

1 – Thomas Foster, SELF-PORTRAIT
c.1820, oil on canvas, 59.5 x 44.5 cm (private collection; courtesy the owner)

‘One of our Brilliant Ornaments’: the death and life of Thomas Foster

WILLIAM LAFFAN AND BRENDAN ROONEY

AT HALF-PAST-TEN ON THE EVENING OF MONDAY 27 FEBRUARY 1826, THOMAS Foster dined at Palianno’s Coffee Room in Mayfair. Foster was a successful Irish artist living in Regency London, and recently had had news of his election as an associate of the newly founded Royal Hibernian Academy. He was strikingly handsome, convivial, and, seemingly, in relatively comfortable financial circumstances. Intimately connected with the Irish aristocracy, he was patronised by the leading Irish Member of Parliament and Secretary of the Admiralty, John Wilson Croker (1780-1857), and, despite his youth, was a friend of the president of the Royal Academy (and one of the most fashionable artists in Europe), Sir Thomas Lawrence (1769-1830).

While drinking several cups of strong coffee in the restaurant, Foster’s behaviour began to attract the attention of a waiter, unsurprisingly perhaps as he was in the process of loading a pistol ‘in an extraordinary manner – nearly to the muzzle’.¹ Leaving Palianno’s, Foster checked into Webb’s Hotel in Piccadilly, and without touching the glass of water and whisky he had ordered, retired to his room. After a short time he rang the bell and asked the chambermaid for a glass of soda water, telling her that ‘he did not feel comfortable and had a long journey to take in the morning’. At half-past-four on the morning of Tuesday 28 February, Foster shot himself twice in the head. He discharged a pair of pistols at almost the same instant, one into his mouth, the other through his ear. His skull was blown to pieces and his features were so damaged that he could not be readily identified. He was twenty-eight years of age.

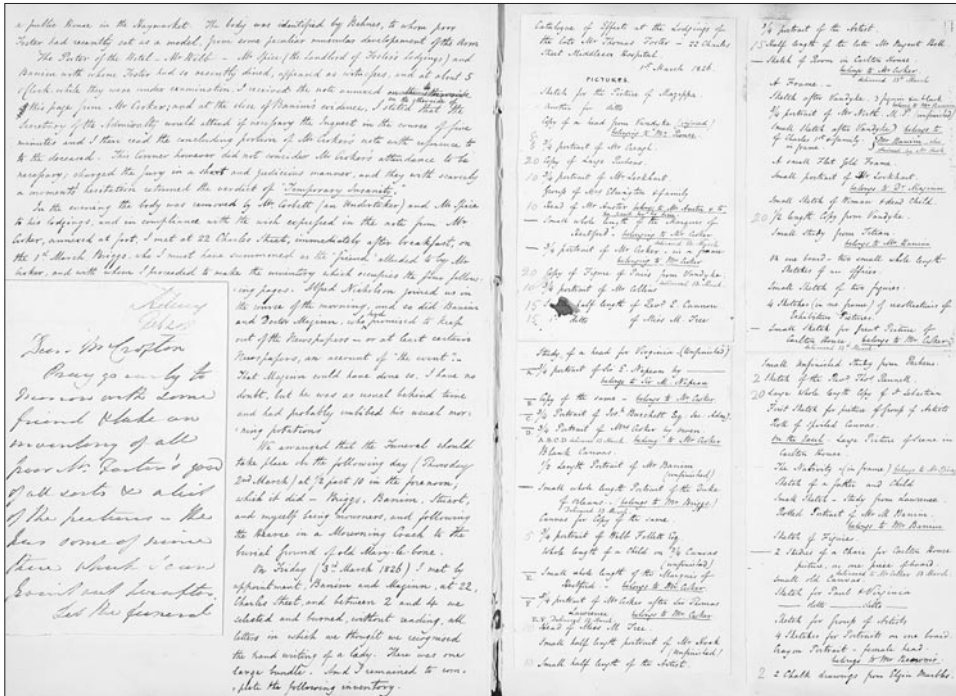
Although one of his few surviving portraits hangs in Trinity College, Dublin, Foster has almost completely dropped out of the art historical literature. He is not mentioned, for example, in Crookshank and Glin’s standard work, *The Painters of Ireland*.² Strickland, however, gives a reasonably accurate outline of Foster’s life

(albeit one derived largely from the entry in the *Dictionary of National Biography*), demonstrating once again how fundamentally important his dictionary still is, ninety years after it was compiled. As the late Michael Wynne said, we are ‘still finding names in Strickland’.³ In Strickland’s account, two possible reasons are suggested for Foster’s suicide – despondency over his work, or ‘a hopeless attachment to a lady whose portrait he was painting’.⁴ He also refers to a suicide note in which Foster declared ‘that his friends had forsaken him and that he was tired of life’.⁵ In part at least, Strickland was correct, but a further reason for Foster’s suicide seems likely to have been the circumstances of his birth and his connection with one of the leading aristocratic families of Ireland.

While relatively little is known about much of Foster’s short life, we are able to trace his last few days almost hour by hour because of the discovery of a remarkable manuscript album dedicated principally to his death, which was compiled by his friend, the antiquarian Thomas Crofton Croker (1798-1854). By investigating this material, the present authors aim to reintroduce Foster as an absorbingly interesting artist of the period, and to examine his oeuvre and artistic practices. The mass of information contained in the album gives us a much fuller picture of Foster’s day-to-day life than is available for almost any other Irish Regency artist, perhaps with the exception of the older Sir Martin Archer Shee (1769-1850). At the same time, the album provides a rare opportunity to test the accuracy of Strickland against a documentary source. The manuscript’s narrative is also used here to explore the remarkable group of Irish artists, politicians and writers with whom Foster associated in London.⁶

Foster, as relatively few Irish artists had been before him, was a highly literate individual who clearly enjoyed the company of writers and who brought his own reading and associations to bear on his art.⁷ Suggestive parallels can be drawn between Foster’s short career and that of Daniel Maclise (1806-1870), who entered almost the identical Irish expatriate circle in London a year or two after Foster’s death. While still in Cork, Maclise had made sketches after a bust of Foster, indicating the esteem in which the young artist was held at home in Ireland.⁸ The Crofton Croker manuscript was discovered in Oxford in March 2002, and has been acquired by the National Gallery of Ireland’s Centre for the Study of Irish Art. Sections of it are published here for the first time. Serendipitously, while the present authors were engaged in researching the album’s contents, a striking self-portrait (Plate 1) by Foster emerged on the art market, and was acquired for an Irish private collection.

Crofton Croker bought the album in which he records Foster’s death at the studio auction of the English artist John Perronet Briggs (1791-1844), a mutual friend of both himself and Foster, describing it as a ‘pleasing recollection of an old friend’.⁹ Briggs had died just three months earlier in London. When Crofton Croker



2 – Folio from Thomas Crofton Croker’s manuscript album of material relating to Henry Perronet Briggs and Thomas Foster, 1854 (courtesy National Gallery of Ireland)

acquired the volume it contained just eight figure sketches and a series of smaller sketches of costume details, all by Briggs.¹⁰ Of these, six, in pen and ink, were copies after engravings of fusiliers by Jacques de Gheyn (1565-1629), a Dutch artist who had published hundreds of such works at the beginning of the seventeenth century.¹¹ Crofton Croker believed that Briggs had executed the sketches in about 1825.

It seems that Crofton Croker had a very clear idea of what he should do with the rather sparsely illustrated volume. With meticulous attention to detail and in a remarkably refined hand, he filled the empty pages beside, or in some cases around, Briggs’ drawings with a comprehensive list of works exhibited at the Royal Academy by Briggs, but also by their mutual friend Foster. The list, evidently transcribed from the official Royal Academy records, begins with Briggs’ showing in 1816. The list proceeds uninterrupted until 1826, at which point Crofton Croker records abruptly ‘FOSTER destroyed himself 28th February’. To emphasise it, he underlines the statement. Crofton Croker continues the list with occasional annotations up to 1844, the year of Briggs’ death, but then dramatically alters the nature of his text. He includes a short passage on the life of Briggs that occupies two pages,



3 – Thomas Foster,
STUDY OF A CHINA JAR
 n.d., watercolour on paper,
 12.5 x 8.5 cm; from Thomas
 Crofton Croker's manuscript
 album of material relating to
 Henry Perronet Briggs and
 Thomas Foster, 1854 (courtesy
 National Gallery of Ireland)

but devotes the remaining thirty pages to Foster. Distributed among these pages are ephemera relating to the artist, including correspondence, sketches, prints, envelopes, press cuttings, and a remarkable inventory of the artist's effects (Plate 2). The volume also features a number of unbound letters that date from after Foster's death.

In Crofton Croker's volume, word and image combine to create an intimate scrapbook effect (Plate 3). In contrast to the short biographies of Foster in Strickland or the *DNB*, with their Victorian stamp of assumed authority, Crofton Croker's approach is resolutely non-linear, yet at the same time remarkably immediate. He quotes verbatim from the accounts of witnesses to the events, and clearly did much detective work himself in his quest to establish the reasons behind his friend's death. At the same time he amplifies his account with quotations from other published and manuscript sources (although sometimes expressing cautious disagreement with them), and seems at times aware of his anomalous position – at once eyewitness, protagonist and chronicler. Certainly he must have been mindful of the irony of including in the album letters about himself that he was never meant to see.

4 – Unknown artist, THOMAS CROFTON CROKER
 1849, oil on millboard, 17.5 x 14 cm
 (detail), (courtesy National Portrait Gallery, London)



Indeed, it is significant in itself that Crofton Croker should have chosen to compile the volume with such assiduity and in such detail some twenty-eight years after Foster's death.¹² He is, in part, engaged in an act of autobiographical writing about a deeply traumatic event of his own youth. Within the album there are textual and visual digressions. He pastes in a clipping from *The Sunday Times* of 15 January 1854 on a proposal to grant a pension to the Irish artist Samuel Lover (1797-1868), on the grounds that Lover later occupied the house in which Briggs had lived – next door to Foster's own lodgings where much of the action of his narrative takes place.¹³

It becomes abundantly clear as one reads through the material written and assembled by Croker that Foster's friends in London were at once alarmed and deeply distressed by his premature death. The album can be seen as an attempt by Crofton Croker to make sense of it many years later. Clearly it was compiled for his personal use and without publication in mind, and its collage effect of image, text and hypertext brings us curiously close to the events of Foster's last few days and to Crofton Croker himself. Indeed, it is clear that an understanding of Crofton Croker

is crucial to any attempt to unravel the album he compiled. His dual and, some would think, conflicting, occupations as chronicler of Irish legend and naval civil servant explain much of the nature of his narrative of Foster's death.

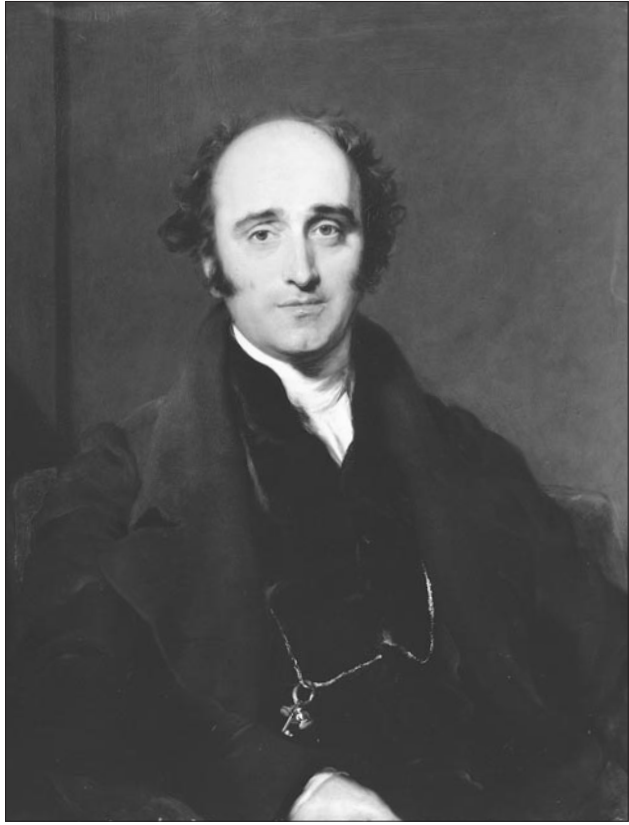
Thomas Crofton Croker (Plate 4) was born in Cork in 1798, the only son of Major Thomas Croker of the 38th Infantry. From the age of about fourteen he travelled extensively in the southern counties of Ireland, collecting the poetry, songs and legends of the Gaelic Irish.¹⁴ In 1815 he published a prose translation of an Irish *coronach* in *The Morning Post*, and later sent 'nearly forty ancient airs' to Thomas Moore. He also had artistic interests, sending Moore drawings of Cork scenery and mastering the art of etching. After the death of his father, Crofton Croker obtained a clerkship in the Admiralty in London through the influence of the Galway-born Member of Parliament and Secretary of the Admiralty John Wilson Croker (Plate 5), who, despite the relatively rare surname, was not a relation. Wilson Croker¹⁵ was one of the most influential Irishmen in the capital, and although hardly known in Ireland today, is of great significance in British political history as one of the founders of modern Conservatism.¹⁶ In addition to his support of Crofton Croker, he was to become Foster's most important patron.

