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O'Connor and the
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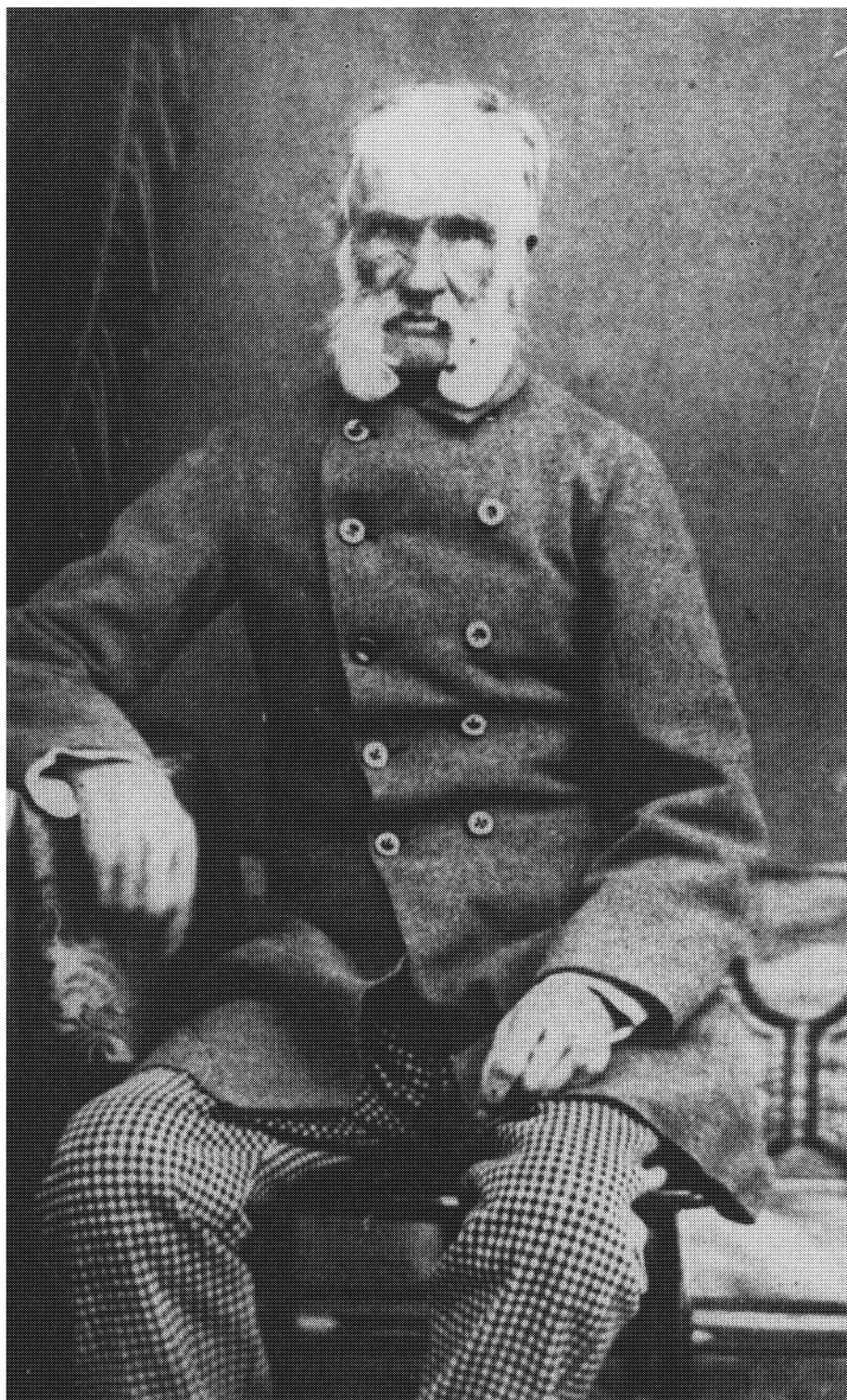
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The Third Man: Francisco Burdett O'Connor and the Emancipation of the Americas

What's in a name?

For the last 500 years most people in Europe have been given at least two names. In a few countries, such as Spain, they hold three, retaining the surname of the mother after the patronymic, and some married women add that of their husband to their maiden name. With the exception of native North Americans, this pattern has generally been followed in the colonies established by the European powers, so that a name normally indicates a family as well as a personal history.

Parents face a constrained choice in bestowing one or more forenames on their expected or recently born child insofar as subsequent usage will bear only partly on the aesthetic or allusive routes to nomination. In childhood the rhyming and rhythmical potential of a name can be positively tyrannical and even for adults the degree of formality used in address does not fit any common threshold of familiarity. It is a banal fact of life that we address many people with whom we have but the slightest acquaintance by their forenames in the same way as do those who know them with the greatest intimacy. A name is only a starting-point, and it can obscure as much as it reveals. Besides, names can be changed.

This is what happened in the case of the subject of this paper. After September 1819, when he arrived in Venezuela from Dublin to join the independence campaign for Spain's colonies in the Americas, Francis – or, as his family and friends called him, Frank – O'Connor became Francisco Burdett O'Connor. This might seem to be an unremarkable hispanisation of a forename. However, I think it telling that this process would restore to O'Connor the qualities precisely of a Christian name, and it may well be that such an early translation helped to ensure that over the rest of his life – some 52 years – he would never return to the British Isles.

At the same time, O'Connor proudly provided himself with a new surname, placing 'Burdett' in the position of the patronymic – that is, where Hispanic custom locates paternity – and so causing open and subliminal confusion as to his inheritance or, in the demotic of our own day, his identity.

Those inclined to the Viennese school of analysis will discern a rich and deep motivational field here, but none of us can quiz O'Connor on that now, and the fact is that until his death he continued to be known by his original surname. Burdett loitered as a quasi-forename. It was, though, no mere embellishment. When he signed his will, O'Connor simply included the initial 'B', but the first article of that document of 1866 studiously indicates that his father was Roger O'Connor, his mother Wilhamena Charlotte Caroline Bowen, and his godfather Sir Francis Burdett. Moreover, when Frank had been a teenager Burdett had acted *in loco parentis* in a serious and practical fashion. His godchild might well have had political or psychological reason to promote him and adopt his name, but he had been a genuine *padrino*, as it is put in Spanish.

Today one of the provinces of the Bolivian department of Tarija carries the name of O'Connor – it includes the farm Francisco built up near the town of San Luis – and

in the 1830s the division he commanded as a general of the Bolivian army was also named after him. O'Connor was personally associated with the establishment of a third of the units that comprised the armed forces in the first century of the republic, and he is the only man to have served three times as their chief of staff.¹ In 1826 the Congress of the new state awarded him 5,000 pesos as a 'liberator', but he himself never used that title despite the rare honour it bestowed, and all these institutional vestiges have now been lost outside the mustiest of books.

Only one of O'Connor's children survived – a daughter, Hercilia.² So, if tradition had been followed his name should also have disappeared from the family within a generation. However, his grandsons adopted his own voluntarist attitude to nomenclature: they not only retained their matronymic but also converted it into a patronymic.

Hercilia had married one Adhemar d'Arlach, which in the valleys of Tarija had no less exotic an echo to it than did O'Connor – which may explain why, even though they traded places, these two possessive surnames have stuck together over the generations as a composite, O'Connor d'Arlach today being a single surname in southern Bolivia. Indeed, the origins of this paper lie partly in a request from the deputy foreign minister of that country, Eduardo Trigo O'Connor d'Arlach, for an explanation of the appearance of Burdett in the name of his forebear.

The name Burdett appears in most textbooks on modern British history as an opponent of the Pitt and Liverpool governments, a forceful advocate of civil liberties – particularly *habeas corpus* – and an architect of parliamentary reform. The name of O'Connor is usually associated with the Chartist leader Feargus, also an MP but more widely known for his ability to mobilise the masses and his frequent arrests in the campaigns for political change of the 1830s and 1840s. This O'Connor was born three years after Frank and was, indeed, his younger brother.

In the simple sense of localised public knowledge Francisco Burdett O'Connor is a 'third man' in that the owner of a forename stands behind two famous surnames that in historical memory belong to other people before they do to him. In some respects, then, the earliest parts of the present story are the most important.

This is particularly so because of the interesting challenge of the relationship between siblings – not just between Frank and Feargus but also between their ebullient father Roger, a sportsman and spectacular spendthrift who exercised his charm equally upon the greatest of Whig grandees and the most humble of countrymen, and Roger's brother Arthur, renegade MP, hardline leader of the United Irishmen and convicted traitor to the British crown, who was idolised by his nephews as a persecuted and heroic patriot.

The imbalance between their father and uncle in terms of public profile and achievement possibly helps to explain why both Frank and Feargus maintained throughout their lives that the family descended from the kings of Connaught, thereby

¹ Julio Díaz A., *Historia del ejército boliviano, 1825-1932* (La Paz, 1971), p. 65.

