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‘Our American Aristotle’
Henry George and the Republican
Tradition during the Transatlantic Irish
Land War, 1877-1887

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Abstract

This thesis examines the relationship between Henry George and the Irish on both sides of the Atlantic and, detailing the ideological interaction between George's republicanism and Irish nationalism, argues that his uneven appeal reveals the contours of the construction of Gilded Age Irish-America. The work assesses the functionality and operation, in both Ireland and the US, of Irish culture as a dynamic but discordant friction within the Anglophone world. Ireland's unique geopolitical position and its religious constitution nurtured an agrarianism that shared its intellectual roots with American republicanism. This study details how the crisis of Irish land invigorated both traditions as an effective oppositional culture to the processes of modernity.

The Land War placed Ireland at the centre of a briefly luminous political upheaval that extended far beyond its own shores and positioned the country as a site of ideological conflict at a critical juncture in the history of political thought. Irish nationalism helped to perpetuate a specific aggregation of moral and economic principles, and, in equating British imperial force with the worst depredations of capital, Irish-Americans tapped into a powerful seam in American political culture that universalised the struggle of the Irish tenant farmers. Just as many contemporaries framed Irish politics with the ideals of the American republic, this thesis argues that Irish politics during the Land War, ever more interdependent on its diaspora, is better understood in relation to American political discourse than British.

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I declare that this thesis has been composed solely by myself and that it has not been submitted, in whole or in part, in any previous application for a degree. Except where stated otherwise by reference or acknowledgment, the work presented is entirely my own.

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Andrew Phemister

‘Our American Aristotle’: Henry George and the Republican Tradition during the transatlantic Irish Land War, 1877-1887

The 1880s were a turbulent decade across the North Atlantic. New challenges radiated from the realms of technology and philosophy that shook previously firm convictions and moral foundations; and with the onrushing tide of ‘modernity’ came both an unrestrained devotion to a new future and a crisis of confidence in the certainties of the past. A near boundless optimism in human and mechanical potential competed with, and was sometimes bound to, a seething anger at present injustice. ‘It is as if we were somehow being endow’d with a vast and more and more thoroughly-appointed body, and then left with little or no soul’ was how Walt Whitman expressed the disquieting changes.¹ There was nothing new in this perhaps; merely the tectonic friction between the past and the future, but it was the speed and dynamism that created the ferocity of the shockwaves. As one observer wrote, ‘at no time in the history of the world has there been such a rapid – I might say revolutionary – advance of opinion’.² Occupying a central position in this ideological maelstrom was the question of Irish land.

The Irish Land War was an international event, both in terms of its causes and its consequences it cannot be confined to Ireland itself. It was precipitated as much by the effect of economic globalisation, particularly the pressures of international competition from the United States, as by a succession of poor harvests, and fuelled by the transfer of both money and ideas from the U.S. and from Britain. It succeeded in mobilising a vast tranche of the Irish diaspora, not only in the cause of their homeland but as part of a more ambitious vision. Their hopes added vigour and, for a brief moment, tangible purpose, to a venerable republican political tradition which spanned centuries and continents, releasing latent frustrations shared by the dispossessed and disenchanted on both sides of the Atlantic.

At the epicentre of this was Henry George. His *Progress and Poverty*, which argued for land nationalization through full taxation of ground rents, became the best-selling work of political economy in the nineteenth century, making its author an international name.³ Various a reformer, amateur political economist, and social philosopher, George remains a shockingly understudied figure, given his stature and prominence during the final decades of the nineteenth century. This is nowhere more evident than in regards to his relationship with Ireland, where a focus on events in the country itself has obscured

¹ Walt Whitman, *Specimen Days & Collect*, (Philadelphia: Rees Welsh, 1882), 211

² ‘What Morality Have We Left’, *North American Review*, 132:294, (1881): 497

³ Jeffrey Sklansky, *The Soul’s Economy: Market Society and Selfhood in American Thought, 1820-1920*, (Chapel Hill, N.C.: University of North Carolina Press, 2002), 115.

the international dimensions of the conflict in which George was pivotal, as well as the centrality of the international Irish working class to George's success.⁴ Indeed, too often the assumption remains that Irish ethnicity in America was broadly a hindrance to radical politics.⁵ In seeking to rectify this, this work attempts to deconstruct the nature of the intellectual correlations between George's republicanism and Irish cultural and political formations across the Atlantic world. Realigning popular political activity with its unspoken moral and ideological motivations is central to this; as is understanding late nineteenth century Ireland as a site of philosophical conflict, as a liminal and libidinal space in which oppositional political ideas could be incubated.

The work seeks to make a number of historiographical interventions. In the first instance, as previously mentioned, Henry George's general absence from the genealogy of political thought is a remarkable omission. While there are a number of reasons for this oversight, this work will make an attempt to reconstruct George as an important theorist as well as a political actor. Secondly, the work addresses two traditionally overlooked aspects within Irish historiography; the diaspora and political theory.⁶ With regard to this specific period, Ely Janis, in his 2015 book *A Greater Ireland*, has recently addressed the diasporic dimensions of the Land League to great effect. Nevertheless, Janis reasserts Eric Foner's assessment that the Land League in the U.S. represented the integration of the Irish into a peculiarly American (and Protestant) reform tradition.⁷ This work seeks to correct that narrow assumption by relocating Irish republicanism and Georgism in a broader transatlantic genealogy shaped less by sectarian difference than by British imperial power, and to see them together as a key nexus in a longstanding battle of ideas about rights, centralisation, utilitarianism and, above all, land. By looking at their (essentially metaphysical) similarities, the relationship between Irish (diasporic) identity, the cultures of republican nationalism, and their political ideologies will be interpreted as deep rooted and interdependent, rather than contingent or opportunistic. By restoring the ideological dimension, the work will question the general consensus on the Land League

⁴ Fintan Lane, *The Origins of Modern Irish Socialism, 1881-1896*, (Cork: Cork University Press, 1997), 65; David N. Doyle, 'Unestablished Irishmen: New Immigrants and Industrial America, 1870-1910', in D. Hoerder, (ed.), *American Labor and Immigration History, 1877-1920s: Recent European Research*, (Urbana, IL: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 193; Sean Wilentz, 'Industrializing America and the Irish: Towards the new departure', *Labor History*, 20:4, (1979): 587

⁵ Timothy J. Meagher, *Inventing Irish America: Generation, Class, and Ethnic Identity in a New England City, 1880-1928*, (Notre Dame, IN.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 126; Kerby A. Miller, *Ireland and Irish America: Culture, Class, and Transatlantic Migration*, (Dublin: Field Day, 2008), 258

⁶ Enda Delaney, 'Directions in historiography: Our island story? Towards a transnational history of late modern Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies*, 37:148, (2011): 83-105

⁷ Ely Janis, *A Greater Ireland: The Land League and Transatlantic Nationalism in Gilded Age America*, (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015); Eric Foner, 'Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism in the Gilded Age: The Land League and Irish America', in Eric Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981)

in Ireland, where ideas are too often seen as of somewhat secondary importance, a rhetorical veneer, when it comes to understanding the League's simply nationalist and petty bourgeois demands. Finally, the thesis builds on Eugenio Biagini's work in *Irish Nationalism and British Democracy* by adding a transatlantic dimension, which suggests a more complex and antagonistic relationship between Irish agrarianism and Anglo-American liberalism.⁸ A corollary of this is the conclusion that Henry George and the Land League were the driver and the engine of a fundamental challenge to liberal political economy and helped to precipitate a reorientation in liberal thought. Recent work on the development of liberalism by scholars such as Duncan Bell and Robert Adcock has emphasised the reformulation of the relationship between democracy and liberalism in the 1880s in particular, without addressing the critical role of either the Irish agitation or the question of land in this story.⁹ This work, then, is partly an effort at redress.

To achieve this, a number of interrelated themes will be addressed. Chapter two will explain how George was embedded in the tradition of land reform and show, by way of historical example, the unavoidable interdependence of Natural Rights discourses and land reform. While chapter three will establish some methodological frameworks, it will also lay out the shared roots of transatlantic republicanism, a non-sectarian Christian inheritance, which formed the foundations of George's ideas and his popularity. The next chapter seeks to examine the centrality of land in the Irish imagination, a fact that shaped a particular vision of ethics and of political economy. Moving on to the transmission and survival of these political visions, chapter five looks at the intersections of culture, identity, and ideology in order to understand Irish nationalism and radical republicanism as mutually interdependent rather than awkward adjuncts. The chapter will argue that while social class was important when it came to constructing the radicalism of the League's demands on both sides of the Atlantic, perhaps more so was the rhetorical feedback loop of cultural ideals. Chapter six will identify the contemporary ideological battles in which these ideas were manifested in the 1880s, where increasingly systematized knowledge in the commercial sphere was mirrored by a commitment to the concept of rational expediency in the intellectual. As models from physics and mathematics were applied to fields of humanistic and philosophical endeavor, Georgism offered a retreat from this scientism; Irish nationalism an alternative model – both with land at the centre

⁸ Eugenio Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism, 1876-1906*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2007)

⁹ Robert Adcock, *Liberalism and the Emergence of American Political Science: A Transatlantic Tale*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014); Duncan Bell, *Reordering the World: Essays on Liberalism and Empire*, (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2016)

of their ambitions. The final three chapters draw this narrative to its denouement. As chapter seven explains, the Land League's rhetorical force, and especially its means of protest and rebellion, was ideologically coherent; together representing a distinct agrarian republicanism. The subsequent chapter looks at how these ideas interacted with Georgism in the U.S., including the revealing peculiarities of the Catholic Church's attempt to reclaim the Irish-American working class from such radicalism. Finally, the last chapter looks at the mirrored failure of the Land League and George's campaigns, in which liberal critics and politicians were eventually successful in co-opting elements of the radical demands while deflecting their moral substructures. In this final victory, the erasure of land as the preeminent site of political power and personal independence marked the collapse of Natural Rights from political discourse. The old radical banner of 'Land and Liberty' had never been a dyad, but rather a unitary vision.

In order to fully comprehend this seismic historical moment it is necessary to loosen the bounds of the national within the historiography. With an estimated seventy million people of Irish descent worldwide, global thinking has become an 'especially critical part in the writing of Irish and Irish-American history'.¹⁰ These new emphases have highlighted the profound social and economic differences across the Irish diaspora, and demonstrated the importance of taking both a regional and a global perspective, which can help to pinpoint the causes of transition and stability.¹¹ For current purposes, looking at the uses and forms of Irish and Irish diasporic nationalism in the late nineteenth century, particularly its intersections with specific socio-political perspectives, reveals the complex mechanisms by which social and moral conceptualisations shift and persist in new places. In many ways, the multiplicity of stories that Irish diaspora communities contain can reflect a new revealing light on their host communities and their homeland, the identities of all such spaces constructed reflexively and in contradistinction to others. In diasporic communities like the Irish in the U.S., where the experiences of a new economic and social existence were often faced collectively with shared self-definitions, both internal and external, 'meanings, ideologies and beliefs', not merely reactions against material conditions, formed 'integral parts of awareness and experience and, hence, of political consciousness and agency'.¹²

What is required is a framework in order to understand this totality. The American historian Daniel T. Rodgers offers one such model. Rodgers' contention is that

¹⁰ Timothy J. Meagher, 'From the World to the Village and the Beginning to the End and after: Research Opportunities in Irish American History', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 28:4, (2009): 119

¹¹ Meagher, 'From the World to the Village', (2009): 124

¹² Marilyn Silverman, *An Irish Working Class: Explorations in Political Economy and Hegemony, 1800-1950*, (Toronto, University of Toronto Press, 2001), 502

the period c.1870-c.1940 constituted a particularly ‘transnational’ one across the North Atlantic. Trade and the growth of capitalism as a political structure were formative in connecting Western Europe and North America together into the ‘North Atlantic Economy’.¹³ This framework helps to conceptualise dominant modes that extend beyond the economic, such as Anglo-American Protestantism, and peripheral (often subversive) traditions like Irish Catholicism. Using a primarily economic foundation, the ‘convergent economic development’ created by the imitation and exportation of technological innovations, Rodgers is able to conceive of this area as a semi-integrated whole.¹⁴ By including the agricultural fringes, such as Ireland, whose position was drastically shaped by the surrounding industrial areas, the economic model provides an explanatory function for reflexive cultural changes. In this framework, Ireland was both the known and the unknown in the Atlantic world: its geographical proximity to Britain placed it at the frontier of capitalist modernity; its religion, language and culture provided a contrasting perspective which formed a dialogue with these new capitalist social forms.¹⁵ Ireland was therefore in a position of ‘overlap and coexistence between two incommensurable realities’.¹⁶ Whilst historians of the Irish diaspora have found some utility in the work of postcolonial scholars, recognising how Anglo-American knowledge of Ireland was infused with the discourse of the dominant culture and the Irish projected as an ‘other’,¹⁷ Ireland cannot be excluded from shared Christian and Enlightenment discourses and cultural motifs, nor from its integration in broader transatlantic economic network. It was precisely this situational anomaly that provided the potency for Irish critiques of British power and of liberal capitalism.

The benefits of such an approach are obvious when dealing with developments that occurred at similar times in very different places. The eruption of popular sentiment about the land question is precisely one of these events. Henry George’s ideas about the liberation of land from private monopoly emerged contemporaneously with not only those of other thinkers across the Atlantic, such as Alfred Russel Wallace, but also the foundation of the Agricultural Labourers Union in Britain in 1872, the Greenback Labor

¹³ Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age*, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1998), 4

¹⁴ Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, (1998), 33

¹⁵ Mark Bevir and Frank Trentmann, ‘Critique within Capitalism: Historiographical Problems, Theoretical Perspectives’, in Mark Bevir and Frank Trentmann, (eds.), *Critiques of Capital in Modern Britain and America: Transatlantic Exchanges 1800 to the Present Day*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 1

¹⁶ Fredric Jameson, ‘Modernism and Imperialism’, in Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, and Edward W. Said, *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 60

¹⁷ Patrick O’Sullivan, ‘Developing Irish Diaspora Studies: A Personal View’, *New Hibernia Review*, 7:1, (2003): 140; Conor McCarthy, ‘Edward Said and Irish Criticism’, *Éire-Ireland*, 42:1-2, (2007): 311-335

Party and the developing Populist movement in the mid-western United States, the energetic antipodean land-reform movements, Charles Bradlaugh's plan for the resettlement of the urban poor, and, most significantly in this instance, the start of the Irish Land War. These, and many other, intellectual and organisational developments, not to mention the labour insurgencies across the United States, give the early 1880s the appearance of a critical juncture in the North Atlantic Economy, with land and its economic implications taking centre stage. As George's biographer wrote, 'there are tides and currents in man's awareness of mankind's affairs, and in today's retrospect we can see that 1879 [...] marks as well as a date can the beginning of a mighty flow'.¹⁸ Certainly, the appearance of similar trends in varied locations demonstrates the need to take seriously the transnational intellectual currents.

It is also important to emphasise the ways in which political ideas were manifested and replicated in a more populist form, and embodied in political and social action. Clearly 'elite'-level political and economic thinking did not exist in a cultural vacuum of disinterested intellectuals, their normative concepts being as much 'tools and weapons of ideological debate' as were the social behaviours and cultural forms of popular activity.¹⁹ The realms of potential political action were dictated to by the limitations of socially constructed languages. There is a reciprocity that connects these aspects. Theorising is itself a political act, and political and popular action relies on a mental and moral framework or sociology of thought; there is no discreet line between theory and practice. 'Abstract changes in moral conceptions are always embodied in real particular events', or, as Henry George expressed it, 'as thought must precede action and govern action, so those who establish theories are, at least within the domain of action, the precursors and pathfinders of the practical men'.²⁰

In tracking changes in political language, and analysing language in its contexts, often replete with layers of meaning and historical baggage, it is possible to detect the interaction between popular experience and political rhetoric.²¹ If 'languages of politics are evanescent forms, mere coverings of an adequate, inadequate or anachronistic kind', then the particular fluidity of political languages in the period c.1877-87 mark it out as one where existing discourse and terminology was being adapted and contested to adequately

¹⁸ Charles A. Barker, *Henry George*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 307

¹⁹ Quentin Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, vol. 1: *regarding method*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 177

²⁰ Henry George, "Lecture notes and text: 'Malthusian Theory'" (Henry George Papers, Series II, Box 12, New York Public Library [hereafter HGP, NYPL]); Alasdair MacIntyre, *After Virtue: a study in moral theory*, (London: Duckworth, 1981), 61

²¹ Raymond Williams, 'Ideas of Nature', in *Culture and Materialism: Selected Essays*, (London: Verso, 1980), 67-68

comprehend the social reality.²² In different ways across the Anglophone world, languages of republican radicalism, liberalism old and new, paternalism, socialism, racial imperialism and their myriad modifications were in conflict over their applicability, not just to describe existing conditions, but to provide a coherent (and appealing) image of the future and the power to shape it.

The actual process of transference, as Rodgers suggests, required ‘brokers’, or in Kerby Miller’s phraseology ‘culture-brokers’, ‘to span the connection’;²³ key individuals whose influence not only spread to various corners of this North Atlantic Economy, but who also retained a strong and rooted connection with a specific constituency of people. These people both spoke and wrote publicly, were familiar and engaged with theoretical discourse, but their popular appeal was inescapably bound to their use of a commonly intelligible and culturally relevant political language. In this way it is possible to understand political languages and the changes therein not as disembodied intellectual constructions, but tangible, active and participatory processes that involved the acceptance, support or dissent of popular audiences. Histories of these individuals and their social networks can reveal a lot about the constitution of popular attitudes, the opinions of those whose words were not heard so loudly. Since Henry George largely refrained from direct or sustained intellectual confrontation with earlier economic theorists or contemporaries, he can be seen more clearly as an interlocutor for moral and economic worldviews outwith the academy.

Any work of this kind has to broach the problem of aligning the history of ideas with real lives and experiences. Is there a valid and tangible connection between an angry and frustrated farmer and men who theorise about political rights? And, if so, what viable structure connects them? Highlighting popular agency and in deconstructing meaning in cultural expressions requires an understanding of the relationship between the powerful and the powerless and the perpetuation of such distinctions in the source material and the subsequent historiography.²⁴ As elucidated in the famous debate between E. P. Thompson and Perry Anderson, it also involves (to take the Thompsonian position) collapsing the ‘elitist division between theory and practice’.²⁵ Perhaps this can result in excessive moralism and romanticisation, as Thompson’s critics asserted, but by rejecting the scientific assumptions of structuralism and seeing theory and practice as interdependent,

²² Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class: Studies in English working class history, 1832-1982*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 21

²³ Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, (1998), 4; Miller, *Ireland and Irish America*, (2008), 275

²⁴ Eric Hobsbawm, ‘History from Below – Some Reflections’, in F. Krantz, (ed.), *History from Below: Studies in Popular Protest and Popular Ideology in Honour of George Rudé*, (Montréal: Concordia University Press, 1985), 64

²⁵ E. P. Thompson, ‘The Poverty of Theory or An Orrey of Errors’, in *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays*, (London: Merlin Press, 1978), 3

Thompson was able to assess the contemporary *mentalité* of his subjects closer to their own terms; his moralism reflecting their moralism.²⁶ As Mark Bevir has noted, this supposed incompatibility of theory and agency has left an ‘unfortunate legacy’ in historical endeavour.²⁷ Ensuring that historical actors are imbued with both agency and contingent rationality involves rejecting the liberal teleologies that impute irrationality or incomprehension to those who have fallen beyond its bounds.²⁸ Conversely, it also involves reasserting the cultures of elites, whose claim to rationality belies their own complex web of prejudices and assumptions; an awareness that economic and cultural structures are foundational to the construction of political ideas at all social levels.

The study of the history of ideas is most plausibly connected to social history by understanding ‘language as beliefs embedded in traditions and practices’.²⁹ This does not require interpreting such culture as uniform, or immutable, or inescapable, but rather as a powerful factor in shaping discourse. This is the mechanism through which the artificial boundary between ideas and social practice can be dissolved. Tradition, as an embodiment of social practice, has a complex relationship with the use of language. The replacement of materialist accounts of historical causation with that of language after the linguistic turn often resulted in replacing one monolith with another and tended towards the isolation of the linguistically created world of ideas from the influence of material conditions. As J. G. A. Pocock admitted in 1981, ‘we now find it easier to write the history of speech acts occurring in language-structures than to write the history of speech and language as occurring in larger contexts of social structure and actions’.³⁰ The connecting feature is tradition, or perhaps more broadly understood as ‘culture’. In this understanding, traditions are ‘social complexes of belief’ that situate individuals in specific contexts and communities, as well as influencing reasoning and the scope of behaviour.

