

# Republican self-fashioning: the journal of Wolfe Tone\*

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If Theobald Wolfe Tone had never kept a journal, and if his wife Matilda hadn't gathered his texts together it is probable that his life and death would not have the significance which now attaches to them. He died, like hundreds of others in 1798, fighting to create a republic, but it is because he left a moving and witty chronicle of his struggle that he is celebrated as the prophet of Irish independence.

Because that record is fragmentary, and because parts of it were lost by other people, it has the radiant quality of a romantic artwork. In it a man who has no sure sense of how events will turn out writes at the mercy of each passing moment, revealing a soul in all the vulnerability of its self-making. Tone's journal is the Irish *Prelude*, an account of the growth of its author's mind which by its very nature must remain unfinished, being a mere overture to something more interesting which will follow, the identity of a free citizen. The reader who knows how the tale ended must feel the poignant vulnerability of the writer in every line. The identity towards which Tone moves so gracefully is not the 'I' with which he began. It cannot, as it turns out, be written by Tone himself: and it is left to be inferred by his son William. He, one of the earliest intended readers, must write the introduction and fill the gaps in the broken narrative.

The extraordinary sense of involvement of all subsequent readers of the journal is due in great part to the space which it leaves for a readerly role. The identity of Tone which emerges at the end is shaped as much by the attentive reader as the patriot writer, defined from day to day amidst the fluctuations of the 1790s world in Ireland, the United States and France. Tone begins the memoir with some feeling of positional superiority over the more naïve, youthful fellow whom he was in the 1780s, and the chronicle begins with a sense of perfectly understandable self-division. Tone has not gone far before he is assigning pseudonyms to himself and his circle of friends, for whom everything, even revolution, takes on the quality of a great game. But this is a merely adolescent trying-on of various possible roles. What really captures the reader's imagination is a promise of an identity which will emerge in Tone from the very act of writing his life down. If his style represents a version of his current self, it contains the possibility of a richer personality yet to emerge out of the diarist's own self-division (for now Tone is 'Hutton' in the journal, 'James Smith' to the wider world).

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At the start Tone is so superior about his youthful self that he seems quite invulnerable in the present: but as the present moment approaches in his narrative and yields to daily journalising, he loses that control. The text is turned over to the reader, who at once feels ashamed of knowing something that its author could never have known: that the adventure of bringing the French to Ireland ended in his death. Yet somehow, Tone seems to have suspected that this was how it might all turn out, for his entries are written in the hope that some structure of future meaning will be discernible in the fragments of a chaotic life, a structure which is less imposed by the writer than discovered by the reader. In this, of course, he anticipates the gapped autobiographies and confessional narratives of W.B. Yeats and Samuel Beckett.

Edmund Burke emerges soon enough as the major antagonist of Tone in the journal, but had he known of its existence, he would probably have endorsed its method. He believed that the attempt to overcome modern fragmentation was *morbid*, leading only to a life-denying abstraction. Tone's refusal to reduce the journal to 'system', to a premature coherence, would have been applauded by him. W.B. Yeats also endorsed such an approach, for in his own *Autobiographies* (the plural title was deliberate), he observed their forward thrust: 'it is so many years before one can believe enough in what one feels to know what the feeling is'.<sup>1</sup> His description of Salvini, a great actor stuck with the bad part of the gravedigger in *Hamlet*, might well have been applied to Tone: 'when the world fails his ideal, as it must, and as he knows instinctively it must, he catches a glimpse of his true self before uttering his swansong'.<sup>2</sup> Tone's text too is offered as a promissory note to the future in compensation for a botched life. Every autobiography is in some sense a confession of guilt. Ostensibly, Tone was expelled from his native Ireland in 1795 for writing a seditious letter to a French revolutionary agent; that was, in the eyes of some, his fitting punishment. He found the United States disagreeable enough: the life of a Princeton farmer humiliated his sense of merit, as did the prospect of seeing his children marry among boorish peasants. But his self-accusation is rather different: it is of abandoning his beloved family in the United States for a private mission as a secret emissary of the United Irishmen in Paris. If there is some residue of a Protestant 'search for evidences' in Tone's nakedness before the moment, it may be found in his condition as a romantic solitary or wanderer, cast out from life's feast, a restless consciousness, travelling vast distances often incognito, unable to make normal social contacts with other people's families.

To experience Tone must now daily add the consciousness of it, as he submits to the humiliations of self-analysis. Like all romantic artists, 'he pleads to be forgiven, condoned, even condemned, so long as he is brought back into the wholeness of people and things'.<sup>3</sup> His attempt to describe seemingly indescribable experiences

1 W.B. Yeats, *Autobiographies* (London, 1955), p. 69. 2 *Ibid.*, p. 84. 3 S. Spender, 'Confessions and Autobiography', in J. Olney (ed.), *Autobiography: Essays Theoretical and Critical* (Princeton, 1980), p. 120.

is the start of this re-entry process, for what Tone writes is a quest-romance. At the end should be the establishment of an Irish republic and the heaping of honours and comforts on his family as its first and foremost citizens, now rewarded for all their sufferings. All of Tone's pleasures are in that sense forepleasures, anticipations of a greater joy to come. Whether he is recalling the popularity of his young family on a ship to America, as they shared wine and food with other grateful emigrants, or an earlier moment when they climbed McArt's fort on a lovely day with a community of like-minded Belfast republicans, Tone finds in such past experiences of solidarity a microcosm of the republic of the future.

The quest has, therefore, strong roots in past epiphanies, the memory of which is so potent that it triggers a wish for renewed fulfilment. The voyage to America is dangerous, but sweetened by the wine and cakes donated by the friends in Belfast and the gratitude of fellow passengers. The only discordant note is struck when the ship is boarded by callous captains of British frigates, who press some sailors and abuse the passengers. But the moments of solidarity seem all the more worthy of repetition, especially after such attack. The search of the romantic quester is for a society that will deliver him from the anxieties of reality, yet somehow contain that reality. His fear is self-absorption: hence the need for some grand ideal to serve. The danger is vanity, best avoided by strong doses of self-mockery and of real devotion to others. The search for enlightenment which was once the sole preserve of religion must now be conducted in a secular narrative because, for a modern republican, the only legitimate myth is art.

Tone wants a republic, but fears increasingly that he may have to find it first of all in himself. His journal becomes a virtual society, in which he trades quips and quotations with his wife, children, friends. It, at least, will fill the gap that is a result of his solitary mission to distant places. All this is one romantic author's attempt to come to terms with his own isolation: the almost unbearable poignancy is the knowledge that Tone, unlike the *Ancient Mariner* or the *Leech-Gatherer*, never did fully re-enter the human community. It is we eavesdroppers on his private conversation who must restore him, by a tender reading of his work.

