

## “Ireland and England will be too little for me”

The Canadian Letters of Lord Edward  
Fitzgerald in Thomas Moore’s *The Life  
and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*

If Thomas Moore was the most famous poet to visit Canada in the early nineteenth century (Bentley 2), then Lord Edward Fitzgerald (1763-98) was probably the most notorious Irish visitor to Canada in the eighteenth. Moore, after publishing a successful two-volume biography of Lord Byron in 1830-31, became Fitzgerald’s official biographer, publishing *The Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald* in 1831. (Byron himself had suggested that Fitzgerald’s life “would make an excellent novel”) (Kelly 485). Fitzgerald’s death in 1798 in a Dublin prison after leading a failed rebellion ensured his status in Ireland as “a toweringly romantic figure in Irish history . . . [who] takes his place indisputably in the hagiography of Irish nationalism and republicanism” (Gahan 85). Surprisingly, he began life as a relatively privileged member of the Anglo-Irish ascendancy: the fifth son of the first Duke of Leinster, and an indirect descendant of Charles II through Louise de Kerouaille (Tillyard xx). He ended it as one of the most prominent conspirators during the United Irish rebellion of 1798. (Incidentally, the years of unrest in Ireland and France preceding the rebellion prompted another famous Irish visitor, Isaac Weld, to consider North America as a refuge, resulting in the journey that he described in his *Travels Through the States of North America and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada During the Years 1795, 1796 and 1797* (1799) (1: iii). Because of his own unique experience in Canada, his indirect links to two such prominent and influential Irish visitors as Moore and Weld, and the light he casts on early Canadian writing, Fitzgerald’s letters should be better known.

Moore stopped in North America on the way to and from a government post as registrar in Bermuda in 1803 to 1804. He had left Ireland in the shadow of another ill-fated rebellion led by his acquaintance Robert Emmet, a United Irish supporter, in July of that year (see Kelly 90-92). Two decades later, while finishing his biography of another Romantic figure, Lord Byron, Moore was given access to family papers of Fitzgerald, whose plans to lead a military insurrection were cut short when he was shot and taken prisoner on May 19, 1798, just before May 23, the date of the planned rising. He died of his injuries on June 4, 1798. The trove given to Moore included letters that Fitzgerald had written to his family during his two trips to North America as a very young man, the first as an officer on active service during the American War of Independence, and then later as the major of a garrison stationed in Fredericton (Kelly 473). With the support of the family, Moore embarked upon a life of Fitzgerald in the style of his successful biography of Byron: "a clear limber prose [that] threaded together long quotations from the rebel's letters" (Kelly 485). A significant portion of the biography's first volume is given over to a selection of letters from Fitzgerald's Canadian travels. The biography includes Fitzgerald's accounts of garrison and settler life, as well as of his travels with Aboriginal hunting parties, and his meeting with two important actors in Canadian and American history, the Mohawk leaders Joseph Brant (Thayendanegea) and David Hill (Karonghyontye).

If his subsequent role in Irish history had not overshadowed them, Fitzgerald's Canadian experiences might have earned him a greater place in the annals of travel and exploration in early North America. During his second visit, he landed at Halifax, and then travelled on horseback to St. John, New Brunswick, to join the 54th regiment before the regiment moved to take up a post at Fredericton (Gahan 87). While a major in this regiment, he, his African American servant Tony, and three woodsmen travelled on snowshoes to Quebec along a route never taken before by Europeans (Moore, *Life* 66). On leave, he used his freedom to visit Montreal and Niagara Falls, which he described in a letter only slightly less effusive than one Moore wrote after his own visit (Kelly 122). There he joined Brant and other Mohawk, and with them travelled by canoe through Ontario to Detroit, and from Detroit to Michilimackinac, and from there to the Mississippi, and eventually to New Orleans. After a brief stay in New Orleans, he left for England in January 1790 (Gahan 87). His travels, which "amounted to a circuit of the newly-independent United States," preceded by

at least one trailblazing exploration in Upper Canada, “was an extraordinary one by any measure” (Gahan 87).

As both a historical figure and an observer of Canadian society at a time of great change, Fitzgerald’s example not only illustrates the “Pan-Atlantic character” of the United Irish history (Gahan 86), but also the necessity of considering his letters and other early Canadian writing in their proper international context. Moore was one of the earliest writers to note the importance of Fitzgerald’s Canadian experience, claiming that it was not Fitzgerald’s witnessing of the American Revolution as a young British officer, but the later “romance . . . of savage happiness” that “retained its footing in his mind. . . [A]ll he had meditated and felt among the solitudes of Nova Scotia could not fail to render his mind a more ready recipient for such doctrines as he found prevalent on his return to Europe” (Moore, *Life* 55). Historians and literary critics are still debating the truth of Moore’s observations in the light of postcolonial interest in the extent to which early Irish nationalists’ ideas were shaped by their reactions to Aboriginal cultures in the New World (King, “A Stranger to Our Sympathy” 82).<sup>1</sup> However, within the context of Moore’s biography, Fitzgerald’s positive impressions are of a piece with the Romantic persona that he embodied in the nineteenth century and that was emphasized in Moore’s book: the sensitive, great-souled figure pushed to the exigencies of rebellion by contemplation of what a later Irish Canadian poet would call “Erin’s woes” (Kidd, *The Huron Chief, and Other Poems* 153). Jason King has noted how widely varied were the responses of individual United Irish members to the plight of oppressed cultures other than Ireland, and suggests that Fitzgerald’s particular affinity with the Aboriginal people that he meets was instead part of a “wider communal outlook” of Romantic attitudes in the late-eighteenth and nineteenth century (“A Stranger to Our Sympathy” 83). As an inspiration for United Irish members, the narrative, like other contemporary accounts of Aboriginal life, could indeed present “a journey back in time to bear witness to the origins of natural rights” that provided “radical thinkers in the West [with] an image of ‘natural liberty,’” and which Luke Gibbons argues influenced a number of United Irish figures who also advocated against slavery and against the dispossession of American Aboriginal nations (53). However, this interest in and idealization of “primitive” cultures was inspired by the antiquarian revivals in Ireland, as well as by Rousseau, and by much pre-Romantic and Romantic literature. The fact that Irish writers such as Adam Kidd and Moore repudiated violent rebellion while still sympathizing greatly with the United Irish movement as

