, and unwanted individuals seeking to salvage sparse, spinsterish existences by cultivating a life of the mind; that cultivation, for Moore's

"blue," derived from paucity of choice rather than authentic thought and genuine ability. Moore's narrative also posed a particularly aggressive threat: for a single woman writer like Martineau, judged by certain male writers on a scale of sexual reputation rather than intellectual worth, the mere hint of impropriety could prove ruinous. In this respect, Moore's satiric wit in "Love Song" becomes tainted by a prurient interest in exposing not only Martineau's work, but also her female body. Long before Martineau's literary fame, Moore targeted women with intellectual ambitions. In his comic opera, *M.P.; or The Bluestocking*, published in 1811, the figure of fun is Lady Bab Blue, who browbeats all and sundry with her knowledge while ordering around her inebriated servant, Davy. Lady Bab Blue is also a friend of "Doctor O'Jargon, the great Irish chemist" (64). Moore's plot contains some comic sexual confusion concerning Lady Bab Blue's niece and a poem; unsurprisingly, the joke is on Lady Blue.

Shunning Moore at a party they both attended, Martineau recalls that he sat primly at a piano and sang; fuming, no doubt, she observes that "he screened his little person behind a lady's harp; and all the time she was playing, he was studying me through his eye glass" (*Autobiography* 238). Obscured by her justified disquiet at the privilege enabling males to view—unreciprocated—and assess the female body regardless of nationality or economic status, the irony also present in the party scene is lost on Martineau. The Irish Moore studies the English woman "through his eye glass," a reversal of how she might be said to have scrutinized the Irish in her travels and in her writing. He positions "his little person" behind a harp, an instrument representing not only Victorian drawing room glamor, but also the demise of Gaelic culture under colonialism; indeed, several of Moore's enormously successful *Irish Melodies* (1807) feature the harp as a symbol of cultural nationalism, its plaintive airs conveying Ireland's pain, the loss of bardic tradition, and citizens' muted cries for freedom. "Dear Harp of My Country," for example, describes a harp (Ireland) "in darkness," imprisoned in "the cold chain of silence" from which it must be liberated: "When proudly, my own island Harp, I unbound thee/ And gave all thy chords to light, freedom, and joy!" (ll. 3-4).

James Freeman Clarke, in his 1877 review of Martineau's *Autobiography*, summed up what he determined was her overall intent in the book's commentary, arguing that she had "loaded this piece of artillery with explosive and lacerating missiles, to be discharged after her death among those with whom she had mingled in social intercourse or literary labors" (438). Clarke's alarm indicates he perceived her *Autobiography* as an opportunity to posthumously voice what she could not utter in life. But, in discharging "missiles" against Moore, Martineau overlooked, or quite possibly subverted, how his annoying, slightly dandified air, and his smooth tenor voice harbored nationalist subversion. Her attitude was couched in the context of Moore's attack in "Love Song," further exacerbated by his public behavior toward her. But Moore did not appear perturbed: ever the performer, he acted nonchalantly about Martineau's spurning; proceeding to another party, he apparently apologized for his lateness by saying he had been "singing songs to Harriet Martineau" (Martineau, *Autobiography* 239).

Effrontery toward the woman writer aside, what else was the Irish Catholic nationalist Moore legitimately responding to in Martineau's writing? "Love Song" can be considered in the context of her disparaging depiction of the Irish in "Weal and Woe in Garveloch," which exploits the most insidious of stereotypes. It recounts the story of twenty-year-old Dan O'Rory, who has come from Ireland with his young wife, Noreen, to work at the Garveloch fishery. Dan is portrayed as lazy, complacent, violent, and drunken, "like many of his countrymen, ready with his oaths and his cudgel at a moment's warning" (Martineau, "Weal" 172). The Scottish characters, Ella and Angus, are also subject to negative stereotypes in that they are socially irresponsible, having had more children than they can support: one child falls ill and dies, while another joins the army. In a sense, Martineau's Garveloch tales are more notorious for their Malthusianism than for minor Irish characters. Ultimately, however, Ella and Angus understand their predicament and come to represent models of good economy, while Irish Dan and Noreen embody the opposite: Dan drinks and beats his wife and child; they save nothing, and their hut remains in a shoddy state; and Noreen is again pregnant, with paltry means to support another child. Even