Although a man of the Enlightenment, Tone was born late enough in the eighteenth century to be an early romantic. His memoir glosses quickly over his childhood in a distinctly Augustan fashion, which would have appalled Rousseau or Wordsworth. After that, however, he appears as a determined romantic, viewing his life as an experiment in living, worthy of analysis for the sake of those who come after. His emphasis is as often on the private as on the public world, for it is his own state of mind that provides the linking material between these disparate zones. Because the forms of autobiography are unique in each specific case, there can be no rigid rules. Everything is notionally admissible, for even acts of literary criticism or accounts of military manoeuvres may allow the writer to divulge some aspect of himself. The self and world, though apparently opposed, are fused in the consciousness by the very act of writing.

In that sense all writing, including his political pamphlets or memorials to the

French government, becomes for Tone a version of autobiography. At the same time, he comes to recognise that any unmediated autobiography is impossible, though always desirable, for the *I* becomes a *me*, the subject an object in the gesture of reportage, even as T.W. Tone becomes John Hutton or James Smith. The self isn't directly knowable in the conditions of modernity, nor should it necessarily seek to make itself available to outside decoders. It is known, rather, through its effects, from which its unknown qualities may be inferred. Like the poet John Keats, Tone knows that he can grasp only a part of the truth at a time: he too is the artist of half-knowledge, capable of living in doubts and uncertainties with no irritable reaching after fact and reason.<sup>4</sup> And, like Keats also in this, he leaves his texts as if they were traces which will not only survive his own death but be seen as a rehearsal for it. Compared with other rebels, Tone did very little, apart from fight gallantly when the *Hoche* was about to be overpowered: we know him less through military action than through the consciousness revealed in the journal

Living on the cusp between eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, Tone understood that one really was an extension of the other rather than an alternative to it. For him the Imagination was not opposed to Reason so much as a heightened version of it. Imagination was the capacity to see things as they were; fantasy the resort of those who wished to see them as they were not. Repeatedly in the journal he uses humour as a defensive wit, forestalling mockery of romantic idealism by another person. The perils of sincerity are never perils for Tone, because he is too continuously aware of his own multiplicity to make the mistake of stabilising one identity over others. His choice of James Smith as a code-name seems almost a joke, for this most common name of Englishmen cries out to be seen through. Likewise, his playing at different roles – that of Irish roisterer, French lover, or American farmer – is done with an excess that borders on disavowal. Tone knows the dangers of singularity, for he has seen the word 'honest' become a term of abuse in the plays of Sheridan. The new Enlightenment protagonist was Diderot's Rameau, the man who knew that any one person has half a dozen selves to be true to. This was the spirit as praised by Hegel: 'to be conscious of its own distraught and torn existence, and to express itself accordingly – this is to pour scornful laughter on existence, on the confusion pervading the whole and on itself as well'.<sup>5</sup> There is a lot of that laughter in the journal, which never invests any entry with more emotion than it deserves from the reader.

The refusal of romantic artists to work in tired, old forms was based on a shrewd judgement of just how necessary it was for form to follow function. The object was to abolish the notion of art as a separate activity of a specialist caste, by substituting for it the example of autobiography as a complete expressiveness to which any citizen might aspire. Tone's journal is that of a dreamer, but one who is seeking to engage with real things; hence the fact that, like the notebooks kept by

<sup>4</sup> *Letters of John Keats*, ed. F. Page (London, 1968), p. 53. <sup>5</sup> Quoted by L. Trilling, *Sincerity and Authenticity* (Oxford, 1972), p. 25.

romantic poets and painters, it often takes the form of quasi-scientific note-taking, as if strange new ideas were being sketched or new forms essayed. 'The subjective emphasis is not egotistical', says Jacques Barzun in *Classic, Romantic and Modern*: 'rather is it a condition of the search and the modesty of the searcher'.<sup>6</sup> Tone was imbued with the scientific spirit of experiment: but also with the idea that the role of language was to inform and to raise feeling. Insofar as he contained within himself certain contradictions, he found in the nation a concept to reconcile individual energy and transcendent tasks, a notion vast enough to hold contrasting elements. He could conceive of Ireland as a nation uniting Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter because he himself had in a few years traversed the society: a coach-maker's son turned gentleman-scholar of Trinity College Dublin, a Protestant lawyer turned Catholic propagandist, a former empire man become a republican militant. Because he passed through so many levels of his society, he achieved an anthropologist's view of its codes; his diaries are proof that he could see it from an outside vantage-point, even as he continued to care passionately about what was happening within.

Tone had no compunction about applying the word 'romantic' repeatedly to himself and his siblings (most of whom travelled to the ends of the earth while young). Theatre posed for him in a particularly direct way the related problems of sincerity and authenticity. As a young tutor of twenty, he found himself like Rousseau in the home of an aristocratic couple and promptly fell in love with the lady, Eliza Martin of Galway. She teased him mercilessly, when they were male and female leads in a play called *Douglas*, during which he had to utter the lines

Her manifest affection for the youth  
Might breed suspicion in a husband's brain . . .<sup>7</sup>

She was beautiful, influential and bored with her husband: and Tone knew it. 'Being myself somewhat of an actor', he recalled a decade later, 'I was daily thrown into particular situations with her, both in rehearsals and on the stage'. His suffering was inconceivable, 'without, however, in a single instance overstepping the bounds of virtue, such was the purity of the extravagant affection I bore her'.<sup>8</sup> Some years later, Eliza Martin absconded with another man after a notorious affair: Tone came to feel that she had been simulating onstage an emotion which in his case was all too real ('an experiment no woman ought to make').<sup>9</sup> He was challenged by her acting abilities as well as her beauty, but he was a conflicted lover: 'Had my passion been less pure, it might have been not less agreeable'<sup>10</sup> – but not more either, for Tone had 'a puritanical attitude towards female virtue'<sup>11</sup> and would

6 J. Barzun, *Classic, Romantic and Modern* (London, 1962), p. 63. 7 M. Elliott, *Wolfe Tone: Prophet of Irish Independence* (London, 1989), p. 27. 8 T. Bartlett (ed.), *Life of Wolfe Tone* (Dublin, 1998), p. 19. This volume contains both the autobiographical memoirs and the journals which are the main subject of this essay. 9 *Ibid.* p. 19. 10 *Ibid.* p. 20. 11 Elliott,

soon elope with the teenaged Martha (Matilda) Worthington on the rebound from Eliza.