well as with the plight of Aboriginal peoples suggests that the desire to acknowledge the distinctive culture and rights of Irish and Aboriginal peoples may have roots in a common Romantic source, as a number of critics in addition to King have demonstrated.<sup>2</sup> Fitzgerald's reactions to Canadian life continued to receive appreciation and sympathy in nineteenth-century Canada, even as the philosophy and violence of the uprising he led was repudiated.

When it was published, Moore's biography was the only way that people in Canada (as well as England, Ireland, and America) could read Fitzgerald's letters, and it is still the most accessible form for modern readers, especially since for nearly a century it was believed that the originals of many of the letters had been lost.<sup>3</sup> While Moore's and Weld's impressions of early Canadian society have been discussed by scholars of early Canadian literature, Fitzgerald's account of his time in North America remains relatively obscure, even though his detailed, engaging, albeit highly romanticized portraits of both settler and Aboriginal life are highly readable. If Fitzgerald's Canadian experience partly shaped subsequent Irish history, then it also shaped, both directly and indirectly, the literary construction of Canadian national identity in the nineteenth century. The tendency for many writers, including Moore, to present Canada as a middle ground, or "demi-paradise," (Bentley, "Isaac Weld" 225) located somewhere between revolutionary France and America and the aristocratic estates of Great Britain was partly a reaction to the United Irish uprising in 1798 (King, "The Peaceable Kingdom" 40). Writers in the 1830s such as Standish O'Grady Bennett and William "Tiger" Dunlop were making direct links between the uprisings of 1837 and 1838 and the earlier Irish uprising. Dunlop, for instance, led a militia against the rebels in 1837. While he thought Fitzgerald would be a congenial companion in a hunting-party, he nevertheless deplores the rebel's "mere impulse of the passions" that led to his "plunging his country into blood and disorder" (52). Jason King notes how Romantic writing in Canada in the nineteenth century shows counter-revolutionary sentiments "in constant tension with more subversive, revolutionary currents of the Irish diasporic imagination" ("Prefiguring the Peaceable Kingdom" 44). In many ways, Fitzgerald's letters cast light on the complex allegiances of many writers and particularly Moore and Kidd, just as the bloody aftermath of the Irish rebellions created the ambivalence about Irish-English relationships shown in these poets' works.

Fitzgerald's letters also offer another variation on themes that reoccur in early Canadian literature. His rosy views of settler life anticipate the idyllic fantasies of Moore's portrait of Upper Canada in "Ballad Stanzas"

and Isabella Valancy Crawford's in *Malcolm's Katie*. In addition, the visit of a significant actor in Irish history was used by subsequent writers to create a sense of "local color" and regional history in their own work. His visit was mentioned by the Scottish explorer and writer Patrick Campbell (81) and of course by Dunlop, whose accounts written under the pen name "Backwoodsman" certainly encouraged emigrants to come to Canada. Dunlop alludes to Moore's biography while composing his own work, *Statistical Sketches of Upper Canada, for the Use of Emigrants: By a Backwoodsman*: "It is only since writing the above, that I fell in with the first volume of Moore's Life of Lord Edward Fitzgerald; and I cannot describe the pleasure I received from reading his vivid, spirited, and accurate description of the feelings he experienced on first taking on him the life of a hunter" (51). Dunlop, incidentally, is another writer who notes how an immersion in the Canadian landscape and Aboriginal ways of life may have altered Fitzgerald's outlook irrevocably, with implications for both Ireland and Canada: "No man who associates with and follows pursuits of the Indian, for any length of time, ever voluntarily returns to civilized society" (51).

While both Moore and Fitzgerald had been greatly affected by their visits to the New World within less than twenty years of each other, they could not exactly be considered fellow travellers. Moore is remarkably silent on the fact that he and Fitzgerald covered much of the same ground in their travels, and "made little of the coincidence" in the biography (Kelly 485). Fitzgerald's positive impressions of the freedom and simplicity of settler and Aboriginal life in North America (Gahan 90) contrasted with Moore's, whose newly gained position as a British civil servant made him shift to a deeply anti-republican position in regards to the United States (Kelly 97).<sup>4</sup> Moore's idealistic portrait of British-ruled Upper Canada reflect his commitment to what Jeffery Vail called "a middle path, that of the moderate liberal" (59), taken after espousing much more radical ideas as a student at Trinity (he claimed to have kept company with Robert Emmet and other United Irish sympathizers).<sup>5</sup> In his Preface to *Epistles, Odes and Other Poems* (1806), Moore claimed that he "went to America with prepossessions by no means unfavourable," and "indulged in many of those illusive ideas, with respect to the purity of the government and the primitive happiness of the people, which I had early imbibed in my native country" (*Poetical Works* 94). His United Irish leanings had taught him to view America as the "elysian Atlantis, where persecuted patriots might find their visions realised and be welcomed by kindred spirits to liberty and repose" (*Poetical Works* 94). In

the wake of a violent uprising that over a few short months caused perhaps 30,000 deaths (Vail 42) and the execution of Moore's acquaintance Emmet, Moore seemed to "shrink back" from the more radical leanings of his recent youth (Kelly 101-02). At the same time, Moore's own meeting with members of the Oneida Nation in New York State caused him to comment on the politics affecting them in greater detail than Fitzgerald's letters had. Moore complained, "The government of America are [sic] continually deceiving them into a surrender of the lands they occupy, and are driving them back into the woods farther and farther, till at length they will have no retreat but the ocean" (qtd. in Kelly 119). However, Ronan Kelly notes that the sympathy Moore expressed for America's Aboriginal peoples and African slaves was mostly superficial, employed primarily to attack the Jefferson government's politics (114-19).