Murdoch, portrayed as a less than admirable inhabitant of Garveloch, describes Dan with connotative language historically used against the "wild" Irish: "Your children are as hungry as cannibals and as naked as savages" (121). Dan deals with his problems by blithely attending mass and comforting himself that the Irish look after their dead well. He eventually enlists in the army, abandoning Noreen and their child, and paying what must be dubious allegiance to Britain while fighting abroad. Dan's fate reflects a trope seen throughout the *Illustrations of Political Economy*: Britain cannot support its own citizens, who are forced to seek subsistence in the colonies or by joining the army. Martineau's plotline in "Weal and Woe in Garveloch" also reflects how a disproportionate number of the Scottish and Irish male populations came to form, somewhat ironically, a significant component of Britain's imperial armies abroad (Kenny 16; Colley 126). That Moore cited "Ella of Garveloch" in "Love Song" rather than "Weal and Woe in Garveloch" might reasonably be attributed to his choice to avoid repeating Martineau's stereotypes—an essential move for a man who became the toast of Regency society and remained, for many, the epitome of Celtic charm and sophistication. Yet Moore's legitimate sense of hurt at Martineau's portrayal of the brutish, inept Irish in "Weal and Woe" is, at the very least, compromised by his targeting of her female person. His critique remains straddled between misogyny and nationalism.

"Love Song" may also be read in light of Moore's earlier poetry that rebukes the female intellectual, rather than airing his nationalism. In this work, he does not specify Ireland, but instead parodies women who are overly fond of such Utilitarian thinkers as Thomas Robert Malthus, Jeremy Bentham, and James Mill, all of whom influenced the burgeoning career of Harriet Martineau. The vitriolic "Ode to the Sublime Porte," originally published in *The Times* in 1828, features an unnamed bluestocking; but it seems unlikely that Martineau was the target, since Moore probably did not know of her at that time. This is despite the fact that from 1822 Martineau was writing for the *Monthly Repository*, which was associated with Unitarians and Utilitarians. The target could be Jane Haldiman Marcet, author of *Conversations on Political Economy* (1816), which popularized

the ideas of, among others, Malthus and James Mill; however, given that Marcet was married in 1799 (Polkinghorn 79) and the woman in Moore's poem is a "spinster," the figure is probably a generic blue. "Ode to the Sublime Porte" addresses the Sultan of the reforming Ottoman Empire with a petition to drown errant women who busy themselves with political economy: "Tis my fortune to know a lean Benthamite spinster,/ A maid who her faith in old Jeremy puts,/ Who talks with a lisp of 'the last new Westminster,'/ And hopes you're delighted with 'Mill upon Gluts'" (ll. 4-8). Moore's "Benthamite spinster," who reads the Utilitarian-leaning *Westminster Review* and John Stuart Mill's writing on the General Glut Controversy, is not only terribly utilitarian, but also humorless, an advocate of "Mr. Fun-blank," who is satirized in a self-referential footnote: "This pains-taking gentleman has been at the trouble of counting [...] the number of metaphors in Moore's *Life of Sheridan* and has found them to amount, as nearly as possible, to 2,285—and some *fractions*." There is also a comic reference to a work called "Hints to Breeders" by "Mr. M Malthus" and, while opining that "drowning's too good for each blue-stocking hag" (l. 23), the narrator requests that the offending woman be strangled and cast into the sea with her "darling *Review*" (l. 28) tied around her neck.

Moore attacked Utilitarian and Malthusian thought in other poems, like "Country Dance and Quadrille" (1826), whose narrator ridicules "Parson Malthus," and "Ode to the Goddess Ceres" (1826), which regrets that there are not one but two Mills: the senior Mill, who "makes war on good breeding" and the junior, who "makes war on all breeding whatever!" (ll. 21-22). "Ode to the Goddess Ceres" does express directly Irish concerns in its anti-Corn law message, as Moore's narrator parodies a landed gentleman blessed by the goddess Ceres and complacent in the wealth he enjoys from high tariffs keeping grain prices artificially high for both British and Irish consumers. Indeed, a factor that would later compel Robert Peel to push through repeal of the Corn Laws in 1846 was the onset of the Irish Famine (McLean and Bustani 834). Moore's pattern of satirizing female ambition also appears in "Proposals for a Gynaecocracy" (1827), which rails against the preposterous idea of women entering Parliament: "We'll all have *she*—