Taking the above as an explanatory model, this work will attempt to conceptualise political discourse as interdependent upon culture, its social practices, and human agency.³¹ Looking in particular at the moral and metaphysical assumptions that emerge from social practices, it will focus on these features, rather than unmoored political

²⁶ Bernard Semmel, ‘Two Views of Social History: E. P. Thompson and Gertrude Himmelfarb’, *Partisan Review*, 52, (1985): 135

²⁷ Bevir and Trentmann, ‘Critique within Capitalism’, (2002), 18

²⁸ Skinner, *Visions of Politics*, (2002), 38

²⁹ Bevir and Trentmann, ‘Critique within Capitalism’, (2002), 12; Mark Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 312

³⁰ J. G. A. Pocock, ‘The reconstruction of discourse: towards the historiography of political thought’ (1981), in *Political thought and history: essays on theory and method*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2009), 80-81

³¹ Bevir and Trentmann, ‘Critique within Capitalism’, (2002), 2-3

languages, as the determinants of particular political persuasions. Moral thought is itself a form of political discourse; social activity the foundation of both. It will be argued here that the rhetorical convocations between the political discourses of Georgism, radical republicanism, and Irish republican nationalism were based on shared moral frameworks, and that these can be decoded to highlight their incommensurability with forms of Anglo-American liberalism, both classical and social, despite similarities in their linguistic constructions during the 1880s. In the first instance, it is important to look carefully at George's own intellectual formation and the relationship between Natural Rights, republicanism, and critiques of private property in land. This is the subject of the next chapter.

Henry George and his antecedents

Born in 1839, Henry George finished formal schooling at the age of 13 and, after a stint in the merchant navy, he left his native Philadelphia for California. He did not fight in the Civil War, but lived an itinerant life in early adulthood, often working, but enduring frequent periods of unemployment.¹ Lacking formal education, George was self-taught, his intellectual development forged in public libraries and literary societies in Philadelphia and San Francisco. In this regard, George was not unusual in mid-nineteenth-century America, where there were 'self-taught experts working on the intellectual margins of imperfectly professionalised fields'.² In the study of political economy particularly, amateur interjections were commonplace and the distinction between elite and popular thought often was quite blurred.³ It appears as though George read little economics during his formative years, focusing on literature, poetry, history and biography.⁴ Although mocked by academics and professional economists, it was precisely this background that enabled George to express his ideas in popularly intelligible terms; he was, as his critic Alfred Marshall condescended, 'by nature a poet'.⁵ The recollection of his damascene moment – his conversion to the panacea of equitable distribution of land – on a road in California, demonstrated the centrality of spirituality in George's life, as well as his tendency for bombast and righteous indignation.⁶ Consequently, although these were ingredients in his success, the critical perception of George as a self-anointed saviour and demagogue was one easily thrown at him by his critics who were unnerved by both the spiritual and populist dimensions of his work and oratory.⁷

Despite his immense popularity among contemporaries, a historiographical amnesia afflicts George. There are a number of valid reasons for this, but foremost among them is his awkward place on the contemporary political spectrum. George came to inhabit the 'politically and conceptually disquieting space' for many historians where 'left and right can no longer easily be distinguished'.⁸ The political inferences drawn from

¹ Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy*, (2002), 105; Barker, *Henry George*, (1955), 51

² Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, (1998), 26

³ Emma Rothschild, 'Political Economy', in Gareth Stedman Jones and Gregory Claeys, (eds.), *The Cambridge History of Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2011), 749

⁴ Barker, *Henry George*, (1955), 45; 137

⁵ T. H. Benton De Witt, (ed.), *A Correspondence between an Amateur and a Professor of Political Economy*, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1898), 17-18; Alfred Marshall, 'Three Lectures on Progress and Poverty' (1883-4), *The Journal of Law and Economics*, 12:1, (1969): 186

⁶ Barker, *Henry George*, (1955), 136

⁷ George Campbell, Duke of Argyll, 'The Prophet of San Francisco', in *Property in Land: A Passage-at-Arms between the Duke of Argyll and Henry George*, (New York: Funk and Wagnalls, 1884), 7-42

⁸ Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, (1998), 90

George's work have encouraged some biographers and students of George to characterise him singularly as a libertarian single-taxer, assuming his proposal was an end rather than a means. This is a mistake; before George developed an interest in land or taxation, he was writing of the poor being crushed 'beneath the wheel of the capitalist's carriage'.⁹ Edward Pessen was rightly baffled by this libertarian view of George, finding it 'hard to understand the statement of his interpreter [Raymond Geiger] that George did not favor common ownership in land'.¹⁰ George's egalitarianism was always a central motivation. His daughter later wrote that her father believed that 'the law of God does not allow the heaping up of riches by honest means'.¹¹ But another important reason for George's increasing obscurity was the declining interest in the radical potential of land reform. Dismissed as anachronistic and naïve, it came to be seen, by the middle of the twentieth century, as an acceptable deviation from, and indeed derivative of, capitalism rather than any form of threat to it.¹²

Displaying a restless intellectual curiosity from an early age, George's formative years were marked by the anxiousness of an ambitious but unfocused young man eager to make an impact on the world. To satisfy this feeling, George joined the merchant navy in search of the excitement of a peripatetic life. In April of 1855, he departed on the clipper *Hindoo*, sailing to Australia and India. His correspondence with friends and family back home reveal both the devout religiosity of his home life and his persistent curiosity with political developments back in the U.S. and across the world.¹³ After returning from his travels, George aimed to set out again once more, this time for the West coast in search of his fortune: 'I am still of the same determination in regard to going west', he wrote, and soon set about investigating wages and employment opportunities in the Pacific states.¹⁴ Whilst sometimes admonished by his family for spending too much time enjoying himself and losing sight of his ambitions, George was still keen to work hard. Still, his restless intellect had made him the 'jack of three different trades, and I am afraid, master of none'.¹⁵

⁹ Henry George, cited in, Barker, *Henry George*, (1955), 66

¹⁰ Edward Pessen, *Most Uncommon Jacksonians: The Radical Leaders of the Early Labor Movement*, (Albany, NY.: State University of New York Press, 1967), 178

¹¹ Anna George de Mille to Fr. Thomas Dawson, [n.d.], (HGP, Series I: D, Box II, NYPL)

¹² Theodor W. Adorno and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment*, (1944), (London: Verso, 1997), 132; F. M. L. Thompson, 'Epilogue: The Strange Death of the English Land Question', in Matthew Cragoe and Paul Readman, (eds), *The Land Question in Britain, 1750-1950*, (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2010), 257-270

¹³ Charles Walton to Henry George, 10 May, 1855, (HGP, Series I: A, Box I, NYPL)

¹⁴ Henry George to unspecified, 3 Apr., 1857, (HGP, Series I: A, Box I, NYPL)

¹⁵ Henry George to unspecified, 3 Apr., 1857, (HGP, Series I: A, Box I, NYPL); Jefferies to Henry George, 19 May, 1858, (HGP, Series I:A, Box I, NYPL)

Once in California, George's fascination with political life continued unabated, and he became frustrated at the paucity of civic discussion and engagement in the west.¹⁶ 'Even the news of the "bloody Harper's Ferry rebellion,"', he complained to his mother, 'couldn't get up the smallest kind of excitement, except among the political papers'.¹⁷ Stirred by the turmoil of the developing Civil War, George, as a committed abolitionist, contemplated joining the Union army but eventually decided it would be fruitless to do so in the west.¹⁸ Instead, George started working for the *San Francisco Monitor*, and it was here that he first engaged with Irish conditions and political issues.¹⁹

George's ideas on land reform had been slowly percolating from the late 1860s, with his first foray into the topic of Irish land appearing in the *Monitor* in 1869.²⁰ Edward O'Donnell has pointed out that there is no evidence that previous tracts on land nationalisation particularly influenced George, but it is indicative that his interest in Irish conditions proceeded in tandem with his nascent land reform ideas.²¹ In 1871 he wrote of some embryonic theories he was developing to a friend back in Philadelphia, who replied with a concern that 'the mass of mankind are not sufficiently enlightened to understand its workings'.²² George's correspondent had highlighted what would later become a *bête noir* for him, how to faithfully and cogently explain the intricacies of the operation of his scheme. Despite praise from his supporters for the clarity of his exposition, critical interpretations were able to prey upon its ambiguities. For those only able to take a cursory glance at George's proposition, it heavily coloured their perspective. This point was picked up by one English supporter, who felt that George did not make 'sufficiently clear' that his plan did not intend to 'interfere with house property'.²³ In the writer's experience, 'I find that people to whom your doctrines are mentioned, fly away with the impression, that their houses are in danger'. George was again warned about this in 1882 by his friend and supporter Fr. Thomas Dawson who cautioned the American that 'I find by experience that the expression "Private property in land" is misunderstood, and keeps people from going deeply into what you have written. This may be unreasonable and even stupid, but it is the fact. People think that you condemn the private use of land.'²⁴ George's exasperated response that 'people will misunderstand until they take the trouble

¹⁶ Henry George to Sir George Grey, 3 July, 1880, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

¹⁷ Henry George to Catherine George, Nov. 1859, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 1, NYPL)

¹⁸ Henry George to his brother, 19 Aug., 1861, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 1, NYPL)

¹⁹ Edward T. O'Donnell, 'Henry George and the "New Political Forces": Ethnic Nationalism, Labor Radicalism and Politics in Gilded Age New York City', PhD thesis, Columbia University, (1995), 40

²⁰ James J. Greene, 'The Impact of Henry George's Theories on American Catholics', PhD Thesis, Notre Dame, (1956), 75

²¹ O'Donnell, 'Henry George and the "New Political Forces"', (1995), 52

²² Unsigned letter to Henry George, 16 Sept., 1871, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

²³ W. Duignan to Henry George, 25 Sept., 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

²⁴ Fr. Thomas Dawson to Henry George, 21 Sept., 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

to understand', betrayed an unerring confidence in his ideas and stubborn refusal to compromise. In a sense, however, George was correct in this observation. There was certainly a wilful misunderstanding on the part of a good number of his many critics as they scrambled to find a theoretical basis for denouncing his ideas that did not resort to misrepresentation.²⁵

Progress and Poverty

On 20th September, 1879, Philip Van Patten, head of the perilously fragmenting Socialistic Labor Party, wrote to Terence V. Powderly, his counterpart at the Knights of Labor, lamenting the disparate concerns and ambitions of America's labour radicals. 'If only we could rally a gigantic independent Labor Party', he wrote, 'with Labor measures first [and] leaving out all radical socialistic planks which are not expedient to advocate yet, but of course retaining the proper spirit and tendency, we could make the country shake in 1880!'.²⁶ Another friend of Powderly wrote to him around this time also disheartened that 'the clouds in the labor sky are just as dark as they ever were'.²⁷ Edward Stevens of Chicago complained similarly at the very end of the 1870s that 'there is a great dearth of labor writers who can present ideas, clear and sharply defined. Some are so full of abstract theories that to the masses they are incomprehensible, while the others are either so dry or crude that they fail to accomplish the work they really desire'.²⁸ Little did any of these men know that a book was about to be released that would supply a new impetus, cohesion and clarity for so many labour radicals. *Progress and Poverty* was published at the tail end of 1879, and George worked tirelessly to find reviewers and critics who could bring the book to public attention.²⁹ In the lengthy but impassioned tome George attacked social injustice, physical deprivation and mental degradation while enjoining readers to imagine greater possibilities. He argued that because of the centrality of land to all economic activity, those who possessed it unfairly profited from economic development to which they often did not contribute. That, despite ever-increasing technological advance, the failure of economic gains to accrue to labour was due to the private ownership of the natural resources necessary for economic productivity. His solution, the full taxation of

²⁵ Greene, 'The Impact of Henry George's Theories', (1956), 152

²⁶ Philip Van Patten to Terence V. Powderly, 20 Sept., 1879, (Powderly Papers, Series 1: Box 2, Catholic University of America [hereafter PP, CUA])

²⁷ G. S. Boyle to Terence V. Powderly, 13 Sept., 1879, (PP, Series 1: Box 2, CUA)

²⁸ Edward Stevens to Terence V. Powderly, 20 Nov., 1879, (PP, Series 1: Box 2, CUA)

²⁹ Unnamed to Henry George, Edinburgh, 8 Jan., 1880, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

ground rents, aimed to nationalise the value of the land while keeping private possession intact. According to George, doing so would restore a natural harmony to society.³⁰

For the first half of 1880 the book did not cause much of a stir, but as the year progressed it began to reach a wider audience. This was partly due to George's efforts, as well as the publicity given to the book by the *Irish World*. By the beginning of 1881, George was confident enough to confide to a friend that 'the future of the book is, I think, secure', and bragged that 'as far as I can learn no book on political economy has even yet been published in the United States, or (to my astonishment in England either) that has ever yet sold a 1,000 copies in the first year'.³¹ In July, the wealthy philanthropist and former abolitionist Francis G. Shaw, in huge admiration for George's work, ordered 1,000 copies of the book to be placed in libraries across the US, and by the summer of 1882, George's publishers were struggling to keep up with the overwhelming demand for his book.³² The next year, 1883, saw 80,000 copies sold in Britain alone.³³ It was to become the best selling work of political economy in the nineteenth century, 'making it second only to the Bible in nineteenth-century readership and its author the most influential American economist worldwide'.³⁴ The opinion of George's own publisher was equally striking. It was his belief that 'never before, probably has a single book so influenced the public mind in so short a time, and that without any puffing'.³⁵

The publication of *Progress and Poverty* was announced in the *Irish World* with an unimpressive review. 'He evidently means well', sighed the reviewer, who found his scheme 'laborious' although welcomed the book as 'an indication that public thought is at last veering into the right direction'.³⁶ The writer suggested that instead of George's calculations, 'to just make one simple sweeping change', and that was, in line with agrarian republicanism, 'that individual property in land shall not be recognized in the courts of this country beyond what is sufficient for the cultivation and support of a family'.³⁷ Nevertheless, George's theory must have quickly made a more positive impression for he was soon given prominent column space in the paper to express his ideas. It was his association with the paper, and with its editor, the Galway-born radical

³⁰ Henry George, *Progress and Poverty: An Inquiry into the Cause of Industrial Depressions, and of Increase of Want with Increase of Wealth. The Remedy*, (1879), (New York: D. Appleton and Co., 10th ed., 1882)

³¹ Henry George to Edward Robeson Taylor, 4 Jan., 1881, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

³² Francis G. Shaw to Henry George, 18 July 1881, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL); Lorien Foote, *Seeking the One Great Remedy: Francis George Shaw and Nineteenth-Century Reform* (Athens, OH.: Ohio University Press, 2003)

³³ 'Anarchic Socialism', *New Englander*, 7:178, (Jan., 1884): 125

³⁴ Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy*, (2002), 115

³⁵ J. C. Durant to Henry George, London, n.d., (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

³⁶ *Irish World*, 3 Jan., 1880

³⁷ *Ibid.*

Patrick Ford, that brought his work to the attention of the wider Irish community, and George began to receive speaking invitations from Land League branches in the US.³⁸ Positive reviews emerged from ever more respected, and indeed sometimes respectable, sources. George was delighted when the naturalist and land nationaliser Alfred Russel Wallace endorsed the book, declaring it ‘the most remarkable and important work of the present century’.³⁹ It was not only positive reaction that helped garner attention for the book of course, and George’s London publisher was very pleased with the ‘recent lectures of Professor Toynbee, of Oxford’, which despite being dismissively critical, ‘have done us an immense amount of good’.⁴⁰ Alfred Marshall also deemed it worthy of his critical attention, revealingly describing George as ‘a poet, not a scientific thinker’.⁴¹ Professor Bonamy Price, too, was ‘entirely opposed’ to *Progress and Poverty*. A student of Price showed George’s book to the Oxford economist, and recollected to George in a letter that, ‘he neither convinced me that your views were entirely utopian, nor did he ever return me your book’.⁴²

The title of George’s magnum opus revealed the book’s heredity in a number of ways. In the first instance, the idea of ‘progress’ – moral and material – was a particularly enchanting and disquieting concept at this time. As a conceptual framework, it clearly owed much to an Enlightenment teleology and the more recent influence of historicism. The central paradox offered by George in the title itself echoed one of the primary debates among civic humanists of the early modern period. Indeed, as Istvan Hont argues, the conflict between the competing notions of ‘progress’ and ‘poverty’ created a productive tension between ‘the traditional egalitarian intuitions of Western moral thought and the guiding assumption of modern political economy’.⁴³ Civic republicanism had accepted the necessity of egalitarianism to the functioning of the polity. It was a decisive break from this that birthed ‘liberalism’, the possibility of a comfortable coexistence of political equality with economic inequality. In expecting political and economic equality to increase together, and presenting his title as paradoxical, George revealed his deep debts to the republican tradition.

³⁸ James A. Murphy to Henry George, 3 Feb., 1881, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

³⁹ Henry George to Edward Robeson Taylor, 7th September, 1881, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL); Alfred R. Wallace to Henry George, 3rd June, 1882; Alfred R. Wallace to Henry George, 7th June, 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

⁴⁰ J. C. Durant to Henry George, London, n.d., (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL); Arnold Toynbee, “*Progress and Poverty*,” *A Criticism of Mr. Henry George, being two lectures delivered in St. Andrew’s Hall, Newman Street, London*, (London: Kegan Paul, Trench and Co., 1883)

⁴¹ Alfred Marshall, ‘Three Lectures on Progress and Poverty’, (1883), *The Journal of Law and Economics*, 12:1, (1969): 186

⁴² F. MacMillan to Henry George, 3 Oct., 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

⁴³ Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade: International Competition and the Nation-State in Historical Perspective*, (Cambridge: MA.: Harvard University Press, 2005), 92

Henry George occupied a pivotal point in the history of popular republicanism. His appeal represented the last popular resurgence of this particular collection of assumptions before the political and economic orthodoxy in the Atlantic world finally ‘abandoned the presumption that market relations were anchored in something more solid’.⁴⁴ In Gareth Stedman Jones’ longitudinal study of the relationship between commercial society and concepts of virtue and the public good, he posits Henry George as a potential reinventor of this earlier tradition, only to reject him. He writes that ‘George’s arguments *appeared* like a return to the pre-Malthusian perspectives of the late Enlightenment reformers’.⁴⁵ But it was more than appearance: George aimed explicitly to ‘form a great truth which marries political economy and common sense’.⁴⁶ It was precisely in recognising the artificial ‘divorce between political economy and progressive politics’ that George attracted such enthusiastic support. And there is no doubting George’s immense popularity for a brief period in the early 1880s.⁴⁷ The widespread admiration for George’s work suggests that its main ideas and their ideological foundations spoke directly to a pre-existing constituency conversant in his assumptions and rhetoric. In Ireland, the idiosyncratic figure of Standish O’Grady, the Anglo-Irish journalist and Celtic revivalist, warned that George’s ‘works are far more widely read and studied than we in England or Ireland are willing to admit’.⁴⁸ While in the U.S., according to David Montgomery, Irish-Americans could be ‘found wending their way home reading *Progress and Poverty*’.⁴⁹

The potential and the attraction of George’s ideas become most comprehensible when set in the context of the developing orthodoxy of economic marginalism, and its attendant assumption of market forces as value neutral and self-evidently scientific.⁵⁰ ‘Its simplicity of analysis and solution’, so appealing to George’s readership, was the formal essence of its stylistic character, which was a ‘jeremiad rhetoric of righteousness and exhortation’.⁵¹ George’s perception was starkly moral, and these were the terms through which his readers also interpreted the world. The book’s remarkable popularity serves to reinforce the contention that moral exhortation within a framework of Natural Rights

⁴⁴ Sklansky, *The Soul’s Economy*, (2002), 9

⁴⁵ Gareth Stedman Jones, *An End to Poverty? A Historical Debate*, (London: Profile Books, 2004), 208

⁴⁶ Henry George to John Swinton, 2 June, 1878, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

⁴⁷ Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, (1998), 70

⁴⁸ Standish O’Grady, *The Crisis in Ireland*, (Dublin: E. Ponsonby, 1882), 20

⁴⁹ David Montgomery, ‘The Irish and the American Labor Movement’, in David N. Doyle and Owen Dudley Edwards, (eds.), *America and Ireland, 1776-1976: The American Identity and the Irish Connection*, (Westport, CT.: Greenwood Press, 1976), 213

⁵⁰ Sklansky, *The Soul’s Economy*, (2002), 106

⁵¹ Alan Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America: Culture and Society in the Gilded Age*, (New York: Hill and Wang, 1982), 44

held a broad appeal, and the constitution of this mental universe will be presented in the following chapter. Prior to this, it will be necessary to situate George's ideas within the genealogy of land reform to which he belonged.