Fitzgerald probably never intended his letters to be read beyond the circle of his family and friends (Gahan 88), even though Moore noted that his accounts of Canadian settler life, "detailed with such natural eloquence . . . affords one of those instances where a writer may be said to be a poet without knowing it" (Moore, *Life* 43). Nevertheless, his accounts could still be viewed in part as an "incremental text" (Warkentin x) that became a travel narrative after they were selected and heavily edited by Moore. Even though the letters' main function is "to make contact rather than inform" (Gahan 88), in Moore's biography, they are shaped into a loose narrative. To cover Fitzgerald's second visit to North America, Moore reproduced eighteen selections from Fitzgerald's letters, written mostly to his mother and William Ogilvie, his former tutor and then stepfather, from his arrival in Halifax on 21 June 1788 until his departure from New Orleans in January 1790. As literary documents, Fitzgerald's letters share with Irish and Canadian autobiographies the portrait of a complex relationship between individual and national circumstances; life writing can not only be used to generalize about national identity but also to show how an individual narrative can subvert the determinism implicit in national narratives (Lynch 80-81). Fitzgerald in some ways represents a typical young man of his period and class (Gahan 89), and at the same time a distinct voice within the web of influence woven by history, nationalism, public life, and individual actors. His letters convey his preoccupations with his family and with the way that his status as a younger son frustrated his marriage prospects. He writes approvingly about the egalitarian society he sees in North America, and the opportunities it offers poor Irish emigrants, while at the same time trying to

profit from his own small estate in Kilrush and caring for his “poor tenants” (Moore, *Life* 65). He enthusiastically describes the apparently classless society of Aboriginal hunting parties while simultaneously negotiating his advancement in the military and trying to maintain his integrity as his brother the Duke of Leinster and his cousin Charles Fox attempt to cement his alliance in politics back home. For example, in a letter written to William Ogilvie, he hints at possible business proposals or plans to be carried out in Canada, while commenting on how Canadian events could affect his family: “Since I began this, the lieut.-governor of Quebec is dead. It is a place of £1600 a year, and I think would do well for Charles [Fitzgerald’s brother]. The day before he died I was in treaty for his lieut.-colonelcy in the 44th regiment” (Moore, *Life* 73).

While Fitzgerald’s portrait of early North American settler society is filtered through his particular circumstances of family relationships, nationality, class, politics, and military strategy, his letters also show the ways that Europeans’ expectations of North America were already being shaped by writers on either side of the Atlantic. Moore himself notes that Fitzgerald’s idealized portrait of both settler and Aboriginal communities “had been already, it is well known, arrived at, through all the mazes of ingenious reasoning, by Rousseau” (55). In style, they may be influenced by Fitzgerald’s own reading, perhaps of other travel narratives, or more likely, picaresque and other travel-related fiction. It is clear from his letters that Fitzgerald was familiar with Frances Brooke’s epistolary novel *The History of Emily Montague* (1769), one of the earliest novels concerned with emigration to Quebec. He saves himself the trouble of giving his mother extensive descriptions of the early spring landscape and climate around Quebec City in a letter dated 4 May 1789, where he writes, “The weather is charming,—no snow, every thing green:—but Emily Montague will tell you all that better than I can. Really, after our long winter, we *do* enjoy spring” (Moore, *Life* 74-75). There may also be a more poignant reason for his mentioning this particular novel, in which everyone is eventually happily married. Fitzgerald had fallen in love with his cousin Georgiana Lennox, but her family had higher ambitions for her than a union with a younger son, and Fitzgerald, humiliatingly, was barred from her family home, a situation that led him to accept the posting in Canada (Moore, *Life* 42). His wistful musings about “G \* \*” throughout his letters suggest that he hoped the narrative his letters shaped would have an equally happy ending. (It did not: Georgiana was married off while he was in North America).

Like a picaresque, Fitzgerald's letters provide social commentary as he moves between classes and cultures, offering descriptions of military and settler life, as well as Aboriginal life in both remote hunting camps and more established villages. Geographically and thematically, the story pieced together from the letters moves from the military and settler society that seemed most familiar to Fitzgerald, to the unfamiliar hierarchy and family relationships of the hunting parties deep in the Quebec woods.

The first letter that Moore writes to his mother on disembarking at Halifax intimates the physical, social, and psychological distances that he will travel, beginning in a town that, linguistically at least, resembles his home and shows family connections wrought through a chain of emigration that was already being constructed by the Irish in North America. At the same time, it hints at how the physical landscape may work upon both emigrant and visitor:

"Halifax, June 24th, 1788.

"DEAREST, DEAREST MOTHER, . . .

"I can give you no account of the country yet, or the people. By what I hear, they are all Irish, at least in this town; the brogue is not in higher perfection in Kilkenny. . . . I am lodged at a Mr. Cornelius O'Brien's, who claims relationship; and I accept the relationship,—and his *horse*, for thirty miles up the country. I set out to-day. My regiment is at St. John's [sic], in New Brunswick . . . I go another road, which takes me round the bay. It is longer, and very bad, but by all accounts very wild and beautiful. I shall cross rivers and lakes of which one has no idea in England. I go down one river called Shubennacadee for thirty miles, which they tell me is so full of fish that you kill them with sticks. They say the banks of it are beautiful—all the finest wood and pasture, but quite in the state of nature. By all I hear, this will be a journey after my own heart. I long to hear from you. I love G\* \* more than ever. . . . (Moore, *Life* 42-43)

Even before Fitzgerald sees it for himself, he hears reports of a "wild and beautiful" land whose extravagant fecundity predictably suggests an Edenic destination for the Irish emigrants Fitzgerald has described. He admits that his proposed trip is "a journey after my own heart," rather than one taken for strategic or economic purposes, which suggests that his perception of the landscape corresponds to the highly personal, unrestrained emotionality that he shows in his letters to his mother, in which he permits himself to assert that he loves Georgiana in spite of the civilized rules governing wealth and succession that forbid his acting on this expression.