Ever afterwards theatre haunted him, the cavalier in him delighting in its display even as the puritan worried about its insincerity. Despite these scruples, he could never abstain for long. Country house theatricals often posed such challenges. In Jane Austen's *Mansfield Park* Sir Thomas Bertram bans them lest his daughter be enabled to express in her part onstage words of tenderness for the man she truly loves rather than for the one to whom she is engaged. All through the ensuing century men and women who acted in such theatricals were pronounced morally suspect by writers as different as Disraeli and Thackeray.<sup>12</sup>

Tone was histrionic and also something of a gallant. No sooner had he married Matilda and fathered children than he left them for a legal training in London. There he enjoyed dalliances because 'the Englishmen neglect their wives exceedingly' and the wives were not cruel to willing substitutes.<sup>13</sup> The thought that he might be similarly neglecting a loyal wife never seems to have entered Tone's head. On the other hand, the question of *trust* haunts him in early pages of the journal. The optimism of the Enlightenment tells him to trust appearances, yet all around is evidence of man's fallen nature. His own family are tied up by robbers in Kildare and he spends a terrible night bound and gagged, wondering whether his pregnant wife and his parents are dead. Yet with the intrepidity of a man, Matilda breaks free and bravely re-enters the house, freeing her husband. Later, when Tone agrees to work as secretary to the Catholic Committee (even though he has never met most of the Catholics before), he is a victim of two attempted robberies as he goes about its work by stagecoach. The more you trust, it seems, the more you are betrayed: and the more likely you are to betray those who trust you. All these scenes are, of course, screen-versions of the anxiety that now assails the writer – the man who has no idea how much longer he'll live or of what the future holds for Matilda and the children. Yet as always he resolves to trust the future, even as he abandons his family to the mercy of time's arrow.

Like Wordsworth in *The Prelude*, Tone recollects past emotion in present tranquillity, and he also is moved more by past or future moments than by present ones. So an early moment of revolutionary solidarity is to be found in the memory of happy days spent by his young family with Tom Russell of the United Irishmen in and around their small house at Irishtown. Tone recollects 'the delicious dinners, in the preparation of which my wife, Russell and myself were all engaged; the afternoon walks, the discussions as we lay stretched on the grass . . .'<sup>14</sup> This is an image of perfected community, whose men gladly assume domestic work and whose women partake fully in political debate. Neither Tone's wife nor his sister left the table, but were often joined for poetry-making and political repartee by Russell's

*Wolfe Tone*, p. 30. Martha Worthington was either fifteen or sixteen when they eloped. Tone preferred to call her Matilda. <sup>12</sup> On this see Trilling, p. 75ff. <sup>13</sup> Bartlett, *Life*, p. 26.

<sup>14</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 33.

old father. Such experiments offered the sort of plain living and high thinking that was sought by Wordsworth and Coleridge, a sort of Grasmere Cottage with sex: 'She loved Russell as well as I did. In short, a more interesting society of individuals, connected by purer motives and animated by a more ardent attachment and friendship for each other, cannot be imagined'. For Tone the personal is at least as important as the political, which is little more than an organised extension of the proper relations between individuals.

Tone had the eighteenth-century gregariousness made possible by an increase in leisure, as more people lived in towns. It is significant that his Irishtown epiphany should have been social in nature, whereas that experienced at the end of the nineteenth century by James Joyce across Dublin Bay on Dollymount Strand would be utterly solitary. As a moment, Tone's epiphany would repeat itself wherever United Irishmen gathered in a romantic setting – on Rams Island in Lough Neagh or at the summit of McArt's Fort, from which they looked down at the radical city of Belfast and vowed to subvert the authority of England in their country. It would be hard to overstate the importance of that recollected moment as Tone lay in the grass alongside his wife and best friend in Irishtown (the poor people's city parish by the sea). What is achieved in the recollection is an electric link between location and patriotic sentiment. The poignancy involves the possibility that such a golden moment may be recaptured and shared with the whole community. In this way Tone looks at once back and forward with something like the emotion which would be felt by soldiers dying for their land in foreign wars.

The linkage between *locale* and *self* also heightened an awareness of the significance of *time* in the construction of an identity. The Memoir was interpellated by Tone in the journal kept in France in September 1796, as if to emphasise the point. But the Memoir of his earlier life yields to the journal, kept intermittently from 1789 onwards. If the Memoir accepts the pastness of the past, the journal challenges it with the immediacy of each moment. Until the age of Rousseau and Tone, a life was assumed to be an accumulation of facts: the self of a writer and the self reported were assumed to be one and the same. Thereafter, an awareness grew of the effects of time as a form of experience on the making of an identity. People recognised that there was a personal past as well as a public past, even as they remained somewhat naïve in their confidence that they could recover past emotion. They soon discovered, like Wordsworth, that memory played many a trick and that the experience recollected was often usurped by the act of recollection, which itself became a more pressing alternative emotion. The real relationship was less between rememberer and remembered than between the subject and time. Tone was sophisticated in recognising time as an opportunity as well as an enemy: perhaps the fact that he was writing at the end of a momentous century helped him to theorise time in this self-aware way.

It is his sharp awareness of tradition as an invention of the present that informs Tone's running commentary on the previous century of Irish writing in English, from Swift through Goldsmith and Sheridan, down to Burke. They (along with

Shakespeare and Henry Fielding) are the authors most often quoted and they were not conjoined in this fashion by any text earlier than Tone's. He becomes in a sense the first professor of Anglo-Irish Literature and Drama, a defender of that tradition, yet at the same time a fomentor of revolution. There is no necessary contradiction between these roles, for a similar ambivalence existed in Swift. Tone had no doubt of the moral of Swift's writing, 'that the influence of England was the radical vice of our government'.<sup>15</sup>

Tone's use of quotation is far more subtle than that of a clubman capping famous lines with a comrade over a frothy beer, for he often unfreezes the seemingly familiar aphorism, inflecting it with unexpected meanings in its new context. The entire journal might in fact be read as a parody of Swift's *Journal to Stella*, its coded names being a version of the 'little language' between the Dean and his friend. Early on, Tone jokes that his is 'a thousand times wittier than Swift's . . . for it is written for one a thousand times more amiable than Stella'.<sup>16</sup> As a parody, it is also an act of homage, but in neither role is it limited by its target. Tone is conscious of doing more fully what Swift *should* have done. In an essay of 1790 Tone had praised Swift for using *The Drapier's Letters* to question 'the imaginary dependence of Ireland on England. The bare mention of the subject had an instantaneous effect on the nerves of the English government.'<sup>17</sup> Yet even Swift, 'with all his intrepidity, does not more than hint at a crying testimony to the miserable depression of spirits in this country'.<sup>18</sup> The value of living after Swift is the chance to take up work that he left incomplete.