and only *she*—/ Pert blues shall act as ‘best debaters,’/ Old dowagers our Bishops be/ And termagants our Agitators” (ll. 31-34). Despite ample evidence that Moore consistently attacked female intellectuals, he was prompted to go further in his later work—to single out, name, and character-assassinate Martineau. Why he did so can be attributed to a list of factors that did not always prioritize his nationalism. Along with concerns about Ireland were concerns about the threat posed by Martineau’s success, a threat that other successful woman writers concerned with political economy, such as Jane Haldiman Marcet or Maria Edgeworth, did not represent, because their work could more easily be categorized as educational texts women were permitted to write. After *Illustrations of Political Economy*, Martineau was not only feted by society but courted by Members of Parliament and Prime Ministers seeking her advice on policy matters relevant to running the country.

In writing against Martineau, Thomas Moore, a Catholic and a nationalist, clothed the controversial language of Irish nationalism in received misogynist language adopted by his cohorts in the predominantly male periodical press. Behind Moore’s satiric jabs, however, also lay the reasonable instinct that political economy, as Thomas A. Boylan and Timothy P. Foley have argued, held within it an ideological means to subdue Ireland, while “claiming to be non-sectarian and non-political” (2). An additional factor worth considering here is the gendered language surrounding the 1801 Act of Union, which expressed the new legislative arrangement in terms of a marriage, one where Britain represented the male partner and Ireland the female (Connolly 114-15; Corbett 3-4; Dougherty 202). Such notable post-Union novels as Sydney Owenson’s *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) and Maria Edgeworth’s *The Absentee* (1812) feature an allegorical marriage plot where a male protagonist must cure his ignorance about Ireland before he can be considered worthy of marriage, expressing “the ideological need for altering England’s historical relationship to Ireland” (Corbett 4). As years went by and events like the 1845 Famine revealed the inequity of the partnership, well-known cartoons in *Punch Magazine* depicted Ireland as a beautiful woman, Hibernia, vulnerable to

Britain as well as to treacherous Fenians (De Nie 184, 274). Gendered language surrounding the Act of Union played into colonial discourse, but it also tapped into traditional Irish cultural traditions depicting Ireland as a woman.¹ Moore took part in this tradition in *Irish Melodies*: “As Vanquished Erin” depicts Erin (Ireland) as a woman weeping beside the Boyne River, the site of the 1690 Battle of the Boyne, when the defeat of James II by William III marked the consolidation of Protestant English rule in Ireland. In attacking Martineau’s English body, Moore was guilty of denigrating the woman writer; but it might also be suggested that his work exploits her corpus as a means to emphasize Ireland’s relationship with Britain’s body politic as overbearing and unproductive.

Thomas Moore was not the only male Irish writer to protest Martineau’s ideas or to reveal how disdain for the acclaimed woman writer superseded notions of national pride. William Maginn, an important figure in London’s nineteenth-century periodical press, whom Patrick Leary describes as “one of the most sought-after writers in the city” (105), also took Martineau to task. Valerie Sanders has observed that periodical literary culture at this time was “dominated essentially by a clubhouse of male satirists” (44) that was peculiarly Irish. During the nineteenth century, many Irish immigrants in England formed an impoverished group; but, congregating in London, there was also present an educated Irish middle class prominent in journalism, politics, literature, and the law. R.F. Foster claims that this rarefied group “colonized central areas of London metropolitan life in the Victorian period” (12). David E. Latané writes that “London was crawling with Irish journalists because immigration to the metropolis meant a better chance to influence affairs back home” (34). Some of the most brilliantly acerbic periodicals writers, including Maginn, came from or had worked in Cork, “which in the early years of the century had a flourishing literary culture of its own” (Leary 115). Commenting on the preponderance of Irish figures in the Tory-leaning *Fraser’s Magazine*, Latané notes that Maginn, along with John Wilson Croker, Daniel Maclise, Edward Kenealy, and Francis Sylvester Mahony (who wrote under the pen name Father Prout) completed “the Fraserian displacement of Cork onto the

metropolis" (Latané 213). This Irish phalanx tended to condescend to women writers, but there was also, as Terry Eagleton observes, subversion at work: Maginn and his colleagues could "take vengeance on the dominant powers not by scrambling from margin to centre but by marginalizing the centre itself, trifling with its forms, trivializing its knowledge and dismantling its canons" (*Crazy John* 180). As the reigning literary lion consulted by politicians and statesmen, Martineau wielded considerable public influence. As a central public figure—especially a female one not in a position to retaliate—she presented an easier subject for Maginn to marginalize. Assertions of Irish worth were therefore bound up in assertions of female unworthiness.