² In 1850 he wrote to his old friend Marshal Otto Philip Braun that his wife had lost 'six or seven' girls, '*todas muertas de resfrío*', and was then nursing a son of ten months with great apprehension. O'Connor, Tarija, to Braun, 12 Dec. 1850, in J. Barnadas (ed.), *El Mariscal Braun a través de su epistolario* (Cochabamba, 1998), p. 204.

providing some dynastic compensation – perhaps even excuse – for the fact that Roger was, in the words of Graham Wallas, ‘a semi-lunatic’.³

Of course, a romance like ours begins bereft of both innocence and rigour. It is bad form even in Whig and Freudian terms to put the *crutch* in place of the deconstruction. Blood-ties provide structuralists with the most numerous, and least stimulating, linkages. Karl Marx himself thought Feargus ‘patriarchal and petty-bourgeois’ – the ultimate put-down, even coming from the accused in the second-biggest ideological paternity suit in two millennia.

I'm not myself sure if any publicly practising post-modernists really exist east of Gander and north of Calais, but if so the chances are that they see biography less as fragmented irony than the metanarrative of solipsism. And for many sophisticated people in receipt of funds from the public purse for purveying to the young ideas ancient and modern the notion of an improving tale is utterly primitive – a veritable Chernobyl of the mind.

Nevertheless, as that great historian Johan Huizinga reminds us, ‘sophistry, technically regarded as a form of expression, has all the associations with primitive play... The sophism proper is closely related to the riddle. It is a fencer's trick.’⁴ Jules Michelet, a contemporary of the O'Connor boys, is no less persuasive of the pleasures and profit in managing the affairs of the dead in our day – when he is celebrated for his treatment of sex and magic – than he was in his own – when he was famous for democratic demands and dates.

The central date for our purposes is 12 June 1791, when Francis, or Frank, was born in the city of Cork to Wilhamena Bowen, second wife of Roger O'Connor, who had previously been married to Louisa Strachan. The son of that earlier union, Roderick, was the elder brother to whom Frank and Feargus both looked for a lead and who later established the Commonwealth branch of the family by settling in Tasmania in 1824. Today his descendent Roderic has preserved a family tradition by occupying in Cressy a house called ‘Connorville’ after the original family estate in County Cork. Feargus would establish a settlement with the same name in the 1840s, when he sought to establish a yeoman-based land company in England as part of a political vision of self-sufficiency and the citizen-as-producer which he shared with Frank, which they both inherited from Arthur, and which Arthur in turn derived from a close reading of Adam Smith.

That notion of the farm and the home as the basis of a republican civilisation has strong roots in the family experience, and the first six years of Frank's life were comfortably set within it. His grandfather had bequeathed a considerable income of £10,000 a year to his four sons, and the eldest of these, Daniel, had already sold his inheritance to Roger in order to fund his elopement to Bristol with a Mrs Gibbons. For a child, life on the Connorville estate at Bandon must have been exciting enough in a family so devoted to the chase that when the season for foxes closed they took to hunting hares. After 1795, when Frank's Uncle Arthur made an arresting speech in the

³ Graham Wallas, *The Life of Francis Place* (London, 1898), p. 51.

⁴ Johan Huizinga, *Homo Ludens* (London, 1949), p. 148.

House of Commons in favour of Catholic emancipation the comings and goings increased further still.

One central reason for Arthur's unexpected initiative was the suicide by drowning of his sister, Anne, who had been prohibited from marrying her Catholic love. A family that for three generations had combined political conservatism, commercial success and social stability was plunged into such a fierce conflict that the second son, Robert, who was the local sheriff, tried to have Roger executed as editor of the nationalist *Harp of Erin* well before both Roger and Arthur were accused of treason for their part in the French invasion plans of 1796 and 1798 and their role in the failed uprising of the latter year.

When, on the eve of his own detention, Arthur published an article in the radical Dublin paper *The Press* praising the Gracchi brothers – the reformers of late republican Rome murdered by conservatives – he was surely displaying more than knowledge of the classical tradition, offering an autobiographical reflection, if not a hostage to fortune.

Arthur took the lead in this shift to what we would now call the left. Roger organised clandestine meetings in Cork and occasionally visited London to frequent those Whig salons where it was fashionable to cherry-pick policies and attitudes from revolutionary France, but it was Arthur who actually went to France to negotiate an alliance with the Directory, who did deals with the real radicals of the London Corresponding Society, and who was followed by Pitt's spies in both London and Ulster. According to Marianne Elliott, Arthur's 'confidence, his informed loquaciousness and oratorical abilities won more support for the movement than it might otherwise have attracted', but 'his obvious desire to run the show' also split a fractious and underprepared organisation.⁵

Today names such as Horne Tooke, Wolfe Tone and Napper Tandy sound quaint and antique – almost as if they were penned by Tolkien – but 200 years ago their ideas about freedom of the press and association and the claims of popular and national sovereignty made them dangerous enemies of the state, which – especially in times of war – sought to have them hanged, drawn and quartered. In none of these cases did Pitt succeed – Theobald Wolfe Tone came closest but killed himself on the eve of execution. Nonetheless, in the 1790s Britain had a regime that so combined the rule of law with the apparatus of dictatorship that opponents were generally given enough rope with which to hang themselves. Ireland was still a different polity and jurisdiction, but it was ruled by the same monarch and cabinet; and there the frontier between privileged security and outlaw status was much more readily crossed.

Frank O'Connor's innocence ended before his seventh birthday, in February 1798, when his uncle trespassed across that fateful line. Roger followed Arthur into prison almost immediately, and the boys were left with their younger sisters in the care of their mother and their godfather Burdett.

Arthur had been arrested at the King's Head, Margate, the day before he was due to flee to France in the company of the radical priest Reverend James Coigley. O'Connor's life was saved by some good luck – the state was reluctant to produce as

⁵ Marianne Elliott, *Partners in Revolution. The United Irishmen and France* (New Haven, 1982), pp. 100; 173.

evidence papers its agents had intercepted in the mail, and his servant succeeded in flushing other incriminating material down the privy in the hotel before the Bow Street Runners broke down the door. However, Arthur also owed much to the fact that before Roger was arrested he had persuaded Arthur's Whig friends to testify to his good character and innocence at the trial held in May – the subject of one of Gilray's most laconic and telling cartoons.⁶

Father Coigley benefited from neither such oligarchic solidarity nor Arthur's emphatically selfish defence strategy, which even moved the judge to remark, 'Mr O'Connor, do you not see how much this is to the prejudice of the other prisoner?' However, Mr Justice Buller did not hesitate to pass the death sentence on the priest, whose guilt seemed to be sought at any cost by all other parties and was sealed by the papers found on his person.

Arthur was acquitted in what Thomas Pakenham describes as:

one of the strangest scenes in a British court of justice. O'Connor could be retried under Irish law on exactly the same charge of which he had been acquitted under British law. Accordingly, two Bow Street Runners were waiting by the dock ready to re-arrest him. But no sooner had the death sentence been passed on the unfortunate Coigley than O'Connor rushed from the dock to the bar, and from the bar into the body of the court, with the police in hot pursuit. The court was plunged into confusion. Outraged Whigs, including O'Connor's council and Lord Thanet, tried to snatch him to safety. Swords were drawn – the swords that were lying as evidence on the table. Furniture was smashed and heads broken. O'Connor might have got clean away, but for the quick-wittedness of the judge's coachman, who brought him crashing to the floor.⁷

Although Arthur was duly dispatched to Kilmainham jail with some 80 other United Irishmen facing charges of high treason, the state was almost as tarnished by the trial as was the embattled republican movement. Pitt eventually won the day, although he had to execute four more people before the rest of the convicts agreed to a trade of their confessions for life. In the process Roger joined Arthur in the Scottish prison of Fort George, and it was only in 1803 that he was permitted to return to Ireland on condition that he settled within thirty miles of Dublin. Arthur took the logical step of exile in France, where, at the age of 44, he married Condorcet's daughter Eliza, who

⁶ My Heart's Beloved, knowing how anxious you will be, I send [this], though the trials will be over some time tonight. Matters, we think, look good for O'Connor, but I am resolved not to be sanguine. I got to speak to him this morning. His mind is composed, but his nerves badly shaken. He was greatly affected when his poor brother was brought into court yesterday, and when the other took his hand, he burst into tears. The usage of Roger O'Connor, who is one of the finest fellows I ever saw, has been merciless beyond example. We are all very anxious and very busy, for the counsel want assistance. Here is Fox, Grey, Erskine, Grattan, Moira, Norfolk etc.

Quoted in Walter Sichel, *Sheridan* (London, 1909), vol. II, p. 284. See also Fintan O'Toole, *A Traitor's Kiss. The Life of Richard Brinsley Sheridan* (London, 1997), pp. 325-37.

⁷ Thomas Pakenham, *The Year of Liberty. The History of the Great Irish Rebellion of 1798* (London, 1972), pp. 129-30. In his maiden speech of March 1797 Burdett declared to the Commons, 'Good God, that treason to Ireland and the name of O'Connor should be preposterously linked together, as he is capable of everything that is great, generous and noble for his country's good'. Quoted in M.W. Patterson, *Sir Francis Burdett and his Times (1770-1844)*, vol. II (London, 1931), p. 58.

was just 17, buying Mirabeau's estate at Le Bignon and being gazetted by Napoleon as a divisional general.⁸

Arthur O'Connor rather misjudged the balance of forces in 1814-15, but he never came close to a real battle and was able to draw a military pension from the French taxpayer for a full 47 years. This was probably just as well since Roger soon either squandered or stole his brother's share of the family inheritance, and Eliza, who until the Whigs came to power was alone permitted to enter Ireland, proved to be no match for her brother-in-law.