The next letter in Moore's selection reinforces the idea of a place that, if not an Eden, is a landscape similar to the Huron traditional lands described by the emigrant poet Adam Kidd, who in *The Huron Chief* imagines them as "a type of that pure sanctu'ry / Where first repenting, man had trod" (634-35).

It also introduces motifs taken up by later Irish emigrant writers such as the Nova Scotian Oliver Goldsmith and Isabella Valancy Crawford, who see in the rich and limitless woods and fertile lands the possibility for a more egalitarian society than that found on the estates of England and Ireland. In this letter from St. John, New Brunswick, July 18, he notes being plagued by millions of “musquitos,” but apart from that inconvenience seems taken with the landscape and its inhabitants, both in a “state of nature” (Moore, *Life* 43). He claims, “The equality of every body and of their manner of life I like very much. There are no gentlemen; every body is on a footing, provided he works and wants nothing” (Moore, *Life* 44). He recounts meeting Irish settlers “who came out not worth a shilling, and have all now farms, worth (according to the value of money in this country) from £1000 to £3000” (Moore, *Life* 43). To illustrate the possibilities for all classes of emigrants, whether Irish, American, or the newly displaced loyalists, he tells his mother of one encounter with an elderly settler couple:<sup>6</sup>

. . . Conceive, dearest mother, arriving about twelve o'clock in a hot day at a little cabin upon the side of a rapid river, the banks all covered with woods, not a house in sight . . . The contrast of all this, which had passed during the day, with the quietness of the evening . . . sitting quietly at the door, on the same spot they had lived in thirty years together, the contented thoughtfulness of their countenances, which was increased by their age and the solitary life they had led, the wild quietness of the place, not a living creature or habitation to be seen, and me, Tony, and our guide sitting with them, all on one log. The difference of the scene I had left,—the immense way I had to get from this corner of the world, to see any thing I loved,—the difference of the life I should lead from that of this old pair . . . I own I often think how happy I could be with G \* \* in some of the spots I see; and envied every young farmer I met, whom I saw sitting down with a young wife, whom he was going to work to maintain. . . . (Moore, *Life* 43-45)

This lengthy letter anticipates Moore's own “Ballad Stanzas” (1802),<sup>7</sup> where he comes upon a solitary cabin at noon, and imagines himself as part of a similarly blessed couple. It also looks forward to the success narratives that appear in emigrant manuals throughout the nineteenth century, and even anticipates the life of Crawford's Max and Katie in old age. As with other life writing, Fitzgerald's immediate reaction is informed by his assessment of his own present and future circumstances, possibly “discontented, disappointed, and miserable, wishing for power . . .” (Moore, *Life* 46).

Fitzgerald attributes this peace to freedom from the trappings of civilization, noting that “[t]he old settlers are almost as wild as the Indians” and furnished by nature with everything they require to be happy, even if

they have no money (Moore, *Life* 44). When he describes Aboriginal life to his family in a letter dated September 2 1788, he again measures happiness by natural affection and family relations, which he suggests are destroyed by the duties and requirements of civilization. He contrasts Aboriginal life to Irish aristocratic society, again using his family's experience to help them conceptualize a different set of societal attitudes and expectations:

To bring things home to oneself, if we had been Indians, instead of its [sic] being my duty to be separated from all of you, it would, on the contrary, be my duty to be with you, to make you comfortable, and to hunt and fish for you: instead of Lord \* \* 's being violent against letting me marry G \* \* , he would be glad to give her to me, that I might maintain and feed her. There would be then . . . no devilish politics, no fashions, customs, duties, or appearances to the world, to interfere with one's happiness. Instead of being served and supported by servants, every thing here is done by one's relations—by the people one loves; and the mutual obligations you must be under increase your love for each other. To be sure, the poor ladies are obliged to cut a little wood and bring a little water. Now the dear Ciss and Mimi, instead of being with Mrs. Lynch, would be carrying wood and fetching water, while you, dear mother, you would be smoking your pipe. Ogilvie and us boys, after having brought in our game, would be lying about the fire, while our squaws were helping the ladies to cook, or taking care of our papouses [sic]: all this in a fine wood, beside some beautiful lake, which when you were tired of, you would in ten minutes, without any baggage, get into your canoes and off with you elsewhere. (Moore, *Life* 50-51)

Fitzgerald's account of Aboriginal life is a combination of anthropological details, some casual sexism, and romanticized fantasy. In spite of idealizing Aboriginal life, Fitzgerald does not necessarily oversimplify the society he observes, but sees a complex web of social organization based on obligation and family relationships. His portrait also intimates the complexities of his own identity. While Luke Gibbons has suggested that Fitzgerald's willingness to see Aboriginal people as possessing a complex society based on family ties, ancient custom and tradition has parallels with later sympathetic United Irish views of ancient Irish culture (73), his portrait of the life of the Aboriginal men with its combination of hunting and leisure appealed to many aristocratic travel writers in the eighteenth century (Liebersohn 1).