Maginn's vociferous attacks on Martineau owed much to her opposition to the Poor Laws and her support for Malthusian ideas, which emerge in "Ireland: A Tale." In her preface, Martineau states that she "speak[s] only as a wellwisher to Ireland, and an indignant witness of her wrongs" (4). In this spirit, her tale exposes the abuses of absentee landlordism as Mr. Tracy, landlord to the Sullivan family, luxuriates in France while agents mismanage his land. In contrast, Mr. Rosso, Martineau's voice of reason and benevolence, lives on his land, which is well-kept and well-managed; he even built a school for Catholic children, even though he himself is a Protestant. The Sullivans and their neighbor, Dan Mahony, are victimized by a chaotic rent system, and they have no one to advise them how best to use resources and carry out agricultural practices. Dora Sullivan has learned to read and write, but that hard-won knowledge is weaponized against her as she reluctantly agrees to sign a rent agreement for her father that will ruin him. In the face of eviction and insurmountable hardship, Dan (now Dora's husband) joins the radical-activist Whiteboys, Mr. Sullivan lingers in misery, Mrs. Sullivan dies, and Dora—forced to abandon her baby—is transported for life after writing a threatening letter dictated by Dan. Martineau's narrative clearly sympathizes with the Sullivans and the Mahonys, and even with Dan's radicalism, which Mr. Rosso understands: "The noblest in their natures, the brave and high spirited, will become white-boys, and die amidst acts of outrage, or on the gibbet"

(75). Mr. Rosso—calm, compassionate, and measured—advocates fairness for the Irish in the face of untenable land and rent systems, exacerbated by Catholics having to pay tithes to the Protestant church. The latter emerges in a gently humorous section of Martineau's tale, when Mr. Orme, the Protestant clergyman, agrees to waive tithes when he discovers that his flock is so small it would fit in his living room. Mr. Orme's good sense is also reflected in his noting a Scottish tradition wherein people delay marriage and children until they have a well-stocked linen cupboard. Mr. Rosso speaks out against the institution of Poor Laws as a remedy for Ireland's troubles, arguing that government intervention to assist the poor would discourage self-reliance. Instead of poor-law relief being extended to Ireland, Rosso advocates policies that will "stimulate, instead of superseding industry—which should cherish, instead of extinguishing true charity,—and ensure its due reward to prudence, instead of offering a premium to improvidence" (79). Nothing should arbitrarily absorb growing capital and quash the intrinsic human motivation for improvement; that would only result in a new class of unproductive consumers and the displacement of domestic charities and domestic ties. Education, argues Rosso, is key, and should be "made universal in Ireland, so that the interests of the people can be safely committed to their own guardianship" (86). Despite the unequivocal sympathy for the Irish in Martineau's tale, what also remains unequivocal is the argument that replicating England's poor-law relief system in Ireland would provide an immediate, but only palliative, remedy.

Guided by recommendations made by the 1833 Report of the Royal Commission on the Poorer Classes in Ireland, and by the new English Poor Act of 1834, with its more stringent system for administering poor relief, the Irish Poor Law Act was passed in 1838 (Crossman 1). Maginn remained adamant that, without Poor Laws, the Irish could not survive. At the same time, he also argued that there was insufficient evidence to show that Ireland could not produce enough food to feed its population. Maginn took every opportunity to shape public opinion in his writings for *Fraser's Magazine* (Latané 279); in November 1832, for example, he declared, "we despise these political economists who swallow the jargon of Malthus" ("Our First"