In 1848, at the age of 85, Arthur published a sprawling three-volume work, *Monopoly – the Cause of all Evil*, the ill-discipline of which he compounded by styling himself Arthur Condorcet O'Connor. That work added little or nothing to his 110-page pamphlet, *The State of Ireland*, published in February 1798, where one finds a fluid and compelling mix of Smithian logic, the scepticism of Hume, and a Kantian appetite for freedom, equality and independence. The piece, although over-stretched, still constitutes a major document of a republican movement striving to escape the stain of Jacobin excess.⁹

Perhaps Arthur's most practical legacy to his nephews was an insistence upon the power and importance of the press to a democratic politics.¹⁰ Feargus took the injunction seriously enough to found a new *Northern Star* in the 1830s as a mouthpiece for Chartism, and although there would be no newspaper in Tarija until the

⁸ Having met Arthur in January 1805, Benjamin Constant noted in his diary:

O'Connor is a sophisticated man. When joking he has a lighter touch than foreigners usually do, and so has something of the French defect of joking about one's own opinions. He is more ambitious than he is a friend of liberty, and yet a friend of liberty nevertheless, because to be so is the refuge of ambitious men who have missed success...

Journaux Intimes (Paris, 1952), p.189.

⁹ James Livesey (ed.), *The State of Ireland* (1798) (Dublin, 1998). Frank MacDermott calls *Monopoly* 'a boring mixture of economics, politics and anti-clerical rant'. 'Arthur O'Connor', *Irish Historical Studies*, vol. XV (1966-67), p. 67. In his introduction to the pamphlet Livesey quotes Lady Wycombe, writing in March 1798 to Lady Holland, in similar vein: 'when he is in company, by the aid of a good memory he talks a few pages out of Adam Smith in lieu of conversation'. *The State of Ireland*, p. 9. MacDermott makes no mention of the pamphlet and is much more interested in matters of espionage than those of ideology.

¹⁰ The press is the palladium of Liberty. What has heretofore made England celebrated over the nations of Europe? – the press. What overturned the Catholic despotism of France? – the press, by the writings of Montesquieu, Voltaire, Rousseau, Diderot, Seyes, Raynal and Condorcet. What has electrified England and called down its curses on a Pitt? – that press he in vain attempted to silence. What illumined Belfast, the Athens of Ireland? *The Press* and the *Northern Star*. Why did America triumph over tyranny? – a journeyman printer fulminated the decree of nature against the giants of England – and the pen of a Franklin routed the armies of the King.

Quoted in D. Dickson, D. Keogh and K. Whelan (eds.), *The United Irishmen. Republicanism, Radicalism and Rebellion* (Dublin, 1993), pp. 275-6. In 1843 Feargus wrote to Frank:

The press of this country is much more shackled than ever the French press was – the difference is just this – that of France had to undergo governmental censorship; while the aristocracy and middle classes hold the press of England in close and much more destructive bonds.

Feargus, London, 28 Sept. 1843, to Francisco Burdett O'Connor, original in the possession of Eduardo Trigo O'Connor d'Arlach, to whom I am most grateful for access to this and other papers belonging to General O'Connor.

early 1850s, Frank wrote in *El Condor* of Chuquisaca within six months of its establishment in 1825, and his grandson Tomás, to whom we owe the publication of the general's memoirs, was editor of *La Estrella de Tarija* for 27 years.

The O'Connors shared a healthy appetite for expression, Francisco alone published no book in his lifetime and positively shied away from speechifying – on Bolivian social outings he would often accompany the ladies so as to avoid the elaborate and inebriated toasting that was the masculine order of the day. Yet, in addition to the published memoirs, which had been written up until 1839 when he died, we have five volumes of diaries dating from 1849, in a varied state of repair but their sparse Spanish – never English, not even Spanglish – is generally readable even for those untrained in palaeography. The two inalterable features of each day's entry are the weather and O'Connor's location. We are usually also given the state of his health and transactions. Sometimes we get a reflection on the wider world, very much less often an inner thought. There is very little mention of Francisca Ruyloba, the 17 year-old daughter of a family of clerks and priests whom he – twice her age – married in 1827. O'Connor unfailingly refers to Francisca, of whom we have a firm and attractive photographic portrait, as 'La Señora', and he sometimes has the good grace to allude to advice she has given and he accepted.¹¹

As he grew old in Tarija O'Connor imbibed more of the ethos of the Franciscan brothers whose monastery dominated the centre of the small Andean town and, with 5,000 books, possessed the best library of the region. In his will he ordained that every school in the department should be donated a copy of his favourite book, Marmontel's *Belisaire*, but also that – following the example of the censors of pre-revolutionary France – its mildly deist chapter 15 should first be excised. Perhaps predictably, his legacy came to nought, saving *Tarijeño* youth from some rather tiresome ruminations on Byzantine affairs as well as the risk of passing on to Procopius's *Secret History*, a text which, by virtue of its references to the more intimate forms of animal husbandry, was unlikely to appear even in an O'Connor syllabus for the history of the book.

Francisco's sympathy for the Catholic Church was not so evident early on – as military governor of Tarija in 1826 he closed all the monasteries except that of the Franciscans (who numbered then, as they do today, just three friars) – although it may well have been a reaction against his father, who habitually declared that Voltaire was his only God.

Frank and Feargus had spent much of their youth and early adulthood coming to grips with Roger's behaviour, which, following his release from jail in 1802, became increasingly extravagant. On one occasion the boys fled his house, stole two horses

¹¹ In a letter to Braun some three years after his marriage O'Connor wrote that, having lost most of his men in a small-scale operation to capture some rebels, he himself was about to be lanced down and tried to kill himself but his pistol failed. He was spared and managed to escape but later suffered a collapse:

En fin, mi amigo, los trabajos que padecí ese día me reventaron el corazón. Desde entonces no me conozco a mí mismo, ni Usted me conociera: estoy lastimado interiormente y expuesto a continuos ataques de enfermedad. Regresé a Tarija, en donde pasé tres meses en cama, merecí mil atenciones de la familia, en la cual me casé por gratitud, pensando morirme y dejar lo que poseía en esa familia. Tal no fue mi suerte. Aún existo... Mi mujercita es apreciable, porque – pobre! – no me traje un real, y es por eso que la elegí.

O'Connor, Retiro-Frontera de Tarija, to Braun, 13 March 1830, in *El Mariscal Braun*, pp. 50-1.

belonging to their brother Roderick, sold them in Dublin to fund the trip to London, doorstepped Burdett at his home in Stratton Street, off Piccadilly, and asked to move in.¹²

At the time Burdett, whose marriage to Sophia Coutts, daughter of the banker, had provided him with more than enough cash to fund his political campaigns, was serving as an MP and publishing incendiary material – much of it on the sale of parliamentary seats – in Cobbett's *Register*. Whilst he was happy to subsidise the boys, show them the town and the radical *demi-monde*, he was not prepared to test further domestic arrangements made very fragile by his affair with Lady Oxford and his frequent clashes over parliamentary privilege with the Speaker and the magistrates. Frank and Feargus returned to Dangan Castle, County Westmeath, which Roger had bought from the Wellesley family in 1803 for £40,000, declaring the mansion to be of a grandeur sufficient for receiving Napoleon when Ireland was finally liberated. And, indeed, a few months later the Emperor sent Arthur an undertaking that he would not conclude a peace with England until Ireland was free.¹³

When, five years after its purchase, part of the Dangan building burned down with only a portion of the price paid in cash, it was widely believed that Roger had planned an insurance fiddle. However, writing his memoirs 60 years later General O'Connor records that he had started the fire by accidentally spilling molten lead on the floorboards when casting bullets for his target pistols.¹⁴ Whether he thought so at the time is unclear, but in his old age O'Connor ruefully presents the blaze as the main reason for his mother's early death, which left the children even more exposed to Roger's antics even as he ran off with a Mrs Smith, took up with her maid Dora Reynolds, and then, in 1817, settled down with a woman uniformly described by the distinctly secondary sources as 'a young peasant girl' at Ballincollig.

By that stage Frank was 26, physically and fiscally independent, having completed his military training; Burdett had already been obliged to talk him out of joining Napoleon's comeback campaign. It is unlikely that he was still lodged at Dangan, but the evidence suggests that he had been around in October 1812, at the time of the infamous robbery of the Galway mail, which was carrying a large sum of cash for the purchase of cattle at the annual fair of Ballinasloe.

Roger was immediately suspected of organising the ten highwaymen who staged the assault, in which the coach's guard was killed. The day after the robbery it was he who informed the police that much – but by no means all – of the loot had been found in the grounds of his home. It is just possible, but unlikely, that Frank and Feargus were aware of the plot, which understandably appears nowhere in their memoirs even though five years later Roger was formally charged with the crime as the result of a plea-bargain struck by a criminal in another trial.