While fuelled by his discontent with his own society, his belief in the superior moral values held by Aboriginal people was reinforced by his first-hand experience of the charity of an Aboriginal hunting party<sup>8</sup> that his small exploration group "fell in" with on their way from Fredericton to Quebec (Moore, *Life* 66). He makes light of the event to his mother, possibly to reassure her that he was all right, since by other accounts his party was lost, starving

and near death, and had to be rescued (Gahan 89). During their time together, they hunted moose, and Fitzgerald increasingly seems to identify with his Aboriginal hosts in describing the perseverance required to track a moose through snow for five days: “An Indian never gives him up” (Moore, *Life* 68). Fitzgerald seems willing to give up the last shreds of an artificial civility as he contemplates the worth of conventional sentiment in the face of basic survival: he tells his mother that he pities the moose at bay, but has no problems later eating him: “In short, I forgot the animal, and only thought of my hunger and fatigue. We are beasts, dearest mother, I am sorry to say it” (Moore, *Life* 69). Nevertheless, in his account, the harshness of Canadian conditions do not correspond to a degeneration of fellow-feeling, but instead prompts the Aboriginal people to cherish communal values that Fitzgerald thinks should be emulated by Europeans. The lengthy letter he composed to his mother provides a moralistic narrative that once again reinforces the significant differences between European and Aboriginal society:

“Quebec, March 14, 1789. . . .

“You must know we came through a part of the country that had been always reckoned impassible. In short, instead of going a long way about, we determined to try and get straight through the woods, and see what kind of country it was. I believe I mentioned my party in a letter to Ogilvie before I left St. Anne’s or Fredericktown: it was an officer of the regiment, Tony, and two woodsmen. . . . [A]fter making the river, we fell in with some savages, and travelled with them to Quebec; they were very kind to us, and said we were ‘all one brother’—all ‘one Indian.’ They fed us the whole time we were with them. You would have laughed to have seen me carrying an old squaw’s pack, which was so heavy I could hardly waddle under it. However, I was well paid whenever we stopped, for she always gave me the best bits, and most soup, and took as much care of me as if I had been her own son: in short, I was quite *l’enfant chéri*. We were quite sorry to part: the old lady and gentleman both kissed me very heartily. I gave the old lady one of Sophia’s silver spoons, which pleased her very much.

“When we got here, you may guess what figures we were: we had not shaved or washed during the journey; our blanket, coats, and trousers all worn out and pieced:—in short, we went to two or three houses and they would not let us in. There was one old lady, exactly the hostess in Gil Blas, *elle me prit la mesure du pied jusqu’à la tête*, and told me there was one room, without a stove or bed, next a billiard room, which I might have if I pleased; and when I told her we were gentlemen, she very quietly said, ‘I dare say you are,’ and off she went. . . . We are quite curiosities here after our journey; some think we were mad to undertake it; some think we were lost; some will have it we were starved; in short, there are a thousand lies, but we are safe and well, enjoying rest and good eating most completely. One ought really to take these fillips now and then; they make one enjoy life a great deal more. . . . (Moore, *Life* 66-67)

Possibly as part of the letter's apparent intent to reassure his mother, Fitzgerald makes light of his ordeal and re-casts it as a picaresque in the manner of *Gil Blas*, which allows him to make satiric comments about both European and the nascent colony's social classes and expectations. Fitzgerald first portrays the welcome he gains from people who see themselves and his party as "kind," thus transforming strangers to kin in recognition that such kindness is essential to survival in a harsh environment. He then contrasts their actions to the manners shown by the supposed "civilization" he returns to, whose values include withholding shelter and food, based on his ragged appearance.

In his biography, Moore includes a report from a Mr. Hamilton Moore to the Duke of Richmond that reinforces the egalitarian aspects of an "arduous and dangerous undertaking. . . . [I]n such expeditions lord and servant are alike, for each must carry his own provisions" (*Life* 71). In Fitzgerald's narrative, the conditions of a journey "entirely through uninhabited woods, morasses and mountains, a route never before attempted, even by the Indians" (*Life* 71) requires entering uncharted social territory for an Irish aristocrat. The harshness of the journey, the letter implies, requires a different social system, in which each person contributes his or her own strength to ensure the survival of the group. When he meets his rescuers, Fitzgerald enters into the social system he has only observed in earlier letters to his mother. He carries not only his own, but also the pack of his Aboriginal "mother," and she in turn feeds and cherishes him, replacing the master-servant relationship he left behind in Fredericton with one couched in familial terms that increases each person's natural bond with the other. Like social class, racial and cultural barriers dissolve temporarily as mutual dependence makes everyone in the group "all one Indian." The token he leaves with his adopted family, a silver spoon from his sister, at first appears an absurd symbol of privilege to be introducing to this culture, but this gift from his sister perhaps allows Fitzgerald to incorporate the elderly couple into his family, as they have welcomed him into theirs.

Before leaving North America, Fitzgerald entered into a more official adoption through the agencies of a figure as instrumental to Canadian and Aboriginal history as Fitzgerald became to Irish history, and one who had as radical a view of cultural and racial relations as the United Irishmen. Like Fitzgerald, Joseph Brant first distinguished himself as a British officer and loyal ally, but became equally known for his ill-fated attempt to unite Aboriginal tribes to regain much of the power and influence that the Iroquois and other tribes lost at the close of the American war (Gahan 100). In many ways Brant seemed to illustrate a hierarchy based on merit rather than inherited privilege:

the Scottish traveller and writer Patrick Campbell described him as “a renowned warrior” who “is not of any royal or conspicuous progenitors, but by his ability in war, and political conduct in peace, has raised himself to the highest dignity of his nation, and his alliance and friendship is now courted by sovereign and foreign states” (qtd. in Kelsay 526).