The moral foundations of land reform

'People don't appreciate what land is' lamented George.⁵² As the root of George's theory and his philosophy, 'the question of all questions, the most fundamental and important', much of his time and effort was spent discussing the difference between land, 'the mother of the universe', and other forms of property.⁵³ George saw the earth as a closed system with the exception of natural fertility as the only added value, and this was aligned with a deeply spiritual dimension to his understanding of man's connection to land, which echoed contemporary American transcendentalism. He wrote: 'Truly the earth is our mother. This very flesh and blood is but borrowed from the soil [...] we are children of the soil as truly as the blade of grass of the flower of the field'.⁵⁴ It was not just soil however, it was all matter, 'the whole material universe'. He explained that once 'you grasp this idea you see the connection between the land question and the labor question – they are the same thing'.⁵⁵ This semi-mystic holism differed marginally from Irish romantic conceptions of land, which tended to be rooted in a temporal space and were more likely to emphasise the historical memory and generational relationship with 'Irish soil'.⁵⁶ Although both conceptions emphasised the metaphysical relationship between man and nature, the interdependence of all matter in George's understanding explains why his ideas served as 'an entering wedge' for socialism.⁵⁷ Partly because George's image of 'the land' was not rooted in a specific place, his hostility to urban life was not as marked as the earlier American (or some Irish) land reformers. In mid-century U.S., George Henry Evans' National Reform Association had sought, like later advocates of Catholic colonisation, a proliferation of small farmers who would escape 'the cringing, the fawning and the lying that enter so largely into political, professional, mercantile and mechanical

⁵² Henry George, lecture notes for Shoreditch Hall, 31st March, 1884, 'Lecture notes, Britain [1880s]', (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

⁵³ Henry George, 'Unidentified lectures [1881]', (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL); Henry George, *Irish World*, 9 July, 1881

⁵⁴ Henry George, 'Garfield or Hancock', 1880, (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL); Henry George, *Irish World*, 9 July, 1881

⁵⁵ Henry George, 'Lecture to the Ladies Prisoner Aid Society', 1882, (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL)

⁵⁶ Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, 'Irish land questions in the state of the Union', in Fergus Campbell and Tony Varley, (eds.), *Land questions in modern Ireland*, (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 6

⁵⁷ Richard T. Ely, *Recent American Socialism*, (Baltimore: N. Murray, Johns Hopkins University, 1885), 18; 'A Capitalist', *Rational Communism: The Present and Future Republic of North America*, (New York: The Social Science Publishing Co., 1885), 464

life'.⁵⁸ Despite George's criticism of modern corruption, his recognition of the values of urban life prevented such a sweeping and derogative assessment of cities. It set George slightly apart from the tradition of land reform and from the Land League itself.

The image and the ideal of Thomas Jefferson was an intellectual template for Henry George, as indeed he had been for the previous generation of land reformers, and remained so for the *Irish World*, where he was exalted as 'the truest embodiment of the animating principle of the American Revolution'.⁵⁹ Jefferson's deviation from a Lockean approach to property in his framing of the constitution provided a solid footing for later land reformers. In reframing Locke's famous dictum of the right to 'life, liberty and property' as the right to 'life, liberty, and the pursuit of happiness', Jefferson confronted the Aquinian dilemma by affirming that the rights of the human were superior to the rights of property.⁶⁰ Jefferson's republicanism, which viewed the potential for human development as the *telos* of human life, viewed property as a social or civil right, not a natural one.⁶¹ Ownership of property remained central to the development of moral faculties, but Jefferson's rendering suggested a more egalitarian vision (at least among white males); that 'moral sense' was innate, 'given to all human beings', implied that access to property should be open to all.⁶² It was this formulation that so animated George. 'Do not think that I am straining the language of the Declaration', George said to his audience at the Brooklyn Revenue Reform Club, 'do not think that I am attributing to Jefferson ideas that he did not realize and hold, though the times in which he live might not have been the time for their full development'.⁶³ In this George believed he had pinpointed the quintessence of Jefferson's thought and sought its application to his own time.

A contemporary of Jefferson, Newcastle schoolteacher Thomas Spence became a pivotal figure in the history of radical land reform.⁶⁴ Spence's millenarian hopes for a total transformation of society and the forceful exposition of his ideas were unpopular with many contemporary radicals, but, particularly though the Chartists, his work had a long

⁵⁸ *The Landmark*, quoted in, Jamie L. Bronstein, 'Land Reform and Political Traditions in Nineteenth Century Britain and the United States', in Bevir and Trentmann, (eds.), *Critiques of Capital*, (2002), 32

⁵⁹ *Irish World*, 8 Feb., 1879

⁶⁰ David M. Post, 'Jeffersonian Revisions of Locke: Education, Property-Rights, and Liberty', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 47:1, (1986): 147-157

⁶¹ Thomas Jefferson to Peter Carr, Paris, 10 Aug., 1787, in Adrienne Koch and William Peden, (eds.), *The Life and Selected Writings of Thomas Jefferson*, (New York: Random House, 1944), 430-1

⁶² *Ibid.*, 431

⁶³ Henry George, 'Wanted: A Democratic Party', Speech to the Brooklyn Revenue Reform Club, 12th March, 1883, (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL)

⁶⁴ T. M. Parssinen, 'Thomas Spence and the Origins of English Land Nationalization', *Journal of the History of Ideas*, 34:1, (1973): 140

trajectory of influence. Spence lectured on land nationalisation to the Philosophical Society of Newcastle in 1775 and it would remain his *'idee fixe'* for the rest of his life.⁶⁵ Beginning from a state of nature, he argued that initial occupation had been by force. His rejection of the justice of this individuation rested upon the necessity of land to human life, for 'there is no living but on land and its productions, consequently, what we cannot live without we have the same property in as our lives'.⁶⁶ Although Spence's scheme was one of decentralisation, less land nationalization than land localisation, in which elected parishes would manage their lands, the parallels with George's conception of land are striking.⁶⁷ That George did not encounter Spence's work until 1882 highlights the shared ideological strands tying this tradition together. George was delighted to discover that his own ideas were supported by the gravitas of an English pastoral communitarian tradition. He wrote to Patrick Ford of the 'remarkable lecture which Hyndman has dug up out of the British museum and reprinted. These are proofs and the first to go to America'.⁶⁸

A more direct antecedent of George was Thomas Paine, whose most significant contribution to the history of land reform, made in his 1797 pamphlet *Agrarian Justice*, was to argue for a separation between 'natural' and 'artificial' property.⁶⁹ In doing so, Paine presaged George's argument that a redistribution of the common inheritance of land could not be a physical redistribution, since it was not possible to separate the natural from the artificial. His own plan was a land tax too, using the proceeds to provide all with an endowment at 21 and an old age pension. There were many similarities with George's work, although there is no evidence to suggest George had read *Agrarian Justice* before he formulated his own theory. What is notable is that both came to their respective conclusions from disenchantment with the idea that a liberal polity alone could provide economic justice. Perhaps most striking was Paine's critique of this failure: 'On one side the spectator is dazzled by splendid appearances; on the other he is shocked by extremes of wretchedness; both of which he has created. The most affluent and the most miserable of the human race are to be found in the countries that are called civilized'.⁷⁰ It was of course this paradox, that 'the tramp comes with the locomotive', that provided the central motif of George's work.⁷¹

⁶⁵ Thomas R. Knox, 'Thomas Spence: The Trumpet of Jubilee', *Past and Present*, 76, (1977): 76

⁶⁶ Thomas Spence, (1775), in H. M. Hyndman, (ed.), *The Nationalization of the Land in 1775 and 1882*, (London: E. W. Allen, 1882), 10

⁶⁷ Spence, (1775), in Hyndman, (ed.), *The Nationalization of the Land*, (1882), 13-5

⁶⁸ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 9 March, 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

⁶⁹ Robert Lamb, 'Liberty, Equality, and the Boundaries of Ownership: Thomas Paine's Theory of Property Rights', *The Review of Politics*, 72:3, (2010): 510

⁷⁰ Thomas Paine, *Agrarian Justice*, (1797), in M. Beer, (ed.), *The Pioneers of Land Reform: Thomas Spence, William Ogilvie, Thomas Paine*, (London: G. Bell, 1920), 181

⁷¹ Henry George, *Progress and Poverty*, (1879), 7

In grounding part of the defence of his theory in what Gregory Claeys calls his ‘principle of progress’, that each generation should do better than the previous, Paine attempted to provide secular foundations for the claims of the materially disenfranchised to a share in ‘natural’ property.⁷² He differed from previous Natural Rights arguments for the commonality of land in rejecting agrarianism, and so represented ‘an important transitional stage in the radical secularization of natural law arguments’.⁷³ Nevertheless, as Claeys makes clear, Paine still required divine sanction to justify the right of all to land.⁷⁴ A successor in this ‘progressive’ position was the Edinburgh landowner Patrick Dove. His 1850 volume, *The Theory of Human Progression*, was not widely read, although it received a favourable reception among scholars and politically interested parties.⁷⁵ Dedicated to the French philosopher Victor Cousin, the author’s professor in Paris, it was built upon Cousin’s philosophical predilections for the foundationalism of the Scottish commonsense tradition.⁷⁶ Dove accepted his theory of progress as an empirical observation, as a ‘fact of progress; for it is a fact as well as a theory’, observed in the apparently inexorable and necessary development of science.⁷⁷ This perspective led Dove to an inflexible teleology, that ‘the political progress of mankind is a passage to one definite end’.⁷⁸ His progressivism, positivity about the possibilities of science, and free trade liberalism were supported by a utilitarian calculation, but one modified by an ‘*a priori* principle of justice’ from the commonsense tradition.⁷⁹ In this his work stands at a slight variance with George, demonstrating the tangents and intellectual fragmentations in the tradition of land reform. Importantly, however, Dove, like Paine and George, relied by necessity on the principle that ‘creation is the only means by which an individual right to property can be generated’, and that the initial creation of the earth had been divine.⁸⁰

Perhaps the most significant intellectual influence on George was John Stuart Mill. A towering figure in nineteenth-century politics and philosophy, Mill’s *Principles of Political Economy* represented George’s first academic introduction to the subject, and his work on land tenure reform in the early 1870s had a visible impact on George’s work.⁸¹

⁷² Gregory Claeys, *Thomas Paine, Social and Political Thought*, (Abingdon: Routledge, 1989), 199

⁷³ Claeys, *Thomas Paine*, (1989), 206

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 199-200

⁷⁵ Alexander Harvey, ‘The Book and the Author’, in Patrick Dove, *The Theory of Human Progression*, (1850), Julia A. Kellogg, (ed.), (New York: Blanchard, 1910), ii

⁷⁶ Edward H. Madden, ‘Victor Cousin and the Commonsense Tradition’, *History of Philosophy Quarterly*, 1:1, (1984): 94; George Elder Davie, ‘Victor Cousin and the Scottish Philosophers’, *Journal of Scottish Philosophy*, 7:2, (2009): 193-214

⁷⁷ Dove, *The Theory of Human Progression*, (1850), 4

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, 63

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*, 38

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 121

⁸¹ Barker, *Henry George*, (1955), 122; Henry George, *Irish World*, 9 July, 1881; Toynbee, ‘Progress and Poverty,’ *A Criticism of Mr. Henry George*, (1883), 9

George corresponded briefly with the ageing Mill, flattering the famous philosopher and economist as ‘that highest of all characters – the “great, good man”’.⁸² George’s respect for the esteemed scholar was evident in the letter but also in his work in general, and he was very proud to have received a reply from Avignon, where Mill resided in his later years.

In his letter to George, Mill described ‘the extent and limits of the right of those who have first taken possession of an unoccupied portion of the earth’s surface, to exclude the remainder of mankind from inhabiting it’, as one of the most difficult questions of political economy.⁸³ His own work was testament to this, and it was over the question of land in particular that Mill felt obliged, like both Paine and Dove, to discard utilitarian hypotheses in favour of an ‘appeal to the communitarian legacy of the natural law tradition’.⁸⁴ Mill had previously made it clear that he considered utilitarian calculations as suitable solely for ‘regulating the merely *business* part of the social arrangements’ rather than offering a totalising philosophy or supplanting the role of ‘the moralist’.⁸⁵ As a result of his delicate and nuanced approach to utilitarianism, Mill came to reject his astringent Benthamite inheritance.⁸⁶ This was most evident in his approach to the land question. Not only did this set him apart from the dominant mid-century liberal discourse and help ‘to prepare the ground for the new growth of socialism in the early eighties’, it also demonstrated, just as for Jefferson, Paine, Spence, Dove and George, the truly fundamental interdependence of land reform and the natural law tradition.⁸⁷

Mill’s intellectual embrace of land nationalisation did much to inspire George. ‘The land is not of man’s creation’, wrote the philosopher, ‘and for a person to appropriate to himself a mere gift of nature, not made to him in particular, but which belonged as much to all others until he took possession of it, is *prima facie* an injustice to all the rest’.⁸⁸ That Mill lauded the moral qualities, the ‘sturdy independence’, of small, owner-occupier yeomanry in this regard, evinced further echoes of republican and natural law discourse.⁸⁹ Even in the realm of political possibilities, the proposition that ‘land ought not to be

⁸² Henry George to John Stuart Mill, 22 Aug., 1869, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

⁸³ John Stuart Mill to Henry George, 23 Oct., 1869, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

⁸⁴ Ursula Vogel, ‘The Land-Question: A Liberal Theory of Communal Property’, *History Workshop*, 27, (1989): 117

⁸⁵ J. S. Mill, ‘The Works of Jeremy Bentham’, *The London and Westminster Review*, 31, (July, 1838): 262

⁸⁶ MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (1981), 63; Rothschild, ‘Political Economy’, (2011), 759; A. W. Coats, ‘The Historicist Reaction in English Political Economy, 1870-90’, *Economica*, 21, (1954): 143-153

⁸⁷ Willard Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism: Men and Ideas in the Formation of Fabian Socialist Doctrines, 1881-1889*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1975), 30; Mill, ‘The Works of Jeremy Bentham’, *The London and Westminster Review*, 31, (July, 1838): 262

⁸⁸ J. S. Mill, *Tract on the Right of Property in Land*, Land Tenure Reform Association, (1873), in Hugh S. R. Elliot (ed.), *The Letters of John Stuart Mill*, (vol. II), (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1910),

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⁸⁹ J. S. Mill, *Chapters and Speeches on the Irish Land Question*, (London: Longmans, Green, Reader, and Dyer, 1870), 2

private property' Mill claimed had 'always seemed to me fundamentally just'.⁹⁰ Despite a disparity in their intellectual ambition, both men sought a political philosophy in which greater individual freedom could be bound securely with greater equality, within a polity orientated toward the common good. In George's famous dictum: 'to show that *laissez-faire* (in its full true meaning) opens the way to a realization of the noble dreams of socialism'.⁹¹ These 'noble dreams' were what prompted Mill in his later years to place himself 'under the general designation of Socialist'.⁹² Linguistically too, Mill's keen moral vision and incisive imagery, evident in his scorn for landowners whose wealth, 'produced by other people's labour and enterprise [falls] into their mouths while they sleep', found a later reiteration in George's work.⁹³

A deep-rooted religious sensibility also inspired a social perfectionism in both men, rooted ultimately in a conception of an ordered and harmonious universe.⁹⁴ For George, socialism in its most palatable guise was a refashioning of the religious spirit, and only 'turned against the forms and expression of religion because [they] have been made the props and bulwarks of tyranny'.⁹⁵ Such a view was expressed repeatedly in labour organs, that radicalism was 'not a mere political movement, it [was] religious work'.⁹⁶ In Mill's writing, this can be seen in his 'tendency to give priority to moral and political considerations, over merely economic ones', and, more broadly, to understand political economy as inseparable from social and ethical evaluations.⁹⁷ Such a proposition was of course the primary dynamic of George's work. One supporter explained his affection for *Progress and Poverty* in these very terms:

I like it because it contains a broader theology than that of Malthus and his followers because it upholds Political Economy as a noble humane science instead of a cold blooded one. I fear it is something more than blindness that causes our great men to ignore the fact that economic law and moral law are essentially one.⁹⁸

⁹⁰ J. S. Mill to C. E. Norton, 24 Sept., 1868, in Elliot (ed.), *The Letters of John Stuart Mill*, (1910), 123; Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, (1975), 59; J. S. Mill, 'Advice to Land Reformers', *The Examiner*, 4 Jan., 1873

⁹¹ Henry George, *Progress and Poverty*, (1879), xi; Gregory Claeys, 'Non-Marxian Socialism', in Stedman Jones and Claeys, (eds.), *Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, (2011), 550; Jeffrey Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy*, (2002), 128

⁹² J. S. Mill, *Autobiography*, (1873), (New York: P. F. Collier and Sons, 1919), 149

⁹³ J. S. Mill, 'Should public bodies be required to sell their lands', *The Examiner*, 11 Jan., 1873

⁹⁴ Gareth Stedman Jones, 'Religion and the Origins of Socialism', in Ira Katznelson, and Gareth Stedman Jones, (eds.), *Religion and the Political Imagination*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2010), 171-189; Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, (1975), 32

⁹⁵ Henry George, 'Moses', (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL)

⁹⁶ *Irish World*, 23 Nov., 1878

⁹⁷ A. W. Coats, 'The Classical Economists and the Labourer', in A. W. Coats, (ed.), *The Classical Economists and Economic Policy*, (London: Methuen and Co., 1971), 13

⁹⁸ John Coleman to Henry George, 28 May, 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

In abridged form, Mill's work provided a valuable resource for Land Leaguers seeking to add weight to their position. His active and empathetic understanding of the Irish situation combined with his intellectual authority had made him a useful irritant, his sympathies gleefully appropriated to demonstrate the probity of land reform or nationalisation, the difference between the two frequently left ambiguous by intent.⁹⁹ Certainly Mill had a visible impact on the rhetorical formations of both George and the Land League. He evoked an earlier, republican, 'liberal' tradition with his contention that many people were 'enslaved or made dependent [...] by force of poverty'.¹⁰⁰ And, of course, with the question of land too, where Mill sought to differentiate between land as 'the original inheritance of the whole species', and other forms of property.¹⁰¹ Given this, and considering Mill's later position, George was perhaps one of the more faithful torchbearers of his legacy. To assess the impact of this political inclination, it will be necessary to trace some of its origins, advocates and interpreters. This will be the focus of the next chapter.

⁹⁹ James J. Clancy, *The Land League Manual*, (New York: Thomas Kelly, 1881), 12-13

¹⁰⁰ J. S. Mill, 'Chapters on Socialism' (1869), in *Principles of Political Economy*, (1848), (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 377

¹⁰¹ J. S. Mill, quoted in Clancy, *The Land League Manual*, (1881), 16

Republicanism: Theology and Political Economy

This chapter will chart the intersecting ideological constructions of republicanism and its theological antecedents in order to establish the experiential basis for the connection between socially constructed morality and economic ideas. In so doing, it is observed that the tradition of republican thought implicitly rejected the solidity of a boundary between theory and practice; that, as the *Irish World* observed, ‘Words are *things*’.¹ The purpose of this chapter is to explore the connections between labour, biological fertility, and value that would animate George and his radical republican cohort, as well as the proximity of the Natural Rights tradition to non-contractual conceptions of social life. It is only by establishing such precedents that it is possible to see how, by the 1880s, George’s ideas and his vast popularity created such a fundamental threat to developing ideas of liberal policy-making.