The case was heard before Mr Justice St. George Daly at Trim Assizes in August 1817. Burdett, recently re-elected MP for Middlesex, rushed across to give evidence on behalf of the father of his godchildren. On the day of the trial the heat

¹² G.D.H. Cole, *Chartist Portraits* (London, 1941), p. 308.

¹³ Elliott, *Partners in Revolution*, p. 329.

¹⁴ Patterson, *Sir Francis Burdett*, vol. II, p. 433; D. Read and E. Glasgow, *Feargus O'Connor. Irishman and Chartist* (London, 1961), p. 13; Francisco Burdett O'Connor, *Recuerdos* (1895) (La Paz, 1972), p. 5.

was so intense that Roger fainted into Burdett's arms, but his friend provided an even more critical form of support in convincing the jury that he had no need to rob the mail in order to secure funds. Under examination Burdett was as studiously reliable in an uncertain cause as had been Sheridan some 20 years before in order to save Arthur's neck:

'If Mr O'Connor had occasion for a particular sum in 1812, would you have advanced it for his accommodation?'

'Undoubtedly, and I can hardly mention the sum to which I would not go to accommodate him.'

'You were surprised at such a charge as this being made against him?'

'I felt ready to sink to the ground.'¹⁵

Roger, who was then 55, proved unable to accept his acquittal as a salutary warning. Later that year he enraged his saviour by preferring charges of perjury against the main prosecution witness in the case, putting it about that the aim of the heist had been to recover Burdett's letters to Lady Oxford now that she had transferred her affections to Lord Byron. Henceforth Burdett stayed with Roderick on his visits to Ireland despite the fact that Roger dedicated to him a book published in 1822 under the title *The Chronicles of Erin*, with the purport of being the only true account of Ireland 'translated from the original manuscripts in the Phoenician dialect of the Scythian language'. Described in the *Dictionary of National Biography* as 'mainly, if not entirely, the fruit of O'Connor's imagination', this text contains a great many grammatical errors, as did Feargus's later writings, opening him to the lampoons of enemies who in their youth had been obliged to undertake classical studies.

In tracing this trajectory, I am deliberately tripping around a caricature – the etching of the pantomime Irishman that is the engine of English condescension – for the purpose of asking a second question: Why does a person cross the Atlantic? I should also reassure the reader that I do not propose to survey the rest of Frank O'Connor's life at a pace proportional to that struck hitherto; this has been undertaken with a view to establishing a distinct perspective on our subject's private emancipation in the Americas even as he participated in their public liberation.

Today, of course, people cross the Atlantic to and fro the whole time, but until at least 1945 – and maybe until the days of Freddy Laker – most made the trip from east to west with much greater thought of arriving and staying than of returning. It was, historically, a journey of escape, and there were usually strong push- as well as pull-factors.

Roger O'Connor had provided his children with a superabundance of the exotic which is so frequently hung on Latin America and popularly associated with the 'magical realist' school represented by Gabriel García Márquez's *One Hundred Years of Solitude*.¹⁶ Yet at close quarter and within familiar distance such 'otherness', as it is

¹⁵ Quoted in Patterson, *Sir Francis Burdett*, p. 441.

¹⁶ The space between reality and invention is shown to be magically minimal in this letter from Roger to

now dubbed by dowdy Anglo-Saxon scholars, could be distinctly disturbing, far from alluring, and conducive less to associational admiration than to the living grief of embarrassment at a life conducted on the very margins of its own ambition.

Terry Eagleton has commented that, 'if Ireland is raw, turbulent, destructive, it is also a locus of play, pleasure, fantasy, a blessed release from the tyranny of the English reality principle'.¹⁷ Elsewhere I have argued that Ireland is usefully looked upon as an American country unaccountably located in the wrong continent, but here I certainly do not want to postulate some kind of ectopian utopia.¹⁸

Rather, I should like to suggest that while the English bayonets were forever the avowed cause of Francisco Burdett O'Connor's voluntary exile from his homeland, the 'collateral damage' wreaked by an eccentricity raised in response to them is an additional factor. We are here, in a sense, dealing with an inversion of the picaresque.

O'Connor was not escaping metropolitan drudgery simply for adventure although this he would experience to intense and dangerous measure; over the rest of his life I estimate that he spent some 24 hours in direct combat, three weeks within an hour's ride of enemy forces, seven years in military campaigning and 45 years farming. His life was transformed by no luxuriant apparitions of butterflies, no wondrous ice-making machines and no dusky seductions – well, just the one – but, instead, by a land of regularity and modesty, naturalism and the rigours of the real. It was a life dedicated more to construction than creativity, and, of course, such a path can be transcendental in a wider philosophical sense as well as within subjective fulfilment.

What is of particular interest to us here is how this trajectory passed through and beyond the paraphernalia of heroism. Francisco Burdett O'Connor was no representative man in the Emersonian sense, and just as Carlyle could write the 70

Lady Burdett:

Dear Lady Burdett,

Your good opinion is most gratifying to me. The greatest misfortune of my life would be the loss of it. I did not think to write now, but a note I wrote in my wild mountains (which I pray Heaven that you will look upon next summer) in answer to one Burdett wrote to me calls for a little history. Of these mountains I can give you no idea – the messenger handed me the letter, which demanded an answer, a written one from me for fear of mistake. How was this to be done was the point; people there were to hand, but they were all on the chance trip to meet Sir Francis. What am I to do lads, say I; is it possible to get pen, ink and paper anywhere near? What, says one, is there no pen among you? No. Is there no goose here?, says another. Yes. Off with the speaker from his horse, catches a goose – plucks a quill – no knife – may be the smith (there chanced to be a smith's forge not far off) has a razor. The pen was made. There was no ink. Run down one of you boys to the forge and make up some forge water pretty strong. Up came ink; there happened to be a pedlar who had a little book - out goes a leaf of a little bit of paper – a fellow takes off his hat for a table – and *thus* was I enabled to make out my note. Never let it be said that the Irish are not people of rare invention.

Your faithful servant.

Quoted in Patterson, *Sir Francis Burdett*, pp. 451-2.

¹⁷ Terry Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* (London, 1995), p. 9. In 1848 Aubrey de Vere wrote that 'charges made against Ireland, it is true, derive a certain verisimilitude from the stories in circulation amongst you; but you cannot be ignorant that for such tales the supply, according to the ordinary laws of trade, will always be proportionate to the demand'. *English Misrule and Irish Misdemeanors* (London, 1970), p. 44.

¹⁸ James Dunkerley, *Americana: The Americas in the World, around 1850 (Or "Seeing the Elephant" as the theme for an imaginary western)* (London, forthcoming 2000).

pages of *Chartism* without once mentioning Feargus, so would he have encountered problems, had he known of Frank's existence, slotting him into *Heroes and Hero-Worship*. In saying this I do not mean to infer that O'Connor was resistant to fame and adulation; he certainly bridled at lack of recognition. But he treated the heroic with an affectation so light as to suggest that it was almost wholly attributable to an inescapable genetic endowment.

We need less to promote O'Connor or rehabilitate him to some overdue iconic status than to go back behind the superficial surrealism that still infects the image of Latin America and interrogate a deep culture of heroism which remains so resiliently attached to the origins of its Independence.

Here I simply note that the heroic version derives from the needs as well as the condescension of posterity. It is not easy to resist the crisp, sub-Bonapartist iconography populated with handsome, focused and beautifully attired young generals. Of those who led the struggles few survived long enough to have their photo taken, and such portraits generally reflect the weight of exhaustion and pain visible in the picture we have of O'Connor (although I persist in the conviction that there is gentleness in those fair eyes).

The telescope given to him by Bolívar has disappeared, as have the many artefacts that most families lose through carelessness and pilfering and that we know from his will were still held in his final years. In that final testament O'Connor claims,

I entered marriage with capital of 26,000 pesos, without counting the value of my silver service, shotguns, firearms, horses, mules, books, etcetera, etcetera, about which I say nothing more here because my wife denies it, saying that she has never seen any of it, but in the distribution of my possessions she will receive one half of everything.

Even if we believe Francisca here, we can be sure that Frank did not leave for the Americas in order to make a fortune. When, in July 1819, he boarded the *Hannah* with 200 other members of the Irish Legion he carried Burdett's letter of credit for £500 drawn on the Bank of England. Two years later when stationed in Panama he would issue a bill for £1,000 to be drawn on Coutts, and just as during the campaign he often kitted out his men from his own purse, so as a landlord was he accustomed to pay small fines and forgive the debts of his tenants and workers, even if in every case he kept a detailed record and in most instances registered a careworn complaint.

Most of all, O'Connor went to America for political reasons. There is no sign that he wished to practise politics himself – and he never did so in Bolivia – but we should not underestimate the extent to which people left Europe, including Great Britain, in the early nineteenth century because it was an unfree and counter-revolutionary place. In 1801 Ireland lost those vestiges of self-government that were still in place when Arthur had tried to drive through to full independence. This, of course, would only be obtained 120 years later, under the aegis of Eamon de Valera, born in the USA of a Spanish father.