Crofton Croker worked at the Admiralty until 1850, and put his early interest in etching to administrative use by introducing lithography to the department. He records in the album that a lithographic stone belonging to the Admiralty, which he had presumably lent Foster, was found in the artist's studio after his death.¹⁷ Despite his administrative duties, Crofton Croker embarked on a literary career shortly after arriving in London, publishing *Researches in the South of Ireland* in 1824, and the following year *The Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland*, the second edition of which was illustrated by Daniel Maclise, his fellow Corkonian whose first visit to London he funded. Maclise was later to include a portrait of Crofton Croker in his masterpiece *Snap-Apple Night* (private collection).¹⁸ Crofton Croker 'was, all his life, a collector of antiquarian and literary curiosities' and a careful scholar and punctilious bureaucrat, in what was then one of the most important departments of state.¹⁹ Walter Scott's description of him – 'little as a dwarf, keen eyed as a hawk and of easy prepossessing manners' – is acute.²⁰ His gift for friendship and sharp critical faculties are both clearly apparent in his account of Foster's death.

In the same troubled year of 1798 as Crofton Croker's birth in Cork, his friend Thomas Foster was born in Birr, county Offaly. Foster's teacher at the Dublin Society Schools, Robert Lucius West (c.1774-1850), wrote to Crofton Croker six weeks after his death giving some cursory details of his family still living there:

With respect to our late friend's relatives I understand he has two brothers, one a cutler and the other I don't know of what occupation and their mother

5 – Thomas Lawrence,
JOHN WILSON CROKER
n.d., oil on panel, 75 x 63 cm
(detail), (courtesy National Gallery
of Ireland)



living in Birr, Kings County. I have a friend there who will make every enquiry for me – and when you wish to forward anything let me know.

The rather lowly social status of Foster's brother, working in a manual trade in rural Ireland, represents a sharp contrast with the artist's own, as he was clearly moving in the highest ranks of London society. The fact that West had to offer to enquire on Crofton Croker's behalf as to the family of a close mutual friend is perhaps also surprising; West had, after all, known Foster since he was a child. It indicates perhaps that Foster did not speak much to either of them about his mother and brothers. An explanation for this will be offered later.

T.L. Cooke's *Picture of Parsonstown in the King's County*, another well-informed contemporary source, provides a charming vignette of Foster's childhood in Birr (or Parsonstown as it then was), and of his earliest artistic ventures:

Foster the portrait painter of London was from this town, and here he made his first attempts in drawing little soldiers, which he sold for a penny a dozen.

At length the late Mr Thomas C. Parsons felt an interest for the juvenile artist, who through his patronage attained whatever reputation he possessed. In return for such parental treatment Foster dedicated to his kind patron the earliest productions of his pencil, of which many specimens were to be seen in Mr Parsons' house in Harcourt Street Dublin. It is remarkable that shortly after Mr Parsons' death his protégée put a period to his own existence.²¹

Written in the year of Foster's death, Cooke's text links the artist's suicide somehow with the demise of his patron Thomas Parsons (1766-1825), the younger brother of the 2nd Earl of Rosse (1758-1841). The tone is rather knowing, and we shall suggest in due course that the Parsons had good cause for his 'parental treatment'.

West's letter to Crofton Croker gives further information about Foster's early productions while still at Birr, and, independently of Cooke, notes the early patronage he received from the Castle:

There was lately sent to my care from the late Mr. Parsons house a very large picture painted by F[oster] when a lad – intended for the chapel at Parsonstown – Mr. Parsons I understand left him one thousand – which sum I suppose his relatives has got.²²

This altarpiece intended for the chapel at Birr has not been located, but three pictures by Foster do still survive in Birr Castle – two small versions of a *Portrait of Lawrence, 2nd Earl of Rosse in Coronation Robes* (Plate 6), and a portrait of his wife, Alice, Countess of Rosse (née Lloyd, of Gloster, county Offaly) (Plate 7), with their daughters Jane and Alicia Parsons. Both coronation portraits are in a decidedly Lawrentian manner. The formulaic nature of such images notwithstanding, the Earl is a direct and close pastiche of Lawrence's *Portrait of 4th Duke of Atholl* (Perth Museum and Art Gallery), dated by Garlick to 1825.²³ Similarly, the portrait of the countess and her daughters has Lawrence's spindly arms, Van Dyckian pillar and curtain, and the view into a landscape that Lawrence uses repeatedly in family portraits. If the connection between Lawrence's Duke of Atholl and Foster's Earl of Rosse is accepted (and if Garlick's dating of the former is correct), we have a *terminus post quem* of 1825 for the latter picture. Certainly it must date from after the coronation in 1821. By either of these dates Foster was living in London, so the portraits now at Birr demonstrate a continuing professional relationship between Foster and the family of the Earl of Rosse after the artist had left Ireland.²⁴

Apart from the stray references quoted above, there is little information in Crofton Croker's album about Foster's years at Birr. However, his precocious efforts at painting were noticed, and in 1811, at the age of thirteen, he was sent to Dublin and entered the Dublin Society Schools, studying in the disciplines of figure draw-



6 – *Thomas Foster, PORTRAIT OF LAWRENCE, 2ND EARL OF ROSSE IN CORONATION ROBES*
c.1825, oil on canvas (private collection; courtesy the owner)



7 – Thomas Foster, *ALICE, COUNTESS OF ROSSE WITH DAUGHTERS LADY JANE AND LADY ALICIA PARSONS*
c.1825, oil on canvas (detail), (private collection; courtesy the owner)

ing, and landscape and ornament. He was awarded premiums in 1813 and 1814 as well as a studentship.²⁵ His contemporaries from the class of 1811 were a rather uninspiring group. It included two Waldrons, who were presumably sons of William Waldron (fl.1772-1801), erstwhile master of the landscape and ornament school. However, two of the previous year's intake, Edward David Leahy (1797-1875) and the sculptor Terence Farrell (1798-1876), were to become friends of Foster and were to be with him during his last days, while Hugh Frazer (c.1797-1861), the landscape painter from county Down, was his junior by one year.²⁶ Grandson of the founder of the school Robert West (d.1770), the master of the figure school was Robert Lucius West. Like so many others, West clearly became extremely fond of Foster, and letters from him to Crofton Croker after Foster's death (one quoted above, and further later) survive in the album.

From the age of seventeen, Foster began to exhibit in Dublin exhibitions. In 1815 he showed two portraits and a subject picture in the exhibition of the Hibernian Society of Artists, and an *Adoration of the Shepherds* in the Hawkin's Street exhibition, as well as *The Piping Faun* at the Royal Irish Institution. In the following two years he exhibited *Hercules Throwing Lychas into the Sea*²⁷ and *Christ Taken Down From the Cross*. His choice of subject matter is adventurous and unusual both for his youth and the place and date of his artistic education. Mythological, and particularly religious subjects, were rare sights in the exhibitions of early nineteenth-century Dublin. Clearly, even at this early date, Foster was determined to be more than a portrait painter. In this, he was, of course, carrying on the tradition of artists such as James Barry and George Romney, and, at least, the aspirations of Reynolds. His ambition echoes the comments made by his friend Briggs to Crofton Croker, who told the latter that he was 'determined to be remembered in art as a "historical painter" and not as a painter of ugly faces'. Foster's innovative approach to subject matter was, as we shall see, to last throughout his short career. Strickland notes that after his first year's exhibiting, Foster was awarded a premium of the not inconsiderable sum of £34 2s 6d by the Irish Institution.

In 1818, at the age of twenty, Foster followed the traditional route for aspiring young Irish artists and moved to London, entering himself as a student at the Royal Academy. That year he sent a large picture, *The Cup Found in Benjamin's Sack*, to the British Institution, and the following year the equally recherché subject, *Mercury Sealing up the Eyes of Argos*. From almost the time he arrived in London, Foster attracted the support and patronage of John Wilson Croker, who, as noted above, had also supported his namesake Crofton Croker, and in the chain of events after Foster's death is a constant presence pulling strings in the background.

In John Wilson Croker, the young Foster had a sympathetic and influential early patron. At his first outing at the Royal Academy's exhibition in 1819 he



8 – William Ward, after
Thomas Foster, THOMAS
ELRINGTON, BISHOP OF
LEIGHLIN AND FERNS
mezzotint, published 1836
(courtesy National Gallery of
Ireland)

showed *Portrait Group of Miss and Master Croker and a Favourite Dog*.²⁸ The connection between artist and patron lasted the length of Foster's time in London. In 1824 he exhibited at the Royal Academy *Miss Croker in a Chinese Hat* and a portrait of Croker himself. Tellingly, Strickland records that Foster also painted copies of Lawrence paintings for Croker. This, no doubt, helped form his sub-Lawrentian style. Indeed, it was almost certainly through Croker that Foster met Lawrence, as the former was a close friend of the Academy's president, acting as pall-bearer at his funeral in 1830. At the time of Foster's death he was working on a further Croker commission, *Louis XVIII Receiving the Garter at Carlton House*. The fact that just the year after arriving in London and at the age of only twenty-one he was receiving portrait commissions from John Wilson Croker, a friend of, and sitter to, Lawrence, suggests some prior connection between the two Irishmen, or at the very least that Foster arrived in London armed with a letter of introduction to the MP.

In addition to his early success in London, Foster continued his professional links with Ireland, winning several important commissions. His portraits of the Earl

of Rosse and his family have already been noted. He also received the institutional patronage of Trinity College, painting the former provost, Thomas Elrington (1760-1835), Bishop of Leighlin and Ferns (Plate 8). He exhibited the portrait at the Royal Academy in 1820, and it was engraved sixteen years later by William James Ward.²⁹ A finely painted, if somewhat dull, picture, it shows Foster's ability at capturing a likeness. The very fact of Foster's winning such a prestigious commission over more established Dublin artists such as William Cuming (1769-1852), who had worked extensively for Trinity, is evidence both of his precocious ability and, perhaps, of his social connections.

While the evidence which can be adduced from the album as to Foster's professional practice is discussed below, a few clues from other sources give a flavour of Foster's artistic formation in London. In addition to Lawrence, he was on good terms with several other leading academicians of a much older generation. Strickland notes that he was a friend of the sculptor Joseph Nollekens (1737-1823), 'in whose studio he used to model from the antique',³⁰ while Crofton Croker's album illustrates his close relationship with Farrell and William Behnes (1795-1864), two sculptors with Irish connections. Foster's good looks seem to have made him a popular model, and shortly before he died he sat for Behnes. He was also included by the leading academician James Northcote (1746-1831) as one of the murderers in his *Burial of the Princes in the Tower*, and, according to Northcote, was prevented from becoming a great artist by his looks, good nature and wit.³¹ This theme is repeated by Strickland, who claimed that 'his love of society, in which his agreeable manners and conversation made him popular, interfered with his art'.³² In spite of such perceived impediments, Foster's large-scale subject pictures, none of which is now known, received favourable comment. The *DNB* informs us that his *Mazeppa*, exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1822, 'showed considerable genius', and according to Strickland (who knew the picture), it 'attracted much attention at the time it was exhibited'.³³ The scale of the work, which measured 8ft 5in by 7ft 4in, shows that the twenty-four-year-old Foster was not lacking in confidence.

In addition to his friendships with Wilson Croker and Crofton Croker, Foster's position within an interlocking circle of Irish writers and artists must have helped to consolidate his ambition. Crofton Croker's manuscript provides fascinating glimpses into the network of patronage and friendship among Irish artists and intellectuals in Regency London. On 10 November 1824, for example, Foster dined with John Banim (1798-1842)³⁴ and Gerald Griffin (1803-40),³⁵ the two leading young Irish novelists of the day, who were close friends. Foster and Banim would have known each other from their student days studying art in Dublin.³⁶ In addition to novels, for which Banim earned the title Scott of Ireland,³⁷ he continued his interest in the visual arts.³⁸ Like Foster, and indeed Crofton Croker, Banim had been born

in 1798, and during the 1820s – the years of his friendship with Foster in London – came to be seen as a ‘spokesman for the rising class of Irish tradesmen, a writer who could do for Irish literature what O’Connell was doing for Irish politics’.³⁹ His father had been a farmer and a small tradesman, and he ‘well knew the fears, hopes and frustrations of being Catholic’.⁴⁰ Foster’s relationship with Banim was close. As Strickland notes, a portrait of Banim was on Foster’s easel at his death, while Crofton Croker recalls that on Thursday 23 February 1826, a few days before his death, Foster ‘dined with Banim (the Irish novelist) and slept at his house’. Banim gave evidence at the coroner’s enquiry into Foster’s death, and was a member of the very small group attending his funeral.

Also at dinner that night in 1824, Foster made a close impression on the other young novelist, Gerald Griffin. Crofton Croker transcribes sections from the biography of Griffin written by his brother Daniel, which records, albeit obscurely, how Foster had been of service to Griffin, apparently by procuring work for him with *The Literary Gazette*.⁴¹ Crofton transcribes a further account of Foster’s suicide from Griffin’s biography:

How singular it is that one has so often to lament the untimely and disastrous fate of persons gifted with qualities so endearing as those I have mentioned. It was about a year or so after these transactions that this young gentleman, to the inexpressible grief of all his acquaintances, put an end to his existence by shooting himself through the head with a pistol. For some time before this shocking act, he had been observed to occasionally labour under a depression of spirits which was quite unnatural to him, but there was nothing else, either in his circumstances or manner to lead his friends at all to anticipate so dreadful a result.