Republicanism is most clearly viewed as a collection of interlocking ideas. It is rooted, ultimately, in Aristotelian philosophy and Thomist theology, which saw human virtue as ‘intimately connected with man’s Aristotelian [ends]’, or final purpose.² Aristotle’s *Politics* was first translated into Latin by thirteenth century Dominicans and subsequently formed the ‘archetypical definition of participatory republican society’.³ His *Nicomachean Ethics*, in framing the idea of the virtues and of a ‘good life’ which seeks the *telos* of human development as the highest goal, provided the mechanism by which such a polity could be achieved. At the heart of the republican tradition was the concept of political virtue, a self-sacrificing fidelity to a nation or *polis* that superseded personal ambition or self-interest, and which generated an ambivalent perception of personal wealth.⁴ In viewing the political freedom to exercise public virtue as determined by economic independence, republicanism stimulated a greater awareness of the political dangers of economic inequality.

While republicanism posited that political freedom could be curtailed to the point of meaninglessness by economic unfreedom, liberalism as a political concept was rooted in a compromise between political equality and significant economic inequality. The rejection of this principle can be seen in the concern of the Knights of Labor leader George McNeill, that ‘extremes of wealth and poverty are threatening the existence of the

¹ *Irish World*, 27 Dec., 1879

² Alan Cromartie, ‘Harringtonian Virtue: Harrington, Machiavelli, and the method of the *Moment*’, *The Historical Journal*, 41:4, (1998): 1006

³ K. Steven Vincent, *Pierre-Joseph Proudhon and the rise of French Republican Socialism*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1984): 36

⁴ See, Jean Jacques Rousseau, ‘Discourse on Political Economy’, (1755) in *The Social Contract and other later political writings*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997), 20; Aristotle, *Nicomachean Ethics*, Book 1:5, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2009), 7

government'.⁵ In fact, the worry that 'enormous private wealth is inconsistent with the spirit of republicanism' dominated the radicalism of the nineteenth-century Atlantic world.⁶ Not only would representative government be corrupted, but, as George explained, 'an aristocracy of wealth is even more pernicious than an aristocracy of birth; that the system which puts the livelihood of one man into the power of another is as truly slavery as that which makes property of the person'.⁷

In seeing the concept of liberty as being social rather than pre-social, republicans believed that freedom was only created within societies and the ends of human development realised in alignment with the fulfilment of social roles, the cultivation of political citizenship rather than in isolation from others. As Jefferson explained, 'Man was destined for society. His morality, therefore, was to be formed to this object'.⁸ Therefore active political participation was not only integral to the operation of the state, but for the primary end, the development of individual personality. For Henry George, and those who shared similar views, the primary aim of economic and political reform was to rectify the central affront of industrial poverty, the curtailment of human potential. It was only through 'personal independence – the ability to get a living without trembling in fear of any man or crouching for the favour of any man [that one could achieve] the basis of all the manly virtues'.⁹ As a friend wrote hopefully to George, 'if every man could get his food by five hours labor he would then have time for mental improvement; and he might be as wise as Plato'.¹⁰

One of the clearest expressions of late nineteenth century radical republicanism was put forward in a public letter by the American labour activist G. Y. Malcolm, and co-signed by other transatlantic radicals such as the tailor Robert Blissert, himself Lancashire-born of Irish parents. The letter set forward its general principle as being that 'since all wealth is created by labor, reform means the making of it as easy as possible to acquire wealth by labor, and as difficult as possible to acquire it in any other way'.¹¹ In the political climate of the U.S., this meant the platform of 'National Land; National Money;

⁵ Quoted in Eric Arnesen, 'American Workers and the Labor Movement in the Late Nineteenth Century', in C. W. Calhoun, (ed.), *The Gilded Age: Essays on the Origins of Modern America*, (Wilmington, DE.: Scholarly Resources, 1996), 51

⁶ John Francis Bray, *Labour's Wrongs and Labour's Remedy; Or, The Age of Might and the Age of Reason*, (Leeds: David Green, 1839), 206; *Irish World*, 4 Dec. 1880

⁷ Henry George, 'To the voters of San Francisco', clipping from unnamed newspaper, 3 May, 1878, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

⁸ Thomas Jefferson to Peter Carr, 10 Aug., 1787, in Koch and Peden, (eds.), *The Life and Selected Writings*, (1944), 430

⁹ Henry George, 'Speech made during Presidential campaign of 1876', (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

¹⁰ Unsigned letter to Henry George, Philadelphia, 16th September, 1871, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL); See similar in, *Irish World*, 16 Nov., 1878

¹¹ G. Y. Malcolm to Henry George, 8 Dec., 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

Free Trade'.¹² There were many other aspects to this matrix of ideas that constituted 'republicanism', such as a focus on strongly defined gender roles and a commitment to political decentralisation (so that 'responsibility may be everywhere joined with power'), that were secondary and dependent upon the above presumptions.¹³ Not all were integral and not all were exclusive, but broadly speaking these constituted the central elements.

Taken as an intellectual totality, the persistence of Aristotelianism was a central thread that connected the early Church doctrines, Aquinas and the Scholastics, to the classical and radical republicanism of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries. This broad trajectory, in particular the 'rediscovery' of this classical tradition during the Renaissance and its manifestation in political praxis during the Enlightenment, has been famously elucidated by J. G. A. Pocock.¹⁴ Since then there have been many studies of 'the rich transatlantic networks through which republican and radical traditions circulated'.¹⁵ The Irish relationship to this larger tradition has perhaps been less well examined, but the importance of republican ideas to conceptions of Irishness has been well documented. As Michael Gordon has argued, 'a regulated way of life revolving around the seasons, marriages, and fairs; a religion intimately bound with folklore; the traditions of clandestine, agrarian Whiteboy associations' all helped to form Irish republicanism.¹⁶ To often, however, within the familiar ancestry of transatlantic republicanism, the Irish find themselves as interlopers and accessories, merely adopting an American political philosophy as part of their acclimatisation to the new country.¹⁷ The present thesis seeks to develop an understanding of political theory as embedded in a social reality and so to observe some of the myriad different transmissions of worldviews and their ideological implications, as well as the institutions and environments that would help them to flourish.

In order to comprehend both how this collection of ideas emanated 'from below' rather than from the imprimatur of a more detached political philosophy, and as a result unravelling some of the causes of the tensions that develop when conflicting cultural

¹² *Ibid.*

¹³ O'Donnell, 'Henry George and the "New Political Forces"', (1995), 112; Henry George, 'To the voters of San Francisco', clipping from unnamed newspaper, 3 May, 1878, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

¹⁴ J. G. A. Pocock, *The Machiavellian Moment: Florentine Political Thought and the Atlantic Republican Tradition*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1975)

¹⁵ Bevir and Trentmann, 'Critique within Capitalism', (2002), 7

¹⁶ Michael Gordon, 'Studies in Irish and Irish American Thought and Behaviour in Gilded Age New York City', PhD thesis, University of Rochester, (1977), xxii

¹⁷ Thomas N. Brown, *Irish American Nationalism, 1870-1890*, (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1966); Eric Foner, 'Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism', (1981); and Ely Janis, *A Greater Ireland*, (2015), all make a variation on this claim

assumptions collide, some theoretical frameworks are constructive. Practical rationality is one such concept; the idea that ‘modes of practice’, primarily economic structures and the social relationships they forged, shape moral perspectives. In this account, both moral virtues and rationality emanate from the social practices that make them intelligible and sustain them. Aristotelian moral theory (and its political equivalent civic republicanism) articulates ‘concepts embodied by such modes of practice [as are found in] some relatively small scale and local communities’.¹⁸ Taking this approach, the transition from rural Ireland to the industrial United States can be understood as moral dislocation because social roles and the practices of life were fundamentally altered. It also follows that, given the dependence of moral ‘theory’ on practical rationality, social behaviours and activities can be read as inherently political acts, as espousing a moral and political philosophy.

This approach has a direct relevance for the study of the Irish diaspora. It involves interpreting republican ‘Aristotelianism’, the proposition that what is ‘good’ is framed by the proper fulfilment of the social role set down by the community, as an arational totalising ‘theory’ of social morality, not as only one concept among many. There is no separation between theory and practice because the ‘life of practice’, ‘in the absence of ideological obfuscation, tends to generate a commonly intelligible morality that facilitates the cultivation of virtue’.¹⁹ As an ideological scheme, it maintains the value of tradition over a culturally detached view of logic and reason. It is, in other words, an ‘anti-theory’ theory, and so ‘incommensurable with other Western philosophical traditions’.²⁰ In the Irish case, etymology is indicative of the connection between role fulfilment as part of a practical life and a conception of ‘good’. *Saor*, meaning freedom, has its origins in the Old Irish *Sóer*, meaning ‘Good Man’, and *Sáer*, meaning ‘skill’, and is the derivation for the words for both labour, (*Saothar*), and liberty (*Saoirse*). These linguistic connections are consistent with the nexus of ideas derived from the aristocratic classical republican tradition.²¹ Not incidentally, of course, George’s sympathies lay with a moral schema that ‘leaves the abstract speculations where thought so easily loses and wastes itself, or finds expression only in symbols’.²² Correspondingly, this philosophical stance relied heavily on the dictates of ‘common sense’, as both an egalitarian leveller and a philosophical proposition.²³

¹⁸ Kelvin Knight, ‘Revolutionary Aristotelianism’, in Paul Blackledge and Kelvin Knight, (eds.), *Virtue and Politics: Alasdair MacIntyre’s Revolutionary Aristotelianism*, (Notre Dame, IN.: University of Notre Dame Press, 2011), 23

¹⁹ Knight, ‘Revolutionary Aristotelianism’, (2011), 24

²⁰ *Ibid.*, 25

²¹ Peter McQuillan, *Native and Natural: Aspects of the Concepts of Right and Freedom in Irish*, (Cork: Cork University Press, 2004), 228

²² Henry George, ‘Moses’, (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL)

²³ *Irish World*, 16 Nov., 1878

Having left an environment where social morality was created and defined by commitments to shared practices, and transplanted into a country undergoing a jarring and uncomfortable ideological transformation, adaptation was necessary for Irish immigrants to the United States. The multiplicity of economic and social relationships, modes of practice and institutions of those practices available in the urban U.S. encouraged an intellectual and moral pluralism at odds with agrarian experience and Irish cultural identity. John Stuart Mill recognised this ‘anti-modernism’ was not only a feature of Irish society but of other non-industrial communities, indirectly suggesting that this divergence was the result of the changing values of more commercial societies. With typical perspicuity Mill asserted that:

Irish circumstances and the Irish ideas as to social and agricultural economy are the general ideas and circumstances of the human race; it is English circumstances and English ideas that are peculiar. Ireland is in the main stream of human existence and human feeling and opinion; it is England that is in one of the lateral channels.²⁴

His position recognised the difficult transition of moral values from predominately rural agrarian societies to urbanised, industrialised and commercialised ones. Reverberations of this idea continued to concern radical republicans throughout the second half of the nineteenth century in both Britain and America, as well as provide intellectual support for Irish radical nationalists who insisted that Anglo-American commercial imperialism had debased concepts of morality, and that ‘natural’ human sensibilities, rather than theorised calculations on ethical outcomes, should be rediscovered.

This practical moral rationality elided well with the necessity of harmoniousness in republicanism, whereby a ‘stable society [...] required a religiously grounded ideological consensus’, and can help to explain the incommensurability of (Irish) republicanism to fit within the pantheon of competing moral and political visions available in modern liberalism.²⁵ Liberal-capitalism destabilized and crowded out normative republican behaviours and social practices. A moral cosmology grounded in arational traditionalism suffered erosion when confronted with a society offering a fragmented choice between different rational moral theories. It was this that troubled Michael Davitt, who cogently expressed the dangers to republican forms of society when he wrote that ‘the genius of her civilization [England’s] is not to propagate itself but rather to infuse its views into those with which it is brought into contact, alike with the injury of

²⁴ HC Deb. 17 May, 1866, vol. 183, col. 1088; quoted by Clancy, *The Land League Manual*, (1881), 15; and T. M. Healy, *Why There is an Irish Land Question and an Irish Land League*, (Boston: Kiley, 1881), 53

²⁵ Vincent, *Pierre-Joseph*, (1984), 12; see Jean-Jacques Rousseau, ‘Of Civil Religion’, (1762), *The Social Contract*, (1997), 142-151

its own higher attributes, are the races which are brought within reach of its demoralising influences'.²⁶

MacIntyre's claim that moral philosophy can only be understood historically, in relation to social practices and institutions, also serves to remind historians of the importance of addressing moral and political philosophy as a causal factor. Confrontations between different moral frameworks can result in conflict, coexistence and synthesis (the forms varying widely). As Timothy Meagher has suggested, the survival (or modification) of these cultural and moral frameworks are reference points that could allow historians of immigration to re-imagine the melting pot thesis as 'an actual process', with the persistence of Irish cultural forms shaping even contemporary differences of place.²⁷ In places like Liverpool, or Butte, Montana, where the Irish community reached a critical mass, such Irish cultural forms took hold and persisted.²⁸ Culturally isolated areas of larger cities acted as incubators in this way, and to the more hostile elements in the contemporary American press, the eastern cities of Boston and New York even appeared to be 'virtually Irish cities'.²⁹

The diasporic Irish (and others) who embraced Georgism relied upon a shared bank of terminology and language to comprehend economic and political constructs. A closer look at these can reveal what common assumptions they shared. In search of this, three interconnected thematic issues will be addressed. In the first instance how the idea of 'value' has been understood, especially in connection with both land and labour; secondly, conceptions of property rights and ownership, including monopolisation; and finally the prospect of social and human perfectibility, founded upon the idea of an 'ordered universe' and the utilitarian and Malthusian modifications of such mental cosmologies.

Value

The early Christian church offered one of the first institutionalised conceptions of different and opposing scales of value or worth, between economic/individual/temporal

²⁶ Michael Davitt, 'English Civilisation', in Carla King, (ed.), *Jottings in Solitary*, (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2003), 19

²⁷ Meagher, 'From the World to the Village', (2009): 132; John Belchem, 'Ethnicity and Labour History: With Special Reference to Irish Migration', in L. H. van Voss and M. van der Linden (eds.), *Class and Other Identities: Gender, Religion and Ethnicity in the Writing of European Labour History*, (New York: Berghahn Books, 2002), 88-100

²⁸ David M. Emmons, 'Exiles, 'Evangelizers', and Anti-imperialists: Ireland's Disputed American 'Empire'', *American Journal of Irish Studies*, Vol. 9, (2012): 65

²⁹ E. E. Hale, 'Social Forces in the United States', *North American Review*, 137:323, (1883): 406

values on the one hand, and moral/collective/spiritual values on the other. Despite the acknowledged existence of both, ‘in the formal exposition of medieval moral theology, the primacy of “spiritual” over “temporal” goods was always emphasised’.³⁰ Nevertheless, economic realities still had to be balanced with the evaluations of early Christianity.³¹ As a mechanism of social control, it is perhaps unsurprising that the Church’s ‘scholastic doctrine is commonly characterized as having condemned as sinful [the attempt of individuals] to accumulate wealth for themselves’, but it would be a mistake to categorise the entire theology as elitist hegemony.³² Under the influence of the medieval scholastic thinkers, the intellectual authority of St. Thomas of Aquinas, itself heavily influenced by Aristotle, grew to a position of dominance within church doctrine by the sixteenth century.³³ The role of Thomism was centrally important in perpetuating Aristotelian conceptions of value.

A prime example is that of usury, where Aquinas, following ‘Aristotle’s barrenness conception to a greater degree than many of the other schoolmen’, distinguished between ‘fungible’ and non-fungible or ‘consumptive’ commodities, whereby money remained a non-reproductive element, no more than stored labour and a measure of exchange.³⁴ Broadly consistent and somewhat tenable in a medieval society, it became fatally undermined in a proto-capitalist one. Nevertheless, these arguments were embedded, and a moral discomfort with the idea of profit without labour proved remarkably durable, persisting in both theological circles and in popular opposition to middlemen, traders and money-lenders.³⁵ As an ardent proponent of economic liberalism, Jacob Viner described the issue as such: ‘In Aristotle’s treatment of usury the implication is that there is an exclusive association of “productivity” with fertility, biologically conceived, in a sense which makes it morally or economically meritorious. This implication probably antedates Aristotle. It is easily understood as the outcome of naïve or unsophisticated observation, and it survives to the present day in much popular economic thinking.’³⁶ Unsophisticated as it may have been to Viner, this approach formed the groundwork for popular republican economic attitudes ranging from Benjamin

³⁰ Jacob Viner, *Religious Thought and Economic Society: Four chapters of an unfinished work*, (Durham, N.C.: Duke University Press, 1978), 61

³¹ Viner, *Religious Thought and Economic Society*, (1978), 61

³² *Ibid.*, 62

³³ *Ibid.*, 48

³⁴ James Broderick, *The Economic Morals of the Jesuits: An Answer to Dr. H. M. Robertson*, London: Oxford University Press, 1934), 125; Gregory Claeys, *Machinery, Money and the Millennium: From Moral Economy to Socialism, 1815-1860*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1987), 4; Joel Kaye, *Economy and Nature in the Fourteenth Century: Money, Market Exchange, and the Emergence of Scientific Thought*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1998), 86-7

³⁵ Claeys, *Machinery, Money and the Millennium*, (1987), 5-9

³⁶ Viner, *Religious Thought and Economic Society*, (1978), 92

Franklin's assertion that trade was 'nothing else but the Exchange of Labour for Labour' to the *Irish World* correspondent and individualist anarchist Sidney H. Morse (Phillip), who described himself as 'a capitalist who denies the right of capital to self-increase'.³⁷ Biological fertility enabled republican radicals in the late nineteenth century to define productive and unproductive labour, to extol the workman and denigrate the merchant and the banker.³⁸

The extremes of wealth evident at the end of the nineteenth century tested the credibility of the connection between work and wealth to breaking point, prompting the *Irish World* to restate that 'the product of manual labor alone constitutes material wealth'.³⁹ Ostentatious inequality highlighted the 'monstrous fallacy' that wealth could be created without productive labour; 'that gambling, theft, and speculation could supply human want'.⁴⁰ Echoing the biological essence of labour, others observed that 'dead wealth asserts its power over living wealth; the banker over the producer; the bondholder over the taxpayer'.⁴¹ For George, to state that value was created by labour, that wages were drawn from labour rather than capital, was not to state an economic theorem but simply 'ethical common sense'.⁴² It is in this way that George's thought appealed to a consistent strand in popular economic thinking.