The code used in the journal is easy to crack: Tone is Mr John Hutton; Russell (a noted anticlerical) is the P.P. (parish priest); William Sinclair is the Draper; and Sinclair's native city of Belfast Blefescu (sic). Relieved of their everyday identities and using this special code, the friends could be absolutely frank with one another in a mode of playful delight. Their masks were slippery and kept falling off or being confused with the face beneath, as happens so often with the devices used by Swift: but they allowed the comrades to play certain roles before themselves as a prelude to their attempt to strike the popular imagination. The theory of it all was based on yet another disavowal of sincerity: wearing his own face a man speaks with caution, but from the confines of a mask, he may blurt out the truth, especially when tongues are loosened by drink. A recurrent theme is captured in Tone's entry from his early weeks in Belfast in 1790: 'Huzza. Generally drunk – Broke my glass thumping the table. Home, God knows how or when . . .'<sup>19</sup> Since the heyday of Sheridan, heavy drinking had been seen as a sign of sociability and libertinism – so much so that when a spy sent from London tried to keep up with Tone's progress through the hostelrys of Dublin, he was soon paralysed with an excess of claret. The shared assumption of the members of his club is that revolution is nothing if it is not great fun:

15 Ibid., p. 30. 16 Ibid., p. 125. 17 Cited in *ibid.*, p. 438. 18 Ibid., p. 439. 19 Ibid., p. 135.

The Tanner (Mr Robert Simms) looks extremely wise and significant. Gog (Mr Keogh), Mr Hutton and he worship each other and *sign an article with their blood: flourish their hands three times in a most graceful manner (see Goldsmith's Citizen of the World)*, and march off into town. *Ho, but they are indeed most agreeable creatures (do.)*<sup>20</sup>

Belfast in those years was a centre of radical activity, especially among its Presbyterian merchant class, who had little respect for inherited privilege. Tone loved the free-thinking ethos and reported it in his diary. One hairdresser, though a Presbyterian himself, had two children christened by a Catholic priest 'with a wish to blend the sects'.<sup>21</sup> Tone's own comments on the Catholic majority are filled with less warmth than Swift's. The ignorance of Catholics is 'a benefit just now as the leaders being few will be easily managed and the rabble are by nature and custom prone to follow them'. There is no affection in the reference, merely a clinical appraisal of the sheer force of Catholic numbers against the British.

What attracted Tone most of all to Belfast was its modernity, which allowed him to study the interactions between street and stage:

Oct 17 1791: Came into town early, went to the theatre; saw a man in a white sheet on the stage, who called himself a Carmelite . . . NB A gentleman, indeed a nobleman, on the street in a white wig, vastly like a gentleman whom I had seen in the morning, walking the streets in a brown wig; one Mr Atkins, a player. QUARE Was he a lord or not? PP incapable of resolving my doubts; but one pretty woman in the house. Came home before the play was half over; the parties appearing all so miserable that I could foresee no end to their woes. Saw a fine waistcoat on the man who said he was a Carmelite, through a tear in the sheet which he had wrapped about him; afraid after all that he was no Carmelite, and that PP was right in his caution.<sup>22</sup>

Five days later comes a cryptic *sequitur*:

Oct 22 Mem: Met the man who said on stage he was a Carmelite, walking the streets with a woman holding him by the arm; the woman painted up to the eyes; convinced, at last, that he was no Carmelite.<sup>23</sup>

The bad play *The Carmelite* allows Tone to make some points at a time when boundaries between street and stage have blurred and men behave like actors in

<sup>20</sup> Ibid., p. 136. <sup>21</sup> Ibid., p. 120. Tone's youthful support for empire was not inconsistent with his anti-Englishness: he simply wanted an independent Ireland to be in a position to found an empire of its own. He voiced (at various times) sympathy for Louis XVI and George III. As a republican, he did not *have* to be anti-monarchical, at least until the 1790s, when republicanism became strongly separatist. <sup>22</sup> Ibid., p. 122. <sup>23</sup> Ibid., p. 124.

order to be sociable.<sup>24</sup> Tone exploits that ambiguity in order to expose the aristocracy as no more than an unconvincing impersonation of 'gentlemen'. The other suggestion is linked: that Catholic priestcraft is also based on magical nonsense and on a similarly deceptive assumption of a falsely authoritative identity.

There is a lot of joking about Catholic ideas in the journal, and humour at the expense of their critics: 'See an apparition of Jordan, who is in London; find on speaking Latin to the said apparition that it is Jordan himself . . .<sup>25</sup> On 5 November Tone pretends to see a vision of Guy Fawkes who, on being questioned in Latin, turns out to be a policeman: nonetheless, with tongue firmly in cheek, Tone says that he sent for fire-engines in his hotel bedroom. Like other United Irishmen, Tone believed in civil rights for all Catholics and that the arming of the citizenry would curtail clerical influence, 'so fatal to superstition and priestcraft is even the smallest degree of liberty.'<sup>26</sup> He questioned the widespread Protestant prejudice that Catholics were incapable of liberty: 'We plunge them by law, and continue them by statute, in gross ignorance, and then we make the incapacity we have created an argument for their exclusion from the common rights of man'.<sup>27</sup> Compared with the 'rights of man' argument, the limited freedoms and franchise of Grattan's Parliament (1782) were so much sham: an edifice of freedom built on a foundation of monopoly. 'Be mine the unpleasing task to strip it of its plumage and its tinsel, and show the naked figure.'<sup>28</sup> Again, his obsession with the difference between latent and manifest content, between appearance and underlying reality, emerges in these strictures. The common Protestant complaint against Catholics – that they judge only by surface imagery and neglect substantive content – is here deftly flung back in the face of a patriotic Protestant like Grattan by a thoroughgoing radical.