As with Crofton Croker’s recollections and other accounts, the note of shock rings out clearly. Griffin does not ascribe a motive for Foster’s suicide, but the basic facts he presents corroborate the account given by Crofton Croker. As a good novelist, however, Griffin himself could not resist slightly embroidering the story. His brother continues:

Gerald was deeply affected by the occurrence and told me the following touching incident connected with it. A maid was engaged in making up a room next to that in which the horrid catastrophe took place. Mr. Foster walked up to her, took her by the hand, pressed it warmly between his, and with tears in his eyes looked silently into her face with an expression of the most melancholy earnestness. It might have been a recognition of some former kindness of hers; or perhaps it was his last farewell to the world in the

person of the only human being who was near him at the moment. Having repeated this heartbroken gaze, he pressed her hand and departed. The maid looked on in mute astonishment, and resumed her occupation, when presently the report of a pistol was heard in the adjoining apartment, and all was at an end. 'The stupid girl', said Gerald with vehemence in relating it, 'to look on with her stupid wonderment at such a state of things and say or do nothing. If it had been an Irish girl she would sooner have plucked out one of her eyes than allow such a circumstance to pass before her without instantly finding out the meaning of it.'

Crofton Croker's more reliable account sets the time of Foster's death at 4.30 am, an hour at which it seems inherently unlikely that a maid would have been engaged in making-up the next-door room. Indeed, Crofton Croker scrupulously casts doubt on this element of the story, inserting into his transcription from Griffin's biography, 'the transcriber can scarcely credit the incident or he must have heard of it and remembered it or have noted it'.

We pick up Crofton Croker's narrative of Foster's last days on Friday, the day after he had spent the night at Banim's house. It is not far-fetched to believe that he made a series of last calls on those closest to him.

On the morning of Friday Foster was seen walking in with a Mr Thompson (an Artist, I think) and he dined about Six o'clock at Palianno's an eating house in a street of[f] Leicester Square. On Saturday the 25th, he drank tea with a brother artist (Mr Leahy) whom he used jocularly to call 'Sir Peter Paul Rubens Vandyck Leahy' and remained with him looking over prints till midnight when Foster returned to his apartment (22 Charles Street, Middlesex Hospital). On Sunday he breakfasted there, and then called on me. I observed nothing particular in his manner. He then went to Alfred Nicholson's in Conduit Street ... where he sat for some time. His next visit was to our mutual friend Crowe 141 Sloane Street in which he was accompanied by an Irish friend Mr Farrell.

Of these friends whom Foster visited, several can be identified as fellow Irish artists. Leahy is certainly the painter Edward Daniel Leahy, who, as noted above, had entered the Dublin Society Schools in 1810, a year before Foster.⁴² He exhibited at the Hibernian Society of Artists in 1815, and in the Dublin Society's House in Hawkin's Street, before moving to London in 1817. A rather striking portrait showing a man as a pilgrim on the road to Santiago de Compostela was recently on the Dublin art market.⁴³ Alfred Nicholson of Conduit Street was a watercolour artist, whose daughter, Marianne, Crofton Croker married.⁴⁴ After Foster's death, Leahy

wrote to Crofton Croker, telling him to give Nicholson whatever he wanted from his effects. This, and a further letter from Nicholson to Croker, are preserved in the album. Foster's 'Irish friend Mr Farrell', with whom he visited Crowe at Sloane Street, is no doubt the sculptor Terence Farrell, like so many of the protagonists of this story, born in 1798, and also Foster's senior by one year at the Dublin Society Schools.⁴⁵ Crowe is Eyre Evans Crowe (1799-1868), a journalist and historian, who, as well as novels and books of the history of France, published *Today in Ireland* in 1825, and *Yesterdays in Ireland* in 1829.⁴⁶ Thompson cannot be identified with any certainty as no first name or nationality is provided, but considering the pattern that emerges of Foster spending the day with a group of Irish artists, it is possible that he is Thomas Clement Thompson (1780-1857), a founding member of the RHA who was certainly living in London at this date.⁴⁷

It is, of course, not surprising that Foster felt at ease in the company of fellow Irish artists, many of whom he had known since his days in the Dublin Society Schools. Indeed, just at this date, a nascent émigré community was developing in London. Martin Archer Shee was one of the leading lights of the Royal Academy, and would be elected its president four years after Foster's death. Four years later again, in 1834, the Sligo-born Bernard Mulrenin (1803-1868), in his letters home to his wife, makes frequent mention of his encounters with Irish artists, noting 'there is a great lot of them here'.⁴⁸ While Irish artists had been visiting England since the late-seventeenth century, there had previously been little sense of an Irish émigré intelligentsia as is so apparent in the circle surrounding Foster. Likewise, later in the nineteenth century, artists such as Maclise and William Mulready (1786-1863) did as much as possible to disguise their Irishness to blend more smoothly into the London Victorian art world.

The detail of Crofton Croker's account reveals that he spoke to all those who had been with Foster during his last few days, and the level of detail, such as verbatim quotations, suggests that he made contemporaneous notes of what they had told him. The narrative continues with Foster and Farrell leaving Sloane Street and repairing to Dick's Coffee House,

where they dined and they then attended evening service at St Dunstan's Church.⁴⁹ They then took coffee at Peel's and parted about nine o'clock. Farrell returned to the Salopian Coffee House where he was staying and Foster to his Lodgings about one on Monday morning the 27th. On that morning he was "up earlier than usual" – this was the only remark made by the servant and he went out about half past nine.

At this point in the story, Crofton Croker notes: 'Here there is a blank in this deplorable record of about twelve hours', and moves on swiftly to describe Foster's

visit to Palianno's and the events at Webb's hotel with which we opened. The twelve-hour lacuna in an otherwise remarkably comprehensive account of Foster's last hours is surprising. Did Foster leave London? As we shall see, there was certainly someone else close to his heart whom it is difficult to imagine that he did not try to visit before ending his life.

All descriptions of the suicide concur with regard to the fact that Foster's face was severely disfigured by the twin discharge of the pistols. The first person to be contacted after his death, either by the hotel or the police, was the sculptor William Behnes whose card was found in Foster's waistcoat pocket. News of the events spread quickly that morning. Behnes informed Crofton Croker, who informed his superior at the Admiralty (and his and Foster's mutual patron), John Wilson Croker. Foster's body was identified by Behnes, to whom Foster had recently sat as a model. Behnes was able to make the identification 'from some peculiar muscular development of [Foster's] arm'.

The son of a Hanoverian piano-maker, Behnes had been born in London, but moved at an early age to Dublin, where he studied at the Society Schools. The date of his enrolment at the Schools is not recorded, but it is likely that he knew Foster in Dublin, being only three years older. He certainly overlapped with Foster from about 1818 at the Royal Academy schools.⁵⁰ Pasted into Crofton Croker's album is a sketch by Behnes of Foster (Plate 10), with a note stating that it was corrected by Gilbert Stuart Newton (1795-1835).⁵¹ We may presume that this was drawn at one of the sittings immediately before Foster's death.

On the afternoon of 28 February, a coroner's inquest was held at a public house in Haymarket. As well as Banim, with whom Foster had so recently dined, Mr Webb, owner of the hotel, and Mr Spice, landlord of Foster's lodgings, gave evidence. At about 5 o'clock Crofton Croker was passed a note from Wilson Croker stating that he was prepared to appear before the inquest. Clearly Foster's friends felt the evidence of the influential Secretary of the Admiralty might be helpful. Crofton Croker notes that he 'read the concluding portion of Mr Crocker's note with reference to the deceased'. No doubt Wilson Croker was relieved when the coroner decided subsequently that his attendance was not necessary. The coroner 'charged the jury in a short and judicious manner and they with scarcely a moment's hesitation returned the verdict of "temporary insanity".' On the same evening, Foster's body was removed by Mr Corbett, an undertaker, and Mr Spice to his lodgings at Charles Street. On 1 March, Briggs and Crofton Croker proceeded to make an inventory of Foster's belongings, which Crofton Croker pasted, many years later, into his volume.⁵² The organisation of Foster's affairs was evidently a co-operative exercise, as Crofton Croker notes that, 'Alfred Nicholson joined us in the course of the morning and so did Banim and Doctor Maginn (Plate 9), who had promised to

keep out of the newspapers – or at least certain Newspapers an account of “the event”.’ It seems that the group of friends were not wholly successful in keeping the story from the press, as Crofton Croker continues ‘that Maginn could have done so, I have no doubt, but he was as usual behind time and had probably imbibed his usual morning potations’.⁵³

It was decided that Foster’s funeral should take place the following day, Thursday 2 March, at 10.30am. Only four mourners were in attendance: Crofton Croker, Briggs, Banim and Stuart, who followed the hearse ‘in a mourning coach to the burial ground of old Mary-le-bone’. Foster was interred alongside such eminent individuals as the architect James Gibbs, the sculptor John Rysbrack, and the artists Allan Ramsay and George Stubbs. However, it was clearly felt by his friends that the funeral should be kept as simple as possible. Although he was buried in consecrated land, the inquest had clearly ruled that his death was suicide, considered at the time both a crime and a sin. It is noticeable that Wilson Croker, though an old friend and patron of the artist, did not attend. His position as an MP and Secretary to the Admiralty would, one assumes, have made his doing so problematical. However, he was clearly directing affairs behind the scenes, and several letters from him to Crofton Croker with, *inter alia*, instructions about funeral arrangements survive in the album. On Tuesday 28 February 1826 he wrote:

Pray go early to morrow with some friend & take an inventory of all poor Mr Foster’s goods of all sorts & a list of the pictures. He has some of mine there which I can point out hereafter. Let the funeral be conducted on Wednesday morning in the cheapest & quietest mode & in the nearest churchyard. Seal up all his papers after you have looked thro’ them & make a kind of note of any of them as appear of any consequence’.

This is followed by a very peremptory letter the following day:

Dear Mr Crofton⁵⁴

In my note of yesterday I said that funeral should be Wednesday but I meant Thursday – however, if you have order’d it so, no matter – under any circumstances I dislike any ceremony of note much beyond what decency requires, but in such a case as this the very quietest & most obscure mode is what decency really requires. Yrs

JW Croker

This almost unseemly rush to have Foster buried, and Crofton Croker’s anxious desire to keep the story from the press may be explained by a careful reading of the events that followed and an examination of the possible reasons for Foster’s suicide. John Wilson Croker was absent from the funeral, but a letter of July 1826 from



9 – Daniel Maclise,
WILLIAM MAGINN
1830, pencil and watercolour on
paper, 27.5 x 19 cm (detail)
(courtesy National Portrait
Gallery, London)

10 – William Behnes,
THOMAS FOSTER
n.d., ink on paper, 13.5 x 11.5 cm;
from Thomas Croften Croker's
manuscript album of material
relating to Henry Perronet Briggs
and Thomas Foster, 1854
(courtesy National Gallery of
Ireland)



another of his circle demonstrates the grief caused in his household by Foster's death:

I am going to call on Mr Croker at the Admiralty Saturday between three and four ... Foster was quite domesticated at the Palace and Mrs Croker thinks yet, he died of inflammation of the brain – she is all goodness and kindness and it would break her heart to know the real truth.⁵⁵

Though it is clear that Crofton Croker wrote his manuscript purely for his own use, he displays a certain reticence in relation to the delicate issues that he was now called on to handle. The first of these was Foster's relationship with the actress Anna Maria Tree (1801-1862) (Plate 11), and the second, still more delicate, matter was Foster's connection with the family of the 2nd Earl of Rosse. On Friday 3 March, the day after the funeral, the three Irish writers, Crofton Croker, Banim and Maginn, met at Foster's lodgings, 22 Charles Street, and between 2pm and 4pm 'selected and burned without reading all letters in which we thought we recognized the hand writing of a lady. There was one large bundle.' In doing so, they went further than Wilson Croker had instructed. After Banim and Maginn had left, Crofton Croker remained behind to complete the inventory. The young woman in question, of whose personal letters Foster's friends were so keen to dispose, was the actress Anna Maria Tree, by now Mrs Bradshaw. This is the woman to whom Strickland alludes, without naming her, as the object of Foster's affections. Indeed, he attributes Foster's suicide at least in part to his 'hopeless attachment' to her.⁵⁶

Anna Maria Tree was born London in August 1801, and appeared in 1818 at Covent Garden as Rosina in *The Barber of Seville*.⁵⁷ This was the start of a successful, if not quite glittering career on the London stage. Anna Maria was most at home in Shakespearian roles such as Ariel, Viola, Ophelia and Rosalind. She was a pupil of the composer Henry Bishop (1786-1855), whose portrait Foster painted. The *DNB* describes her as 'of medium stature and pleasing figure, and no special claim to beauty', continuing, 'she owed her popularity to the pathos of her voice. Though inferior in singing, her acting won commendation. She was much praised for the modesty of her performance in male attire.'⁵⁸ Her sister, Ellen, also an actress, became the wife of Charles Kean (1811-1868), son of Edmund Kean (1787-1833).⁵⁹ Anna Maria created the title role of Bishop's opera *Clari, The Maid of Milan*, in 1823, thus achieving the distinction of singing *Home, Sweet Home*, for the first time in public.

It is not known when Foster first met Anna Maria, but he exhibited a portrait of her, 'in the character of the Fair Gabrielle', at the Royal Academy in 1823.⁶⁰ Crofton Croker notes that this (or a sketch for it) was later in the possession of Daniel Maclise's earliest patron, Richard Sainthill, in Cork.⁶¹ The most explicit sec-



11 – Richard J. Lane, after John Boaden, ANNA MARIA TREE AS CÆLIO IN NATIVE LAND mezzotint, published 1826; from Thomas Crofton Croker's manuscript album of material relating to Henry Perronet Briggs and Thomas Foster, 1854 (courtesy of National Gallery of Ireland)



12 – Daniel Maclise,
THEODORE HOOK
1834, pencil on paper, 30.5 x 19 cm
(detail), (courtesy National
Portrait Gallery, London)

opposite

13 – S.W. Reynolds,
after Thomas Foster,
HENRY BISHOP
mezzotint, published 1822 (detail);
from Thomas Crofton Croker's
manuscript album of material
relating to Henry Perronet Briggs
and Thomas Foster, 1854 (courtesy
National Gallery of Ireland)

tions in the album describing Foster's relationship with Anna Maria do not occur in Crofton Croker's own narrative. Rather, they feature in sections he transcribes from the diaries of another mutual friend, the novelist, hoaxer and wit, Theodore Hook (1788-1841) (Plate 12), which, at the time of writing, were in Crofton Croker's own possession and from which he quotes extensively.⁶² Hook, without doubt one of the most colourful of all figures of Regency London, was described by Coleridge 'as true a genius as Dante', and yet again was a protégée of John Wilson Croker.⁶³ Crofton Croker introduces Anna Maria with caution:

There would appear to have been an unfortunate attachment between Miss Anna Maria Tree and poor Foster of which [Hook] was cognizant; and after the marriage of that lady, several of Foster's friends remarked an alteration in his manner. There certainly had been interchangement of rings.