Taken to its logical extremities, as it had been by the French Physiocrat Francois Quesnay, agriculture could be viewed as the only productive enterprise.⁴³ Quesnay's thought was characterised by a 'combination of economic individualism encompassed within traditional holism'.⁴⁴ His biological conception of value determined that only agriculture and natural processes could add to the sum total of value, as industrial labour 'only incorporates in the product the value used up by the worker, or necessary to maintain or reproduce him'.⁴⁵ As the world was a closed system and value absolute, only reproductive biological processes, human or agricultural, could add to it. Quesnay believed then that what an individual produced from the natural world was due back to

³⁷ Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy*, (2002), 19; 'Phillip', *Irish World*, 14 Dec., 1878

³⁸ Richard J. Ellis, 'Radical Lockeanism in American Political Culture', *The Western Political Quarterly*, 45:4, (1992): 828

³⁹ *Irish World*, 16 Nov., 1878

⁴⁰ J. K. Ingalls, *Land and Labor; Their Relations in Nature – How violated by Monopoly*, (Princeton, MA.: Co-operative Publishing Co., 1877) 7; 3

⁴¹ *Irish World*, 30 Nov., 1878

⁴² Henry George, 'Land and Labor', speech given to Knights of Labor, Binghamton, NY, 12 Apr., 1883, (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL); Charles A. Barker, *Henry George*, (1955), 159; Henry George, *Progress and Poverty*, (1879), 20

⁴³ Barker, *Henry George*, (1955), 137

⁴⁴ Louis Dumont, 'Agriculture and the Birth of Classical Economics: The *Docteur* Quesnay', in E. Hobsbawm, (ed.), *Peasants in History: Essays in Honour of Daniel Thorner*, (Calcutta: Oxford University Press, 1980), 277

⁴⁵ Dumont, 'Agriculture and the Birth of Classical Economics', 279

him not because he had increased the value, but only because he had transferred his own value onto it. George expressed similar sentiments:

For that man cannot exhaust or lessen the powers of nature follows from the indestructibility of matter and the persistence of force. Production and consumption are only relative terms. Speaking absolutely, man neither produces nor consumes. The whole human race, were they to labor to infinity, could not make this rolling sphere one atom heavier or one atom lighter, could not add to or diminish by one iota the sum of the force whose everlasting circling produces all motion and sustains all life.⁴⁶

Whilst not matching the philosophical ambition or conceptual unity of this enunciation, other proponents of the republican tradition framed agricultural production as similarly primary and elemental, arguing that ‘most wealth comes from the soil’ and that ‘the price of all valuable commodities must be paid from the mediate or immediate products of the soil’.⁴⁷ Among American radicals, this position also formed the intellectual bedrock for New York’s Central Labor Union. The organisation placed land nationalisation on the top of their platform because land was the ‘great storehouse from which all wealth is drawn’.⁴⁸ As the *Irish World* explained, land ‘is the *first* thing. It is the foundation upon which all economic reform must be built’.⁴⁹ In the Irish context, these ideas are evident in the revealing attack by Lord Sherbrooke on ‘the tendency already far too strong in Ireland to look to the land as the only source of wealth and well-being’.⁵⁰ Replying to Sherbrooke, Rev. David Humphrys, the curate of Clonoulty, Co. Tipperary refuted the implication that such a state of affairs could possibly damage Ireland: ‘As agriculture has been the first human industry, so it has been the foundation of all other industries’.⁵¹

Religion and a proximity to agriculture both played a role in sustaining the moral frameworks within which such concepts were rooted, and also helping to explain the transference of these ideas. George’s own opinion recognised the importance of socially embedded practical rationality; as he explained, ‘the truth I wish to make clear is naturally perceived, and has been recognised in the infancy of every people, being obscured only by the complexities of the civilized state, the warpings of selfish interests,

⁴⁶ Henry George, *Progress and Poverty*, (1879), 118

⁴⁷ George W. Bell, *Peasant Proprietary for Ireland: A Communication from Captain George W. Bell, Lawyer and Journalist, Ottawa, Illinois, U.S.A., to Thomas Sexton, Esq., M.P.*, (Dublin: Irish National Land League, 1881), 5

⁴⁸ Matthew Maguire, *Irish World*, 15 July, 1882

⁴⁹ *Irish World*, 9 Nov., 1878

⁵⁰ Lord Sherbrooke, ‘Legislation for Ireland’, *The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review*, 8:45, (1880): 688

⁵¹ Rev. David Humphrys, *The Justice of the Land League*, (London: Kegan Paul, 1881), 14

and the false direction which the speculations of the learned have taken'.⁵² The elevation of the moral worth of agriculture over other, non productive, activities has been observed in a number of 'pre-industrial' contexts.⁵³ In the Irish case, the sustenance of these perceptions relied not only on the strength of rural society, but also the persistence of a 'corpus of original Christian values'.⁵⁴ Although this moral and economic conceptualisation was by no means ever limited to predominantly Irish Catholic communities, it does point to the importance of the Catholic Church in the survival of these ideas.

Property

The early Christian Church's conceptions of value had important implications for private property. Whilst the institution of private property in land was accepted as a matter of political utility because 'the Fall of man had made private property a necessary institution', originally, as Aquinas proclaimed, the world was divinely bestowed 'to the collective stewardship of the human species as a community of goods'.⁵⁵ Although individual possession of private property was accepted, the means of origination had dangerous implications for private property, giving, in Aquinas' formulation, the right to life priority over the right to property:

Now, according to the natural order instituted by divine providence, material goods are provided for the satisfaction of human needs. Therefore the division and appropriation of property, which proceeds from human law, must not hinder the satisfaction of man's necessity from such goods. Equally, whatever a man has in superabundance is owed, of natural right, to the poor for their sustenance.⁵⁶

⁵² Henry George, *Progress and Poverty*, (1879), 199

⁵³ Eric Hobsbawm, 'Scottish Reformers of the Eighteenth Century and Capitalist Agriculture', in Hobsbawm (ed.) *Peasants in History*, (1980), 26; Emilio Willems, 'Peasantry and City: Cultural Persistence and Change in Historical Perspective, a European Case', *American Anthropologist*, 72:3, (1970): 537

⁵⁴ Bernard Ransom, *Connolly's Marxism*, (London: Pluto Press, 1980), 7

⁵⁵ Viner, *Religious Thought and Economic Society*, (1978), 67; This is what so concerned one of George's fiercest critics, Msg. Henry A. Brann, when he wrote that 'his system is by implication an attack on original sin and the Atonement', Henry A. Brann to Michael A. Corrigan, 8 Dec., 1886, Archbishop Corrigan Papers, C-6, Archives of the Archdiocese of New York [hereafter ACP, AANY]; Istvan Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, (2005), 420

⁵⁶ *Summa Theologica*, II-II, Question 66, Article 7; Peter Singer, 'Famine, Affluence and Morality', in P. Laslett and J. Fishkin, (eds.), *Philosophy, Politics and Society*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1979), 31

Such implications were reinforced by the dominant scholastic voice of the Spanish Jesuit Thomist Francisco Suarez.⁵⁷ Suarez rejected Machiavelli's suggestions that the ends of political rule were the stability and existence of the state or government and that 'just' rule depended singularly on this consideration.⁵⁸ Aquinas's hierarchy of laws placed Natural Law, intrinsically just and implanted in the mind at birth, above the human law of private property.⁵⁹ This created ambiguities for the institution of private property, left as it was to the vagaries of human laws and therefore evaluated on its effectiveness in providing for human needs, to be 'defended only on the ground that the alternative is less desirable'.⁶⁰ If natural law was 'a measure or rule of action directing every created nature to its final end', then the conception of absolute possession was hamstrung by its subordination to the 'final end' of human survival and development.⁶¹ Aquinas' understanding of private dominion of land was intensely constricted by a limit to individual necessity and a belief that 'if one man overabound in external riches, others will lack necessities'.⁶²

Istvan Hont argues that 'the history of European natural law can be understood as a series of attempts to rearrange the elements of the puzzle left by Aquinas'.⁶³ To extend the supposition, the challenge of formulating a solid and universalisable justification of private individuation of land when economic conditions forced reappraisals of the moral aspects of this individuation, proved to be the intellectual force propelling Western political thought to abandon Natural Rights in favour of utility, expediency and moral relativism. The ambiguity of Natural Law, and the understanding that land was originally given to mankind in common, forced each defence of private property 'to provide a conjectural history that both accounted for and legitimated exclusive individuation'.⁶⁴ Indeed this central contradiction was recognised by land nationalists and republicans in the late nineteenth century. As J. K. Ingalls explained: 'The advocate of land monopoly has never met the question on the broad basis of human rights'.⁶⁵

⁵⁷ Quentin Skinner, *The Foundations of Modern Political Thought*, vol. II: *The Age of Reformation*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979), 138

⁵⁸ Skinner, *The Foundations*, (1979), 143; See too, Alfred O'Rahilly, 'The Catholic Origin of Democracy', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 8:29, (1919): 1-18

⁵⁹ Skinner, *The Foundations*, (1979), 148; Alfred O'Rahilly, 'St Thomas's Theory of Property', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 9:35, (1920): 341

⁶⁰ Skinner, *The Foundations*, (1979), 153

⁶¹ Miriam Ann Cunningham, 'A Thomistic Appraisal of the Philosophy of Henry George', MA thesis, Catholic University of America, (1950), 42

⁶² *Summa Theologica*, IIa-IIae, q. 118, art. 1

⁶³ Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, (2005), 421

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 440

⁶⁵ Ingalls, *Land and Labor*, (1877), 3

Locke had attempted to remove the 'theoretical necessity of consent' from the initial individuation of land.⁶⁶ In claiming the initial occupation land itself as a process of labour, he merged the initial entitlement to land with the thomistically-accepted entitlement created by labour. In the first instance, land was not 'stolen' from the people. It had always been held individually, with property limits that were set by the natural limits of each man's labour. As Locke theorised the origins of private property to emerge from initial abundance rather than scarcity, to explain the development of barter and trade, Locke had to assume that, as well as being naturally solitary, men were naturally and inherently jealous of others; an approach that subsequently characterised forms of Lockean liberalism. It was this natural greed that had caused the development of a system of money, and therefore accumulation. More than a means of transferring stored labour then, money was, like the possession of land, a matter of power. Once combined with the fact that the initial occupation of land was just and fair, 'the inequality [inevitably] created by the emergence of money was a faithful reflection of the natural differences in human industry'.⁶⁷ Therefore the rational and the industrious created government to protect themselves and their earned property from the natural greed and rapaciousness of the poor. Although these ideas would provide a powerful defence for what George would term, the 'House of Have', part of the efficacy of Locke's theorising for both defenders and critics of private property in land was its flexibility. Indeed, George fully accepted Locke's theory that the right of property in 'things' stemmed from labour, which was based on 'the right of the individual to himself'.⁶⁸

This flexibility was evident in the prominent use by radicals of Blackstone's legal discourses. William Blackstone, the English jurist whose codification of English common law was hugely influential in the early American republic, was certainly an influence on George's understanding of natural law and other contemporary natural law interpretations of land.⁶⁹ While Blackstone strongly rejected the notion that there was a divinely bestowed right to land as a common good, his prominence as an interpreter of the legal canon explains his attraction as a citation to deflect criticism and bestow authority on an opinion.⁷⁰ A stance adopted by many republicans who disavowed the possibility of an absolute title to land, was to retort that 'Blackstone admits this in so many

⁶⁶ Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, (2005), 440

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, 436

⁶⁸ Henry George, *A Perplexed Philosopher*, (1892), (London: Vacher & Sons, 1937), 35

⁶⁹ Donald S. Lutz, 'The Relative Influence of European Writers on Late Eighteenth-Century American Political Thought', *The American Political Science Review*, 78:1, (1984): 193;

⁷⁰ Gregory Claeys, 'The Origins of the Rights of Labor: Republicanism, Commerce, and the Construction of Modern Social Theory in Britain, 1796-1805', *The Journal of Modern History*, 66:2, (1994): 283

words'.⁷¹ The nationalist MP Alexander Sullivan quoted him at length: 'The law of nature, being coeval with mankind and dictated by God himself, is, of course, superior in obligation to any other'.⁷² So too did James Fintan Lalor refer to Blackstone as producing 'the only page I ever read on the subject' of the basis of the right to property in land.⁷³ Blackstone's popularity rested on the internal contradictions of his legal structures, noted by Jeremy Bentham among others, which served a valuable purpose for Land Leaguers, Georgists, anarchists and radical republicans.

Although he was considered an impeccable English authority, the 'so-called immortal Blackstone' as one writer sneered, in the process of attempting to logically systematise and codify existing English common law, his work exhibited a microcosm of the instability and ambiguity of the natural law defence of private land. This led Blackstone as it subsequently would for many others, 'unwittingly into a positivist standpoint', as he found himself unable to justify the laws of feudal tenure, for example, 'in a rational way without recourse to history and empirical but illogical fact'.⁷⁴ Blackstone admitted himself that the reason why 'we seem afraid to look back to the means by which [landed property] was acquired' was because 'accurately and strictly speaking, there is no foundation in nature or in natural law, why a set of words upon parchment should convey the dominion of land'. Blackstone warned, however, that such questions would be 'troublesome in common life. It is well if the mass of mankind will obey the laws when made, without scrutinizing too nicely into the reasons of making them'.⁷⁵

Recourse to this original injustice remained a central component for both Georgist and Irish nationalist discourse on land.⁷⁶ In both cases, the biblical references to the initial commonality of land connected their radicalism to the longstanding debates on private property in land. 'What is the origin of this possession?' queried the constitution of an American Land League branch, 'is it so holy as to preclude legislative interference?'⁷⁷ But even though first occupancy did not apply in the Irish case, since England landlords were

⁷¹ Ingalls, *Land and Labor*, (1877); Also referenced by Edmund F. Dunne, *Ireland: Rights, Wrongs and Remedies: An Address delivered before the Fort Wayne, Indiana, U.S.A. branch of the National Land League of Ireland, on St. Patrick's Day, 1881*, (Chicago: S. W. Roth, 1881), 24-5, (Pamphlets, 103, Box 34, P.001.1804, Philadelphia Archdiocese Historical Research Center [hereafter PAHRC])

⁷² William Blackstone, *Nature of Laws in General*, cited by, A. M. Sullivan, 'Ireland's Great Grievance: Land Tenure in Ireland and Other Countries', *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 6, (1881): 51

⁷³ James Fintan Lalor, in L. Fogarty, (ed.), *James Fintan Lalor: Patriot and Political Essayist*, (Dublin: Talbot Press, 1918), 99

⁷⁴ Michael Lobban, 'Blackstone and the Science of Law', *The Historical Journal*, 30:2, (1987): 312

⁷⁵ William Blackstone, (1765), *The Commentaries on the Laws of England* Vol. II, *Of the Rights of Things*, Robert Malcolm Kerr, (ed.), (London: John Murray, 1876), 1-2

⁷⁶ George, *Progress and Poverty*, (1879), 342

⁷⁷ 'Constitution of the Middletown, N.Y. Branch of the Irish National Land League of the United States, adopted, March 6, 1881', 3, (103, Box 34, Poo8.883, PAHRC)

the descendants of ‘burglars’ and ‘banditti’, the authors noted too that ‘they have never become valid by industrious occupancy’. The application of labour to the soil remained the only authority for possession; instead, in Ireland, ‘the sole industry of the owners for generations has been to wrest from the tillers of the soil the great bulk of the fruits of their labors’.⁷⁸

Natural harmony

Posthumously proclaimed the father of modern economics, Adam Smith’s pre-eminence has ensured a contested legacy for over two centuries. Freeing capital from the restraints of state authority had many untested radical implications, and even from the beginning of the nineteenth century, efforts were underway to reshape elements of Smith’s work, and to detach it from the radical and dangerous ideas that led to the French Revolution.⁷⁹ Francois Quesnay’s holistic view of the economic system, as an ‘ordered system’ or ‘equilibrium between interdependent quantities’, was influential for Smith.⁸⁰ The underlying belief that the universe was an ‘ordered whole’ is plainly evident in Smith’s work, which contained ‘distinctive value postulates intended to promulgate an egalitarian agrarian capitalism in the spirit of physiocracy’.⁸¹ Sharing this observation of Smith, the economist John Kells Ingram in 1888 criticised the renowned economist for being ‘secretly led’ by his ‘*a priori* theological ideas’ about the existence of an ordered universe in which there was a natural harmony of men and in nature.⁸² Similarly, Arnold Toynbee dismissed George’s economic ideas by equating him with Adam Smith, as both were men who believed ‘in what economists no longer believe in, [...] economic harmonies, [...that] individual interests will harmonise with common interests’.⁸³

Smith possessed some Aquinian theological presumptions, likely mediated through the work of Hugo Grotius and Samuel Pufendorf, and, in particular, his own predecessor Francis Hutcheson.⁸⁴ Both Hutcheson and later Smith were irritated by the reduction of morality to mere self-interest in Pufendorf’s work. Smith’s premises were

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*

⁷⁹ Rothschild, ‘Political Economy’, (2011), 752

⁸⁰ Dumont, ‘Agriculture and the Birth of Classical Economics’, (1980), 273

⁸¹ Hiram Caton, ‘The Preindustrial Economics of Adam Smith’, *The Journal of Economic History*, 45:4, (1985): 1

⁸² Rothschild, ‘Political Economy’, (2011), 773

⁸³ Toynbee, “*Progress and Poverty*,” *A Criticism of Mr. Henry George*, (1883), 22

⁸⁴ Donald R. Stabile, ‘Adam Smith and the Natural wage: Sympathy, Subsistence and Social Distance’, *Review of Social Economy*, Vol. 55, No. 3, (1997): 296; A. S. Skinner, ‘Pufendorf, Hutcheson and Adam Smith: Some Principles of Political Economy’, *Scottish Journal of Political Economy*, 42:2, (1995): 165-182; Emma Rothschild, ‘Adam Smith and Conservative Economics’, *Economic History Review*, 45:1, (1992): 74-96

mirrored by George who, in critiquing Herbert Spencer's metaphysics, denied the possibility of a theory of justice, inherently understood by men, that did not rely on an 'appointed order';⁸⁵ for George, 'The laws of the universe are harmonious'.⁸⁶ That is, natural law, within a stable society, would extinguish contradiction and conflict. The simplicity of George's single-tax proposal is testimony to this belief. It was one shared by other single-taxers and republican socialists; that given the righteousness of natural law, systems of economic subjugation 'could never sustain itself in being but through special laws'.⁸⁷

While Smith noted the encroachment of economic scales of value on others, he still required a separate justification of status and respect that was bound securely to a moral philosophy in order to enable the operation of self-interest to remain within acceptable bounds. Smith saw that capitalism required inequality, and a self 'deception' that wealth brought happiness, in order to stimulate unnecessary desires.⁸⁸ Since 'ordinary men's self-interest was constrained by their need for the approval of others', moral condemnation, 'built in restraints derived from morals, religion, custom, and education', was the only check on the system that made it operable.⁸⁹ For Smith, however, it was only within a dispersed market place, the forum for sociability and human interaction and the exercise of practical rationality, that the social pressures of morality and respectability could effectively redirect economic self-interest. Moral virtue and economic fortune would only coalesce 'where market success itself depended on a reputation for probity and propriety'.⁹⁰ In fact Smith was expressly concerned that the glorification of wealth, and admiration for the rich and powerful, was 'the great and most universal cause of the corruption of our moral sentiments'.⁹¹ It is unclear then, as James Kloppenburg asks, whether Smith and Hume expected 'man's innate moral sense to provide a standard that would rule out any social order resting on exploitation, or did they suppose instead that the impulse toward benevolence would suffice as a brake on oppression regardless of the form of economic organisation?'⁹² With the decline of established religion and the ideological power of large capital towards the end of the

⁸⁵ George, *A Perplexed Philosopher*, (1892), 122

⁸⁶ George, *Progress and Poverty*, (1879), 296; Henry George, *Irish World*, 1 May, 1880

⁸⁷ Ingalls, *Land and Labor*, (1877), 3; K. Steven Vincent, 'Visions of a Stateless Society', in Stedman Jones and Claeys, (eds.), *Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, (2011), 449

⁸⁸ Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, (2005), 398

⁸⁹ Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, (2005), 401; Donald Winch, 'Adam Smith: Scottish Moral Philosopher as Political Economist', *The Historical Journal*, 35:1, (1992): 91-113

⁹⁰ Hont, *Jealousy of Trade*, (2005), 402

⁹¹ Adam Smith, 'The Theory of Moral Sentiments', in D. D. Raphael and A. L. Macfie, (eds.), *Glasgow Edition of the Works and Correspondence of Adam Smith*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1976), 61

⁹² James T. Kloppenburg, 'The Virtues of Liberalism: Christianity, Republicanism, and Ethics in Early American Political Discourse', *The Journal of American History*, 74:1, (1987): 19

nineteenth century, these 'built-in restraints' were waning. So while the social and economic crises of the late-nineteenth-century convinced George that 'the inadequacies and anachronisms' of Smithian political economy needed urgent attention, he nevertheless still believed that the opportunities for human and social improvement and intellectual fulfilment was only possible within a market society.⁹³

Ideas of nature

These disagreements about the essential order or chaos of the universe are at their core dictated by attitudes and beliefs about nature, what it constitutes and how it is structured. Attitudes towards nature shaped both George's perfectionism and Herbert Spencer's social Darwinism. Whilst George may have had explicit recourse to natural law, Spencer based his political theorisations on the law of nature. John Kells Ingram's rejection of Smithian harmony relied on contemporary biological science and the assumption that man was governed by similar strictures. The socio-scientific theories of the operation of the natural world, as either harmonious symbiosis or as a brutal struggle for survival, gave credence to the respective views on how human society should be organised, and attitudes toward 'Nature' both in its physical and philosophical sense remained a key marker of political allegiance and sympathy.⁹⁴ The attack on natural law as an ethical system at the end of the eighteenth century and the elevation of utilitarianism as the primary evaluative system still found its support in the idea of nature, a paradox that Raymond Williams describes as 'one of those ironies we are constantly meeting in the history of ideas'.⁹⁵ Faith in the coherence and synchronicity of the universe remained, but it had found a new idea of nature; a secular theodicy absent of any recourse to higher principle and better able to incorporate discord and injustice into its operation.