Joseph Brant’s British connections were as impressive as Fitzgerald’s: he was friends with Fitzgerald’s cousin, the Whig politician Charles Fox (Tillyard 106), and had made several trips to England to cement alliances with the British and also to seek compensation as a Loyalist for damage to property incurred in the recent war (Kelsay 390-92). His real dream was for the Iroquois to lead other Aboriginal nations in a pan-Indian confederation that would be considered an equal player in British and American policy after the American war, but unknown to him, the British had already made the decision to surrender Iroquois territories to the Americans. Brant dreamed of an Indian confederacy supporting the common good, imagined as “a dish with one spoon” (Kelsay 416) that was enriched by trade and military alliances with the British. Naturally, as a kinsman of an influential British politician, Fitzgerald was welcomed, possibly with lavish meals, tea on fine china served by servants (and African slaves), copious whiskey and Scottish reels, the type of hospitality Patrick Campbell wrote of in detail after he visited Brant (Kelsay 527). However, descriptions of indoor hospitality are significantly absent from Fitzgerald’s letter to his mother from Fort Erie on June 1, 1789:

“DEAREST MOTHER,

“I am just come from the Falls of Niagara. . . . As I said before, to describe them would be impossible: . . . your own imagination must do it. The immense height and noise of the Falls, the spray that rises to the clouds. . . . Then, the greenness and tranquility of every thing about, the quiet of the immense forests around, compared with the violence of all that is close to the Falls,—but I will not go on, for I should never end.

\* \* \* \*

“I set out to-morrow for Detroit: I go with one of the Indian chiefs, Joseph Brant, he that was in England. We have taken very much to one another. I shall entertain you very much with his remarks on England, and the English, while he was there. Instead of crossing Lake Erie in a ship, I go in canoes up and down rivers. In crossing Lake Ontario, I was as sick as at sea,—so you may guess I prefer canoeing;—besides my friend Joseph always travels with company; and we shall go through a number of Indian villages. If you only stop an hour, they have a dance for you. They are delightful people; the ladies charming, and with manners that I like very much, they are so natural. Notwithstanding the life they lead, which would make most women rough and masculine, they are as soft, meek, and modest as the best brought up girls in England. At the same time, they

are coquettes *au possible*. Consider the manners of Mimi in a poor *squaw* that has been carrying packs in the woods all her life. . . . I think often of you all in these wild woods:—they are better than rooms. Ireland and England will be too little for me when I go home. If I could carry my dearest mother about with me, I should be completely happy here. (Moore, *Life* 75-76)

Even before his official adoption by Brant's friend, the Mohawk chief David Hill, Fitzgerald notes how his time in Canada has changed his perceptions, as suggested by his recounting of the sublime scale of the Niagara Falls reinforced by its foil, the silent forests, that precedes the encounter with Brant. Fitzgerald continues to focus on the hospitality of Indian villages, rather than his time in Brant's mansion, which seems in keeping with his sense of freedom and possibilities represented by open, unconstrained imagery:<sup>9</sup> the freedom of the canoe, contrasted to the nauseous prison of a lake boat, the freedom of the woods, contrasted to the claustrophobia of rooms, including even the "little book room" (Moore, *Life* 76) at his mother's estate that he imagined returning to at the end of the letter. Even the relationships between the sexes seem more "natural" and unconstrained. In contrast to the stilted courtship and financial negotiations that governed aristocratic marriage contracts, he hints of more open sexual mores in his description of Aboriginal women, and, in a letter dated June 20, of a particular relationship he entered into while travelling with Brant: "*Entre nous*, I am in a little sorrow, as I am to part to-morrow with a fellow-traveller who has been very pleasant and taken great care of me:—*les plus courtes folies sont les meilleures*" (Moore, *Life* 76).<sup>10</sup> In the same letter, he links his personal adoption of a new perspective and mores with his official adoption by David Hill: "I have been adopted by one of the Nations, and am now a thorough Indian." Moore reproduces the letter that certifies Fitzgerald's adoption, essentially a tradition in which British officers and allies were made civil chiefs to facilitate trade and strategic connections (White xv):

"David Hill's letter to Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Chief of the Bear Tribe.

*"Waghgongh Sen non Pryer*

*Ne nen Seghyrage ni i*

*Ye Sayats Eghnidal*

*Ethonayyere*

*David Hill*

*Karonghyontye*

*lyogh Saghnonnyon*

21 June, 1789

*I, David Hill, Chief of the Six Nations, give the name of Eghnidal to my friend Lord Edward Fitzgerald, for which I hope he will remember me as long as he lives.*

*"The name belongs to the Bear Tribe." (Moore, Life 76)*

According to Moore, Fitzgerald preserved this note commemorating his adoption to the end of his life (76). A hybrid document written in Mohawk and English, it could function as authentication in a form expected by a European, but also reflects an older oral and ceremonial history. Hill's willingness to provide a legal document probably reflects a more pragmatic and accurate view than Fitzgerald held of the "middle ground"<sup>11</sup> inhabited by Joseph Brant and the Aboriginal nations who were struggling to find a place in the new international political world, in which events in North America affected Britain, and British policy irrevocably changed the traditional way of life Fitzgerald admired during his sojourn with the hunting party.