The entries from Hook's diary are, at times, difficult to follow, but they make clear that the romantic intrigue between artist and actress was involved and painful for all



concerned. Hook was evidently stuck in the middle: ‘Foster dined at _ past 6, letter from AM cautioning me not to let F. see her hand writing. He sitting by at the moment.’ In addition to her dalliance with the glamorous young artist, Anna Maria was also involved with the older and respectable James Bradshaw, who in 1825 was elected MP for Brackley.⁶⁴ Hook writes:

Heard much of Miss T – think she is playing a very foolish game with Mr Bradshaw, and am moreover of opinion that he will not marry her. Pat [Hook’s nickname for Foster] sees the whole of it in a clear and dispassionate light and there is more trifling about her conduct than I expected to find.

To complicate things further, it seems that Anna Maria was also involved somehow with her former teacher, the composer Henry Bishop (Plate 13), whose portrait, as noted above, Foster had painted.⁶⁵ Bradshaw insisted that Anna Maria leave the stage if he was to marry her, but as Hook notes: ‘He has only about £1,800 a year perhaps, and she makes 21000 by her profession – it therefore seems a bad specula-

tion for her.’ Clearly Foster confided in Hook his feelings for Anna Maria. ‘We talked of Miss Tree’, Hook recalls,

for whom he certainly feels at all events a powerful interest. I am quite of the opinion that the marriage will never take place between her and Bradshaw nor do I think it would be at all productive of happiness to her or to him ... the repugnance of her family to the connexion, the difference of their pursuits and habits, added to his mere dandyism, combine I think to serve up the most formidable obstacles to comfort in such a match. Shewed Pat Miss M.T.’s letters and quite surprised him.

Despite Hook’s assessment of the chances, Anna Maria and Bradshaw did marry in August 1825. However, quite how happy a union this was is open to debate, as shortly beforehand she made her own attempt at suicide. This is not described in the Crofton Croker manuscript, but details can be found in the aptly named *Oxberry’s Dramatic Biography and Histrionic Anecdotes*, a contemporary magazine devoted to the stage. Volume 3 (no. 44) of the magazine features a highly critical biography of Anna Maria, including an account of ‘her attempt at self-destruction’, taken from *The News of Literature and Fashion*. At the insistence of his mother, who did not want him to marry an actress, Bradshaw sent a solicitor to break off the engagement. Anna Maria ‘immediately ordered her carriage, and drove off to a druggist’s, where she purchased a small phial of laudanum – little more than half the quantity which would take away her life’. She then proceeded to another chemist and bought a further phial, and ‘immediately on stepping into her carriage, she swallowed the contents of both’. Unlike Foster the following year, Anna Maria survived. The engagement was reinstated, and at St George’s Church, Bloomsbury, ‘Miss Tree resigned the barren title of virgin for that of Mrs Bradshaw’.⁶⁶ *Oxberry’s* hostile irony at this point is undisguised.

Any discussion of the motivation for Foster’s suicide is, of course, speculative, and should be undertaken with due sensitivity. Indeed, it is important to note that there was no consensus on the matter even among his own friends. While Hook notes baldly in his diary that ‘this day my poor friend Foster shot himself’, without proffering a reason, he and other of Foster’s friends clearly saw his unhappiness at Anna Maria’s marriage the previous summer as one of the principal influences on his state of mind.⁶⁷ Hook is more explicit about the causal link between the two events in a letter, not in Crofton Croker’s album, but preserved in the Fales Library of New York University. This letter is of crucial importance to our understanding of Foster’s life, and provides a clue regarding his origins at Birr.

I am labouring under a very great shock about my poor poor Foster – kind

hearted fellow that he was and joyous and pleasant – he shot himself on Monday blew his head literally to atoms – his good natured countenance actually stares at me while I write – he was greatly to be pitied – disappointed in the hopes of a fortune from a father of whom he was the natural son, but who proved an unnatural parent to him, devotedly attached to Miss Tree (now Mrs Bradshaw) but too high spirited to him by her talents he gave her up, and with her verily I believe his happiness and now his life – I can think of nothing else I fancy I hear his voice in every sound.⁶⁸

Hook proposes two motives for Foster's suicide here: his disinheritance and Anna Maria's marriage. Although Hook is the only source to mention the former as a contributing factor, his relationship as a close confidant of the artist means that his testimony must be treated seriously. Indeed, Foster's distress at not coming into the fortune to which he thought he was entitled makes sense of the events that followed the burning of Anna Maria's letters.

On Saturday 4 March, Crofton Croker again met Banim and Maginn, together with Alfred Nicholson and Stuart, at Charles Street, and completed the burning of the letters, 'reserving only the letters of Mr Thomas Parsons, the early and steady friend of Foster through life and who had recently left him a legacy of £1,000, and a few other letters which we found placed with them'. Thomas Parsons was the brother of the Earl of Rosse of Birr Castle, and has already been noted as Foster's early patron at Birr. His letters alone were spared, being sealed up and entrusted to Crofton Croker 'to deliver to the Earl of Rosse, should he desire to see them'. Later Crofton Croker noted:

Lord Rosse wrote to me in the reply that looking over these letters would only give him pain and he requested that I would retain but not destroy them and that I was [at] perfect liberty to unseal the packet and would do him a favour by reading over the letters and acquainting him after I had done so if there was anything that might be desirable to call to his attention.

Crofton Croker did this, and a fortnight later informed Lord Rosse that

they were only the kind of letters he might have expected his lamented brother to have written and that I saw nothing in any of them calling on me to make a further communication to his Lordship. To this I received no reply but did not feel myself justified in destroying the letters of the Parsons family which range from 1813 to 1825 and consequently had them put up together with a few letters from Foster to myself in volumes.

Foster's close association with the brother of the Earl of Rosse demands investiga-

tion. The letters described by Crofton Croker demonstrate that Foster was in communication with Thomas Parsons from (at least) the age of fifteen until the year of Parsons' death. Parsons seems to have left a significant amount of money to Foster, and his brother, the Earl, refused to read the letters between them lest it cause him pain. The closeness of this relationship is much more than one would expect between artist and patron. Instead, we suggest that Thomas Parsons was the father, unidentified in Hook's letter, who had 'proved an unnatural parent' to Foster. Such a connection would explain the rather arch reference to Parsons' 'parental treatment' of Foster in Cooke's *Picture of Parsonstown*, quoted above, and the direct link Cooke makes between Parsons' death and Foster's suicide. Although Hook's letter says that Foster was disappointed in the hopes of a fortune from his father, both Crofton Croker and Robert Lucius West state that Foster received a legacy of £1,000 from Parsons. Either this is incorrect, or the sum was not the 'fortune' to which Foster had thought he was entitled.⁶⁹ The closeness of their relationship, and indeed the bestowal of his father's name on the young Foster, suggests that he was seen as part of the wider family group. Significantly, however, Thomas Parsons had no legitimate children, and perhaps demurred when it came to acknowledging publicly a responsibility to Foster in his will. A link to the Parsons family would certainly explain how Foster entered such elevated circles of society so soon after arriving in London.⁷⁰

Crofton Croker was characteristically persistent in his attempts to return the letters to the Parsons family. The Parsons for their part were equally resolute in not wanting to receive them. Almost twenty years after Foster's suicide, Crofton Croker notes

When I was introduced to the present Earl of Rosse at Sir William Chatterton's (Castle Mahon, Cork) 18th August 1843 (during the meeting of the British Association in that city) I mentioned this collection of Mr Thomas Parsons letters with the circumstances under which they came into my possession and offered when I returned to England to send them to him, but his Lordship merely thanked me without expressing any desire to see or possess his Uncle's letters, some of which are very interesting and deserve preservation.

The location of these letters is unknown. Not surprisingly, they are not preserved in the muniments room of Birr Castle with the rest of the family archive.

Although Crofton Croker does not state directly that Foster was the bastard son of Thomas Parsons, his attempts to return the letters to successive Earls of Rosse clearly demonstrates that he was aware of a close personal connection. This is evidenced further in a rather sorry correspondence the following year. Mr Webb of Webb's Hotel, where Foster had killed himself, hired the solicitors Wrentmore &

Ellis to bring an action against his estate for damage to the room occasioned by the suicide. Both Crofton Croker and Wilson Croker treated the claim contemptuously, and denied any knowledge of Foster's executors. However, in a letter to Webb of 13 March 1827 Crofton Croker writes, 'all I have it in my power to do is to refer you to the Earl of Rosse, Parsonstown, Ireland for the information which you desire'. It seems likely that it was common knowledge among Foster's friends that he was an illegitimate nephew of the Earl.

Crofton Croker's album thus serves as a poignant and dramatic record of a tragic event in the lives of a tight-knit group of expatriate Irish writers, artists and bureaucrats. It also provides, however, an invaluable insight into the professional practice of an ambitious artist in Regency London. A handwritten price list that Crofton Croker recovered from a frame in Foster's 'painting room' testifies to his ambition:

Prices of Portraits

Whole length	100 [guineas]	Kit-Cat	20 –
Bishops half length	50 –	Three quarter	15 –
Common [Ditto]	40 –	Head	10 –
Small [Ditto]	30 –	N.B. Half price to be paid at the commencement of the picture.	

Foster's fee of 100 guineas for a full-length portrait shows that he had a high opinion of his own work. Though not exorbitant, his prices were considerable when compared with those of some of his contemporaries. Foster's friend Robert Lucius West, for example, wrote in a letter to William Clements of 1838 that 'the price we fixed upon for my pictures was eight pounds or guineas for each picture without frames'.⁷¹ Thomas Cooley charged £60 for a full-length portrait, £20 for the equivalent of a bishop's half-length, and £5 for a kit-cat. It is interesting to note that Cooley's price list, like Foster's, also stipulates 'half the money to be paid on the first sitting'.⁷²

Among the most revealing items in Crofton Croker's volume is the inventory of Foster's possessions, from his collection of paintings to his professional paraphernalia, his clothing and kitchenware (see appendix). A comprehensive list of books within it hints at the principal areas in which Foster's personal interests and experience lay. It is evident, for instance, from the variety of books relating to France and the French language on his shelves that Foster had crossed the English Channel at some point. His reading in this area was both practical and contextual, and included a map of Paris, Madame de Genlis' *Manuel du Voyageur* (a collection of model dialogue), *Elements of French Conversation*, no less than four books on

French grammar, and the rather dauntingly named *Englishman's Guide to the French Substantives' Gender*. He also owned a guidebook to Belgium. Crofton Croker records that Foster was even believed to have assisted Madame de Genlis 'in some of her literary labours'.

It is obvious that Foster's interest in the French language merely echoed his enthusiasm for his own. Numerous volumes relating to English grammar and usage appear within his collection, among them 'Cobbet's Grammar' and *Eton Grammar*.⁷³ Foster's interest in language also manifested itself in his taste for poetry. Like so many of his contemporaries in artistic and literary circles, he seems to have been particularly fond of modern Anglophone poets, including Thomas Gray, H.W. Longfellow, Henry Kirk White and Robbie Burns. Foster also owned anthologies of poetry and a number of volumes of Samuel Johnson's *Lives of Eminent Poets*.

In some conspicuous cases, one can identify connections between Foster's library and his clientele. Lines from a ballad beginning 'Souvenez vous de Jemappes?', for example, are transcribed on the verso of Foster's portrait, in charcoal, of Samuel Lawrence that is included loosely in the album. Jemappes, in the Austrian Netherlands, was the scene of a famous victory over the Austrians in 1792 by the French Revolutionary army, under the command of General Dumourier (1739-1823). The following year, Dumourier, who had served in the French military for some thirty years, defected to the Austrian side during peace talks. Dumourier soon found himself in London, advising Arthur Wellesley, Duke of Wellington, and organising guerrilla insurgency against the French in Portugal and Spain. Foster may well have known Robbie Burns' *Impromptu on General Dumourier's Desertion from the French Republican Army*, written in 1793. In any case, he exhibited a portrait of Dumourier at the Royal Academy in 1820. Similarly, Foster owned a volume recording Captain Cook's voyage for the discovery of a north-east or north-west passage, and one wonders if his interest in this expedition stemmed from his meeting with Colonel Molesworth Phillips. He showed a portrait of Phillips at the Royal Academy in 1821, and specified in the accompanying catalogue that Phillips was 'one of the few gentlemen now living who sailed with Captain Cook'.⁷⁴

Significantly, there is evidence of Irish influence in Foster's library. His collection included the first volume of 'Ryan's Worthies of Ireland' (*Biographica Hibernica* by Richard Ryan), a life of St Patrick, 'Public Buildings of Dublin' (probably *Views of the Most Remarkable Public Buildings, Monuments and other Edifices in the City of Dublin* by Pool and Cash), Pasquin's *Memoirs of the Royal Academicians and an Authentic History of the Arts in Ireland*, and a selection of the writings of James Barry. The representation of Edmund Burke on Foster's bookshelf adds some credence to the assumption frequently made by scholars that artists read and digested Burke's theories on aesthetics.