During the course of the nineteenth century, the influence of transatlantic romanticism helped to perpetuate the spiritual superiority of the natural world, and 'the idea that nature was good inspired many early socialists'.⁹⁶ George's supporters continued to interpret the world in these terms, such as when the socialist and labour activist John Swinton, wrote to George to express his 'delight' to find *Progress and Poverty* 'on the right side – the side of Truth, Nature'.⁹⁷ Irish republicanism, in both its Fenian and Land League incarnations, also tended toward this beneficent conception of the natural world and the

⁹³ Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy*, (2002), 119

⁹⁴ Williams, 'Ideas of Nature', in *Culture and Materialism*, (1980), 70

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*, 79

⁹⁶ Mark Bevir, 'British Socialism and American Romanticism', in Bevir and Trentmann, (eds.), *Critiques of Capital*, (2002), 91

⁹⁷ John Swinton to Henry George, 30 Oct., 1879, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

inherent harmoniousness of nature as implied by the idea of a natural, God-given, law. It was well expressed by Matthew Harris when he explained: 'I dislike [the Aristocracy], because, as a Christian and a man, I dislike tyranny and crime, I dislike them, because I dislike social distinction, founded upon conventional rules, which reverse the natural order of things'.⁹⁸ So too did the *Irish World* explain: 'That as God, operating through Nature, has shown Himself to be All-Bountiful, it is clear that the one and only obstacle standing in the way of these blessings is the false system of political economy now at work'.⁹⁹

Just as Thomas Malthus' famous work had been written as a 'refutation of the perfectionist theories of the English radical William Godwin', central to Henry George's view of social perfectibility was his own rejection of Malthusianism.¹⁰⁰ In blaming the limitations of nature and overpopulation for the growth of poverty, Malthus had theorised that human and animal life had a persistent and unavoidable tendency to outstrip subsistence, leading to persistent and unavoidable poverty. The implication was that poverty and immorality could not be attributed to institutions or social and economic structures, but rather, through nature, the poor were condemned to their situation; 'the unhappy persons who in the great lottery of life have drawn a blank'.¹⁰¹ Efforts at redistribution, whether through structural changes or state intervention would be ineffective as well as counterproductive as the poor would become habituated to relief. It was under the twin influences of Malthusianism and utilitarianism, driven by the conservative reaction of the 1790s, that Adam Smith's political economy became something very different in the next century.¹⁰² Malthus' perception of human nature created what Emma Rothschild describes as a 'parody' of Smith's political economy, which had encompassed a more positive view of human nature.¹⁰³ A staple educational diet of *laissez faire*, in which economic laws were natural and immutable and structural

⁹⁸ Matthew Harris, letter to the *Irishman*, Ballinasloe, 19 June, 1880, Pamphlet, (Heffernan Papers, MS 21,910, National Library of Ireland [hereafter HP, NLI])

⁹⁹ *Irish World*, 16 Nov., 1878

¹⁰⁰ Pessen, *Most Uncommon Jacksonians*, (1967), 129

¹⁰¹ Thomas Malthus, *An Essay on the Principle of Population; Or, A View of its Past and Present Effects on Human Happiness; with An Inquiry into our Prospects Respecting the Future Removal or Mitigation of the Evils which it Occasions*, (1798), (London: John Murray, 6th ed., 1826), 34

¹⁰² Donald Winch, *Riches and Poverty: An Intellectual History of Political Economy in Britain, 1750-1834*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1996); Istvan Hont and Michael Ignatieff, (eds.), *Wealth and Virtue: The Shaping of Political Economy in the Scottish Enlightenment*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983); Richard F. Teichgraber, 'Adam Smith and tradition; the Wealth of Nations before Malthus', in Stefan Collini, Richard Whatmore, and Brian Young, (eds.), *Economy, Polity, and Society: British Intellectual History 1750-1950*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), 85-104

¹⁰³ Rothschild, 'Political Economy', (2011), 758; 775

economic change blasphemy, was fed to undergraduates into the late nineteenth century and came to be 'regarded as indisputable truth'.¹⁰⁴

For Henry George, Malthus' heresy denuded human life of 'dignity and responsibility'.¹⁰⁵ Explicit in his desire to recapture a pre-Malthusian understanding of political economy, George saw that Malthusianism 'furnished a plausible reason for the assumption that some have a better right to existence than others'.¹⁰⁶ Perhaps more perniciously, its real damage was that it 'deadened faith and stifled conscience and darkened views of human life', and, George added in revealing language, 'stilled the *sensibilities of naturally humane men*'.¹⁰⁷ This anaesthetisation of natural human sentiment and moral sensibility was a toxic hazard for classical republican theory. George correctly observed how this modification of political economy was embraced eagerly by 'a powerful class, in whom an intense fear of any questioning of the existing state of things had been generated by the outburst of the French Revolution'.¹⁰⁸ Malthus' ideas appealed because they mapped onto a pre-existing discord over the bounteousness of nature.¹⁰⁹ This pessimistic naturalism found its scientific consummation in Darwin's theory of evolution, a 'tendency of modern thought' that provided 'fresh and strong support' for Malthusiansim.¹¹⁰ Enthusiastic adoption of Darwinism as an analogue for the social world by classical liberals, scientific socialists, and others helped to cement the singularity of 'progress'. This material determinism further marginalised the language of rights from the dominant political discourse in favour of utility embedded in a triumphalist scientism.¹¹¹

Anti-Malthusian interpretations of political economy based on a language of Natural Rights remained a hallmark of transatlantic radicalism during the nineteenth

¹⁰⁴ Henry George, 'Lecture notes and text 'Malthusian Theory' [1880s]', (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL); Coats, 'The Classical Economists and the Labourer', (1971), 191-193

¹⁰⁵ Henry George, 'Lecture notes and text 'Malthusian Theory' [1880s]', (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

¹⁰⁶ Raymond Geiger in Pessen, *Most Uncommon Jacksonians*, (1967), 132; Barker, *Henry George*, (1955), 273; Henry George, *Progress and Poverty*, (1879), 81-91

¹⁰⁷ Henry George, 'Lecture notes and text 'Malthusian Theory' [1880s]', (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL) [my emphasis]

¹⁰⁸ George, *Progress and Poverty*, (1879), 87-8; Henry George, 'Lecture notes and text 'Malthusian Theory' [1880s]', (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

¹⁰⁹ James Madison to Thomas Jefferson, 19 June, 1786, cited in James L. Huston, 'The American Revolutionaries, the Political Economy of Aristocracy, and the American Concept of the Distribution of Wealth, 1765-1900', *The American Historical Review*, 98:4, (1993): 1091; Kloppenberg, 'The Virtues of Liberalism', (1987): 22

¹¹⁰ Henry George, 'Lecture notes and text 'Malthusian Theory' [1880s]', (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL); Donald Winch, 'Darwin Fallen among Political Economists', *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 145:4, (2001): 415-437

¹¹¹ Daniel Pick, 'The Politics of Nature: Science and Religion in the Age of Darwin', in Stedman Jones and Claeys, (eds.), *Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, (2011), 678; Daniel T. Rodgers, *Contested Truths: Keywords in American Politics since Independence*, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1987), 129

century. In America, labour radicals Thomas Skidmore and Stephen Simpson explicitly refuted Malthus' ideas.¹¹² In Britain and Ireland, Francis Place and early Irish socialist William Thompson were among the first to reject the social implications of Malthus' 'scientific' argument.¹¹³ Such was the centrality of the Malthusian question to the provenance of political allegiance that it remained a key distinction by 1880s between 'new liberalism' and the socialists on the one hand, and the anti-scientism of the radical republican tradition. As Michael Davitt argued, poverty was unnatural. If man 'revels not in the possession of all the Nature has so beautifully placed within reach of his industry, he has but to blame modern society for having placed a law between him and the enjoyment of his natural rights'.¹¹⁴ Musing on this issue George noted that Malthusianism 'is accepted by most of the German socialists, while in England a considerable section of the radicals rally upon the platform of "Atheism, Malthusianism and Republicanism"', before exclaiming, 'with Atheism Malthusianism seems to me to thoroughly harmonize; but with Republicanism, no!'¹¹⁵

Catholicism and liberal modernity

As the institutional component in the connections outlined above, Churches were vehicles for the transmission of ideas, cultural textures and social practices to the wider population. Irish Catholicism in particular, 'because of its tight worldwide ecclesiastical structure and the large number of Irish migrants who were Catholic' was a powerful ideological and cultural network within the North Atlantic Economy.¹¹⁶ As an ideological conduit, melding, maintaining and transplanting ideas around the globe, it had few comparators. The priesthood, ministering in the main to their own ethnicity, connected specifically Irish mental frameworks to the spiritual and moral certainties taught in the seminary. In its networks and hierarchies the Irish Church in particular, because of its diasporic structure and its ambiguous political relationship to state power, reveals in its varying theological and pastoral inflections the political tensions at work within the Irish Catholic diaspora.

While not a conservative and reactionary monolith, the Catholic Church certainly stood outwith the dominant religio-political discourses of liberal capitalism, and,

¹¹² Pessen, *Most Uncommon Jacksonians*, (1967), 140

¹¹³ *Ibid.*, 131

¹¹⁴ Michael Davitt, 'Random Thoughts on the Irish Land War', in King, (ed.), *Jottings in Solitary*, (2003), 187

¹¹⁵ Henry George, 'Lecture notes and text 'Malthusian Theory' [1880s]', (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

¹¹⁶ Meagher, 'From the World to the Village', (2009): 125

consequently, often appeared antithetical to the idea of modernity. Ostensibly rooted in the secularising tendencies of the Enlightenment, and bound up with concepts of rationality and economic progress, the very concept of ‘modernity’ would appear hostile to the Catholicism.¹¹⁷ However, this polarisation obscures more than it reveals, and it is necessary to abandon the totalising implications of the secularisation thesis, and to question the teleological assumptions that associate certain Enlightenment ideas with a rejection of religion and the false dichotomy created between Enlightenment and Catholicism.

As Patrick Pasture has observed, ‘anti-modern criticism is an essential feature of modernity’, and ‘the apparent contradiction between modernity and anti-modernism, which has puzzled so many historians and sociologists dealing with (in particular) the Catholic social movement and the development of Catholic social action, may be overcome in this context’.¹¹⁸ Seen in this way, Irish Church catered to the strain of oppositional anti-modernism that was itself an inescapable element of modernisation. As the disparate legacies of the Enlightenment so well demonstrate, capitalism and its critics were not two fixed polarised forces, but rather ‘interwoven processes’.¹¹⁹ In rejecting the idea of the Catholic Church as an immutable monolith, it becomes more appropriate to see it ‘as a cultural system, a set of symbols and collective representations of society’.¹²⁰ This approach helps explain the vacillating and equivocal obedience given to the Church hierarchy by prominent figures in the Irish diasporic community. Patrick Ford, for example, was often critical of the Church’s hierarchy when it opposed socially radical or nationalist activities, but remained loyal to the institution of the Church, which he perceived as a buttress and protection against anti-Irish prejudice.¹²¹ As such, Philip Bagenal, a critical British spectator, interpreted the lack of a ‘Catholic censor’ in the press as Irish-American ‘emancipat[ion] from ecclesiastical control’, when it was actually demonstrative of conditionality; the routine and reflexive oscillation of power between the established Church and its lay community.¹²²

At the heart of this non-hierarchical social control lay familiar psychological precepts. Pride, the original source of sin in the biblical tradition, ‘is the element in man which leads him both to co-operate and to overreach himself, both to create and

¹¹⁷ Patrick Pasture, ‘The Role of Religion in Social and Labour History’, in van Voss and van der Linden (eds.), *Class and Other Identities*, (2002), 110

¹¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 110

¹¹⁹ Bevir and Trentmann, ‘Critique within Capitalism’, (2002), 3

¹²⁰ Pasture, ‘The Role of Religion’, (2002), 117-8

¹²¹ James P. Rodechko, ‘An Irish-American Journalist and Catholicism: Patrick Ford of the Irish World’, *Church History*, 39:4, (1970): 529

¹²² Philip H. Bagenal, *The American Irish and their influence on Irish Politics*, (Boston: Roberts Bros, 1882), 66

destroy'.¹²³ It is both a driver of social and economic development as well as a creator of social disharmony. George attempted to historicise the rejection of communal property in land by suggesting that pride in the accumulation of land had caused the overreach and collapse of the Roman Empire, sustained 'only by the healthier life of the frontiers, where [...] primitive usages longer survived'.¹²⁴ Whilst the 'modern secular eye looks in vain for the sin [in pride]', explains Martin Hollis, when humans are considered 'not as pre-social individuals but as actors essentially located in societies', as in republicanism, then pride and esteem possess strong negative connotations.¹²⁵ The pervasion of conspicuous consumption in a Gilded Age America is then a demonstration of the erosion of these earlier social boundaries. In Irish Catholic terms, the moral vacuity of Anglo-American society was the 'natural result of the pride of superiority'.¹²⁶ Its converse can be observed in the hostility in pre-industrial rural communities towards 'upstarts', contempt for those 'aspiring so blatantly to elite status', and the perpetuation of these attitudes, though modified, into industrial environments in culturally cohesive communities such as those that marked the Irish diaspora.¹²⁷ The opposition on the part of republican radicals to 'such monstrous aggregations of wealth [not] seen since the days of Rome', was clearly influenced by classical republican fears of the declining public virtue and increased corruption brought on by luxury and extravagance.¹²⁸ It was the 'spectre of Rome in decline', passed on through the lens of Enlightenment thought, that sharpened the reformers' criticisms of wealth and economic disparity in this period.¹²⁹ It was a language also familiar and well utilised by Irish nationalists who effectively utilised the discourse of personal and political virtue and vice, as evident in James Clancy's impassioned denunciation of Irish rents, which 'go abroad for expensive luxuries to England or the continent; they meet the demands of fashion and aristocratic dissipation in London; they enrich racecourses, gambling dens, and other haunts of gilded vice'.¹³⁰

¹²³ Martin Hollis, 'Economic Man and Original Sin', *Political Studies*, 29:2, (1981): 179

¹²⁴ George, *Progress and Poverty*, (1879), 336

¹²⁵ Hollis, 'Economic Man', (1981): 177

¹²⁶ Arthur F. Marshall, 'English Manners', *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 5, (1880): 109

¹²⁷ David S. Jones, 'The Cleavage between Graziers and Peasants in the Land Struggle, 1890-1910', in Sam Clark and James S. Donnelly, (eds.), *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest, 1780-1914*, (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2003), 413; see also John Belchem, 'Priests, Publicans and the Irish Poor: Ethnic Enterprise and Migrant Networks in Mid-Nineteenth-Century Liverpool', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 23:2-3, (2005): 207-231

¹²⁸ Henry George, *Irish World*, 20 Dec., 1879

¹²⁹ John L. Thomas, *Alternative America: Henry George, Edward Bellamy and the Adversary Tradition*, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 1983), 2

¹³⁰ James Clancy, *Ireland: As She Is, As She Has Been, And As She Ought To Be*, (New York: Thomas Kelly, 1877), 44

Conversely, a parallel concept, and no less evident in Irish nationalist discourses and critiques of Anglo-American society, is that of shame or guilt. As the antithesis of pride it had an important role in the mechanisms through which moral presuppositions shaped economic attitudes. In a social structure in which pride could be a hubristic and potentially dangerous sentiment, guilt and shame were valuable emotional commodities, despite their own potential repressive toxicity. Socialised guilt and shame were key elements of communal loyalty and requisite for the type of active loyalty needed by social groups undertaking collective action such as boycotting and other ‘moral economy’ protests. Guilt and loyalty were intertwined and inseparable, dependent on each other to be effective. A reduction in socially induced guilt was in effect a reduction of moral responsibility towards others, a loss of a sense of responsibility for externalities caused directly or indirectly by an individual’s actions. In its absence, the concept of civic duty that underpins republicanism crumbles in the face of liberal pluralism and social atomisation. It was along this fault line that the more socially radical strands of Irish nationalism found themselves positioned and greatly supported by the dogmatic structures of the Catholic Church.

The problem of the Enlightenment

all the Enlightenment of Europe is on your side.¹³¹

Like Ireland itself, the Catholic Church enjoyed a complex relationship with the concept and the legacies of ‘Enlightenment’. Despite the enormous plurality, ‘religious, intellectual and geo-political’, of the philosophical ambitions of the eighteenth century – between an understanding of enlightenment as an event or an activity, or between its radical and moderate iterations – if it is to be conceived as a totality, Enlightenment’s antagonistic relationship with religion and religiosity offers perhaps the best definition.¹³² For whilst it would be wrong to understand it as resolutely anti-clerical or irreligious, ‘the intention of reducing or eliminating the independence of the sacred from the civil is common to so many of the phenomenon we term Enlightened’.¹³³ The incursion of the human element into the understanding of revealed religion, turning ‘theology into history’, even if its ambition was not to disturb belief, removed the necessity of God for the

¹³¹ Rev. O’Dwyer at, Thurles, Co. Tipperary, 14 Nov., 1880, (Land League Papers, MS II,289, NLI [hereafter LLP])

¹³² John Robertson, *The Enlightenment, the Public Sphere and Political Economy*, C. Th. Dimaras Annual Lecture, 2010, (Athens: National Hellenic Research Foundation, 2011), 122

¹³³ J. G. A. Pocock, ‘Historiography and Enlightenment: A View of Their History’, *Modern Intellectual History*, 5:1, (2008): 94

operation of society, and opened the door to the idea of man's control over his own world. Two primary elements that we may adduce as central to the varied programs of enlightened thought, the creation of a public sphere and the idea of a political economy, were both emblematic of this development; a relegation of the role of the divine in favour of the human. To this the Catholic Church was understandably resistant. But the image of the 'Enlightenment' subsequently constructed by its supporters and its critics can illuminate its fraught relationship with modernity. From Thomas Carlyle's polemical attacks on the 'swindler-century', to its twentieth century association with the totalitarianism of 'modernity' in the work of Adorno, Horkheimer and Koselleck, opposition to Enlightenment has so often revolved around an impressionistic hostility to the arrogance and conceit of absolute human control over the world, of human rationality over tradition.¹³⁴ By the middle of the nineteenth century many Catholic thinkers had embossed a profitable dialectic that equated Enlightened thought solely with a cold and harsh materialism and philosophical positivism, with Catholicism as its humane and sympathetic mirror image. Paul Leopold Haffner, later the Bishop of Mainz, offered, in 1864, a reading of the enlightenment as something 'purely negative, destructive, empty; it has no positive content and no productive principle' because, in rejecting all knowledge beyond the material world, it meant knowing nothing of value.¹³⁵ In a critique of Henry George, the Jesuit theologian Rev. Victor Cathrein traced the evil of socialism back to the reformation, via the 'cynicism of the "Encyclopedists"'.¹³⁶

However, this materialist understanding of the Enlightenment is reductive. In order to understand the ways in which Enlightenment legacies influenced even those who perceived themselves to be opposed to its principles, it is important to see the intellectual effusion of the Enlightenment period as marked as much by intellectual continuity as it was by dramatic disruption or disconnection. The reliance of civic humanists and republicans on Aristotelianism has already been discussed in this regard.¹³⁷ So too did the multiplicity of Enlightenment legacies mean that, by the nineteenth century, the concept was a complicated inheritance for supporters and critics alike. The use of the concept 'civilization' demonstrated this parallelism, gesturing toward the idealised but unfulfilled and corrupted vestiges of Enlightenment. It was evident when George lamented 'this juggernaut of advancing civilization' and entertained the idea that 'those savage races are

¹³⁴ James Schmidt, 'What Enlightenment Was, What It Still Might Be, and Why Kant May Have Been Right After All', *American Behavioural Scientist*, 49:5, (2006): 649

¹³⁵ P. L. Haffner, *The German Enlightenment: An Historical Sketch*, (1864), in James Schmidt, 'What Enlightenment Was', (2006): 652

¹³⁶ Rev. Victor Cathrein, S.J., *The Champions of Agrarian Socialism: A Refutation of Emile de Laveleye and Henry George*, (Buffalo: P. Paul and Bro., 1889), 10