626). As a prominent public figure whose work sympathized with Malthusian logic, Martineau became one of those figures Maginn so despised, as evidenced in his *Fraser's Magazine* review of "Cousin Marshall" (*Illustrations of Political Economy*). Although not about Ireland, the tale contains views to which Maginn objected: it makes the case that the poor law system "destroys the natural connection between labour and its rewards" (Martineau, "Cousin" 250). The character Mrs. Bell abuses the system: she lies to obtain relief, which only makes her more indolent and selfish. Any personal charity she could extend has been extinguished, evidenced in her refusal to look after her orphaned nieces and nephews, the Bridgeman children. When the character Effingham asks about the cottage system of charity, Mr. Burke describes its detrimental effect: "it will not bear the test. Under no system does population increase more rapidly;—witness Ireland" ("Cousin" 252). In his review, Maginn condemned prescriptions for the "preventive check" and for repeal of the Poor Laws as a "frightful delusion," adding "that it may be seen in the experience of Scotland and Ireland, that as a check upon human increase, it would be wholly ineffectual" ("On National" 413). He quotes Jonathan Swift, a fellow Protestant, Tory, and Irish author with a similarly caustic pen. After aligning the Irish with the Israelites suffering under a Pharaoh seeking to reduce their population, Maginn observes that "Dean Swift's plan" was preferable—alluding to Swift's *A Modest Proposal* (1729), which mimicked the language of dry political economy to emphasize its myopia.

Maginn's satiric "An Ode to Miss Harriet Martineau," published in the May 1834 edition of *Fraser's*, begins with the narrator's challenge—"a desperate endeavor" (l. 5), as he describes it—in writing an ode for his subject, whom he repeatedly calls "Harry Martineau." It takes until verse four to muster a compliment clothed in ridicule: "Oh! How she shows her reading,/ When she writes about good breeding" (ll. 19-20), adding "Of bacon, eggs, and bitter/ Rare philosophy she'll utter" (ll. 31-32). The subject possesses talents of biblical proportions: "Her political economy/ Is as true as Deuteronomy" (ll. 37-38). Patricia Marks underscores one of Maginn's stereotypes of learned women already used to great effect by Thomas

Moore: “Although Maginn had ample disagreement with Martineau, he chose, instead, to pursue an ad hominem attack based on a prevailing distrust of the bluestocking” (28). Entrenched sexist attitudes, readily encouraged in periodical culture and endorsed by the reading public, shielded Moore and Maginn from accusations of being too pro-Irish. It might be controversial to criticize colonial rule; but, if tempered with the right amount of misogyny, society could laugh at women while Irish grievances were aired. In this sense, male Irish writers capitalized on female inequality to address Irish inequality.

Writerly ripostes to Martineau were bolstered by the work of the celebrated Irish artist, Daniel Maclise (pseudonym: Alfred Croquis). Maclise was as sought-after an artist as Maginn was a sought-after writer, evidenced by his 1846 commission to paint frescoes for the newly-constructed House of Lords (Cullen 59; Weston 191). Maclise also illustrated the 1846 edition of Thomas Moore’s *Irish Melodies*, illustrations far removed from Martineau’s *Illustrations*, which conjured up very different visual images through its written text. Maclise drew an Ireland replete with harps, dignified Gaelic chieftains, and elegant delineations of beautiful women resembling Hibernia. These illustrations for Moore dramatically contrast with Maclise’s well-known satirical sketch of Martineau in *Fraser’s Magazine* (November 1833), part of the popular series titled *Fraser’s Gallery of Illustrious Literary Characters*. Each sketch was accompanied by narratives mostly penned by Maginn. In an 1891 edition of the *Gallery of Literary Characters*, William Bates rather naively concluded that Maclise’s sketch “is, of course, a caricature; but an innocent one” (211). Maclise’s depiction of Martineau and Maginn’s accompanying write-up reflect a concerted attack that is far from innocent; indeed, Judith L Fisher terms it a “devastating personal attack” (120). In contrast to the urbane poses of many of Maclise’s sketches of male figures, Martineau appears in front of a fire with only the company of a cat, who, as Maginn points out, “has been trained to the utmost propriety of manners by that process of instructions which we should think the most efficient on all such occasions” (“Miss” 576). His commentary highlights “Miss Harriet in the