At a more social level, the inventory also demonstrates the intimacy and interaction within Foster's circle that is implicit in Crofton Croker's accompanying text. Foster probably read much of the same material as his friends, and certainly exchanged books with them. Banim, in particular, appears to have furnished Foster with reading matter, such as Moyle Sherer's *Recollections of the Peninsula*, a personal account of the Peninsular War published in 1823, and the William Mason edition of *The Life of Thomas Gray*. The familiar, abbreviated forms in which the contents of Foster's library are recorded reinforce the notion that Foster's reading was typical. For example, Prince Hoare's *An Inquiry into the Requisite Cultivation and Present State of the Arts of Design in England* of 1806 is reduced to 'Prince Hoare's Art of Design', while *The Ruins; or A Survey of the Revolution of Empires* by Count Volney becomes simply 'Volney's Ruins'. The few novels and plays that feature in Foster's collection include Walter Scott's *Guy Mannering*, Miguel de Cervantes' *Don Quixote*, and Bernadin de Saint Pierre's *Paul et Virginie*.

This last novel, enormously popular at the time for its sentimental story of love in the south seas, provides one of the neatest links between Foster's reading and artistic practice. He exhibited a painting of the subject at the Royal Academy in 1825.⁷⁵ A large picture, measuring 5ft by 4ft, it was described in the catalogue as representing Paul and Virginia 'a short time previous to their separation'. Foster appended the following quote from the novel to the picture's frame:

If Virginia had seemed charming to me in the blue cloth of Bengal, she looked still more so when I beheld her dressed like the ladies of this country. The very contrast of this European dress which appeared worn against her inclination, only served to render her languor more affecting, and it was impossible to see or hear her without feeling a tender concern. It aggravated the wretchedness of Paul.⁷⁶

In addition to his reading, Foster would have had direct knowledge of the terrain in which Paul and Virginia had been set. His friend Hook, when serving as Treasurer and Accountant General in Mauritius, had visited the supposed site of Paul and Virginia's tomb. He wrote from the island to a friend: 'I have wept over poor Virginia's grave; I saw her cottage, and old slave.' He even enclosed in the letter 'a piece of bamboo which I pulled from Paul and Virginia's grave'.⁷⁷ When Foster came to paint the subject, he surely consulted not just the copy of the novel in his library, but the first-hand knowledge of his close confidant in matters of the heart, Theodore Hook.

Like any other man about town of the 1820s, Foster would have been inspired by the romantic example of Lord Byron, and indeed two Byronic works appear in his library, *Medwin's Conversations of Lord Byron* and the poet's *Don*

Juan. The same Theodore Hook had shared a room with Byron at Harrow and was included in his English *Bards and Scotch Reviewers*.⁷⁸ Unsurprisingly then, one of Foster's major works, *Mazeppa* (exhibited at the Royal Academy in 1822), takes its subject from Byron's poem of three years before. Derived from Voltaire's *Histoire de Charles XII*, the poem tells the story of Mazeppa, a page at the court of the King of Poland who has a dalliance with the wife of a Polish count, for which he is tied naked to a horse and let loose to die of exhaustion on the plains of the Ukraine. The line from Byron which Foster had attached to the frame – 'With glossy skin and dripping mane' – gives a flavour of the dramatic moment he chose to depict.⁷⁹ In painting subjects from contemporary literature, Foster was far from unique. On this occasion, however, he anticipated Delacroix's interest in this Byronic subject by at least two years.⁸⁰ It is sadly ironic that for these two major exhibition pieces, Foster chose subjects of blighted love that end in tragedy.

Classical literature, including Aristotle, Horace, Ovid, Pliny and Plutarch, is represented in Foster's library, though one wonders about the degree to which he read it in detail. He also possessed a rather disparate collection of books on art and artists, ranging from Leonardo's *A Treatise on Painting*, to a copy of John Opie's lectures on painting delivered at the Royal Academy, and examples of the writings of Sir Joshua Reynolds and Antonio Canova.⁸¹ The importance to a practising artist of the Elgin marbles is borne out by the fact that Foster owned a copy of Canova's letter on the subject, and had produced sketches after them. As J.T. Smith observed, the Elgin marbles were 'considered by the professors, in every branch of the polite arts, to comprise the artists' primer'.⁸² Numerous issues of *John Bull Magazine*, which Hook edited and for which Maginn wrote, and a bundle of *The Modern Literary Register* indicate that Foster was also interested in current issues, while publications such as *Smollet's Travels* and a book on the Incas attest to his curiosity further afield. A slightly different inquisitiveness is suggested by the rather prosaic-sounding guide to Tunbridge Wells.

Most poignant, perhaps, when one considers the circumstances in which the inventory was compiled, is a list of the personal effects found on Foster's person at Webb's hotel at the time of his death. The considerable rates he charged for his work notwithstanding, these items demonstrate that he enjoyed a relatively frugal existence and invested much of his income in his profession and social life. Few luxury items feature among his effects beyond a 'silver hunting watch', made by the fashionable London horologist Robert Wood (the unique number of which the compilers judiciously included), a 'Chinese snuff box' in a case, and a 'finger ring'.

It must be said that Crofton Croker's volume is poignant rather than morose. In September 1825 Foster received the honour of being 'unanimously elected an Associate of the Royal Hibernian Academy'. A letter to him from William Stephen

Mossop (1788-1827) informing him of the decision of the incipient body confirms that the artist's friends' faith in him was not misplaced. Mossop, the first secretary of the Academy, wrote that 'the beautiful specimens of your highly improved talent which you favoured us with left no doubt on the minds of the Academicians in their choice'.⁸³ Tragically, Foster died before the Academy's first exhibition in 1826, though four of his works were included posthumously.⁸⁴ In a letter to John Wilson Croker written after Foster's death, Robert Lucius West declares wistfully that the Academy had 'looked to him as one of our brilliant ornaments both as an artist and as a man'.

As well as purchasing the volume of sketches by de Gheyn in Christie & Manson's sale, Crofton Croker paid £1 for a plaster cast of the 'dog of Alcibiades' (lot 510) that Foster had placed in the hall of his residence. One assumes that the cast had come into Briggs' possession on Foster's death in 1826. Henry Constantine Jennings acquired the antique original – an unusual animal sculpture dating from the second century AD – in Rome between 1753 and 1756.⁸⁵ The sculpture became so famous in Britain that its owner became known as 'Dog-Jennings', and to own a cast of the dog, which had been admired by Dr Johnson and Winckelmann, was widely considered a sign of taste.⁸⁶ Crofton Croker placed Foster's cast of the dog in the garden of his residence, Rosamund's Bower in Fulham, where it was admired by the poet Samuel Rogers (1763-1855), and subsequently took the sculpture with him to 4 Hyde Park Gate, South Kensington Gore, and in due course to 3 Gloucester Road, Old Brompton.

Frustratingly, insights provided by the volume into Foster's style and technique are as tantalising as the equivalent glimpses of his character. However, when assessed in the context of Foster's other extant work and details in the text, the few examples pasted into the volume suggest an instinctive creativity. Crofton Croker pasted several drawings and sketches by Foster into the volume that demonstrate his facility, curiosity and interest in the work of recent masters. In pencil sketches such as those after a portrait of Richard Burke (Edmund Burke's only son) by Reynolds, and another of a 'maniac' after Fuseli, Foster employed a vigorous, if unusually heavy hand.⁸⁷ A watercolour of a china urn, by contrast, indicates his attention to detail when conceiving large compositions.

Other items in the volume include two lithographs by Robert Lucius West of a very young Foster, and the original portrait sketch by Moreau (Plate 14) after which they were executed.⁸⁸ Dated 1818, the delicate pencil drawing with gouache highlights shows a fresh-faced, wistful man in casual attire, the epitome of the Romantic artist. Indeed, it anticipated and perhaps even inspired Foster's later self-portrait in oils. Crofton Croker also included the above-mentioned quick profile sketch of Foster by William Behnes (Plate 10), which he described as an 'admirable likeness'.



14 – Robert Lucius West, after Moreau, THOMAS FOSTER

1818, lithograph, 21 x 24 cm; from Thomas Croften Croker's manuscript album of material relating to Henry Perronet Briggs and Thomas Foster, 1854 (courtesy National Gallery of Ireland)

The quantity of unfinished pictures discovered in Foster's studio suggests either that he was busily occupied or that he was a distractible practitioner. Admittedly, a significant number of these works were portraits of, or belonged to, his friends. Ten, for example, belonged to John Wilson Croker, including two portraits of the Marquis of Hertford, a portrait of Joseph Burchett (of the Admiralty), and a three-quarter-length of Wilson Croker himself, all by Foster, and a portrait of Wilson Croker's wife by Owen. Sketches by Foster after Titian and van Dyck, meanwhile, belonged to Banim, as well as two portraits of the writer by Foster. Maginn owned a small portrait of Mr Lockhart, while Theodore Hook was represented in a small half-length portrait, and was apparently contesting ownership with Banim of the sketch after van Dyck of Charles I with his family. More surprising, perhaps, is the designation of a nativity scene as belonging to Mr Spice, the landlord

of Foster's lodging house; perhaps it was received in lieu of rent.

Strickland notes that at the time of his death, Foster was working on a portrait of Banim, but also on a major commission from John Wilson Croker for a painting of *Louis XVIII Receiving the Garter at Carlton House*, an event which had happened in 1814.⁸⁹ The inventory corroborates Strickland's claim, and lists a 'sketch of Room in Carlton House', '2 studies of a Chair for Carlton House picture', and 'On the Easel. Large Picture of Scene in Carlton House'. Carlton House, the development of which was associated with such illustrious figures as Robert Adam, William Chambers, James Wyatt, John Nash and Henry Holland, had been the extravagant London residence of the Prince Regent, but in 1826 was deemed to be unstable by Nash and was demolished the following year.⁹⁰

Foster's ambitions extended to a desire to record for posterity an image of himself with his artistic contemporaries. Robert Lucius West refers to Foster's plans for a group painting, the first sketch for which appears in the inventory. In a letter to Crofton Croker, West says that he is 'anxious certainly to possess that little sketch which you say you will secure for me, the (group of artists), there were two of them'.⁹¹ He adds that he would prefer the larger of the two, and that as a tribute to Foster he would paint the same subject 'on a large canvas and get the artists to sit for me for our next annual exhibition'. In practice, West did not exhibit, or perhaps ever execute such a work. He was also eager to acquire 'as a relic' John Comerford's sketch in oil of Foster, which Comerford (c.1770-1832) had hidden in a corner of his studio as he did not like it.⁹² Ironically, West also recalls in his letter that Foster was 'much pleased' on a visit to West's studio to hear that West had stipulated in a codicil to his will that he was leaving to Foster all his 'painting apparatus paintings prints &c'. Sadly it was the younger artist who was to die first.

It is not surprising to find copies after Thomas Lawrence among Foster's effects. Indeed, one of the two portraits of Wilson Croker is stated, rather respectfully, as being 'after Sir Thomas Lawrence'. The original may well be that which is now in the collection of the National Gallery of Ireland (NGI 300) (Plate 5).⁹³ Lawrence was something of the nonpareil in British artistic circles in the early decades of the nineteenth century, and his work was judged by numerous fellow painters – such as Ward, and Foster's friend Northcote – to equal van Dyck's.⁹⁴ The few portraits by Foster that are known (as noted above with regard to the pictures at Birr Castle) evince a clear debt to Lawrence. Indeed, it is reasonable to assume that a young man with Foster's ambition and early promise as a portrait painter sought to emulate Lawrence in his practice. Moreover, Foster's prodigious talent and early infiltration of the elevated ranks of British high society indicate strongly he had been relatively successful in his efforts. His drawings of Samuel Lawrence and portrait of the composer Henry Bishop (Plate 13) seem undoubtedly informed by

Lawrence's romantic creations. Foster's portrait of Bishop may lack Lawrence's flourish, but the composition is strongly reminiscent of Lawrence's formal portraiture, as is the pensive good humour of the sitter.⁹⁵

It is, however, in his *Self-portrait* (Plate 1) that Foster comes closest to Lawrence.⁹⁶ It may be compared directly with the older artist's *Portrait of David McIntosh* (c.1813) (location unknown) in the directness of the confrontation with the viewer.⁹⁷ Foster chooses to exclude any apparatus of his trade such as easel or brush. Instead he depicts himself as a well-dressed gentleman. No doubt, this manner of self-presentation reflects his concerns at the ambiguous social status which the circumstances of his birth had conferred on him. However, the slightly rakish dress defines him as an artist and Byronic dandy. In addition to Lawrence, Foster's image looks back to similar self-portraits by William Turner (1775-1851) (Tate Britain, London) and John Opie (1761-1807) (private collection), the latter an artist whose lectures were included in Foster's library.⁹⁸ Perhaps even closer in spirit is the almost exactly contemporaneous self-portrait of Samuel Palmer (1805-1881) (Ashmolean Museum, Oxford).