A fortnight after the Irish Legion set sail for Venezuela in 1819 11 people were killed and more wounded when the militia charged with sabres upon a political reform meeting held not in Caracas but in Manchester. It was not until ten years after that 'Peterloo Massacre' that any Catholic was allowed to vote or hold public office, and it was three more years before there took place a British parliamentary election in which

a large number of seats were not effectively bought and sold; even then the franchise was restricted to propertied men. There was no World Bank, IMF or other multilateral agency to tutor the Westminster and Whitehall of the day in the manners of good governance.

Of course, a popular vote for the presidency of the USA was not held until 1824, but it is today easy to forget how, compared to a reactionary post-Waterloo Europe, the Americas offered the only real prospect for a democratic, republican politics. Nowadays that is accepted almost by default in the celebration of Anglo-American 'exceptionalism' and in the lamentations over the collapsed promises in the south of the continent – a disappointment which is explained with depressing frequency in terms of some cultural blindness or mimetic clumsiness, without any sense of the wider world which posed such a political challenge.

O'Connor could not but recognise that dual feature of Independence. Soon after it was achieved – probably in 1827 – he began drafting an essay on the political economy of Bolivia that is strikingly similar to his uncle's *State of Ireland*.¹⁹ In June of that year he published a proclamation encouraging 'Men of Ireland' to settle in the 'New Erin' of Tarija, 'where the poor of my flesh and blood will be received with open arms and provided with a good cow, a horse, a pig and some farmyard fowl... They will be absolute masters of their own destiny.'²⁰ This now familiar motif of liberty residing in an industrious rural community averse to luxury and extravagance also lies behind O'Connor's consistent advocacy of protectionism against British textiles – an anti-imperialism that was kept alight by the daily sight of even the most humble of Bolivians wearing clothes of foreign-made fabric.²¹ The image we have of him as a patriarch decked out in Palmerstonian check and English cashmere was one most reluctantly assumed.

¹⁹ Neither uncle nor nephew confused the rights of man with the qualities of men. Francisco opens his untitled essay in distinctly sober voice:

A true desire to render a service to the Republic of Bolivia and to all the new states of America obliges me to exercise strict control over my nature, violating it to the extreme of writing for the multitude, ungrateful though I know it to be, always to have been and always to be... My conscience tells me that [in this] I provide a service of greater value than those... in nine years of work in the fields of destruction of tyranny and victories for the rights of man...

²⁰ Parts are reprinted in Edmund Temple, *Travels in Various Parts of Peru, Including a Year's Residence in Potosí*, vol. II (London, 1830), pp. 354 ff.

²¹ In the mid-1830s, arguing that the sale of public lands on the US model would not work in Latin America, O'Connor proposed to President Santa Cruz that all Bolivians who wore foreign clothes should be taxed twice as much as those with locally-produced garments. Although there was evidently a huge problem with the practicality of such a scheme, O'Connor reports that Santa Cruz reacted in a positive manner:

Do you know General, he said, that my little Simon's nurse is an Indian from the Puna, to whom my wife gives presents of yarn, shawls and scarves of foreign fabric. Her relatives see this when they come to the house in La Paz and are themselves wearing such garments when they visit the following Sunday. I expect to see all our Indians dressed in foreign clothes instead of the rude garments they now wear. And, General, it will then be necessary to find new sources of tributary tax because when the Indians who now pay it are clothed in foreign materials they will not have a *real* left to pay for their *fiestas* or ecclesiastical obligations.

Recuerdos, p. 217.

Feargus would likewise inveigh against free trade as just 'a substitute for landed monopoly at home'.²² He, however, did not take the critique as far as his spartan elder brother, who on 28 January 1850 noted in his diary,

Upon my arrival [at Tarija] I paid to Don Antonio Cortés 43 pesos and one *real*, which I owed him from last week for the clothes... I bought in his shop, and this is the first expenditure of this size that I have made for the purpose of clothing my person in 13 years, but I had nothing left to wear... It would have pleased me much to have spent this money on a product of national manufacture, but all the money leaves the country for Europe, where it maintains the industries of those countries, and I am caused great discomfort by the idea of contributing to the ruin of my *patria*, where I eat my daily bread...

Naturally, neither that *patria* nor any other aside from Spain existed when Frank O'Connor set out from Dublin, and it is, above all, as a soldier who fought to make their existence a possibility that history recalls him. In 1999, with the outbreak of the first major armed conflict in Europe for over 50 years, more than one generation is acquiring for the first time a sharp sensibility as to the physical and mental consequences of warfare. Even those predisposed to accept claims made for modern weaponry on the basis of scream-free and bloodless videos know that the exercise is not, and cannot be, free of butchery, cruelty, privation and that volunteered madness which is required to kill and court death.

In a campaign fought with the ordnance of Waterloo the scale of damage inflicted was certainly different. Not a single shot was fired at the Battle of Junín in August 1824, when O'Connor was chief of staff of a Patriot army of 1,500 ranged against the viceroy's 7,000 troops and nine artillery pieces; an engagement confined to cavalry charges ended within an hour. Four months later at the Battle of Ayacucho, the last set-piece of a 15-year conflict, the Patriots fielded just one cannon, and the Royalists only managed to fire ranging shots with theirs.

On the other hand, the Patriot cavalry won at Junín largely because the Royalists had cut down their lances to six feet in order to lessen the stress on the backs of horse and rider ('lumbago' was a complaint common to all soldiers but experienced especially by lancers, and O'Connor suffered it all his adult life). The fact that the Patriots had not done the same meant that they had a three-foot advantage with which to impale their enemy or his horse. The wounds suffered were not neat bullet-holes but dismemberment and evisceration. When treatment could be administered it was undertaken with anaesthetic comprising the same liquor served up in slightly more modest quantities before the start of the battle. At Ayacucho over 1,500 men were killed and more than 1,000 wounded in a couple of hours.²³

²² *Northern Star*, 3 Nov. 1838.

²³ John Miller (ed.), *Memoirs of General Miller in the Service of Peru*, vol. II (London, 1828), p. 170. According to Miller there was not a single qualified doctor in the Peruvian department of Puno, and when, after the war, San Martín's surgeon general, the Irishman Michael Crawley, set himself up at Lampa it was not as a medical practitioner but as an owner of mines. An English dentist by the name of Dudley did open a clinic in Arequipa, where he had a child with the great Argentine writer Juana Manuela Gorriti, at whose earlier wedding General O'Connor had been *padrino*.

Moreover, at Junín and Ayacucho prisoners were taken. When O'Connor first arrived in Venezuela in 1819 this was not the case, the war being formally and practically 'to the death'. Even for a professional soldier whose father had twice escaped capital punishment this was a nasty shock. O'Connor reports that after the Battle of Ciénaga de Santa Marta in November 1820:

There were two badly wounded Spaniards, unable to move, lying on the field. An adjutant to the commander approached him when I was sat beside him and asked permission to slit the throats of the Spaniards. It was in vain that I opposed such barbarism... and the next day the officer told me that he had hung the prisoners upside down over the river before decapitating them with his sword.²⁴

It is not surprising that almost the entire Irish Legion had deserted or died within six months of its arrival in Isla Margarita. No amount of promotions and promises could compensate for such experiences, although it was disease that was the main fear and the principal cause of death. Yellow fever and cholera were the two greatest killers in the lowlands, into which the commanders tried to hem their enemy. Tuberculosis, of course, kept mortality rates generally high, but although he frequently coughed up black blood, O'Connor seems to have been resistant to it. He also escaped the attacks of diarrhoea that ravaged troops and officers alike. However, as the army moved south through the territories that would become Colombia, Ecuador and Peru he became increasingly concerned about his 'terciana' – a less virulent strain of malaria – and 'Peruvian wart', also caused by insect bites and with the unpleasant symptom of discoloured tumours on the face.

These ailments meant that he was constantly compelled to experiment with remedies, from the familiar 'Dover salts' based on magnesium sulphate and opium to local potions of chocolate, celery and *chicha*, often prepared by his orderly, to whom he attributed the saving of his life on two occasions. Years after the campaign the general – who was often in pain, usually on the farm and seldom mentions a doctor or dentist – would administer himself formidably powerful purges, usually with an opiate-base of 'English salts' drenched in Jalapa pepper, honey and calomel or mercurious chloride.²⁵

There is a second sense in which I see Francisco Burdett O'Connor as a third man. Some seven years ago I gave my first inaugural lecture in this university, at Queen Mary and Westfield College. In that earlier lecture I placed between two historical stereotypes – a warrior felled in his prime and a scribe spared to ruminate – the figure of a third man representing those who died in defeat, the disappeared forgotten as individuals by all bar family and friends.

In this paper I seek a much less tragic shadow, but I cannot fail first to notice that in 1992 my exemplar for it was a man – Jorge Ríos Dalenz – who had been executed in Santiago de Chile on 15 September 1973, following the coup led by General, now Senator, Augusto Pinochet. I do recognise that there are many distinguished persons

²⁴ *Recuerdos*, p. 28.