¹³⁷ Cromartie, 'Harringtonian Virtue', (1998): 1006; Kelvin Knight, 'Virtue, Politics and History', in Blackledge and Knight, (eds.), *Virtue and Politics*, (2011), 244

wisest who say we want none of your civilization’, while elsewhere he sought to refute the idea that justice was incompatible with civilization, despite its ‘abuses which shock the moral sense’.¹³⁸ Similarly, it was possible to position a direct attack on Enlightenment philosophy in its own linguistic and rhetorical terms. As one writer explained, the Enlightenment morality of Kant ‘deeply lowers the dignity of man’ and had created a context in which ‘the morality of public life thus becomes the policy of the iron hand’.¹³⁹ Highlighting the inconsistencies of this Enlightenment legacy, idealised but corrupted, the *Irish World*’s attacks on imperialism adopted a mocking tone for ‘civilization’, while glorifying Ireland as the ‘torch of civilization’.¹⁴⁰

While a binary division between the Scoto-American and continental European Enlightenments can obscure important variations and connections, the benefit of this blurred dual conceptualisation is that it recognises the powerful differences between enlightened thought on the question of religion.¹⁴¹ Largely distinct from the strong continental strain of anticlericalism, the Scottish moral philosophers modified but maintained the ethical framework central to the radical republican critique. For example, Francis Hutcheson’s ‘don’t ask’ attitude to the origins of moral sense obviated the need for the application of detached rationality, what Alasdair MacIntyre would later critique as the ‘Enlightenment project of justifying morality’.¹⁴² Hutcheson used ‘the authority of Aristotle in support of the claim that it is pointless to ask oneself about the reasons for an ultimate end of action’.¹⁴³ The influence of Hutcheson’s ‘moral-sense doctrine’ on the thought of Thomas Jefferson in particular has been often employed particularly to explain his ‘strong egalitarianism’.¹⁴⁴ In tracing these links through the Enlightenment, scholars looking at the political discourse of opposition radicalism have noted how continuities of thought repudiate an understanding of the Enlightenment as an intellectual big-bang.¹⁴⁵

An overly narrow secular-rationalist view of the Enlightenment has certainly been a problem for understanding Irish history because, as Michael Brown argues, the

¹³⁸ Henry George, *Irish World*, 25 March, 1882; Henry George, *Irish World*, 28 Aug., 1882

¹³⁹ Rev. J. Ming, S.J., ‘The Pretended Unity of Modern Philosophy’, *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 5, (1880): 24-5

¹⁴⁰ ‘Transatlantic’, *Irish World*, 21 Dec., 1878; John Ferguson, *Irish World*, 16 Nov., 1878

¹⁴¹ Gertrude Himmelfarb, ‘The idea of compassion: The British vs. the French Enlightenment’, *The Public Interest*, 145, (2001): 3-24; Michael Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment*, (Cambridge, MA.: Harvard University Press, 2016), 461

¹⁴² MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (1981), 51

¹⁴³ Lugio Turco, ‘Moral sense and the foundations of morals’, in Alexander Broadie, (ed.), *The Cambridge Companion to the Scottish Enlightenment*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2003), 140

¹⁴⁴ Samuel Fleischacker, ‘The impact on America: Scottish philosophy and the American founding’, in Broadie, (ed.), *The Scottish Enlightenment*, (2003), 320

¹⁴⁵ Bevir and Trentmann, ‘Critique within Capitalism’, (2002), 6

Enlightenment in Ireland ‘transfigured’ all confessional persuasions.¹⁴⁶ Nevertheless, the stadial view of historical progression formulated by Enlightenment historiography, in which the ‘vector is “civilization”’, meant that Enlightened thought retained a close association with imperialism, secularism and rationalism.¹⁴⁷ As Colin Kidd has shown, unlike in Scotland where Enlightened tendencies sought to create a distance from primitive Gaelic cultures, ‘the powerful, positive and resilient image of Gaelic culture constructed by early modern Irish antiquarians had traversed the quicksand of Enlightenment’.¹⁴⁸ In doing so they bequeathed an equivocal and non-linear conception of ‘civilization’, one that ‘rejected the simple socio-economic equation of modernity and civility’.¹⁴⁹

Historical judgement of Irish Catholics has tended to assume that, broadly speaking, a belief in human perfectibility was a peculiarly Protestant temperament to which most Catholics were immune. Lawrence McCaffrey has asserted that, ‘as Catholics they never have accepted the natural goodness of man, the perfectibility of human nature, or the Enlightenment sources of Anglo-Saxon liberalism’.¹⁵⁰ Eric Foner agreed, arguing that ‘the galaxy of reformers and their underlying premise – that men could perfect the world – did not impress an immigrant Irish community characterised in its early years by insularity, traditionalism and anti-intellectualism’.¹⁵¹ Within such a framework, attempts at structural amelioration such as those of George caused consternation among members of the conservative Catholic hierarchy for ‘fostering discontent with existing conditions’.¹⁵² However, Foner’s assessment that the Land League, was a ‘conjunction of Irish-America with the Protestant reform tradition’, strongly overemphasises the distinctiveness of the religio-political traditions and does not account of the continuity of political rhetoric between them.¹⁵³ It cannot explain the popularity of George in particular and the tradition of radical republicanism in general, that powerfully animated so many Irish Catholics across the diaspora. The canon of Irish nationalist literature demonstrates the implausibility of this intellectually blunt demarcation, as political emancipation always

¹⁴⁶ Brown, *The Irish Enlightenment*, (2016), 459

¹⁴⁷ David Denby, ‘Ireland, Modernization and the ‘Enlightenment’ Debate’, *Irish Review*, 31, (2004): 28

¹⁴⁸ Colin Kidd, ‘Gaelic Antiquity and National Identity in Enlightenment Ireland and Scotland’, *English Historical Review*, 109:434, (1994): 1197; 1213

¹⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, 1213

¹⁵⁰ Lawrence J. McCaffrey, ‘A Profile of Irish America’, in Doyle and Edwards, (eds.), *America and Ireland*, (1976), 83; David M. Emmons, *Beyond the Pale: The Irish in the West, 1845-1910*, (Norman, OK.: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 10

¹⁵¹ Foner, ‘Class, Ethnicity and Radicalism’, (1981), 179

¹⁵² Rev. Victor Cathrein, *The Champions of Agrarian Socialism*, (1889), 122

¹⁵³ Foner, ‘Class, Ethnicity and Radicalism’, (1981), 151

gestured toward a moral and social improvement. Emmet's Protestantism did not diminish his status with working-class Catholic Irish-Americans.¹⁵⁴ Often, as with the poetry of John Boyle O'Reilly or the political works of James Clancy, John Mitchel, Thomas Davies, James Fintan Lalor or Michael Davitt, a utopian perfectionism is located in an imagined past, but it still serves the same function; a representative ideal. It is an artificial partition, for George's discourse also embraced an acceptance of the fallibility of human beings and the frailty of human understanding and strongly rejected the implication of progressive liberal and state socialistic thought that humans could safely and benevolently exercise ultimate control over the world.

Nevertheless, ultramontane elements of the Catholic hierarchy relied heavily on the idea of inherent human weakness from the Fall. James O'Connor, the Bishop of Omaha, suggested as much in his critique of common ownership, arguing that business owners were 'of exceptional virtue, a virtue not to be looked for, and in point of fact never found [...] in the majority'.¹⁵⁵ In his defence of the existence of poverty, the Bishop proclaimed that 'One venial sin, a lie, for instance, is a greater evil than all the poverty that has ever afflicted and ever will afflict the children of men'.¹⁵⁶ Many Catholic criticisms of George rejected the possibility of an eradication of poverty. These evils had their roots in human sin, one that could not be expurgated. James A. MacMaster believed he had found the fatal flaw in George's scheme when he wrote in his *Freeman's Journal*: 'Mr. George, with Mr. Powderly's help, strives in vain to lay other foundations for human society than those laid by Christ and his Church. Before they 'abolish property', they must abolish original sin, as the root of so many pains besides those of being poor!'.¹⁵⁷ So too did Rev. Victor Cathrein remind his readers that 'if our first parents had not fallen, the earth would have remained a stranger to want and misery'. But this was not so, and Malthus was right that 'the great bulk of mankind will always be compelled to gain their living, in a close struggle, as it were, with nature, and to eat their bread in the sweat of their brow'.¹⁵⁸ The theologian's use of nature here, in a competitive, Malthusian sense is intriguing, and he was not alone. Rev. Henry Brann also castigated George's optimism: 'So many are poor from their own fault [...] that it is impossible to abolish the evil'.¹⁵⁹ Clearly evident in both is the attempt to affix a theological principle based in a condition of social stasis, to the Darwinian principles of 'meritocratic' capitalism. Either poverty and indigence were the

¹⁵⁴ Jim Smyth, 'Robert Emmet's Copy of John Locke's "Two Treatises of Government"', *History Ireland*, 11:3, (2003): 28

¹⁵⁵ Bishop James O'Connor, 'Socialism', *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 8, (1883): 228

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, 233

¹⁵⁷ *New York Freeman's Journal*, 13 Nov., 1886

¹⁵⁸ Cathrein, *The Champions of Agrarian Socialism*, (1889), 122

¹⁵⁹ Rev. Henry A. Brann, 'Henry George and his Land Theories', (New York: Catholic Publication Society, 1887), 4

inevitable result of original sin, or the poor were suffering from their own intransigence and incapacity, and Catholic critics of George were often caught struggling to decide which it was.

This was manifest in the Church's approach to the idea of holy poverty too. The Bishop of Omaha, as a strident critic of socialism, described the spiritual glories of poverty as 'consistent with true happiness', and an 'inequality of condition [that] cannot be remedied in this life'.¹⁶⁰ This was a common defence of poverty among the conservative clergy in the U.S., as Kerby Miller has observed.¹⁶¹ But aside from the fatalism and resignation of 'holy poverty', it also contained a sharp anti-materialist edge; a consequential refusal to deign wealth with virtue and meritocratic righteousness. This was an implicit and unreconciled challenge to a competitive market society and to the assumed virtuousness of wealth. In America of the 1880s, the idea of the dignity of poverty had the potential to be mirrored back against the wealthy. As one Catholic writer explained, 'the confession of the dignity of poverty [suggests] the unmerited good fortune of wealth'.¹⁶²

Taking a broader view, it is clear that there was no firm division between two opposing or antithetical theological stances. Firstly, the doctrine of original sin should not be treated as deterministic. Catholic theologians were fiercely critical of Calvinist predestination for what was perceived to be a fatalistic rejection of the idea of free will. As the Rev. Henry Brann observed, 'the Catholic Church teaches that the human will is free; that man's nature is not depraved even by the fall, and that no man will be damned save by his own free act'.¹⁶³ Nor, in practice, did Protestants reject the concept of original sin in a way that generally implied the possibility of human perfectibility. There remained a considered impression that the utopian schemers 'forget that man is depraved and desperately wicked', his natural state 'bowed and bent under the yoke of [...] perverted instincts', and Malthusianism serves as a powerful example of that Protestant tradition.¹⁶⁴

Although George's ideas have often been framed as an evangelical Protestantism, his intellectual confluence with figures like Fr. Edward McGlynn suggest a bipartisan Christianity that could easily appeal across the confessional divide. Terence Powderly, an

¹⁶⁰ O'Connor, 'Socialism', (1883): 233

¹⁶¹ Miller, *Ireland and Irish America*, (2008), 265

¹⁶² Arthur F. Marshall, 'English Manners', (1880): 108

¹⁶³ Rev. Henry A. Brann, 'American Rationalism', *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 5, (1880): 256

¹⁶⁴ Alexander W. Terrell, *Land: Its Individual Ownership and Culture, the Surest Safeguard of Free Government: University of Texas Commencement Address*, (Austin: University of Texas, 1898), 21; George Campbell, Duke of Argyll, *The Unity of Nature*, (New York: Putnam, 1884), 367

Irish-born Catholic, sounded no less the evangelical than George when he wrote: ‘He whose heart, moved to indignation and pity, condemned the wrongs inflicted on the toiling poor by the rich and powerful. Did they not call Him an agitator when they said: “He stirreth up the people.” Did He not pay the penalty for being an agitator when they pressed the thorns into His flesh, and nailed His hands and feet to the cross?’¹⁶⁵ The vivid and powerfully egalitarian Christ of the Protestant reform tradition is clearly visible here. Nevertheless, McGlynn’s hostility to Roman authority extended further than most. He later decried not only papal influence in secular business, but castigated the ‘fashion of comparatively modern adulation and Pope-worship and Pope deification,’ denouncing the ‘wealth and power’ that had corrupted the Church.¹⁶⁶ Given these positions, it is not perhaps at all surprising that the ultramontane Archbishop of Philadelphia, Patrick Ryan, thought it ‘evident from the alumno’s [McGlynn’s] last diatribe against the Holy Father that the alumno has become a Protestant’.¹⁶⁷ This problematizes not only to the idea that the Irish were self-contained and restricted by the dictates of Catholic doctrine, but poses questions about the insularity of separate genealogies of thought, suggesting that ‘the divisions of the mind are less pronounced’.¹⁶⁸

In the Quaker state of Pennsylvania, Henry George’s upbringing had been one of quiet but determined religiosity, the family being prominent and active members of St. Paul’s Episcopal Church during the height of the second ‘great awakening’. But, whilst imbibing a heavy diet of biblical study, George ‘bucked the current of piety at home’.¹⁶⁹ He was intellectually rebellious enough to find the religious intensity somewhat stifling, but it is indicative that George would later find his own personal route to religion, rejecting Episcopalianism for the plain and simplified rituals of Methodism. In his own mind, George’s political aspirations had deep roots in theology, in the radical implications of scripture, and the example of Christ, that grounded his visceral hatred of economic injustices.¹⁷⁰ His pointed critiques of the ‘House of Have’ dwelt on religious hypocrisy, observing with frustration that ‘many of those who call themselves Christians do not begin to appreciate the deep philosophy of Christ’.¹⁷¹

¹⁶⁵ Terence V. Powderly, *The Path I Trod: The Autobiography of Terence V. Powderly*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 1940), 39

¹⁶⁶ Edward McGlynn, ‘The Pope in Politics’, 3; 6; 7-8, (ACP, G-67, AANY)

¹⁶⁷ Rev. Charles E. McDonnell to Michael A. Corrigan, 9 Feb., 1888, (ACP, C-19, AANY)

¹⁶⁸ David T. Gleeson, ‘Smaller Differences: “Scotch Irish” and “Real Irish” in the Nineteenth-Century American South’, *New Hibernia Review*, 10:2, (2006): 72

¹⁶⁹ Barker, *Henry George*, (1955), 10; 12; Michael O’Brian, ‘The American experience of secularisation’, in Katznelson, and Stedman Jones, (eds.), *Religion and the Political Imagination*, (2010), 141

¹⁷⁰ Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785-1865*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1986), 299

¹⁷¹ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 17 May, 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

Of all the lectures that the reformer delivered, perhaps the most well known was his oft-repeated talk on 'Moses'. First presented to the Young Mens' Jewish Society of California, George's appreciation for his subject rested partly on his appeal as a universal authority; as he reminded his audience, 'three great religions place the leader of the Exodus upon the highest plane they allot to man. [...] Moses is the mouthpiece and law-giver of the Most High'.¹⁷² It was through Moses that George attempted to trace the roots of the 'recognition of the common right to land' beyond Aquinas to the very foundation and fabric of Abrahamic religion. As he explained, 'it is not the protection of property, but the protection of humanity, that is the aim of the Mosaic code. [...] At every point it interposes its barriers to the selfish greed that if left unchecked will surely differentiate men into landlord and serf, capitalist and workman, millionaire and tramp, ruler and ruled'.¹⁷³ In developing a social radicalism through non denominational corpus of Christian religiosity, George was following a well-trodden path. Indeed 'most forms of nineteenth-century non-Marxian socialism saw themselves as supplanting or extending Christianity' and, as we have seen, biblical texts could offer a powerful impetus to collectivist tendencies.¹⁷⁴

Dissenting Protestantism and Irish Catholicism

For the Catholic Church, as you know is the most potent conservative force in our modern society [...] yet I found that in Ireland wherever there was famine, there the Catholic priests did not hesitate to declare, both in private and in print, that the primary causes of Irish destitution were the exactions of the landlords.¹⁷⁵

The peculiarities of Irish Catholicism are important here too. As has been argued, in drawing too sharp a line between Irish Catholicism and Protestant America, much work on Irish-American nationalism has assumed a natural opposition between Catholic doctrines and a tradition of Protestant reform emanating from the Enlightenment, whereas the two should not be seen as completely distinct. While social radicalism and socialism often sprang from dissenting protestant sources, it was due less to a unique theology than to a subaltern political position. The conflation between Protestantism and statehood fostered a misunderstanding of the difference, practically speaking, between

¹⁷² Henry George, 'Moses', (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL)

¹⁷³ Henry George, 'Moses', (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL); George, *Progress and Poverty*, (1879), 333

¹⁷⁴ Claeys, 'Non-Marxian Socialism', (2011), 545; Peter d'A. Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival, 1877-1914: Religion, Class, and Social Conscience in Late-Victorian England*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1968), 99

¹⁷⁵ James Redpath, *Talks About Ireland*, (New York: P. J. Kenedy, 1881), 9

Catholicism and Protestantism. Forms of Protestantism and Catholicism lacking in direct political power often had much in common.

In mid-nineteenth century England and Wales, the Church of England and its adjunctive economic evangelicalism served to buttress the interests of the political establishment and 'embraced secular agendas' such as utilitarianism.¹⁷⁶ Similarly in America, the absence of a politically established church did not stymie a religion of the propertied. During the course of the nineteenth century 'American Protestantism accommodated itself to a comfortable position as guardian of a new, privatized virtue characterized above all by propriety' and 'the genteel tradition'.¹⁷⁷ This comfortable respectability proved irreconcilable with the social anger fermented by many dissenting protestant sects in England and their cousin churches in America. In Scotland too, where the Presbyterian Kirk was largely shorn of its direct political powers, Scottish moral philosophers produced an Enlightenment sociology that did not necessitate a rejection of theology.¹⁷⁸ But these same substantive causes also explain why the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland 'presented itself as the church of the poor and in this way acquired a social and political status comparable to that of the Nonconformist denominations in England and Wales, or the Free Church in the Scottish Highlands'.¹⁷⁹

In Ireland the Catholic Church found important uses for the more politically subversive Christian teachings in ensuring it remained relevant to its population as the representative of a politically disenfranchised people. A proximity to suffering also helped to soften doctrinal criticisms of poverty and spur opposition to evangelical economic utilitarianism.¹⁸⁰ In this context the Irish Catholic Church spoke as a national church of a state-less and, broadly, powerless people, ministering mostly to subaltern groups. Unlike its European counterparts, who knew 'full well how terrible are the passions aroused by political and national aspirations', the Irish Church had benefited from a cautious acceptance of popular national sentiment.¹⁸¹ This was especially evident in the U.S., where the Irish Church located the 'immigrant-as-communicant in a universe whose tenets of redemption were thoroughly bound up with mythic national histories'.¹⁸² Irish

¹⁷⁶ D. M. Thompson, 'The Enlightenment, the late eighteenth-century revolutions and their aftermath: the 'secularising' implications of Protestantism?' in Katznelson, and Stedman Jones, (eds.), *Religion and the Political Imagination*, (2010), 81

¹⁷⁷ Kloppenborg, 'The Virtues of Liberalism', (1987): 25

¹⁷⁸ Fania Oz-Salzberger, 'The Political Theory of the Scottish Enlightenment', in Brodie, (ed.), *The Scottish Enlightenment*, (2003), 157

¹⁷⁹ Eugenio Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, (2007), 114

¹⁸⁰ Allan W. MacColl, *Land, Faith and the Crofting Community: Christianity and Social Criticism in the Highlands of Scotland, 1843-93*, (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2006), 213

¹⁸¹ Cardinal Simioni, quoted in James J. Greene, 'The Impact of Henry George's Theories', (1956), 117

¹⁸² Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002), 64

Catholicism produced ‘an extensive hagiography’ detailing the heroic Irish Catholicising mission and ethnic suffering at the hand of centuries of invaders.¹⁸³ As a result, the Irish Church was more willing to decry rather than accept the persistence of material immiseration. The Church had no interest in maintaining an Anglo-Irish political elite and offering them ecclesiastical or theological support. Consequently, Ireland never developed a significant anti-clerical movement, like France or Italy.¹⁸⁴ Certainly compared to the Church on the continent, the Irish and Irish-America priesthood were decidedly radical. Of one Irish Jesuit, a devoted critic of socialism, it was noted that ‘Catholic schools of social ethics on the Continent were startled by his articles [...] on the rights of property. His views seemed to them to savour of socialism’.¹⁸⁵ It is clear then that categorising Irish Catholicism as synonymous with Roman authority is a misleading comparison, as in the Anglophone world it often tended to operate in practice as an oppositional institution.