Foster's self-portrait is at once assertive in the directness of the artist's gaze, and strangely tentative in the questioning expression which flickers across his features. It is impossible not to view the haunted expression on his face without reflecting on the tragic events which disfigured it so absolutely very shortly afterwards. More than any other of his surviving works, the self-portrait shows Foster's remarkable talent and romantic sensibility. We can, of course, but speculate how his career would have progressed. Certainly the ambition of his subject paintings suggests that he would have proved a serious rival for Maclise in this field. Instead, Foster is numbered among the group of highly talented Irish artists who died at or before the age of thirty – a long list which includes Samuel Chearnley (c.1717-1746),⁹⁹ Robert Healy (1743-1771), Thomas Roberts (1748-1778), James Coy (c.1750-1780),¹⁰⁰ Samuel Forde (1805-1828)¹⁰¹ and Matthew Lawless (1837-1864). We can only mourn the years of mature work deprived to us by their early deaths.¹⁰²

A letter that Crofton Croker no doubt found at Foster's lodgings after his death, and which he pasted into his album, provides a moving epilogue to the sad narrative of Foster's short life, while at the same time marking his friendship with yet another remarkable Irish writer, John Anster (1793-1867). James Clarence Mangan (1803-1849) said of Anster's *Faust* (discussed in this letter) that

Dr Anster has not merely translated Faust ... – he has translated Goethe – or rather he has translated part of the mind of Goethe which was unknown to Goethe himself ... he is, in short, the real author of Faust.¹⁰³

Praise indeed. However, in his letter to Foster, written from Dublin on 1 March

1826, Anster expresses frustration at his lack of inspiration, and (more prosaically) funds. He pleads with Foster not to exhibit a portrait of him, claiming that it would ‘do mischief to us both’. ‘There can be little doubt’ Anster agonises ‘that the good natured public would laugh exceedingly at both author and artist.’ Foster had already completed the portrait. It is listed in the inventory as belonging to the sitter, but described as not yet paid for. Although in part difficult to decipher, Anster’s light-hearted letter contains banter between artist and writer about the visual arts: ‘I am afraid my taste for the fine arts has so far declined that I might even mistake a horse’s leg for a Gothic arch.’ Clearly, Crofton Croker was a mutual friend and it must have been painful for him to read an account of himself which he was never intended to see. ‘How is Crofton’, Anster continues. ‘I read with great delight his charming and characteristic little book of fairy tales which does so much for the south of Ireland. I hope he is not ill, though I am jealous at not hearing a word from him.’ The most poignant detail in the letter, however, must be Anster’s remark to Foster: ‘I envy you the enjoyment of London and its society.’ Foster never read this letter. Unknown to Anster he had died in solitude and despair the day before it was written.

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The authors are indebted to the Knight of Glin, who first drew our attention to Foster’s paintings in Birr Castle, and who read and provided helpful comments on an earlier draft of this article. We are very grateful to the Earl and Countess of Rosse for access to their archives (and hospitality); Bill Newton Dunn for information on Theodore Hook; Dr Toby Barnard, Prof Anne Crookshank, Prof Roy Foster and Prof John Kelly for their interest and support; Alan and Mary Hobart for providing transparencies; and a private collector for permission to reproduce Foster’s *Self-portrait*. A special word of thanks is due to Leah Benson for her painstaking transcription of Crofton Croker’s album.

APPENDIX

Catalogue of Effects at the Lodgings of the late Mr Thomas Foster – 22 Charles Street Middlesex Hospital, 1st March 1826

PICTURES

Sketch for the picture of Marzeppa
 Another for ditto
 Copy of a head from Vandyke (injured)
 belonging to Mr. Rouse
³/₄ portrait of Mr. Creagh
 Copy of large Rubens
³/₄ portrait of Mr Lockhart
 Group of Mrs Elrington + family
 Head of Mr Anster
 – *belongs to Mr. Anster*
 + *to be paid for by him*
 Small whole length of the Marquis of Hertford
 – *belonging to Mr. Croker*
 delivered 13. March
³/₄ portrait of Mr. Croker in a frame
 – *belonging to Mr. Croker*
 Copy of Figure of Paris from Vandyke
 delivered 13 March
³/₄ portrait of Mr. Collins
 Small half length of Revd. E. Cannon
 ” ditto of Miss M. Tree

 Study of a head for Virginia (Unfinished)
 A. ³/₄ portrait of Sir E. Nepean by _____
 – *belongs to Sir M. Nepean*
 B. Copy of the same
 – *belongs to Mr. Croker*
 C. ³/₄ Portrait of Jos.h Burchett Esq: Sec:
 Admy.
 D. ³/₄ Portrait of Mrs. Croker by Owen
 A.B.C.D. delivered 13 March
 – *belong to Mr Croker*
 Blank canvas
¹/₂ length portrait of Mr. Banim (unfinished)
 Small whole length portrait of the Duke of
 Orleans
 – *belongs to Mr. Briggs*
 delivered 13 March

Canvas for the copy of same.
³/₄ portrait of Webb Follett Esq.
 Whole length of a child on a ³/₄ canvas
 (unfinished)
 E. Small whole length of the Marquis of
 Hertford
 – *belongs to Mr. Croker*
 F. ³/₄ portrait of Mr Croker after Sir
 Thomas Lawrence
 – *belongs to Mr. Croker*
 E.F. Delivered 13 March
 Head of Miss M Tree
 Small half length portrait of Mr Hook
 (Unfinished)
 Small half-length of the artist

³/₄ portrait of the artist
 Half length of the late Mr Nugent Bell
 Sketch of Room in Carlton House
 – *belongs to Mr Croker*
 delivered 13th March
 A frame –
 Sketch after Vandyke. 3 figures and a black
 – *belongs to Mr. Banim*
³/₄ portrait of Mr. North M.P. (unfinished)
 Small sketch after Vandyke of Charles 1st
 + family in frame
 – *belongs to Mr. Banim*
 also claimed by Mr Hook
 A small flat gold frame
 Small portrait of Mr. Lockhart
 – *belongs to Dr. Maginn*
 Small sketch of woman + dead child
¹/₂ length copy from Vandyke
 Small study from Titian
 – *belongs to Mr. Banim*
 On one board – two small whole length
 sketches of an officer.
 Small sketches of two figures.
 4 sketches (in one frame) of recollections of

- Exhibition pictures
 Small sketch for great picture of Carlton House
 – *belongs to Mr. Croker*
 delivered 13th. March.
- Small unfinished study from Rubens
 Sketch of the Revd Thos. Rennell
 Large whole length copy of St Sebastian
 First sketch for picture of Group of Artists
 Roll of spoiled canvas
On the Easel. Large picture of Scene in
 Carlton House.
 The Nativity (in frame)
 – *belongs to Mr Spice*
 Sketch of a father and child
 Small sketch – study from Lawrence.
 Rolled portrait of Mr M. Banim
 – *belongs to Mr. Banim.*
 Sketch of Figures.
 2 studies of a chair for Carlton House picture,
 on one piece of board.
 delivered to Mr. Croker 13 March
 Small old canvas
 Sketch for Paul + Virginia
 _____ ditto _____ ditto _____
 Sketch for Group of Artists
 4 Sketches for portraits on one board
 Crayon portrait – female head
 – *belongs to Mr Be[nomi?]*
 2 Chalk drawings from Elgin Marbles
- 2 Straining frames.
 Old picture frame
 Old Cattle piece in gold frame.

- BOOKS
- A. MS. Sermon in black leather case.
 Recollections of the Peninsula.
 – *belongs to Mr. Banim*
 Sayings and doings. Vol. 1 and 3.
 Map of Paris.
 Genlise’s Manuel du Voyageur
- *belongs to Mr. L. Ferrall*
 Bible
 Belgium Traveller
 – *belongs to Mr. L. Ferrall*
 French Grammar
 Johnsons Pocket Dictionary
 English Dictionary
 John Bull Magazine
 Nos 4. 5. and 6.
 Guthrie’s Geography
 Specimens of British Poets Vol 1.
 History of Modern Europe.
 Vols. 1, 2, 3, 4, 5 and 6
 Bells Pantheon Vol 1.
 Cobbets Grammar
 Sketch and Note book
- History of the Reign of George the 3rd.
 Vol. 1, 2, + 3.
 Burchetts Naval Transactions.
 (delivered 13th March)
 belongs to Admiralty
 Ryan’s worthies of Ireland. Vol. 1.
 Paul + Virginia
 Prayer book.
 Nugents dictionary
 Telemacus (French)
 Rollins Art: History Vol. 3
 Rousseau’s [sic] Mis: Works
 Vol 1 + 2
 Rouchfoucault’s reflections.
 Small French Grammar.
 Lectures Graduées Vol 2.
 High life below Straits [sic]
 Essay on Art of Criticism.
 Elements of French Conversation
 Englishman’s guide to the French
 Substantives Gender
 Mason’s Gray – Vol 1.
 belongs to Mr Banim
 Advis Fidelle aux veritable Hollandais
- Monthly Literary Register No 1.
 Spectator Vol. 3.
 Roman History (Dublin)

- A Vindication of Natural Society
 Festival of Wit
 Billets in the Low Countries
 Fearné's Essay on Remainder.
 Volney's Ruins.
 Picture of London.
 Life St Patrick.
 – *belongs to Crofton Croker*
 John Bull Newspaper, bundle of.
 Paradise regained &c.
 Fables Choisies.
 Fables Amusantes.
 Eton Grammar.
 Theodosius + Constantia
 Latin Grammar
 Political Magazine Vol. 1
 Practical French Grammar
 Small Geography.
 English Grammar.
 Smollett's Travels. Vol. 1.
 Pieces Choisies
 French Grammar
 Large Sketch book
 Rassalas
 Dante's Inferno.
 Devil among the Tailors
 Tragedy of Richard 2nd
 Burke on the Sublime
 The Incas
 Forresti (a Novel) Vol 1.
 Catalogue of the Louvre. 1815.
 Sherstone's letters
 A Disquisition about final Causes.
 Nature displayed.
 Burn's Poems Vol 1.
 Aristotles Art of Poetry.
 Man of Feeling
 Creeche's Horace.
 New Testament
 Don Quixote. Vol 2.
 Plinys Epistles Vol 1
 Ovid Vol. 1
 Bundle of Literary Register.

 Opie's Lectures
- Anti Jacobin Review Vols 35, 36 and 41
 Public Buildings of Dublin
 Plutarch's Lives. Vols 1.2.3.4.5 + 6
 Essay on Perspective
 Whittingham's Shakespeare. 7 Vols
 – *belongs to Mr Banim*
 Two Treatises on Government.
 H.K. White's Remains Vol 1
 Hoare on the Arts
 R. Mengs's Works.
 Johnson's Lives of the Poets
 (complete in 1 Vol)
 Johnson's Poets. Vol 4.5.6 and 7.
 Barry's account of the Adelphi Pictures
 – *belongs to Crofton Croker*
 Barry's Letter – *ditto*
 Barry's ditto to Dilettante Society – *ditto*
 Da Vinci on Painting
 Le Antichita di Ercolano – 4to
 (2 Copies of Vol. 2 + Vol 3)
 Olivers Song book

 Lavatars Aphorisms. *belongs to Mr Banim*
 Don Juan
 The Silent River
 Prince Hoare's Art of Design
 Guy Mannerling [?] – 3 Vols
 delivered 13th. March
 – *belongs to Mr Croker.*
 Tunbridge Wells Guide
 O'Mara's St Helena 2 Vols.
 Medwin's Conversations of Lord Byron
 Voyage for the Discovery of the N. West
 Passage.
 Lock's Essay on Human Understanding
 Sir Joshua Reynolds' Works – Vol 3.
 Blackstones Commentaries Vol. 2.
 Les Juex [sic] Champêtres des Enfans
 Anthony Pasquin
 Elgin Marbles (Canova's Letter on)
 Sir Joshua Reynolds' Lectures Vol 1.
-
- MISCELLANIES

An Easel.
 Chinese Snuff box in Case.
 Blank Note book
 Sketch and M:S. book
 Sketch book of Brighton Characters
 French Sketch Book
 Blank Memorandum book
 Chinese Hat
 Indian Hat
 Small Clothes Brush
 3 Pallettes + Lot of Brushes +c.
 Shade Lamp.
 – *belongs to Mr Brooke*
 Malt Maul Stick
 Small Copper Plate with Arms
 2 Switches
 Small Glass Slab + Muller
 Colours in Bladders – Lot of.
 5 Casts of heads in Plaster
 4 Plaster Casts of hands Arms + Legs
 Small Table with Jars – bottles +c.
 Lithographic Stone
 – *belongs to Admiralty*
 Delivered to Admiralty Lithographic Printer
 13 March 1826

Tin Painting Box + 2 Oil Cans.
 Set of Chess Men.
 15 Numbers of Reynolds’s Engravings from
 Sir Joshua Reynolds’ Pictures
 Large Port Folio with about 400 Prints &c.
 Large Port Folio with about 100 Prints,
 Drawings &c.
 31 Engravings
 Some prints belonging to Mr Brooke
 31 Engravings of Rev.d T. Rennell.
 3 Plaster Casts
 2 ditto of Horses Legs
 Print of the late Mr Rennie
 6 Chairs – 1 Arm Chair – Throne and Stand
 A Small Glass.
 A Set of fire irons + fender
 A Table with Green Baize
 Old Pistol
 Baize Carpet, and piece of Carpet for Rug.

Paint Box.
 Large Lamp.
 A Coal Box
 13 Quart + 2 Small bottles
 1 Foil
 A Parcel Addressed to “L. Creagh Esq
 care of Mr Foster.”
 Delivered to Mr Creagh 13th. March

IN BEDROOM &c.

2 Shirts
 4 Cravats
 3 Silk handkerchiefs
 7 Collars
 4 Pair White Trousers
 A flannel dress.
 2 Towels
 Hunting belt.
 Counterframe
 2 Sheets
 Camlet Cloak
 black Trousers.
 5 Pictures
 Fragments of plaster Casts.
 Bundle of John Bull Newspaper.
 Large Knife.
 3 Deal Boxes
 Some old Magazines + Catalogues
 1 flat + 2 Sketching frames
 Large Book of Anatomical Studies
 2 Pair old boots
 A Collection of small prints
 Some old books + painting Materials

IN SITTING ROOM

Blue Cloth Cloak
 India Dressing Gown (for figure)
 Old blue Frock Coat.
 2 ditto body Coats
 2 black Velvet Waistcoats.