²⁵ *Recuerdos*, pp. 62; 78-9; Diary entries for 22 Nov. 1849; 27 March 1850.

convinced that Pinochet's detention last October in London at the behest of the kingdom of Spain was a denial precisely of the kind of republican sovereignty fought for at such cost by O'Connor and the other founding fathers.

England and Spain are, indeed, the villains of this piece. Nonetheless, I am of the firm, if inexperienced, view that the arrest of the former dictator on such charges, whilst it undeniably further alters the ever-mutable condition of national sovereignty, provides welcome support precisely for those rights of man – that we today call human rights – and that individual sovereignty without which no civil society – let alone a nation – may flourish in freedom. Many of the claims for an increasing internationalisation of society in the post-Cold War world are both exaggerated and misconceived, but the evolution of law in this field clearly does promise progress beyond both property-based ideologies and Westphalian frontiers.

As I have already intimated, the third man I discern here is both warrior and scribe, and he is a victor who survives, but he is a technician, planner and strategist, not the heroic leader. This is the O'Connor who stands behind Bolívar and Sucre in the campaign of 1824 in Peru, and this is the same man who stands behind Sucre and Santa Cruz in the construction of Bolivia until the late 1830s.

In his own account O'Connor was told by Bolívar that after the campaign for independence he would lend a regiment of Hussars to help the Irish cause. The offer was, of course, even less serious than that made 20 years earlier by Bonaparte to Arthur.²⁶ However, Bolívar had quickly gained a high regard for the young Irish colonel, whom he appointed chief of staff of the United Army of Liberation within six months of his joining it from Panama early in 1824. It was O'Connor who kept the Patriot forces coordinated and supplied as they manoeuvred under Sucre's command in distinctly hostile territory to bring the last Spanish viceroy in mainland America to battle and defeat.²⁷

This was a far more demanding task than it might appear today. Even the modest rebel army required a cattle train of some 6,000 head, which had to be kept close

²⁶ *Recuerdos*, p. 56. Morgan O'Connell, the son of Daniel, 'the Liberator', also joined the Patriot forces in 1820, encouraging his father to stage a fervent defence of John Devereux, the Waterford man charged with illegally recruiting members of the Irish Legion. In April 1820 O'Connell wrote to Bolívar to register 'my respect for your high character and... my attachment to that sacred cause which your talents, valour and virtue have gloriously sustained – I mean the cause of liberty and national independence'. By the end of the year, though, he was writing to his wife with more parental concern and candour:

You have seen our darling Morgan's letter to Ricarda (*sic*) Connor. Would to God we knew where he is at present. Admiral Brion's letter which appeared in the *Freeman's [Journal]* of yesterday distinctly says there will not be any more troops recruited from Ireland. He calls them a *banditta*. In my opinion that gentleman has not behaved by the Irish troops as he should have done. I hope he will be made to suffer for his conduct.

O'Connell, Dublin, to Bolívar, 17 April 1820; O'Connell, Tralee, to his wife Mary, 5 Oct. 1820. *The Correspondence of Daniel O'Connell*, vol. II (Shannon, 1972), pp. 277-8; 284.

²⁷ In January 1824, a month after he first met him, Bolívar wrote to Sucre, 'Major O'Connor should be detached from his battalion to oversee the carrying out of your instructions to the Grenadiers as I think he is the best officer to use at the advanced posts'. Bolívar, Pativilca, to Sucre, 24 Jan. 1824, in V. Lecuña (ed.), *Selected Writings of Bolívar*, vol. II (New York, 1952), p. 247. In April the Liberator had enough confidence in O'Connor to think of using him as an emissary to negotiate with Viceroy LaSerna. Bolívar, Otuzco, to Sucre, 14 April 1824, in V. Lecuña (ed.), *Cartas del Libertador*, vol. IV (Caracas, 1929), p. 127.

enough to afford regular supply but sufficiently distant to avoid enemy raids. A horse is more primitive than an armoured car, but it still needs considerable upkeep – not only in terms of forage but also shoes, and nails for those shoes, and farriers to fix them, and forges to melt down the requisitioned iron, which was so precious that even carbines were converted in order that the chargers might be shod on all four hooves, which was uncommon at that time.²⁸

Moreover, for every horse the army needed several mules, not just to carry the stores across the Andean fastnesses – 300 mules were required for the reserve depot alone – but also to provide fresh mounts for marches and counter-marches at altitudes which sickened beasts as well as men. O'Connor's equestrian youth underpinned his aptitude for logistics of this type, but his assiduous quartermastership reflected a far less naturalistic factor, and sometimes his liking for dispatch and detail drove other members of the command to distraction.²⁹

In his will O'Connor scrupulously notes that he was not chief of staff on the day of the Battle of Ayacucho but chosen by Sucre to determine where the Royalists should be engaged. The disgrace of being replaced by a Peruvian – General Agustín Gamarra – for political reasons when the engagement was imminent, was felt most deeply, even bitterly. O'Connor sourly notes that no unit of the Patriots' Peruvian Division was actually commanded by a Peruvian, and all the officers who had been born outside the Americas must have taken some umbrage at the fact that only one of their number – the Irishman Colonel Arthur Sandes – was mentioned in Sucre's official despatch after the battle.

Otto Braun, the commander of the Grenadiers already denied proper recognition for his action at Junín, adopted a Germanic brown study. William Miller, who led the Hussars in the charge that swung the battle, remarked that the last cannonade of the day had signalled the moment for all foreigners to get out. By contrast, O'Connor, who showed no sign of leaving, protested to Sucre, who then withdrew his promotion to general – he would have to wait six years to receive the rank.³⁰

However, it is telling that following this very public difference of opinion Sucre put O'Connor in command of the operation to hunt down the remaining Royalist forces

²⁸ 'Such was the scarcity of iron that most of the firearms had been converted into nails and horse-shoes', *Memoirs of General Miller*, vol. II, p. 124.

²⁹ The Liberator instructs me to inform you that there are here 700 loads of wheat which should be taken to the hill, and that he does not know how this is to be checked because O'Connor does not belong to this world and knows nothing; and the intendent is worse than O'Connor because he is useless.

Tomás de Heres, Huánuco, to Sucre, 12 July 1824, in *Correspondencia del Libertador* (Caracas, 1974), p. 240.

³⁰ *Recuerdos*, pp. 99-104. In fact, O'Connor had previously used his powers of persuasion to stop Sucre executing the Kessel-born Braun for disobedience when he was conducting himself in a rather teutonic and not ingratiating fashion. Aside from Miller and Braun, both of whom would serve the young Bolivian republic, O'Connor mentioned Wright, Ferguson, Harris, Gregg, Duxbury and Hallows as foreign-born soldiers who fought at Ayacucho with distinction. Foreigners served on the other side too. O'Connor failed to extract a single intelligible word from Paul Eccles, a native of Switzerland whom he and Sandes had interrogated in French, Spanish, English and Celtic when Eccles was detained near Oruro carrying a flask of poison and instructions from General Olañeta for the murder of Sucre and the rebel guerrilla commander Miguel Lanza. *Ibid.*, pp. 109-10; C. Arnade, *La dramática insurgencia de Bolivia* (La Paz, 1972), pp. 196-7.

under General Pedro Olañeta, whose escape into Alto Peru would lead the angry but disciplined colonel into his new *patria*, shortly to be renamed Bolivia.

This was a command entailing considerable confidence, and indeed it would seem to revindicate O'Connor's achievement at Ayacucho, where the Royalist army of over 9,000 troops had been nearly twice as large as that commanded by Sucre. O'Connor knew that a battle could only be won by choosing terrain which permitted an attack to be pressed home before the enemy could collect all his forces, and that this would most likely happen as a result of surprise, when LaSerna's troops were descending rather than climbing the steep gorges of the zone.

After an initial encounter in which the Patriots lost most of their baggage train and so many of their rearguard that the veteran Sandes wept as he reported their deaths, the two armies manoeuvred for nearly a week. In the eyes of his former chief of staff, Sucre began to lose his nerve, and O'Connor, who now formally held only a regimental position, had difficulty in persuading him not to make a defiant stand but to continue marching the exhausted and demoralised force to Hauicho and then engage the Royalists as they confidently approached from the heights of Condorcunca. Despite his many years of attachment to the turf, Francisco Burdett O'Connor was not a betting man, but on 9 December he wagered his pay on the result.³¹

Something similar is discernible almost 15 years later when O'Connor, then in his late 40s and much more familiar with the terrain, rejoined forces with Otto Braun to inflict a defeat on the invading Argentine army at the Battle of Montenegro. That victory was also obtained by a series of flanking manoeuvres and feigned retreats through hill country in a manner which might be expected of a fox-hunting man. It came too late to save the Peru-Bolivia Confederation that Santa Cruz had laboriously assembled as a counter-weight to conservative Chile and the pugnacious power of Governor Rosas in Buenos Aires. However, Montenegro consolidated the present south-west border of Bolivia as well as allowing the Hibernian commander to retire from military service for the third time – he always refused to serve in times of peace – and recover his farms, which the invaders had occupied, slaughtering and selling off cattle that in those same times of peace were rustled only by the Chiriguano Indians.