full enjoyment of economical philosophy; her tea-things, her ink bottle, her skillet, her scuttle, her chair, are all of the Utilitarian model." Quoting from Thomas Moore's "Love Song," Maginn also satirizes Martineau producing books instead of babies, as she tends to her "rows/ Of chubby duodecimos." This incorporation of Moore's poem completed a three-pronged Irish attack against Martineau comprised of Moore, Maclise, and Maginn. Maginn's implication that Martineau advocates Malthusianism because no one would want to overpopulate with her was tremendously ungallant, demonstrating clear contempt for an intellectual woman. By emphasizing women's exclusion from the Malthusian debate, Maginn's paternalistic Tory politics sat safer through cloaking their pro-Irish sentiment in acceptable attacks against Martineau's body. Escaping Maginn's consideration was the fact that, as a woman, Martineau surely had sufficient standing to canvass ideas about women delaying marriage and not bearing children if economic conditions precluded their survival and prosperity. Maclise also drew Maginn's image (which featured no cats) as number eight in the *Fraser's Gallery* series. Far from the uncouth Dan of Martineau's "Weal and Woe of Garveloch," Maginn's image is sophisticated, poised, and confident; it is accompanied by a narrative written by his friend, John Gibson Lockhart, emphasizing Maginn's powerful sociability, energy, and wit as a "Rollicking jig of an Irishman!" (Lockhart 716).

The third Irish writer who attacked Martineau without compunction was John Wilson Croker. Although he was sympathetic to Catholic emancipation, Croker was, like Maginn, firmly pro-Union, Protestant, and Tory, an ardent supporter of Empire throughout his career, which spanned journalism, politics, and the law. Boasting that he had "tomahawked" Martineau, Croker reviewed "Ella of Garveloch" and "Weal and Woe in Garveloch" in the *Quarterly Review* (1833). As with Moore and Maginn, Martineau's position as an unmarried woman was targeted: "an *unmarried* woman who declaims against *marriage!!* A young woman who deprecates against charity and a provision for the *poor!!!*" ("Miss Martineau's" 151). Croker also gave a scathing review of Martineau's *How to Observe Morals and Manners* (1838) in the *Quarterly*, condemning "the very foolishest and

most unfeminine farrago we have ever met of apocryphal anecdotes, promiscuous facts, and jumbled ideas [...] the sooner the public are warned against such at once stupid and impudent impostures the better” (“How” 72). *How to Observe Morals and Manners* does not directly feature Ireland, excepting a few sympathetic comments: while the Irish are “an impetuous race” (Martineau, *How* 110), she commiserates with the “injury of having an aristocracy of foreigners forced on the country” (205). As with Moore and Maginn, Croker clothed his pro-Irishness with the less controversial indictment that Martineau failed societal strictures for obedient femininity. That is not to say that Croker did not have genuine concerns about her position on Irish affairs. Amid his imputations against the woman writer was his objection, shared with Maginn, to Whiggish, Utilitarian answers to Ireland’s problems (Moore favored the Whigs over the Tories, although not their Utilitarian policies). Croker propounded that the 1834 Poor Law Amendment Act blithely championed workhouse systems and efficiency over the more personal, paternalistic care intrinsic to outdoor relief and parish involvement. While conceding the viciousness of Croker’s acerbic pen, Robert Portsmouth also commends him for “almost certainly being [among] the earliest and most active press promoters of compassionate Poor Laws for Ireland” (81).

Martineau recorded her contempt for Croker’s *ad feminam* onslaughts in her *Autobiography*, where she included him among “the low-minded and foul-mouthed creatures who could use their education and positions as gentlemen to ‘destroy’ a woman” (167). Her 1857 *Daily News* obituary for Croker proved similarly biting, terming him “the wickedest of reviewers, that is, as the author of foul and false political articles in the *Quarterly Review*, which stand out as the disgrace of the periodical literature of our time” (“The Late” 5). She added that Croker’s temperament was so bad that “we do not know that either England or Ireland would be very anxious to claim him.”