Tone believed that Catholics must be freed from their sense of dependence on the British government, and Presbyterians from their fears of enfranchising Catholics. The Catholic Relief Bill of 1793 was a minor relief, he admitted, but it was accompanied by a gunpowder act. Edmund Burke had been advising the British government on the need to ameliorate Catholic grievances and to drive a wedge between the emerging Catholic and Presbyterian radicals. The setting up of a national seminary for Catholic priests at Maynooth in 1795 did not impress Tone one jot: he foresaw that the clergy rather than laity would gain control of the educational institutions thus allowed. Towards Burke himself, Tone was ambivalent. He was fascinated by his aesthetic theories and recognised the greatness of his writing. Although Burke affected to be a great defender of traditional privilege, Tone was aware that he was in fact a *parvenu* in England, who had used his immense abilities to win the favour of the mighty and powerful. His career, though glittering,

<sup>24</sup> R. Sennett, *The Fall of Public Man* (New York, 1978), pp. 64–6. <sup>25</sup> Bartlett, *Life*, p. 131.

<sup>26</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 138. <sup>27</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 288. <sup>28</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 281. This may be a boost for Paine at the expense of Burke, who was accused by Paine of noticing only the plumage of society and missing the dead bird underneath.

constituted an act of national betrayal. Yet the sense of engagement with Burke in the journal goes well beyond the political into the personal, as if he is the real antagonist, the man to beat. Burke had been a precursor of Tone at Trinity College Dublin, also an auditor of its debating society and a man of burning ambition like himself. His *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790) had turned British people against the Jacobins, as Tone bitterly observed, by playing upon their competitive feelings towards French power and commerce. Ireland, however, was a different case (in Tone's view 'an oppressed, insulted and plundered nation'),<sup>29</sup> but this didn't deter Burke from fearing rather than encouraging a revolution in that country.

Burke had launched his beloved son Richard on a political career in the lucrative post of secretary to the Catholic Committee in Ireland: but he proved incompetent. By 1792 they were paying him off to make way for Tone: but the father continued to woo members of the committee on behalf of his son. Tone's diary for 5 September is written with cryptic eloquence in the sort of interior monologue later made famous through Joyce's Leopold Bloom:

Sad. Sad. Edmund wants to get another 2000 guineas for his son, if he can: dirty work. Edmund no fool in money matters. Flattering Gog (Keogh) to carry his point. Is that *sublime* or beautiful?<sup>30</sup>

In contrast to the self-seeking of the Burkes, Tone believed that his own actions were purged of all self-interest and solely for the welfare of the Catholics. He believed that Burke was in the pay of the British government, and the award of a Civil List pension in 1794 only confirmed this suspicion.

In Tone's mental landscape, Edmund Burke occupies a position as polar opposite to Tom Paine: the one a reactionary, the other a radical. While Burke is smooth, emulsive and eloquent, Paine is jagged, challenging and awkward. After reading Paine, Tone can only marvel: 'His wit is, without exception, the very worst I ever saw. He is discontented with the human figure, which he seems to think is not well constructed for enjoyment. He lies like a dog . . . He has discovered that a spider can hang from the ceiling by her web, and that a man cannot, and this is *philosophy*'<sup>31</sup> By his own admission not the handsomest of men, Tone nonetheless took delight in all bodily pleasures. After his arrival in Paris in 1796, he noted how drapes were removed from windows, even as women adopted a *négligée* appearance in the streets, which were to be places without masks. Tone's own diary worked to a similar aesthetic of casual undress: its body also was revealed in its basic lineaments. The Augustans had sought to distort and conceal the body's natural shape, but now the French were willing to expose it in all its vulnerability. Of the French soldiers Tone observed: 'every one wears what he pleases; it is enough if his coat be blue and his hat cocked.'<sup>32</sup> In the *Conseils des 500*, he noted the refusal of parliamentarians to dress up. As so often before, he felt conflicting thoughts about this. The puritan in

him endorsed those French lawyers who foreswore wigs and gowns, but the dandy missed them.

The mockery of Paine's distrust of the body has, then, strong roots in Tone's experience of the streets of post-Thermidorian Paris. He met Paine in Paris in 1797 and they fell to talking of Burke. As so often when caught between the claims of two charismatic men, Tone couldn't help voicing some fellow-feeling with Burke, even as he repudiated his politics. Once again, the defender of feeling against intellect could strike Tone where he was most vulnerable – on the subject of family feeling. Paine attributed Burke's depression to the success of his own *Rights of Man*, but Tone knew that it had more domestic roots:

I am sure *The Rights of Man* have tormented Burke exceedingly, but I have seen myself the workings of a father's grief on his spirit, and I could not be deceived. Paine has no children?

– Oh. my little babes, if I was to lose my Will, or my little Fantom!<sup>33</sup>

Tone was amused by Paine's vanity, and certain that Burke's mind had been shattered by the sudden death of his son.

Even in the 1790s, the passage in Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* about the flight of Marie Antoinette was famous. A band of 'ruffians', Burke wrote, had invaded the bedroom from which she fled 'almost naked', the very image of the newly freed bodies in Parisian streets; but for Burke this was not liberation but disenchantment: 'All the decent drapery of life is to be rudely torn off.'<sup>34</sup> He might have expected ten thousand swords to leap from their scabbards in vengeance but no, the age of chivalry was dead, making way for an age of sophisters and calculators. The Tone of the journal is as haunted by that passage as anyone. Visiting Versailles, he is struck less by its majesty than by the *ennui* of a confined life in its *Château*.

The central issue raised by Burke's passage is an ideal of womanhood. Tone admired women possessed of 'manly' spirit and men capable of 'womanly' virtues, in keeping with the androgynous styles promoted by the French revolution. Yet Paris proved to him that truly democratic women were few and far between: most were secret royalists. Nor was he fully sure that he admired the new freedoms. He had failed to respond to the promptings of Eliza Martin in Galway: now in his lodgings in Paris he rejected the advances of a pushy landlady who wanted to take him to bed: 'I have no great merit in my resistance, for she is as crooked as a ram's horn (which is a famous illustration) and as ugly as sin besides; rot her, the dirty little faggot, she torments me.'<sup>35</sup> On such a subject, he was more ambivalent than

33 Ibid., p. 734. 34 E. Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (London, 1969), pp. 85–6, 92. 35 Bartlett, *Life*, p. 573. Matilda Tone was very tolerant in including this passage in the first edition of 1826.

ever, the puritan and cavalier cancelling one another out. Tone's landlady is a further image of the revolution, a sort of comic alternative to the tragic Burkean narrative of Marie Antoinette, for she invites invasion of the bed-chamber, being at once ugly and aggressive. The treatment of the image suggests that Tone had more in common with Burke than he cared to admit.