A Trunk
 2 Carpet Bags
 2 Waistcoats + a Silk pair of Socks
 2 or 3 Collars.

A Parcel of thing with Washerwoman
 On Person at Webbs. Hotel

Thus marked have been given up. *

A Purse containing 3 Sovereigns – 2 foreign
 Silver pieces. – 1 Shilling + 6d.-
 * *A Bunch of Keys*
 1 Pair Trousers + Pair of Braces-
 Finger Ring.
 Silver Hunting Watch. (Robt. Wood London)
 No 2362
 A Seal + Two Keys with Ribband-Ring
 and Slide
 A Snuff Box. Wood-
 A Black Stock – + *Two Linen Collars*

From a Mem[morandum] in the hand writing of Mr. F.

CATALOGUE OF FURNITURE

Drawing Room

√ One Mahogany Table
 √ 6 Chairs
 √ Carpet
 Do for Stairs
 √ Fire Irons.
 Green Table Cover
 Two Table Cloths
 3 Towels
 1 Tray
 1 Tea Kettle
 1 Coffee Pot

4 Cups + Saucers

1 Black Tea Pot
 1 Black Cream Jug
 1 Slop Bowl
 6 Tea Spoons
 3 Knives + forks
 2 Plated Candle Sticks
 3 Breakfast plates
 1 Carpet Broom
 1 Sweeping Brush
 √ Thus marked we noticed
 in the foregoing inventory

In Bed Chamber

1 Tester Bed with Curtains
 1 Mattress [sic]
 1 Pair of Blankets
 √ 1 Counterframe
 2 Pairs of Sheets
 1 Bolster
 1 Deal Table
 2 Chairs
 1 Jug + Basin
 1 Utensil
 3 Shoe Brushes

ENDNOTES

The following abbreviations are used:

Crofton Croker Album	Thomas Crofton Croker's manuscript album of material relating to Henry Perronet Briggs and Thomas Foster, 1854, National Gallery of Ireland, Centre for the Study of Irish Art. All quotations without a specific reference have been taken from this source.
<i>DNB</i>	<i>Dictionary of National Biography</i> , 22 vols (Oxford 1968)
Dunn, <i>T.E. Hook</i>	Bill Newton Dunn, <i>The Man who was John Bull, The Biography of Theodore Edward Hook 1778-1841</i> (London 1996)
NGI	National Gallery of Ireland, Dublin
RA	Royal Academy, London
Strickland	Walter G. Strickland, <i>A Dictionary of Irish Artists</i> , 2 vols (Dublin 1913)

- ¹ The pistols were made by the leading small arms manufacturer, Twigg of London.
- ² The same authors, in their recent revision of the work, briefly include Foster and note the discovery of the Crofton Croker Album, Anne Crookshank and the Knight of Glin, *Ireland's Painters, 1600-1940* (New Haven and London 2002) 190-91, and 315, n. 44. The portrait in Trinity College, Dublin, of Provost Thomas Elrington is included in Anne Crookshank and David Webb, *Paintings and Sculptures in Trinity College Dublin* (Dublin 1990) 50.
- ³ Michael Wynne, 'Frederick Prussia Plowman, A Dublin Painter of the Late-18th Century', *Irish Arts Review Yearbook*, 17 (Dublin 2002) 35.
- ⁴ Strickland, I, 379.
- ⁵ *ibid.*
- ⁶ The present article is part of an ongoing research project by the authors into Foster's life.
- ⁷ A comparison may be made with another Offaly-born artist of an earlier period, Charles Jervas (c.1675-1739), who, likewise, had literary ambitions, close, if uncertain, connections with the Parsons family, and who was on terms of close friendship with writers, including Pope, Swift and Addison.
- ⁸ For a comprehensive account of Maclise's life and work see Nancy Weston, *Daniel Maclise, Irish Artist in Victorian London* (Dublin 2001). The present authors do not accept many of Weston's readings of Maclise's iconography, and in particular the coded references to Ireland she sees in much of his work. It may be noted that, as far as we know, Foster did not paint any Irish subject matter.
- ⁹ The sale took place at Christie & Manson's from 25 to 27 April 1844. The album was lot 400 and sold for £2.12.0.
- ¹⁰ The item, sold on the second of a three-day sale, was listed in the accompanying catalogue as 'A volume, containing eight sketches of military costume, in colours and Indian ink'. Croker pasted the catalogue of the sale, along with a receipt for his purchases, to the back cover of the volume.
- ¹¹ De Gheyn's lavishly illustrated book *The Exercise of Arms*, published in 1607, was designed as a handbook for the infantry. Containing 117 designs that demonstrated the use of various weapons, the book coincided with the Dutch fight for independence from Spain. See most recently *Jacques de Gheyn II, Drawings*, exhibition catalogue, Museum Boymans-van Beuningen (Rotterdam 1986) 45-47. Crofton Croker notes in his text that De Gheyn's 'well known work sells when complete for about five pounds, and has been re-engraved in smaller editions'.

- ¹² An undated letter from Foster to Crofton Croker pasted into the album provides evidence of their close friendship: 'I am going to Brighton tomorrow to shoot pheasants, and as I am anxious to see you before I start I mean to call upon you for a few minutes this evening for that purpose – The account Hook has given me of your having bled from the cheek alarms me much and I want to consult you about it least [sic] you should take into your head to kick the bucket before I come back to town. You should consult a good doctor on the subject as I think it rather serious. I shall remain at Brighton a week or ten days. I am yours ever T. Foster.'
- ¹³ 'They lived at this time within two or three doors of each other; Briggs' number I think was 24 (afterwards the residence of Lover, the lyrist and artist) and Foster's 22 Charles Street, Middlesex Hospital.' For Lover, see Paul Caffrey, 'Samuel Lover's Achievement as a Painter', *Irish Arts Review*, 3, no. 1 (Dublin 1986) 51-54.
- ¹⁴ See the entry in the *DNB*, V, 132-34; 'Memoir of the Late Thomas Crofton Croker', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, October 1854, and *A Description of Rosamond's Bower, Fulham, the Residence of T. Crofton Croker Esq...* (London 1842).
- ¹⁵ See the entry in the *DNB* and L.J. Jennings (ed.), *Memoirs, Diaries and Correspondence of the Right Hon. John Wilson Croker* (London 1884). John Wilson Croker was born in Galway in 1780, and after Trinity College and a spell at the Irish bar, moved to London. He entered the House of Commons in 1808 as Tory member for Downpatrick. The following year he launched (and edited) *The Quarterly Review*, in which, a few years later, he published his scathing review of Keats' *Endymion* that the poet's friends believed hastened his death. Croker also conducted a vitriolic campaign in its pages against the Irish novelist Lady Morgan. He is widely credited with renaming the Tory party the Conservatives.
- ¹⁶ To avoid homonymic confusion, Thomas Crofton Croker is referred to throughout this article (slightly incorrectly) as Crofton Croker.
- ¹⁷ With a civil servant's attention to detail, even in such traumatic circumstances, Crofton Croker punctiliously notes that the lithographic stone was returned to the Admiralty's printer on 13 March 1826.
- ¹⁸ 'Memoir of the Late Thomas Crofton Croker', *The Gentleman's Magazine*, October 1854, viii.
- ¹⁹ *ibid.*, vii.
- ²⁰ *DNB*, V, 133.
- ²¹ T.L. Cooke, *The Picture of Parsonstown in the King's County...* (Dublin 1826) 237-38.
- ²² NGI, Crofton Croker Album, letter from West to Thomas Crofton Croker, 12 April 1826. The 'chapel', following contemporary usage, refers to the recently built Catholic church in Birr, towards the construction of which the Earl of Rosse had contributed generously; see T.L. Cooke, *The Picture of Parsonstown in the King's County...* (Dublin 1826), 173-210.
- ²³ K. Garlick, *Sir Thomas Lawrence, A Complete Catalogue of the Oil Paintings* (Oxford 1989) 141, no. 51.
- ²⁴ For a recent account of the life and multifaceted interests of the 2nd Earl, see A.P.W. Malcomson, 'A Variety of Perspectives on Laurence Parsons, 2nd Earl of Rosse', in William Noland and Timothy P. O'Neill (eds), *Offaly, History and Society, Interdisciplinary Essays on the History of an Irish County* (Dublin 1998) 439-83.
- ²⁵ See G. Willemson (ed.), *The Dublin Society Drawing Schools, Students and Award Winners 1746-1876* (Dublin 2000) 36.
- ²⁶ For Frazer, see Anne Crookshank and the Knight of Glin, *Ireland's Painters, 1600-1940* (New Haven and London 2002) 209-10.
- ²⁷ The rather rare Herculean subject is from Ovid, *Metamorphoses*, Book 9, 212-20. It may be

- noted that a copy of Ovid was in Foster's library in London (see appendix).
- ²⁸ For the 1819 exhibition Foster gave an address at 53 Leicester Street; the following year he moved to 50 Greek Street, before settling at 22 Charles Street.
- ²⁹ Anne Crookshank and David Webb, *Paintings and Sculptures in Trinity College Dublin* (Dublin 1990), 50; Adrian Le Harivel (ed.), *National Gallery of Ireland, Illustrated Summary Catalogue of Prints and Sculpture* (Dublin 1988) 162.
- ³⁰ Strickland, I, 379.
- ³¹ *DNB*, II, 503.
- ³² Strickland, I, 379.
- ³³ At the time Strickland was writing, the picture was in the possession of Herbert Mally, 18 Nassau Street, Dublin. No doubt it still survives somewhere.
- ³⁴ See most recently the introduction by John Kelly to John Banim, *The Anglo-Irish in the Nineteenth Century* (Washington 1997).
- ³⁵ For Griffin, see the biography by his brother Daniel Griffin, *Life of Gerald Griffin* (London 1843); more recently Gerald Griffin (ed. John Cronin), *The Collegians* (Belfast 1992).
- ³⁶ Banim's well-informed biographer Patrick Joseph Murray is explicit on this point: 'having selected the profession of an artist as that to which he wished to devote his life, he was, in the year, 1813, removed from his last school, the College of Kilkenny, and sent to Dublin, where he became a pupil in the drawing academy of the Royal Dublin Society', Patrick Joseph Murray, *The Life of John Banim, the Irish Novelist* (London 1857) 38. However, his name does not appear in the list compiled from Dublin Society records, G. Willemsen (ed.), *The Dublin Society Drawing Schools, Students and Award Winners 1746-1876* (Dublin 2000).
- ³⁷ *DNB*, I, 1,036.
- ³⁸ According to the same source, 'it was largely owing to his efforts that the artists of the Irish capital obtained a charter of incorporation and a government grant, and in acknowledgement of his efforts, they presented him with an address and a considerable sum of money', *ibid.*, 1,035.
- ³⁹ John Hawthorne, *John and Michael Banim (The O'Hara Brothers), A Study in the Early Development of the Anglo-Irish Novel* (Salzburg 1975) 17.
- ⁴⁰ *ibid.*, 18.
- ⁴¹ The full story is quoted below. It may be noted that Crofton-Crocker's transcription from Daniel Griffin's biography is scrupulously accurate. 'This Mr. Foster had been acquainted with Gerald about a year and a half before this meeting, and then procured him some introductions to parties who he thought might be useful to him. He was the same friend who by the merest accident dropped in one evening in the hour of his greatest distress "to have a talk with him" and of whom he says in a letter which I have already given "I had not seen him, nor anybody else that I knew for some months, and he frightened me by saying that I looked like a ghost".' Griffin gives an, albeit second-hand, description of Foster's personality which so endeared him to his friends. 'He appears to have been a person of the most warm and generous disposition and highly esteemed by those who knew him. In this instance he was the chief cause of Gerald's deliverance from his embarrassments, though the latter did not know at the time the full extent to which he was indebted to him. Immediately after the visit alluded to he went straight to Dr. Maginn and described what he saw. Dr. Maginn with extreme good nature, immediately communicated with the Editor of the Literary Gazette, and this led to the engagement which Gerald alludes to above, and to the series of papers he there speaks of.'
- ⁴² *Strickland*, II, 13-15; G. Willemsen (ed.), *The Dublin Society Drawing Schools, Students and Award Winners 1746-1876* (Dublin 2000), 58.