Martineau’s focus on the Irish landscape, in particular bogs, in *Letters from Ireland* reflects her pragmatic concern with efficient socio-economic solutions for which she was earlier savaged by Moore, Maginn, and Croker,

although their attacks were ultimately concerned with her as a woman writer. In her preface to *Letters from Ireland*, Martineau thanks the Dublin Statistical Society and the Belfast Social Inquiry Society for documentary assistance, demonstrating a reliance on facts gathered by local institutions as opposed to imposing her outsider's view. Martineau's emphasis was not on the bog's multi-layered and shifting associations of history and meaning, what Katie Trumpener calls the bog's "primeval ooze" (42), but on the need to harness bogs as a source for economic recovery. Eschewing literal and symbolic meanings of bogland in its preservation of prehistoric farming landscapes beneath peat, as well as artifacts and bodies preserved by the peat's ecological mass, Martineau opts to concentrate on the immediate, critical demands of basic subsistence suffered by most of the Irish. In *The History of the Peat* (1849), she noted the abundance of Ireland's natural resources "if only her inhabitants knew how to use them" (492). Given that the Famine was not limited to 1845 but effectively lasted up to 1852-53, Martineau's reporting on Irish recovery had to be pragmatic: "Of the horrors of the famine we shall say nothing here. It is more profitable to look at the present state of the district, to see if future famines cannot be avoided" (*Letters from Ireland* 22). It arguably stands to reason that she would wonder about the bog as a resource that could benefit and bolster the country economically.

In thinking about Ireland's recovery, Martineau recounts seeing the vast Bog of Allen during her train journey from Dublin to Galway through the middle of Ireland. She is keen to recognize its economic potential, even pondering whether there could be some kind of Irish Gold Rush: "we were accustomed, a year ago, to hear the Bog of Allen called the Irish California" (*Letters from Ireland* 71). As the train traverses the bog, she observes its starkness and bleakness, musing poetically that the landscape "makes the imagination ache, like the eye" (70-71); she lyrically describes such pensive images as "bog-cotton waving in the wind, and the bog myrtle" (100). Conscious that she cannot rhapsodize about the landscape, however, Martineau soon moves on to endorse the objectives of the Irish Peat Company, formed in 1849, and its bid to exploit the bog's resources: "to

produce peat gas and tar, along with by-products including ammonium sulphate, paraffin wax, petroleum, and lubricating oils” (72). Martineau was not incapable of contemplating the symbolic properties of the bog, writing that when Oliver Cromwell “transplanted all the disaffected families from other parts to Connaught, and when Connaught became the proverbial alternative of Hell, the great bog was no doubt the uppermost image in men’s minds” (70-71). Symbolism, however, could not be Martineau’s prerogative.

Encouraging pragmatic recovery in Ireland resonates with the description of Martineau as an “apparently compulsive educator of others” (Sanders and Weiner 6). This didacticism was not always out of place. In *Letters from Ireland*, Martineau noted the neglect evident in the estate belonging to the Catholic nationalist leader Daniel O’Connell at Cahirciveen in County Kerry, neglect that appeared as bad as that of Protestant English absentee landlords. The observation affirmed her misgivings about O’Connell, whose demagoguery she viewed with suspicion. Nationalism might say one thing but do another: for the practical Martineau, doing was of the utmost importance. That she exposed the hypocrisy of other nationalists was also evident in her reminder that the Young Ireland exile, John Mitchell, was not only an inspiration to Fenian activity, but also an enthusiastic supporter of slavery after he settled in America. In contrast, Martineau’s travels to America, recorded in *Society in America* (1837) and in her journalism, entailed an unequivocal condemnation of slavery and a life-long support for abolition.

Teja Varma Pusapati has argued that Martineau’s *Letters from Ireland* evince the adoption of an “implicitly masculine persona of the *Daily News* journalist” (4), perhaps aimed at confronting harsh criticism for writing on political economy. Martineau’s masculinized narrative may have tempered criticism, but that might be because, as more of a fully-fledged Victorian, she outlived her most aggressive Irish detractors. By the time *Letters from Ireland* was published, William Maginn had already died (in 1842). Moore died in 1852, and Croker, who died in 1857, was nearing the end of his life. What bound the explicit onslaught of this Irish trio against a woman who

Julie Donovan, "The Irish Riposte to Harriet Martineau"

could not defend herself on equitable terms was a legitimate concern for Ireland. Despite this concern, and the intelligence and wit that often accompanied it, Martineau's male detractors ultimately gave precedence to a grudging recognition of the power and influence of a woman's writing.

George Washington University

Note

¹ The allegorical identification of Ireland as woman is evident in the following: the *aisling* figure, Dark Rosaleen, Hibernia, Erin, and Kathleen ni Houlihan. For an insightful essay on the topos, see Eavan Boland, *A Kind of Scar: The Woman Poet in a National Tradition* (Dublin: Attic, 1989).

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