At one point Santa Cruz had placed his hopes for the Confederation's future in the purchase of a new European warship for one million pesos, which he asked O'Connor to take to Britain.³² The reply received by the president indicates that Francisco was never going to revert to Frank:

If any friend asked me to accept this proposition I would not accept it... when I left my homeland I did so with the intention of never returning to it because my family suffered the persecutions of the English government, but I owe [you] the obedience due to my commander, and [you have] the right to order me to undertake this task.³³

³¹ *Recuerdos*, p. 97. Miller's account stresses the superior numbers, weapons and resources of the Royalists but also their political divisions and low morale. *Memoirs of General Miller*, vol. II, pp. 163 ff.

³² 'Señor O'Connor, because of his birth, his honour and his knowledge seems to me to be the most obvious choice to obtain a boat for us in Europe.' Vice-President Enrique Calvo, Tapacarí, to Santa Cruz, 10 June 1836, in R. Querejazu (ed.), *Oposición en Bolivia a la Confederación Peru-Boliviana* (Sucre, 1996), pp. 149-50.

³³ *Recuerdos*, p. 248.

Perhaps it was just as well that the money was never raised. Indeed, a few years later there arrived in Tarija a letter from Feargus which would have surely confirmed his brother's fears about political repression in Britain and probably revived others about personal eccentricity in the family.

These were no longer focused on Roger because, as Feargus reported,

Our Father died in 1834 of apoplexy, having got up in the morning in perfect health and being dressed, he stooped to put on his boot, seized the bed post and never spoke more, although he lingered some days in perfect consciousness. He also died a Catholic and was buried according to the ceremonies of that religion.

Roger's death does, however, appear to have unleashed something in Feargus, who was described by Sir Robert Peel as a man who 'appeared to take fire very easily and boil at a very low temperature'.³⁴ Feargus himself told his brother in Bolivia,

Since [1837] I have had to sustain seven government prosecutions, for two of which... I was sentenced to 18 months confinement in York Castle, which I spent in one of the condemned cells in solitary confinement, and upon the day of my liberation I was received by delegates from all parts of England, Scotland and Wales and honoured with a triumphal procession in a splendid triumphant car covered with velvet and drawn through the City of York with six horses... While I was in York Castle I read 200 volumes of the best works and wrote a number myself. I have published several works, some of which have been stereotyped and all of which sell well... I should tell you that on every occasion I have been prosecuted I have defended myself, and upon my last trial at York I spoke for 5 hours and 37 minutes, when the judge directed an acquittal but the special jury found me guilty... More I need not tell you of myself other than that after all, and having travelled more than any other man living during the last ten years, and having been knocked down and awfully and brutally mangled by hired mobs with stones, sticks and iron bolts, yet I am as well in health and constitution as when you and I used to jump over the six feet poles...[at] a hopping match at the Pigeon Ground at Battersea... I did 306 feet in thirty consecutive hops, never putting the second foot to the ground.³⁵

Feargus gave as good as he got to almost everybody – from the chancellor of the exchequer, whom he ridiculed at one remove,³⁶ to hissing audiences of northern

³⁴ Quoted in Norman Gash, *Sir Robert Peel* (London, 1986), p. 661.

³⁵ Feargus O'Connor, London, to 'My dear Frank', 28 Sept. 1843. Typed copy in the possession of Eduardo Trigo O'Connor d'Arlach. Feargus shared the family love of equestrianism, but 'in 1834 all my horses were thoroughly licked at the races of Fermoy. I lost £750 upon them, sold them all, and gave up the Turf. Since then I have never bet a farthing on horseflesh.'

³⁶ Harry Brougham said they wanted no poor law as every young man ought to lay up a provision for old age, yet while he said this with one side of his mouth, he was screwing the other side to get his retiring pension raised from £4,000 to £5,000 a year. But if the people had their rights they would not long pay his salary. Harry would go to the treasury, he would knock at the door, but Cerberus would not open the door, he would ask, 'Who is there?' And then luckless Harry would answer, 'It's an ex-chancellor coming for his £1,250 a quarter's salary', but Cerberus would say, 'There have been a dozen of ye here already, and there is nothing for ye'. And then Harry would cry, 'Oh! What will become of me? What shall I do?' And Cerberus would say, 'Go into the Bastille that you have provided for the people'. Then, when Lord Harry and Lady Harry went into the Bastille, the keeper would say, 'This is your ward to the right, and this, my lady, is your ward to the left; we are Malthusians here, and are afraid you would breed, therefore you must

aristocrats, whom he abused directly and with relish.³⁷ Perhaps his greatest defeat in debate was in 1844 at the hands of Cobden over free trade. He has certainly gone down in history as a turbulent, unreliable braggart hated by his companions in the Chartist leadership but loved by the masses. Even Marx's description captures a critical contrary strain: 'He is essentially conservative, and feels a highly determined hatred not only for industrial progress but also for the revolution... He unites in his person an inexhaustible number of contradictions which find their fulfilment and harmony in a certain blunt *common sense*.'³⁸

Such common sense – allied with the convictions of this most physical of men about the superiority of moral force – led Feargus to persuade the thousands gathered on Kennington Common on 10 April 1848 not to march on Westminster and so avoid an almost certain massacre at the hands of troops assembled by Wellington.³⁹

Here, though, there is also tragedy because Feargus, stressed by the pressures of 1848 beyond even his promethean limits, did eventually go mad. The sad arena for the final collapse was the House of Commons, where he sat for Nottingham and where his prior antics had so exasperated the Speaker that he was held in custody by the sergeant-at-arms for a full week until, after petitions from his sister Harriet, the true nature of his ill-health was recognised.⁴⁰ Feargus died three years later, believing, not without a certain logic, that he was still being detained by the state.

be kept asunder'.

Quoted in R.G. Gammage, *History of the Chartist Movement, 1837-1854* (London, 1894), p. 26.

³⁷ Yes – you – I was just coming to you, when I was describing the materials of which our spurious aristocracy is composed. You gentlemen belong to the big-bellied, little-brained, numskull aristocracy. How dare you hiss me, you contemptible set of platter-faced, amphibious politicians? ...Now was it not indecent of you? Was it not foolish of you? Was it not ignorant of you to hiss me? If you interrupt me again, I'll bundle you out of the room.

Quoted in Mark Hovell, *The Chartist Movement* (London, 1918), p. 94. The threat would have been taken seriously, according to Gammage, who was writing when Feargus was still alive: 'No member of the prize ring could fight his way with more desperate energy through a crowd than could this electioneering pugilist; and it was not alone with his fists that he was useful to his friends.' Gammage, *History*, p. 14. In 1843 Feargus told Frank, 'I am six feet and one inch high, and weigh 14 stone...I have had four duels in which I received three apologies on the ground, and was once fired at in the neighbourhood of Cork when the bullet whizzed by my nose.'

³⁸ Review of May-October 1850, *Neue Rheinische Zeitung Revue*, in D. Fernbach (ed.), *Marx. The Revolutions of 1848* (Harmondsworth, 1973), pp. 308-9.

³⁹ I take my lead in this unfashionable interpretation from John Belchem, '1848: Feargus O'Connor and the Collapse of the Mass Platform', in J. Epstein and D. Thompson (eds.), *The Chartist Experience: Studies in Working-Class Radicalism and Culture, 1830-60* (London, 1982). In his 1843 letter to Frank – who as Francisco was a republican and warrior – Feargus wrote,

You must know that I am not a republican nor would I seek for any change by violence, while you have learned enough of literary political trick to be aware that... with the accredited power of authority, tyrannical governments always have it in their power at a given moment to bring about a futile resistance to the settled order of things.

⁴⁰ Feargus had earlier eaten the supper left for the Speaker in his private office following a refusal by that officer to issue a ruling on whether a root vegetable served to O'Connor and the O'Gorman Mahon (the MP for Ennis, Charles James Patrick Mahon (1800-1891), whom Trollope once spotted on dubious business in Costa Rica) was a beetroot or a mangle-wurzel. On 8 June 1852 Feargus struck another MP in the chamber, was named and apologised. On the 9th Hansard reports,

Francisco Burdett O'Connor would have recognised his brother's common sense beneath the hype, but he must also have had reason to contrast his own life with that lived publicly and privately on the edge and so insistently within the idiom of heroism.

O'Connor's diary gives the lie to the image of a nineteenth-century Bolivia wracked by constant anarchy and utterly unhinged from the residual concerns of civilisation. The reality was by no means shining, just more prosaic. The entry for 17 December 1849 is quite representative:

I went to the Fort after lunch and spent a long time with the Reverend Father and the magistrate. I made a visit to the governor with some complaints about the abuses of authority caused by reserve officers posted to this frontier – he promises me satisfaction and we leave it at that. During my visit he gave me to understand that the Reverend Father had offered him six pesos and that he, for his part, would match them towards the building of a small schoolhouse for the village. I greatly approved of his plans, and I promised six pesos of my own....