Burke had seen France of the revolutionary terror as sublime and peacetime England as beautiful. Though haunted by the immensity of the former, he settled gladly for the latter, but not without struggle, for as an *arriviste* himself he would always harbour some smouldering resentments towards those who inherited rather than earned their privileges. Burke was shrewd enough to recognise that, as an outraged Irishman, he might easily have identified with the rebels, as Tone did. Tone in the journal repeatedly compares the Parisian Terror with the current British policy of suppression in mid-1790s Ireland: and so the possible equation is clear. What Ronald Paulson has written of Burke – 'the ambivalence of the rebel towards the act of revolt is both because it is an aggressive act and because the object remains beyond comprehension'<sup>36</sup> – might apply also to Tone's feelings about his French landlady.

For Burke the women in the mob which dragged Marie Antoinette from her bed were monstrous: an example of the 'false sublime' in their awful energy even as the outraged queen was beautiful. Mary Wollstonecraft argued against Burke that such turbulent women were badly needed, to tear away the *indecent draperies* and reveal to men the true nature of the world – an image of stripping already used by Tone of Grattan's Parliament. In *A Vindication of the Rights of Women* (1792) she argued that women should not seek power over men but over themselves: and the state of widowhood was an ideal model, she suggested, allowing women to double as father and mother in one.<sup>37</sup> This was exactly the situation of Matilda Tone in all but name, and after 1798 she would be a famous revolutionary widow for many years. Her husband may have shrunk from the advance of one unaccompanied woman in fear that the one he had abandoned for the sake of the revolution might feel her own situation to be no different from that of the landlady.

It could be said of Tone that he makes a clean breast of his flaws, while being careful to admit only likeable ones. There are moments when he seems anxious to present himself as a man attractive to women but one who never falls, and yet he was frank enough in confessing the London amours of his student years. The overriding impression conveyed, as in Rousseau's *Confessions*, is of a search for absolute transparency, 'a true republican frankness'.<sup>38</sup> Tone was an *honnête homme* but one who realised just how disintegrated a modern consciousness could be. He was capable of playing the rake, chatting up a Dutch beauty in a carriage, but he was also a child of the age of sensibility, and so rebuked Lord Chesterfield for encouraging his son to sleep with happily married women (including his best friend's

<sup>36</sup> R. Paulson, *Representations of Revolution 1789–1820* (New Haven, 1983), p. 70. <sup>37</sup> M. Wollstonecraft, quoted in *ibid.*, p. 71. <sup>38</sup> Bartlett, *Life*, p. 477.

wife). In such passages of the journal, the revolt of the laughing as opposed to the satiric comedy is re-enacted. Tone was fond of the sentimental comedies of Sheridan: a great grievance in Paris is that he may never see *The School for Scandal* in an English theatre again. The French production irritates him because the soliloquies are not uttered to the self, as in romantic rumination, but to the gallery. Worse still, the singing of civic airs at plays seems often done without real sincerity: after a few short years of revolution, the new rituals have already grown perfunctory. Yet the French retain the power to intrigue, removing the bloody conclusion of Shakespeare's *Othello* for a more uplifting closure: 'I admire a nation that will guillotine sixty people a day for months, men and women and children, and cannot bear the catastrophe of a dramatic exhibition.'<sup>39</sup>

'The catastrophe of a dramatic exhibition': the phrase is telling. Though Tone frequented the playhouses as a cure for his loneliness in Paris, he could not help feeling the theatre 'trivial', almost unworthy as a subject: 'but I must write something to amuse me'.<sup>40</sup> His reservations are puritanical in basis – acting encourages people to assume personalities not their own and to usurp those of others. Many passages of the journal are devoted to detecting and exposing imposters: swindlers in hotels, mountebanks in carriages, and so on. When, finally, Tone meets the ambitious French naval leader Lazare Hoche, the seaman says that 'he got me by heart' and Tone wonders what he means: if he has mastered the detail of his Memorials (political analysis of Ireland prepared for the French government), fine, but if he is pretending to have plumbed Tone's character to the depths, that is not so flattering and probably untrue. The French revolution, even as it sought transparency in human exchanges, nevertheless insisted that no citizen was obliged to possess a personality that was 'believable' in traditional terms. The new simplicity of dress added to the 'mystery within'. Tone, already possessed of one name and two pseudonyms, has no desire to be too easily read or decoded.

For him, the theatre was at once an immoral institution, which encouraged persons to simulate emotions they did not feel, and a glorious utopian zone in which a person might throw off the constraints of a jaded role and assume a new, altogether unprecedented character. By the time he reaches Paris, Tone can hardly conceal his excitement at being able to attend Racine's *Iphigénie* at the Grand Opera. The period costumes are utterly accurate and the muslin *negligée* dresses of the heroine beyond praise, 'entirely in white, without the least ornament'.<sup>41</sup> The ballet *L'Offrande à la liberté* was even more striking: and Tone deliberately uses a Burke-word to describe it: 'All this was at once pathetic and sublime, beyond what I had ever seen, or could almost imagine.'<sup>42</sup> This is the only moment in the journal when Tone feels that words cannot fully render what he has seen. For one majestic instant onstage, the gap between a reality and a representation of it has been closed, as the symbolic and real meanings coincide. In a stroke, those moral scruples touched off in him by theatrical performances have been resolved and the

degradation of all actors – from the Carmelite in Belfast to the ham-soliloquists in Sheridan – has been removed. ‘What heightened it beyond all conception was that the men I saw before me were not hirelings acting a part; they were what they seemed, French citizens flying to arms to rescue their country from slavery.’<sup>43</sup>

What Tone felt in those moments was something rather like what Jean-Jacques Rousseau had recommended years earlier in his *Lettre à M. d’Alembert sur les Spectacles*. He also felt his self to be multiple and was aware of the problems this posed for the potentially sincere man: he had concluded that hope lay in the dedication of the honest soul to a transcendent task outside the self. Such a task was the creation of republican virtue: and the only entertainments worthy of a republic would be those in which the citizen was no longer just a spectator but also a participant:

People think that they come together in the theatre and it is there that they are isolated. It is there that they go to forget their friends, neighbours and relations in order to concern themselves with fables . . .<sup>44</sup>

Rousseau’s ideal spectacle was a memory of an impromptu communal festival during his childhood, a memory not unlike that of Tone of the Irish Volunteers linking hands in the Phoenix Park. Rousseau recalled ‘the unity of five or six hundred men in Uniform, holding one another by the hand and forming a long band that snaked about in rhythm and without confusion’.<sup>45</sup> While the original moment witnessed by Rousseau had a beautiful spontaneity, the attempt to describe it thereafter in programmatic fashion for others might seem forced, even insincere. Tone himself was quite scathing about the unconvinced rendition of civic airs at the Opera, as has been seen.