The remainder of Fitzgerald's trip through America by canoe with his adopted brothers was lengthy and arduous, equalling the achievements made by more famous travel writers of the time (Gahan 87). The letters that survive are significant Irish historical documents, but are also very early examples of many of the themes that would resonate throughout nineteenth-century Canadian writing in poetry, fiction, emigrant guides and popular history. Importantly, Fitzgerald's writing, seen through the lens of Moore's biography, kept his presence alive in Canada well into the 1830s, and for some writers came to illustrate their ambivalence about violent rebellion, not to mention ambivalence about Irish and Canadian identity within a British-controlled territory. Moore, and even Kidd wrote about the United Irish rebellion as something firmly in Ireland's past, and emphasized Ireland's contributions to and rightful place within the British empire in the present (Kelly 484). Such ambivalence reflected a unique Irish sensibility existing in early Canadian writing that evolved into a later, more conservative support for the interests of settler societies, of which the Irish made up a significant part, over those of Aboriginal communities (Urschel 181). As the nineteenth century wore on, Irish Canadian writers such as Thomas D'arcy McGee and Nicholas Flood Davin advocated harmony between Irish and English settler cultures by creating "an essentially 'Anglo-Celtic' conception of Canada to which others had to assimilate" (Urschel 181-82). However, in the first decades of the nineteenth century, Fitzgerald's voice was part of a conversation during a time when what King called "a whole spectrum of Romantic aesthetic and political possibilities" for Ireland and the Irish in Canada was still open (King, "Prefiguring the Peaceable Kingdom" 39). Finally, Fitzgerald's letters, alternately lovelorn, naïve, satirical, witty, and consciously literary, would be, in their own right, interesting contributions to any anthology of early Canadian literature.

NOTES

- 1 Just as they differed widely on other New World subjects, including slavery, United Irish attitudes to Aboriginal people covered a range of attitudes, of which Jason King provides a useful overview. David Wilson, for instance, observes that United Irish responses featured “a complex combination of attraction and repulsion,” and that “the leading United Irishmen in America believed they were bringing enlightenment to the savages” (qtd. in King, “A Stranger to Our Sympathy” 82).
- 2 In “Native Muses and National Poetry: Nineteenth Century Irish Canadian Poets,” “Ossian Abroad: James Macpherson and Canadian Literary Nationalism, 1830-1994,” and “United Irishmen in Canada: Adam Kidd’s *The Huron Chief* Reconsidered,” I trace some of the common Romantic cultural nationalist strategies used by Irish and Canadian writers. Many of these strategies were inspired by the work of Irish antiquarians and employed by Romantic writers in Ireland and Canada. They are a characteristic common to nationalist groups such as The Patriots and The United Irish Society in Ireland, and later by Young Ireland, and then by Thomas D’arcy McGee in Canada.
- 3 Moore’s *The Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald* is still the most accessible source of Fitzgerald’s letters from Canada and North America, although it poses a problem for bibliographers and historians. According to a later biographer, Stella Tillyard, Moore heavily edited Fitzgerald’s letters, and in this form they survived an apparent purge of the Duchess of Leinster’s family archives that occurred after the biography was written (Tillyard 302). However, in “New Light on Lord Edward Fitzgerald,” Kevin Whelan examines the letters recovered and acquired by the National Library of Ireland, and comments on the editorial changes that Moore made to make the letters acceptable for, in Whelan’s words, “edifying Whig consumption. He corrects his style, removes any hint of ‘low’ vulgarity, and elevates Edward into the Whig canon.” One of Moore’s characteristic excisions concerns Edward’s comparison of the New World brothels to the ones in Paris: “There is a certain commodity here very cheap indeed which helps me on—not quite so good as chez la Comtesse de Milford but very tolerable. What a set of hungry dogs there will be at this shop this winter. I certainly do envy some of them” (qtd. in Whelan). The unedited letters suggest that occasionally, in spite of reassurances to his mother, Fitzgerald couldn’t always get by with “only one blanket” on a long winter night (Moore, *Life* 63).
- 4 Kelly notes that Moore “was wholly repentant” for what he later termed “the hasty prejudices of my youth” (97), a repentance he attributed in part to the influences of the company he travelled with, which included the new British ambassador to Washington, and the anti-American British sailors and officers, one of whom, Rear-Admiral George Cockburn, was later responsible for burning down the Capitol and the White House during the War of 1812 (97).
- 5 Vail claims that Moore not only sympathized with United Irish aims and wrote in support of them, but also joined them, based on evidence from the diaries of a contemporary of Moore, Charles Cavendish Fulke Greville, who claimed that Moore told him that he took the oath of the United Irish Society shortly after an inquisition of all Trinity College students including Moore (49). Kelly is more skeptical about the degree of commitment to the United Irish cause implied by the frail eighteen-year-old Moore’s simply taking the oath: “What Moore knew before and after his swearing in was in likelihood fairly common knowledge. Indeed, Moore was hardly the ideal schemer” (63).
- 6 Daniel Gahan suggests that if this couple was Irish, Fitzgerald would say so; since he does not, Gahan speculates that they might be “New England ‘Planters’ who moved in after the Acadian expulsion” (90n).

7 I knew by the smoke, that so gracefully curl'd  
 Above the green Elms, that a cottage was near,  
 And I said, "If there's peace to be found in the  
     world,  
 A heart that was humble might hope for it here!

It was noon, and on flowers that languished around  
 In silence reposed the voluptuous bee;  
 Every leaf was at rest, and I heard not a sound  
 But the woodpecker tapping the hollow beech tree . . .  
 (Moore, *Poetical Works* 124)