In view of what had gone on in his life before and what he learned of events in the British Isles it is perhaps unsurprising that on 6 August 1849 – Bolivia's national day and the 25th anniversary of the Battle of Junín – the general noted,

Now I'm a man forgotten by all... reduced to seeking my own subsistence at an age – 58 years – when there is little strength left in the body, and even less energy, but obliged to undertake manual work by necessity. Thanks to God, who endowed me with a disposition for this. If it had been otherwise, I'd be delivered up to sadness and revisiting my past life, and who knows what would happen to me.⁴¹

I have told this tale very much for its own sake, so that O'Connor might not be forgotten by all. However, it would be idle not to make at least one wider point.

These days one discerns a certain slack-jawed hubris in the world's metropoli with respect to the phenomenon of 'globalisation'. Now, of course, we cross the Atlantic every day and night, courtesy of our televisions, our telephones and our computers linked up to the internet. This transportation is not physical, but it is real. We are told

The Attorney General was proceeding to address the Committee, but was interrupted by the disorderly and offensive conduct of the honourable Member for Nottingham, who, on being remonstrated with by the honourable Member for West Riding, thrust a half-closed hand into the honourable Member's face.

Parliamentary Debates, Third Series, vol. CXII, p. 367.

⁴¹ O'Connor knew that local politics was not for him:

In Tarija today there was a farce of an election for senator, and it befell General Celedonio Avila to be elected to that class of escort for General Belzu. The said general knows about as much about legislation as I do of the Chinese language, but this matters not at all; that is not the intended object of General Avila's nomination... These countries are ignorant of everything to do with sovereignty. Votes are given according to the orders of the leader and there's nothing more to be said of this matter.

Diary entry for 2 June 1850. A year earlier O'Connor's close friend Colonel Eustaquio ('El Moto') Méndez, a guerrilla leader in the Independence Wars, had been tortured by rebels against Belzu and died in his house whilst being nursed by Francisca. Octavio O'Connor d'Arlach, *Calendario histórico de Tarija* (La Paz, 1975), p. 114.

that it is producing a qualitative transformation of the human condition even if the energy required and the effect produced sometimes seem to match those of a gerbil at leisure.

It is possible that – from the perspective not of technology but of the human mind and experience – we have been here, or very near here, before. Certainly, there is a narrow sense in which I need to signal an institutional precedent. The first monograph published for the Institute of Latin American Studies 30 years ago by the Athlone Press was *The 'Detached Recollections' of General D.F. O'Leary*, edited by the founding director, Professor Robin Humphreys. Daniel O'Leary was Bolívar's principal aide-de-camp, a decade younger than his friend O'Connor but also a Cork man and capable of turning a fine phrase. It was O'Leary, not García Márquez, who described Bolívar's death in 1830 as 'the last embers of an expiring volcano, the dust of the Andes still on his garments'.⁴²

Professor Humphreys himself died last month, in his 92nd year. He was not only the first Director of the Institute but also, from 1948, the first holder of the established chair in Latin American history based at University College. That chair was subsequently occupied with great distinction by John Lynch and Leslie Bethell, both with us this evening, but in the early 1990s it was frozen. This is a great shame because it was the only established chair related to Latin America in the University, and it helped to ensure that the existence of the Institute was not used as an excuse to reduce or remove the study of the region elsewhere.

Indeed, that chair was one of only a couple in the country as a whole, so I am here concerned not just with the opportunities for our field within the new, more autonomous and less coordinated University of London but also throughout the United Kingdom. The Institute plays a critical role promoting Latin American studies at a national level in collaboration with other institutes and centres with which it sometimes has to compete for scarce resources. The balance is fine and the challenge is sometimes considerable but it is also entirely consonant with our place and mission within the School of Advanced Study.

My predecessor, Victor Bulmer-Thomas, was the man who so enthusiastically and energetically oversaw our entry into the School, simultaneously expanding the Institute's activities on all fronts. The extent to which he has really 'retired' may be judged from the fact that he is this evening giving a lecture in Salamanca, prior to attending a committee in New York. Last Autumn I caught sight of him briefly on Institute business in Boston and Chicago, on either side of a trip to China.

I won't even attempt to match such activity, but it gives me great pleasure to announce today that the Institute will, in memory of its founding director, appoint each year to a Robin Humphreys Visiting Research Fellowship a past or present British

⁴² R.A. Humphreys (ed.), *The 'Detached Recollections' of General D.F. O'Leary* (London, 1969), p. 48. The final sentence of García Márquez's account is less concise but still very powerful:

Then he crossed his arms over his chest and began to listen to the radiant voices of slaves singing the six o'clock *Salve* in the mills, and through the window he saw the diamond of Venus in the sky that was dying forever, the eternal snows, the new vine whose yellow bellflowers he would not see bloom the following Saturday in the house closed in mourning, the final brilliance of life that would never, in all eternity, be repeated again.

public servant with experience of the Americas. The first holder of the Fellowship is to be Philip McLean, formerly British Consul in Boston and latterly Ambassador to Cuba, or, to borrow another title from Graham Greene, 'Our Man in Havana'.

Mr McLean's prior posting in Hibernian Massachusetts reminds us that O'Connor and O'Leary were a military vanguard of a major diaspora; and that diaspora was, in turn, simply one of the more recent movements of peoples – very seldom of a voluntary nature – throughout the globe.

It is a common observation that there are in America more people of Irish ancestry than on the island itself. It is less well known that there are now in US schools more pupils of a Hispanic background than there are young African-Americans. The Irish Famine began just months before the US invasion of Mexico and the annexation of that territory now being peacefully repopulated by the descendants of those defeated in 1847. It would take the better part of two more decades before slavery was abolished in the USA, and 20 more years would lapse before the system which had over several centuries transported millions of people in chains from one continent to another would be entirely eradicated in that second place.

When we ask what's in the name 'America', then, we find a plethora of responses that gives the lie to any notion that the globe came into a complete spatial and self-knowing integrity with the advent of the micro-chip or the collapse of a wall built in Berlin after Fidel Castro came to power in Havana.

I don't mean to cast aspersions. We need fashion; it keeps us on our toes, sometimes literally. I would simply register some scepticism as to any unprecedented, seamless and centrifugal process of homogenisation. In that vein I have in this paper employed the nearly anachronistic term 'the Americas'. Pluralism is not just normative nicety – if, in fact, it is that at all. It is also a better class of scholarship – one that seeks excellence but without elitism. General O'Connor is, to my mind, best understood as a Jeffersonian, and there are many others and much more south of the Rio Grande profitably to be studied from that perspective of similarity as well as difference.

Indeed, a little more concern with comparison as a dual process – and a little less timidity in exploring and explaining it – would rectify the unwarranted exoticism of 'otherness' and test vacuous notions of homogenisation-through-hybridity. It would enrich the understanding of Latin America and fortify area studies as a whole.

We cannot, after all, complain at the undoubtedly miserable funding of UK research and teaching in area studies if we do not confront the belief that they constitute little more than parochialism craftily practised abroad and protected by factors of space and language from the glare of scholarship heroically based on pure discipline. We need, in short, to enhance our disciplinary expertise (usually with a couple of others besides) and energetically to demonstrate how area studies has been made more, not less, valid in the contemporary world, where phenomena that we have studied for decades are now in the mainstream of daily life.

Francisco Burdett O'Connor died in Tarija on 5 October 1871. At this stage of proceedings one balks at further tale of audacity, but it is a matter of record that at eight o'clock in the evening he refused to receive the last rites at home and was assisted to the monastery, four blocks away, where they were administered. Eighty-one

years of age, he died at ten p.m. Francisca and Hercilia survived him. Burdett had died a dozen years before Feargus. Now, of course, Frank dies too.

The name, we know, has been kept alive. Perhaps its most celebrated owner in recent years has been Cecilia O'Connor, who was the red-haired and post-globalist representative of Bolivian pulchritude at the Miss Universe contest of 1994, staged at Manila.

The family that's in the name of O'Connor has flourished since the patriarch died in the midst of his memoirs. For this paper I choose as its representative Octavio, from the third generation, because he carried his forebears educational concerns into the twentieth century that we are so noisily about to leave:

The ceremony to mark the opening of the school year was exceptionally well attended, the teachers and populace of Tarija overflowing the stalls of the '15 April Hall'. In the wait before ascending the platform the Director of Education, Dr Octavio O'Connor d'Arlach, slowly lit his pipe and took a few contented puffs as he listened to the talk about him. Then somebody came up to him to say that people were getting impatient of waiting. O'Connor snapped to, put the pipe in his back pocket, as you would a handkerchief, and requested the committee to take their seats.

Following the solemn act of inauguration, Dr O'Connor, who was standing to the right of Don Víctor Navajas Trigo, prefect of the department, began to read his annual report. Immersed in his speech, he was unaware of the mounting consternation around him. But just as he was describing with some passion the infrastructural needs of the district, he sensed both the odour of burning and the gentle elbow of the prefect in his ribs. The smell came from his trousers, which the increasingly concerned audience could not see to be on fire. The boss was unharmed, the trousers were a write-off, and the pedagogic community most gratified.⁴³

We have happily evaded the combustion that terminated that inauguration. It is not the prefect but the clock that is now nudging me. The reality principle beckons, and I must thank you all for both indulgence and attention.

⁴³ Antonio Paredes Candia, *Anécdotas bolivianas* (La Paz, 1978), pp. 127-8.