- ⁴³ *An Exhibition of 18th-21st Century Irish Painting*, Gorry Gallery (Dublin 2003), no. 25; the picture is unusual for its aggressively Catholic iconography. See also his *Portrait of Theobald Mathew* (National Portrait Gallery, London), discussed in Fintan Cullen, *The Irish Face, Redefining The Irish Portrait* (London 2004) 46.
- ⁴⁴ See Anne Crookshank and the Knight of Glin, *The Watercolours of Ireland* (London 1994) 95. Nicholson, Crofton Croker and Marianne toured Cork, Waterford and Limerick in 1821, collecting material for Crofton Croker's *Researches in the South of Ireland* (London 1824).
- ⁴⁵ Strickland, II, 333-35; see also P. Murphy, 'Terence Farrell, Sculptor', *Irish Arts Review Yearbook, 1991-92* (Dublin 1992) 73-79.
- ⁴⁶ Crofton Croker notes of Crowe: 'For many years Crowe was closely connected with the newspaper press and indeed I believe is so at present (1854). He was a large contributor to the pages of Blackwood, chiefly upon literary matters as his political bias was decidedly "liberal". He wrote several novels and a history of France in Lardner's Cyclopaedia. A Government literary pension, of I think £100 a year was conferred on Crowe ... through the influence of the Marquis of Lansdowne.' Several letters from Crowe (or Chough as Foster called him) addressed to Crofton Croker are included in the album.
- ⁴⁷ Strickland, II, 437-44.
- ⁴⁸ See Alf MacLochlainn, 'The Portrait Artist as a Young Man: Letters of Bernard Mulrenin, 1825-34', in Adele N. Dalsimer (ed.), *Visualizing Ireland, National Identity and the Pictorial Tradition* (Boston and London 1993) 190. Like Foster, Mulrenin was from rural Ireland (Sligo) and had also received early patronage from a local aristocratic family (in his case the Coopers of Markree Castle). He painted Foster's friend John Banim.
- ⁴⁹ Presumably St Dunstan in the East, designed by Christopher Wren and located in Dunstan Hill, just off Lower Thames Street. The church, one of Wren's most daring, features a particularly dramatic spire and four freestanding flying buttresses.
- ⁵⁰ G. Willemson (ed.), *The Dublin Society Drawing Schools, Students and Award Winners 1746-1876* (Dublin 2000) 5; Rupert Gunnis, *Dictionary of British Sculptors, 1660-1851* (London 1953) 45-48.
- ⁵¹ Born in Nova Scotia, Newton was the nephew of Gilbert Stuart (1755-1828), under whom he trained in Boston. He achieved considerable success in London, exhibiting regularly at both the British Institution and the RA, but suffered poor mental health. He died in the Chelsea Asylum in August 1835.
- ⁵² The formal signatories to the inventory were A.L. Spice, landlord of Foster's lodging house, and Thomas Corbett, an undertaker.
- ⁵³ The hapless William Maginn (1793-1842) was one of the most remarkable members of the group of Irish writers with which the young Foster surrounded himself. Born in Cork in 1793, he entered Trinity College, Dublin, at the age of ten, and at fourteen became the second youngest graduate ever in the British Isles. By the time he was awarded a doctorate he was proficient in Latin, Greek, Hebrew, Sanskrit and Syriac, as well as several modern languages, including Irish and Basque. He founded *Fraser's Magazine* in 1830, and, like Crofton Croker, supported his fellow townsman Daniel Maclise, who worked extensively for the magazine. Described as a 'bosom crony' of Banim (Daniel Griffin, *Life of Gerald Griffin* (London 1843) 181), Maginn was at the very core of the literary group around Foster. After Crofton Croker had lost the original manuscript of *The Fairy Legends and Traditions of the South of Ireland*, Maginn, who was familiar with the text, helped him rewrite it. With Foster, he was of assistance to Gerald Griffin in finding him work at *The Literary Gazette*. Seemingly alone of the

- group, he was brave enough to attack their mutual patron John Wilson Croker in print, mocking the Admiralty secretary's Irish brogue, of which he was embarrassed.
- ⁵⁴ In his haste, John Wilson Croker misnames Thomas Crofton Croker.
- ⁵⁵ New York University, Fales Library, 89.32, letter to W.S. Streatfield from Theodore Hook, dated July 1826, cited in Dunn, *T.E. Hook*, 217.
- ⁵⁶ Strickland, I, 379.
- ⁵⁷ *DNB*, II, 1,082.
- ⁵⁸ *ibid.*
- ⁵⁹ See J.M.D. Hardwick (ed.), *Emigrants in Motley, The Journey of Charles and Ellen Kean in Quest of a Theatrical Fortune in Australia and America, as Told in their Hitherto Unpublished Letters* (London 1954).
- ⁶⁰ Foster mixed in theatrical circles. His friends Banim and Hook were both playwrights, and a further portrait of an actor in character exists in the Garrick Club – *John Braham as Lord Aimworth*. See Geoffrey Ashton, *Pictures in the Garrick Club, A Catalogue* (London 1995) 53. Ashton's tentative attribution to Foster can now be confirmed.
- ⁶¹ Strickland incorrectly gives the role in which Anna Maria is depicted as 'The Fair Geraldine', Strickland, I, 380. Richard Sainthill (1787-1870), referred to in the volume as the owner of Foster's portrait of Miss Anna Maria Tree, was a distinguished numismatist and antiquarian, best remembered for his book *Olla Podrida*, a collection of writings on coins and medals. According to a cutting from a sales catalogue in Crofton Croker's volume, Sainthill owned a bust of Foster, after which Maclise himself produced two pencil sketches in 1825 and 1826.
- ⁶² Crofton Croker writes: 'Connected with the deplorable suicide of Foster it was with extreme regret that I found in looking over the diaries of the late Theodore Hook (now in my custody) the following passages which were certainly never intended by the writer to meet other than friendly eyes.'
- ⁶³ For Hook, see Dunn, *T.E. Hook*, *passim*; quotation from Coleridge, cited 288.
- ⁶⁴ See Gerrit P. Judd, *Members of Parliament, 1734-1832* (Yale 1972) 127. He was later MP for Berwick-on-Tweed (1835-37) and Canterbury (1837-47).
- ⁶⁵ Bishop was engaged to be married to Miss Bolton before she married Lord Thurlow, and it seems he offered Miss Tree to become his mistress.
- ⁶⁶ *Oxberry's Dramatic Biography and Histrionic Anecdotes*, III, no. 44, 1825, 209.
- ⁶⁷ The lapse of time between Anna Maria's marriage and Foster's suicide does not in itself militate against the link between the two events. The delayed shock at the end of a relationship is a well-known phenomenon. Nowhere in Hook's account, or in Crofton Croker's album, is there any support given to Strickland's suggestion that he was 'despondent over his work' or felt that 'his friends had forsaken him'. The events immediately after his death certainly contradict the latter assertion. Strickland, I, 379.
- ⁶⁸ New York University, Fales Library, 89.32; cited in Dunn, *T.E. Hook*, 217.
- ⁶⁹ While £1,000 was a substantial sum, it could not really be described as 'a fortune'. In Jane Austen's *Sense and Sensibility*, Eleanor Dashwood plans to live cheaply in the country on an income of £850 a year. Just ten years before Foster's death the definition of a rich man was given as one with an income of £5,000 a year; see Venetia Murray, *High Society in the Regency Period, 1788-1830* (London 1998) 80.
- ⁷⁰ The contrast with the struggles encountered in London by contemporary Irish artists such as James Arthur O'Connor (1792-1841) is striking.
- ⁷¹ New Haven, Yale Centre for British Art, Weyhe Gift, MS letter from Robert Lucius West to

- William Clements of Liverpool. Admittedly, the genre and size of these pictures is unspecified, but it is interesting that the price is still below Foster's lowest of over ten years earlier.
- ⁷² These prices were quoted on *Mr Cooley's Terms*, an illustrated list in the National Gallery of Ireland. The exact date of *Mr Cooley's Terms* is unknown, but it is likely to have been executed during the 1820s, when the artist was practicing in both London and Dublin.
- ⁷³ One assumes that this refers to William Cobbett's *A Grammar of the English Language*. William's son James Paul Cobbett published numerous books on English, French and Italian grammar in the early nineteenth century.
- ⁷⁴ Phillips was wounded when Cook was killed at Kealakekua Bay, Hawaii, in 1779. Phillips himself died on 11 September 1832.
- ⁷⁵ Foster showed the picture again at the British Institution the following year.
- ⁷⁶ Algernon Graves (ed.), *The Royal Academy of Arts, A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their Work from its Foundation in 1769 to 1804*, 4 vols (London 1905) II, 146.
- ⁷⁷ Dunn, *T.E. Hook*, 88-89.
- ⁷⁸ *ibid.*, 12, 29.
- ⁷⁹ Algernon Graves (ed.), *The Royal Academy of Arts, A Complete Dictionary of Contributors and their Work from its Foundation in 1769 to 1804*, 4 vols (London 1905) II, 146.
- ⁸⁰ *Delacroix: An Exhibition of Paintings, Drawings and Lithographs*, exhibition catalogue, Arts Council of Great Britain (London 1964) 45.
- ⁸¹ Opie's lectures were published in 1809. Coincidentally, a number of titles, including Leonardo's treatise and a volume on Anton Rafael Mengs' works, also featured in Henry Fuseli's 'small and very select Classical Library', sold at Sotheby's in July 1825. The widespread admiration in Britain for Mengs was attributable to a great extent to the fact that Benjamin West, esteemed President of the Royal Academy, was his erstwhile pupil.
- ⁸² J.T. Smith, *Nollekens and his Times* (London 1828) 127.
- ⁸³ The letter is preserved in the Crofton Croker Album.
- ⁸⁴ *Mazepa, Domestic Quarrels, Portrait of Robert Lucius West and Portrait of J.G. Davis*.
- ⁸⁵ Jennings named the sculpture *The Dog of Alcibiades* after the Athenian general and pupil of Socrates who docked the tail of his dog so that people would have something to talk about other than himself. The dog is a molossian, ancestor of the modern mastiff. As recently as 2001 the British Museum succeeded in acquiring the sculpture, having had it on temporary loan.
- ⁸⁶ Jennings was forced to sell the sculpture in 1816. It was bought by T. Dumcombe MP, and placed in the grand hall at Duncombe Park in Yorkshire, where it remained until the 1980s.
- ⁸⁷ According to the annotation, Foster produced the copy after Reynolds for a Mr Murray of Albemarle Street. A copy in oils of the same painting by George Hayter is in the collection of the National Gallery of Ireland (NGI 297). For Reynolds' two original versions, see David Mannings, *Sir Joshua Reynolds, Complete Catalogue of his Paintings*, 4 vols (New Haven and London 2000) I, 115.
- ⁸⁸ It is unclear which artist was responsible for the drawing. A number of artists called Moreau were active in France and elsewhere at this time.
- ⁸⁹ Strickland, I, 379.
- ⁹⁰ This event coincided with the Prince Regent's (by now George IV) plans to enlarge Buckingham House. The portico of Carlton House was reused in the façade of the National Gallery in Trafalgar Square.
- ⁹¹ NGI, Crofton Croker Album, letter from Robert Lucius West to Thomas Crofton Croker, 12 April 1826.

- ⁹² For Comerford, see Paul Caffrey, *John Comerford and the Portrait Miniature in Ireland, c.1620-1850* (Kilkenny 1999).
- ⁹³ Lawrence painted John Wilson Croker on at least three occasions, as well as portraits of Croker's sister-in-law (and adopted daughter Rosamund). See K. Garlick, *Sir Thomas Lawrence, A Complete Catalogue of the Oil Paintings* (Oxford 1989) 175. Garlick notes that the portrait of Rosamund (Albright-Knox Art Gallery, Buffalo, NY), was one of Lawrence's most popular female portraits.
- ⁹⁴ See Katheryn Cave (ed.), *The Diary of Joseph Farington*, 17 vols (New Haven and London) VIII, 4 May 1807, 3,037 and XV, 1 January 1819, 5,309.
- ⁹⁵ Bishop had Irish connections, and Foster's portrait commemorates his award of the Freedom of the City of Dublin in the autumn of 1820. It was exhibited at the RA in 1821 and engraved by Samuel W. Reynolds at the behest of a Mr Power. The portrait was exhibited subsequently at the National Portrait Exhibition in London in 1868, by which time it belonged to a Mrs Smith. See Richard Walker, *National Portrait Gallery, Regency Portraits*, 2 vols (London 1985) I, 49.
- ⁹⁶ The self-portrait measures 59.5 x 44.5 cm (23 x 17 ins). It was inscribed on the original canvas, prior to relining, *Portrait of T. Foster by himself*. A photograph of this inscription is in the files of the private collection in which the portrait now hangs. This inscription can be confirmed by other images of Foster in the Crofton Croker Album. However, the portrait supposedly of Foster in Strickland, I, pl. xxv, seems not to be of the same man.
- ⁹⁷ K. Garlick, *Sir Thomas Lawrence, A Complete Catalogue of the Oil Paintings* (Oxford 1989), pl. 40.
- ⁹⁸ Both portraits are illustrated in Alastair Laing (ed.), *Clerics and Connoisseurs, An Irish Art Collection through Three Centuries* (London 2001) 308.
- ⁹⁹ Chearnley was also from Birr, and also a relation of the Parsons family. Burke's *Landed Gentry of Ireland* gives his death date as 12 March 1746 and his age as twenty-nine. However, drawings in an album at Birr Castle are dated as late as 21 May of that year. See William Laffan (ed.), *Miscelanea Structura Curiosa* (forthcoming, Dublin 2005).
- ¹⁰⁰ Coy's dates are slightly uncertain, however, Strickland notes his age at death as thirty. Strickland, I, 215.
- ¹⁰¹ The parallel with the Cork artist Samuel Forde is particularly suggestive as Forde worked on a similarly large scale and painted religious and mythological subject matter. Foster's large painting for the Catholic church at Birr may be paralleled with Forde's *Crucifixion*, painted for a church in Skibbereen, while both artists shared an interest in the work of Fuseli. Forde, a friend of Maclise in Cork, would also have known Richard Sainthill (who, as noted above, owned a bust of Foster), and, as a scholar of Latin, French and Italian, would at least have been aware of others of the Cork literary set, such as Crofton Croker and Maginn. See Strickland, I, 372-75, and Peter Murray, *Illustrated Summary Catalogue of the Crawford Municipal Art Gallery* (Cork 1991) 173.
- ¹⁰² Among other Irish artists of the period who committed suicide was Roberts' brother Thomas Sautelle (c.1760-1826). Roberts 'terminated his own life in his house in Richmond Street, Portobello in 1826' (the same year as Foster), Strickland, II, 281, while Robert Fagan (1761-1816) had jumped out of a window in Rome ten years earlier.
- ¹⁰³ *The Irishman*, 21 April 1849.