At another military spectacle, *Serment de la Liberté*, at the Opera on 13 March 1796, Tone watched as a procession of beautiful women presented a line of youths with their sabres, each man saluting his mistress and kissing the sabre on receipt:

I do not know what Mr Burke may think, but I humbly conceive from the effect all this had on the audience that the age of chivalry is not gone in France. I can imagine nothing more suited to strike the imagination of a young Frenchman than such a spectacle as this . . .<sup>46</sup>

The context of the diary animates this analysis: for the journal is written by a man who seeks only the good opinion of his wife, referring all his thoughts, hopes and judgements back to her. If Hector’s bravery against Achilles owed much to his desire for approval from the Trojan women, human nature hasn’t changed over

43 Ibid., p. 465. 44 Rousseau, quoted in Trilling, *Sincerity*, p. 65. 45 Rousseau, quoted in J. Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau: Transparency and Obstruction*, trans. By A. Goldhammer (Chicago, 1988), p. 93. 46 Bartlett, *Life*, p. 495.

three millennia: Tone sees himself as gripped by the same emotion, such as was appealed to by Fielding's Lady Bellaston in working upon Lord Fellamar. The journal is, in fact, daily testimony that chivalry has never been stronger than in the new revolutionary world, though Tone is honest enough to include within its range the comically reduced anti-heroes of Fielding as well as the more austere heroes of Homer. There is, he sees, a demonstrable link anyway between the comic and heroic. The idea that a man may be laughed to scorn can only have meaning in the wider context of his dignity as a viable possibility.

The sheer pace of change in the 1790s amazes even Tone. Rereading entries from the previous winter he is 'very curious to see what pains I took to prove fifty things which are now regarded as axioms'.<sup>47</sup> That sense of movement makes him all the more aware of how much he lives from moment to moment: the significance of events is often lost at the time of their happening. In the absence of any wider sense of significance into which things might be cast, it seems wiser not to impose even the beginnings of a pattern on entries: 'but as that would be something approaching to system, I despair of ever reaching it'.<sup>48</sup> The work of piecing together the shreds of an integral personality can safely be left to others: his task is simply to show how he came to be the man he now is.

Although Tone never accuses himself of deserting his family, and therefore never seeks formal forgiveness, the whole journal is composed with that implicit object. Proceeding more by implication than statement, he trusts that the narrative of his exile will suggest a truth he is too modest to assert. His absence is, in fact, but a sign of his deep love. He removes himself from his family for a great task, but is forever present to them through his written words. They are all exiled from Ireland (the others in America, he in France), but then so is the truth that his country needs but cannot yet see. In this his dilemma is identical to that of Rousseau in the *Confessions*: 'To hide without writing would be to disappear. To write without hiding would be to give up the idea that he is different from other people . . . The goal is to be recognised as a "noble soul". He breaks with society only in hopes of making a triumphal return.'<sup>49</sup> The willingness to undress the soul before the world's tribunal is tantamount to an assertion of republican virtue, for a person so free of dissimulation, a character so *unrehearsed*, cannot have any sin to repent of. On the contrary, he will expect to be given credit by every single reader.

The mesmeric power of Tone's candour to later generations is straightforward enough in its origins: readers give credence to an image of Tone that they have largely constructed for themselves. His truth seems to come without mediation, unobstructed, even as his language hardly draws attention to itself. The self is so engrossed in itself that it gives little thought to the medium or to the techniques of sincerity. The prose, though beautiful, is deliberately styleless, suggesting a self not exceptional, just one man speaking to others in a search for the conditions in which that self might further grow. The reader has to help in the release of that

<sup>47</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 154. <sup>48</sup> *Ibid.*, p. 198. <sup>49</sup> Starobinski, *Jean-Jacques Rousseau*, pp. 125–6.

future self and bring the story to its completion of that unfinished business. One consequence is that for almost two centuries Tone's journal has not even been treated as a work of literature. Like the Bible in the days before the higher criticism, it was a point of origin, the word unmediated, holy writ. Its theme was grand: being itself. And the challenge posed was not to be like Tone but to awaken every reader to the artist-hero who lies within himself or herself.

So far is Tone from notions of warrior-heroism that he repeatedly quotes Fielding's Parson Adams ('I do not desire to have the blood even of the wicked upon me'), and Sheridan's Bob Acres ('that I could be shot before I was aware').<sup>50</sup> Much of his time in France is spent – like that of his illustrious successor Beckett – pondering the meaning of waiting for something that may never happen: in this case a naval expedition. The arrest of Russell in October 1796 is traumatic news, leading to the collapse of the code: suddenly, revolution is no longer a game. As one expedition is cancelled and another aborted, Tone lives on an emotional roller coaster, unsure whether he will live as an Irish citizen or French officer. Although he never discusses the medium of language as such, he often ruminates upon the processes of his own mind. A journal is a daily process, whereas a book would be only a finished object: Tone is less interested by the object than by the ways in which an imagination can reach out to an object. For him, meaning isn't pre-formed: rather it emerges in the process of the search, the mind being attracted and excited by the pleasures of that search itself. In the virtual society of the journal, he regrets that so many good ideas are lost for want of an interlocutor to make them seem real. As the day of departure for Ireland draws near, the *anomie* brought on by prolonged isolation astonishes him. The expedition may 'change the destiny of Europe', emancipating three nations and opening the seas. Before either Karl Marx or James Connolly, Tone could see that Ireland might be the Achilles heel of the British empire, but somehow he is underwhelmed:

The human mind, or at least my mind, is a singular machine. I am here in a situation extremely interesting and, on the result of which, every thing most dear to me as a citizen and as a man depends, and yet I find myself in a state of indifference . . .<sup>51</sup>

Tone monitored his responses with the precision of a brain-surgeon, and was astounded by what he found. On his first expedition to Bantry Bay in December 1796, he was on the ship that stood becalmed within a few yards of Ireland, utterly unable to land. It was a moment like that, months earlier, in which he had looked down with his friends from McArt's Fort on the townscape of Belfast. In Tone's writings, distance is always the necessary condition of love. Only those who can stand back from a city, a family or a nation, and conceive of it, can know precisely what it can be made to mean. Yet estrangement is also a condition of that inten-

sity. A few years later a solitary romantic soul would define itself against the void on a mountain peak or at the lonely prow of a ship facing into storm, but for Tone such moments are ultimately *social*. His hope was always to make the inhabitants of Ireland share in that developed consciousness: 'Poor Pat . . . who knows what we may make of him yet?'<sup>52</sup> Nevertheless, when he finally reaches the desired moment on the Irish coastline, all he feels is an unexpected estrangement:

I am now so near the shore that I can in a manner touch the sides of Bantry Bay, with my right and left hand, yet God knows whether I shall ever tread again on Irish ground. There is one thing which I am surprised at, which is the extreme *sang froid* with which I view the coast. I expected I should have been violently affected, yet I look at it as if it were the coast of Japan; I do not however, love my country the less, for not having romantic feelings with regard to her.<sup>53</sup>

Nothing, in fact, could have been more romantic than such an attitude. The landscape is no longer seen here as a mere backdrop to the human drama, but as a wholly unknown world with a mysterious life of its own, full of redemptive possibilities, but essentially inscrutable. In that respect it is akin to the Catholic masses, defined and defended but never really animated in Tone's writing. What Rainer Maria Rilke wrote of the strange disconnection of landscape from human figure in the Mona Lisa might be invoked in this scene:

It had been necessary to see the landscape in this way, far and strange, remote and without love, as something living a life within itself, if it ever had to be the means and notion of an independent art; for it had to be far and completely unlike us – to be a redeeming likeness of our fate. It had to be almost hostile in its exalted indifference, if, with its objects, it was to give a new meaning to our existence.<sup>54</sup>

Because Tone had been so intently monitoring the workings of his inner self, the landscape had become estranged. This would be a characteristic experience of four generations of romantic and republican militants afterwards in Ireland: the same sense of tragic separation from the very people in whose name they risked their lives, and the same sense of the remote, ungraspable beauty of the landscapes through which they moved on their dangerous errands. *On Another Man's Wound*, Ernie O'Malley's account of the War of Independence, may be the consummation of a tradition that had its source in that paragraph of Tone. What was thought to be the discovery of a new intensity of feeling in the face of a natural setting was

52 Ibid., p. 628. 53 Ibid., p. 465. 54 R.M. Rilke, *Von der Landschaft, Ausgewählte Werke*, 1938, II, p. 218: cited by J.H. Van den Berg, 'The Subject and his Landscape', in H. Bloom (ed.), *Romanticism and Consciousness: Essays in Criticism* (New York, 1970), p. 61.

revealed in the entry to be really the revelation of a loss: the sense that nature, far from being in harmony with the human mood, was unspeakably other, indescribable, unavailable to ready meaning. The Tone who, when he became secretary to the Catholic Committee, could admit to never having known a single one of its Catholics, was in the same predicament as the romantic protagonist who finds himself standing *before* a landscape rather than *in* it.

Tone was born to be estranged, for he was a play-actor: even the revolution for which he gave his life was but another role. However, he was estranged for a very good reason from the world as he found it: his 'true' self, the one that would signal an end to all the acting, lay up ahead. His autobiography, like Rousseau's, confronted taboo subjects in seeking to make that better self. Written like many subsequent diaries of Irish republicans in conditions of quarantine – one thinks of John Mitchel's *Jail Journal*, Máirtín Ó Cadhain's *As an nGéibheann* or Brendan Behan's *Borstal Boy* – his journal was a plea for understanding and forgiveness. Of another Irish autobiographer, James Clarence Mangan, it would be said that he had two personalities, one well known to the Muses and the other to the police.<sup>55</sup> The greatness of Tone's journal is that it renders the life of both, of Theobald Wolfe Tone and of Citizen James Smith. It gives the *auto*, the life of the mind, even as it chronicles the *bios*, the experience of the body.

Yet, precisely because he could divulge such a range of public and private sentiment, and at the same time control that sentiment, Tone remained to his readers as mysterious as the shores of Bantry Bay were to him. His readers, like his biographers, help to construct him, but soon realise that they are simply indulging a fantasy of the romantic performer and of what he might really be like.<sup>56</sup> To some he is a rationalist patriot; to others a colonial outsider; to others again a conflicted romantic whose ideas were less original than he took them to be. There is nothing especially false about any of these partial interpretations, but they all ignore one salient fact: Tone was an artist. He was so good an artist, so adept at using art to conceal art, that for all but two centuries he convinced his readers that he was no more than an interesting diarist. 'As to literary fame', he recalls of his London days in the *Memoir of 1796*, 'I had *then* no great ambition to attain it.'<sup>57</sup> That sentence is as near as he comes to admitting that the autobiography will constitute his present attempt.

Tone finally landed on the shores of Lough Swilly (from which the Gaelic earls had fled in 1607) in 1798. He was captured, identified by a Trinity College classmate, and arrested to be tried for his life. He wounded himself in the throat and died after some days of terrible pain. Whether he was attempting suicide or seeking to delay the hangman remains uncertain. He wanted to be shot like a soldier,

55 J. Mitchel (ed.), *James Clarence Mangan: Poems* (New York, 1859), introduction, p. 32.

56 Authoritative examples are Elliott's ground-breaking biography; T. Dunne's *Theobald Wolfe Tone: Colonial Outsider* (Cork, 1982); and F. MacDermott, *Theobald Wolfe Tone* (Dublin, 1926). 57 Bartlett, *Life*, p. 23.

not hanged like a dog. 'I am sorry that I have been so bad an anatomist', he said.<sup>58</sup> He was only thirty-five. His enemy and likeness, Edmund Burke, had died of old age just the previous year, still desolate after the death of his son. Burke was so terrified that Jacobins would dig up his remains and vandalise them that he carefully choreographed a secret burial. Tone was buried at the family home in Bodenstown. So defeated were republicans that his grave was not properly marked for half a century, until Thomas Davis helped his widow to raise a black slab.

It was unveiled at a private ceremony, in order to prevent embarrassment to Daniel O'Connell, the Catholic emancipist.<sup>59</sup> Since those days, however, it has become a place of annual pilgrimage for political parties and revolutionary cadres of modern Ireland. Tone refused to recognise the received identities of Catholic, Protestant and Dissenter, challenging their supporters to reimagine themselves under the 'common name of Irishmen'.<sup>60</sup> But he did more than that. In his journal, he left a model of how such a freed consciousness might move through the modern world.

58 *Ibid.*, xxxviii. 59 Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty* (Cork, 1996), p. 168. 60 Bartlett, *Life*, p. 40.