- 8 Tillyard refers to Fitzgerald's rescuers as Iroquois, possibly because he later spends much time with two Mohawk leaders who spoke for all the Iroquois nations, but Gahan speculates that Fitzgerald, who called all the Aboriginal people he met "Indians" or "savages," met Maliseet and Micmac in Nova Scotia and New Brunswick, and possibly a Montagnais or Huron hunting party while in Lower Canada (Gahan 97-98).
- 9 D.M.R. Bentley introduces the Canadian Poetry Press edition of Adam Kidd's *The Huron Chief* (1987) with a discussion of similar centrifugal tendencies and preference for "freedom (openness)" in the poet's imagery (xiv-xv). In *The Huron Chief, and Other Poems*, Kidd calls Ireland "the Land of Fitzgerald" (203).
- 10 Given that this letter is written to Fitzgerald's mother, it is hard to say from this phrase exactly how far Fitzgerald pursued his flirtation or "brief folly." Tillyard suggests that Fitzgerald did have a sexual relationship with a young Aboriginal woman while travelling with Brant, but does not say where this information comes from (103). Whether mere flirtation or something more, Fitzgerald obviously did not share what King noted was a "widespread sense of 'horror at miscegenation'" more prevalent in the nineteenth century ("A Stranger to Our Sympathy" 82). His writing again anticipates Kidd's own willingness to celebrate "the spirit of miscegenation in its artistic treatment of Irish and Indian cultural intermixture . . . that . . . encapsulates a communal ethic of empathy for Indigenous peoples that is expressed through a Romantic structure of feeling" in Kidd's writing and the pro-Catholic Irish Canadian newspaper *The Vindicator* ("A Stranger to Our Sympathy" 82).
- 11 "The middle ground" is a phrase coined by Richard White and used as the title to his study of the Aboriginal/European culture that he argues briefly flourished in North America in the eighteenth century. Intermarriage and adoption ceremonies were seen as an economic and political tactic as well as human necessity and rarely viewed with horror in the communities White studies.

WORKS CITED

- Bartlett, Thomas, et al., eds. *1798: A Bicentenary Perspective*. Dublin: Four Courts, 2003. Print.
- Bentley, D.M.R. "Introduction." Kidd, *The Huron Chief* xi-xliii.
- . "Isaac Weld and the Continuity of Canadian Poetry." *Biography and Autobiography: Essays on Irish and Canadian History and Literature*. Ed. James Noonan. Ottawa: Carleton UP, 1993. Print.
- . "Thomas Moore's Construction of Upper Canada in 'Ballad Stanzas.'" *Canadian Poetry: Studies, Documents, Reviews* 35 (1994): 1-10. Print.
- Campbell, Patrick. *Travels in the Interior Inhabited Parts of North America, in the Years*

- 1791 and 1792. 1793. *CIHM/ICMH Microfiche Series*. University of Alberta Libraries, 1986. Web. 25 May 2011.
- [Dunlop, William]. *Statistical Sketches of Upper Canada, for the Use of Emigrants: By a Backwoodsman*. London: Murray, 1833. *Google Books*. Web. 25 May 2011.
- Gahan, Daniel. "Journey After My Own Heart': Lord Edward FitzGerald in America, 1788-90." *New Hibernia Review* 8.2 (2004): 85-105. Web. 25 May 2012.
- Gibbons, Luke. "The Return of the Native': The United Irishmen, Culture and Colonialism." Bartlett et al. 52-74.
- Holmgren, Michele. "Native Muses and National Poetry: Nineteenth-Century Irish-Canadian Poets." Diss. University of Western Ontario, 1997. Print.
- . "Ossian Abroad: James Macpherson and Canadian Literary Nationalism, 1830-1994." *Canadian Poetry: Studies, Documents, Reviews* 50 (2002): 51-81. Print.
- . "United Irishmen in Canada: Adam Kidd's *The Huron Chief* Reconsidered." *Canadian Poetry: Studies, Documents, Reviews* 60 (2007): 46-67. Print.
- Kelly, Ronan. *Bard of Erin: The Life of Thomas Moore*. London: Penguin, 2008. Print.
- Kelsay, Isabel. *Joseph Brant: Man of Two Worlds*. Syracuse: Syracuse UP, 1986. Print.
- Kidd, Adam. *The Huron Chief, And Other Poems*. Montreal: Herald and New Gazette, 1830. Print.
- . *The Huron Chief*. Ed. D.M.R. Bentley with Contributions and Appendices by Charles R. Steele. London: Canadian Poetry, 1987. Print.
- King, Jason. "A Stranger to Our Sympathy': Radical Romanticism and the Image of the Native American in Adam Kidd's *The Huron Chief* and *The Vindicator*." *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 33.1 (2007): 82-90. Print.
- . "Prefiguring the Peaceable Kingdom: The Construction of Counter-Revolutionary Sentiment in Irish-Canadian Romantic Verse and Prose." *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 31.1 (2005): 38-44. Print.
- Liebersohn, Harry. *Aristocratic Encounters: European Travelers and North American Indians*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1998. Print.
- Lynch, Claire. *Irish Autobiography: Stories of Self in the Narrative of a Nation*. Oxford: Peter Lang, 2009. Print. Reimagining Ireland 7.
- Moore, Thomas. *Poetical Works*. London: Oxford UP, 1929. Print.
- . *The Life and Death of Lord Edward Fitzgerald*. 1831. Tennessee: Nabu Public Domain, 2010. Print.
- Tillyard, Stella. *Citizen Lord: The Life of Edward Fitzgerald, Irish Revolutionary*. New York: Farrar, 1997. Print.
- Urschel, Katrin. "From Assimilation to Diversity: Ethnic Identity in Irish-Canadian Literature." *Multiculturalism and Integration: Canadian and Irish Experiences*. Ed. Vera Regan, Isabelle Lemee, and Maeve Conrick. Ottawa: U of Ottawa P, 2010. Print.
- Vail, Jeffery. "Thomas Moore in Ireland and America: The Growth of a Poet's Mind." *Romanticism* 10.1 (2004): 41-62. Web. 27 Apr. 2012.
- Warkentin, Germaine. *Canadian Exploration Literature*. Toronto: Oxford UP, 1993. Print.
- Weld, Isaac. *Travels through the States of North America, and the Provinces of Upper and Lower Canada, during the Years 1795, 1796, and 1797*. 2 vols. London: Stockdale, 1800. Print.
- Whelan, Kevin. "New Light on Lord Edward Fitzgerald." *History Ireland* 7.4 (1999): n. pag. Web. 27 Apr. 2012.
- White, Richard. *The Middle Ground: Indians, Empires and Republics in the Great Lakes Region, 1650-1815*. Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 1991. Print. Studies in North American Indian History.