In America, as David N. Doyle observes, ‘Catholicism was misshapen, [...] to the partner of unjust social conditions’.¹⁸⁶ Priests were reactive to the experiences of Irish communities, their authority and esteem stemming from being embedded with the groups they served.¹⁸⁷ As one member of the Knights noted sympathetically, ‘Priests are human and sometimes make mistakes. Of course they don’t pander to the wealthy and influential, like ministers of other denominations’.¹⁸⁸ The rites and rituals that formed the internal scaffolding of Irish Catholic lives in Gilded Age New York were centred around the Church but not dictated by it. The Irish laity showed considerable independence in, to the chagrin of Archbishop John Hughes during his disputes with the Jesuits, choosing to attend confession at Jesuit Churches ‘because of their reputation as skilled confessors’, and causing neighbouring priests to complain of parishioner poaching to their archbishop.¹⁸⁹ The hierarchy may have been frustrated with the persistence of riotous funerals as ‘ostentatious and unseemly’, but these cultural manifestations persisted.¹⁹⁰ Jay Dolan suggests that for most intents and purposes, ‘an Irish parish in New York could have easily passed for a church in Dublin’ and there were striking differences between

¹⁸³ *ibid.*, 66; Emmet Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church and the Creation of the Modern Irish State, 1878-1886*, (Philadelphia: American Philosophical Society, 1975), 394

¹⁸⁴ R. Stuart, ‘Jesus the *Sans-Culotte*’: Marxism and Religion during the French *Fin de Siecle*, *The Historical Journal*, 42:3, (1999): 716; Eric Hobsbawm, ‘Religion and the Rise of Socialism’, in *Worlds of Labour: Further Studies in the History of Labour*, (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1984), 47

¹⁸⁵ M. F. Egan, ‘Father Peter Finlay, S.J.’, *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 18:72, (1929): 574

¹⁸⁶ David N. Doyle, ‘Irish Elites in North America and Liberal Democracy, 1820-1920’, *Radharc*, 3, (2002): 32

¹⁸⁷ Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, (2007), 119

¹⁸⁸ John Hirsch to Terence V. Powderly, 12 May, 1880, (PP, Series 1: Box 2, CUA)

¹⁸⁹ Thomas J. Shelly, ‘Catholic Greenwich Village: Ethnic Geography and Religious Identity in New York City, 1880-1930’, *The Catholic Historical Review*, 89:1, (2003): 64

¹⁹⁰ Jay P. Dolan, *The Immigrant Church: New York’s Irish and German Catholics, 1815-1865*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1975), 61

Irish and German parishes in the city.¹⁹¹ As these examples show, social practices were central to the retention of cultural forms and political identities. How these were applied to an understanding of Irish land will be the concern of the next chapter.

¹⁹¹ Dolan, *The Immigrant Church*, (1975), 67

Land in the Irish Historical Imagination

Rent (v.): 'to pull to pieces; lacerate'

'The widow is gathering nettles for her children's dinner; a perfumed Seigneur, lounging delicately in the Ceil-de-Boeuf, has an alchemy whereby he will extract from her the third nettle, and name it Rent'.¹

'Wherever a number of men are gathered together in Ireland', reported the *Irish World* toward the end of 1878, 'that solid, significant monosyllable LAND is the first word that presents itself.'² This longstanding agrarian focus had fostered an intellectual distance and increasing divergence from orthodox, purportedly English, political economy in the nineteenth century, helping shape a distinctive Irish version. Early in the century, the pioneering Cork-born socialist William Thompson (1775-1833) had articulated these frustrations at the physical distance from material reality that enabled privileged theoreticians to pontificate on economic matters, creating a distance between moral and economic 'laws' and between theory and practice. Heavily influenced by Enlightenment republicanism, for William Thompson, as it would be later for George, 'if the laws of political economy are at loggerheads with those of universal morality, the former must bow to the latter.'³ In the 1880s, John Mitchel's biographer William Dillon mirrored these same sentiments when he observed 'that in the chief wealth-producing centres of England the physical and moral degradation of human nature is greater both in extent and degree' than anywhere else, expressing his hostility to the idea that 'the greatest possible wealth' was the purpose to which 'every other consideration ought to be sacrificed'.⁴

This integrated assessment of moral, social and economic concerns was reflected far more widely within 'Irish' political economy than only Dillon's critique. Social conditions impressed a 'unity of discourses' upon many mid-century Irish political economists who, partly due to their proximity to the worst excesses of *laissez-faire* economics, saw the operation of political economy functioning alongside a conception of a moral economy, rather than being coextensive with it.⁵ Irish political economists were in the vanguard of the developing historicism in the 1860s, but its imprint in Ireland did not

¹ Thomas Carlyle, *The French Revolution: A History*, Vol. 1, (New York: William Kerr, 1841), 229

² 'Land and Thought', *Irish World*, 30 Nov., 1878

³ Terry Eagleton, *Saints and Scholars*, (London: Verso, 1987), 101; Terry Eagleton, 'The Radicalism of William Thompson', *The Irish Review*, 26, (2000): 80-88; Fintan Lane, 'William Thompson, bankruptcy and the west Cork estate, 1808-34', *Irish Historical Studies*, 39:153, (2014): 24-39

⁴ William Dillon, *The Dismal Science: A Criticism on Modern English Political Economy*, (Dublin: M. H. Gill & Son, 1882), 18

⁵ Eagleton, *Saints and Scholars*, (1987), 102; Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*, (1986), III

bear the same hallmarks of conservative reactionism as was so often the case elsewhere.⁶ Irish political economists, centred around the Whately chair at Trinity and the Statistical and Social Inquiry Society of Ireland [SSISI], developed a 'distinctly 'Irish' [...] political economy by the 1860s'.⁷ The SSISI in general, and its founder William Neilson Hancock in particular, emphasised the historically and socially grounded nature of political economy before such ideas were embraced within the mainstream of British economic discourse. Hancock's enthusiastic embrace of Adam Smith, bordering on the obsessive, was predicated on his particular affinity for Smith's capacious understanding of the importance of the public sphere in keeping the self-interest of capitalists in check. As early as 1862 he confidently asserted the importance of disentangling private vices from public virtues, stating 'that the tendency of capitalists, when unrestrained by a vigilant public opinion, is that ascribed to them by Adam Smith, the greatest of political economists, of sacrificing the public interest to their own'. The solution was a 'strong and enlightened moral public opinion', or in other words a non-market public sphere dictated by ideal of civic duty over atomised self-interest.⁸ That Hancock's reanimation of a pre-Malthusian understanding of Adam Smith echoes that of Henry George is important to the broader correlation of Irish economic thought and civic republicanism that resonated in the 1880s.

The proximity and experiences of the famine also had a direct and tangible effect. As Allan MacColl has demonstrated for the Highland presbyterians, realities of place shaped the social attitudes that underpinned economic thought. In Scotland it meant that the legacy of the clearances enabled the Free Church to retain the 'atonement' theology characterised by Boyd Hilton's evangelicals, but reject the 'retributive social attitudes' that accompanied it closer to the imperial capital.⁹ Such outlets for human sympathy prevented the hardening of attitudes towards those who struggled in the face of nascent capitalism in comparison to the physically distant and intellectually cocooned metropolitan economists so thoroughly critiqued by William Dillon.

If economics and morals were two important and related, but crucially independent, mechanisms in Irish political economy, such a position offered direct protection against the claims of positivism. 'Christian confidence in the redemptive function of commerce was waning' by the mid 1860s as it became all too obvious that

⁶ Clive Dewey, 'Celtic Agrarian Legislation and the Celtic Revival: Historicist Implications of Gladstone's Irish and Scottish Land Acts, 1870-1886', *Past & Present*, 64, (1974): 37; R. D. Collision Black, *Economic Thought and the Irish Question, 1817-1870*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960), 47-71

⁷ Peter Gray, 'Irish Social Thought and the Relief of Poverty', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 20, (2010): 2

⁸ William Neilson Hancock, *The Journeyman Bakers' Case*, (London: Emily Faithful, 1862), 11-12

⁹ MacColl, *Land, Faith and the Crofting Community*, (2006), 213

market success did not automatically reflect moral standing.¹⁰ Turning away from a faith in the market itself to deliver moral guidance, positivism was a necessary buttress for the market, only now not by equating its operation with moral judgement, but by rejecting the imprimatur of external moral laws at all. But in Ireland, whilst it was soon axiomatic that ‘political economy does not, and cannot, lay down any general rules of action applicable to all circumstances’, the focus on the question of land meant that ideas of ‘natural justice and right’ were more difficult to abandon, and remained principles of recourse within political economy.¹¹

Thomas Edward Cliffe Leslie was another Irish political economist who stood somewhat apart from the metropolitan mainstream. Wexford-born of Scottish descent, Leslie studied at Trinity College before becoming Professor of Jurisprudence and Political Economy at Belfast. Like Hancock, and influenced by the anthropological jurisprudence of Henry Sumner Maine, Leslie sought to demonstrate the anti-Ricardian elements of Adam Smith’s work by emphasising the historically grounded nature of economic enquiry. Although Leslie favoured smaller proprietorship in Ireland, and recognised that he, like George, found himself in opposition to the school of political economy ‘which a short time ago was considered the orthodox one’, he nevertheless rejected George’s proposals. Unsure about the operation of his plan, Leslie wrote to George that ‘without private property [in] some form I don’t believe that human happiness and civilisation could survive’. The subsequent discussion, in which he ruminated over the potential for anarchy and murder over access to land, suggested that he engaged only in a cursory reading of George’s scheme. Both men actually shared similar perceptions about the value of widespread access to land, and Leslie’s publicised views were no doubt the reason why George had sought his opinion in the first place. He signed off by counselling George that ‘great estates are another matter, but they must be attacked on a different ground from endangering all and any property in land’.¹² A year later, and after properly digesting *Progress and Poverty*, Cliffe Leslie wrote to George in advance of a published review of the book in the *Fortnightly Review*. His opposition now rested firmly on the injustice of depriving those who had bought land. He wrote: ‘I confess the proposal to confiscate rent without compensation amazes me [...] How can it be otherwise than gross and scandalous injustice to deprive the one who has gone into land’.¹³

¹⁰ Hilton, *The Age of Atonement*, (1986), 31

¹¹ Isaac Butt, *Land Tenure in Ireland: A Plea for the Celtic Race*, (Dublin: John Falconer, 1866), 61; 81

¹² Thomas Edward Cliffe Leslie to Henry George, 26 Nov., 1879, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

¹³ Thomas Edward Cliffe Leslie to Henry George, 26 Sept., 1880, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

Another Irish political economist adrift from metropolitan orthodoxy, John Elliot Cairnes' conception of political economy was predominantly scientific and only partially historicist. He recognised economic laws as indications of human behaviour only 'in given circumstances', and as entirely separate from morality; economic laws did not entail 'a realization of the principles of abstract justice' and operated 'essentially out of the moral sphere'.¹⁴ This, however, led him into some murky intellectual waters, as while he admitted that ethical concerns should shape economic designs, because 'our existing system of industry is not such as entitles us to claim for it [...] the character of satisfying the requirements of moral justice', he was unable to secure a firm footing for it. Cairnes, much like George and Mill, held that the unimproved value of land was a commodity distinct from others by dint of the fact that 'no man made the land'. But he was also aware that this position suggested a natural right to land. Cairnes took great pains to dismiss 'so called "natural rights"', footnoting his argument: 'To guard against misapprehension, it may be as well to state that I do not recognize in this argument any proof of a "natural right" to property in anything, even that which our hands have just made'. But this was a disingenuous circumlocution because Cairnes did hold that it was possible to distinguish between the products due to the 'exertions' of labour and those 'to which he has no more right than anyone else'.¹⁵ This was especially evident in regard to the question of rent, where Cairnes also struck a resemblance to George when he inquired rhetorically, 'how many landlords have had their rent-rolls doubled by railways made in their despite?'¹⁶ Cairnes definition of economic rent was something that 'cannot properly be said to owe its existence to either labourer, capitalist, or landlord', but was rather 'value incident to the progress of society'.¹⁷

By the end of the 1860s Cairnes would pre-empt the declarations of the Land League a decade later by asserting that rent was a surplus due to the landlord after the farmer had taken care of himself, so that 'the rent extracted [should not] encroach upon the domain of wages and profits'.¹⁸ This idea was widely held during the Land War. When the Earl of Lucan concluded that 'it is to communism alone [that] the present state of things in [Ireland] is to be attributed' he was observing that many tenants were not destitute, and were instead choosing not to pay rents in straitened times.¹⁹ As Davitt told a

¹⁴ John Elliot Cairnes, *Some Leading Principles of Political Economy*, (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1878), 185; 268-9

¹⁵ John Elliot Cairnes, *Essays in Political Economy: Theoretical and Applied*, (London: Macmillan, 1873), 191; 210

¹⁶ Cairnes, *Essays in Political Economy*, (1873), 193

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 197

¹⁸ *Ibid.*, 198; Collision Black, *Economic Thought and the Irish Question*, (1960), 54

¹⁹ Earl of Lucan, quoted in Donald Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics in Ireland: County Mayo from the Plantation to the Land War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 323

meeting in Milltown, Galway, in 1879, if, once having comfortably fed and clothed their families, provided for education and necessities of the home, 'there was sufficient left to pay the rent, I would pay it'.²⁰ James Daly similarly defined rent as being 'regulated by the amount of margin left the tenant, after deducting the cost of maintenance of himself and family'.²¹ While the Irish Law of Distress ensured that the landlord was a privileged creditor, many farmers accepted this definition of rent, as due only after the farmer had taken their share.

Clearly this had, certainly for the agrarian radicals, resonances of the Aquinian supremacy of life over property, but Cairnes again attempted to present the argument in utilitarian terms. He sought 'the considerations of practical utility', as a moral basis for capitalism. His circuitous argument exalted 'progress in civilization', arguing that the accumulation of capital was necessary to develop industry and to allow science and literature to flourish. He accepted that 'the feeling appealed to may, if you like, be a coarse one, but it is at any rate efficacious' as it 'furnishes society with the necessary material basis for civilized progress'.²² As with Mill, when confronted with the question of Irish land, Cairnes found it impossible to coherently reconcile his moral inclinations, his consciousness of the Irish predicament, within a utilitarian framework. Again it was the question of Irish land that brought Natural Rights to the fore, framing a battle that left Cairnes without a strong footing on either side. Cairnes' disjointed and unstable metaethical position may be what marked him as the last of the classical economists.²³

It is notable that the most positivist of Irish political economists, the most in tune with the new organic sociology of Spencer and the functionalism of the new liberalism, was the Comtean John Kells Ingram, who critiqued Cairnes' 'apparent vacillation of view' as 'intrinsically unsound' and a 'retrogression in methodology'.²⁴ As G. K. Peatling observes, Ingram's positivism owed much to his Protestant and rationalist background, and the Comtean philosophy he espoused 'gained few disciples from a Catholic background'.²⁵ The Irish rationalist represented a sharp break with popular nationalist belief in the late nineteenth century, and, in sustaining the distinctiveness of Irish political economy, as Cairnes' work demonstrated, the question of land itself was clearly critical.

²⁰ *Connaught Telegraph*, 21 June, 1879

²¹ *Connaught Telegraph*, 18 Dec., 1886

²² Cairnes, *Some Leading Principles*, (1878), 269-70; 272

²³ Thomas Sowell, *Classical Economics Reconsidered*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 14

²⁴ John Kells Ingram, *A History of Political Economy*, (1888), (London: A&C Black, 1919), 151

²⁵ G. K. Peatling, 'Who Fears to Speak of Politics? John Kells Ingram and Hypothetical Nationalism', *Irish Historical Studies*, 31:122, (1998): 207; 214

Land ‘invests man’s life with stability; it is the site of his habituation; it is a condition of his physical safety; it is the landscape and the seasons’.²⁶ For George, the basis of his whole theory stood on this ground.²⁷ It was also embedded in the social practices of the tenant farmers and the League, where land was not a commodity in the way that livestock was. Tenant farmers were, for the most part, resolute in refusing to bid for or to occupy a farm from which a neighbour or another tenant farmer had been ejected for non payment of rent, but with their livestock there was not the same level of solidarity.²⁸ So too with debts, as both Parnell and Davitt encouraged people to pay shopkeepers and merchants before anything that their landlord might claim. The radical Irish publisher John Ferguson was clear that ‘the shopkeeper must unquestionably be paid and there must be no attempt whatever to meddle with his right to be paid’.²⁹ Opponents seeking to characterise the League’s agitation as communistic studiously ignored these particularities, and the conservative Dublin *Evening Mail* proclaimed the immateriality of the distinction between rent and other debt. Among the rights of property, it observed, ‘is that of lending the use of it to another person for a money consideration, called rent’.³⁰ If rent was secondary and surplus, then it was necessary, as Alfred Marshall did, to refuse the idea that there was a difference between land and other forms of property. Without doing so it would be hard to justify the right of landlords to any rent at all.

Academic discussions of the nature of rent sometimes fell down the interstices between these conceptions of property and value. Bonamy Price, an orthodox voice on the issue, was quoted warmly by T. M. Healy as saying that ‘rent is surplus profit’, and that, as a result, ‘it is not the landlord, but the tenant, who shall in the last resort determine what the rent shall be’.³¹ In this he highlighted the crux of the issue, for Price’s normative definition of rent was not an ideal, but an operative reality in the English market; one with sufficient liquidity to facilitate the transfer of labour to other enterprises. Rent has to be in essence set by ‘the will of the farmer at last’, because it has to be ‘in excess of what will satisfy the tenant as an adequate reward for entering on the business of farming’.³² With no option other than farming meaning a high demand for land, combined with an attachment to the land that often precluded leaving if at all possible, rent could be set,

²⁶ Karl Polanyi, *The Great Transformation: The Political and Economic Origins of Our Time*, (Boston: Beacon Press, 1957), 178

²⁷ Henry George to Archbishop Michael A. Corrigan, 7 Dec., 1886, (ACP, C.8, AANY)

²⁸ Adam Pole, ‘Sheriffs’ Sales during the Land War, 1879-82’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 34:136, (2005): 399

²⁹ *Freemans Journal*, 20 Oct., 1880

³⁰ *Evening Mail*, 10 Jan., 1880; Paul Bew and Patrick Maume, ‘Michael Davitt and the Personality of the Irish Agrarian Revolution’, in Fintan Lane and Andrew G. Newby, (eds.), *Michael Davitt: New Perspectives*, (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2009), 70

³¹ Bonamy Price, quoted in Healy, *Why There is an Irish Land Question*, (1881), 84-5

³² *Ibid.*, 84-5

within certain bounds, at whatever the landlord could extract. Alexander Sullivan noted this too when he observed that ‘in England the rent is not raised, generally speaking, except every twenty-one years, and then after a fair revaluation. In Ireland, generally speaking, the rent is raised whenever the landlord’s agent thinks he can extort another pound out of the tenant’.³³ Land was in high demand with a labour surplus but with a fixed and naturally finite supply.

Similarly, Lord Sherbrooke denied the justice of remunerating tenants for improvements. What, he mused, are landlords and tenants but ‘persons who have entered into contracts with each other, and they are nothing more’.³⁴ With an impressive myopia, Sherbrooke explained that redress is merely sought by finding another landlord. ‘The unfair dealer finds this, and mends his ways; or, if he does not, he gets a bad name, and is shunned accordingly’.³⁵ Whilst the remarkable obduracy of the position and patent obliviousness to the Irish context hardly needs pointed out, it was also not lost on some contemporaries. A subsequent reply to Lord Sherbrooke in the same periodical observed ‘his Lordship’s inaccuracy as to the thoughts, feelings, and expectations of the Irish tenant’.³⁶ These expectations were embodied in tenant right. Understood most simply as the right of an outgoing tenant to ‘sell the right to occupy his holding to an incoming tenant’, it encompassed both the improvements made by the farmer and his more intangible sense of ownership.³⁷ Akin to dual ownership, it rejected the absolute authority of landlords as well as the commoditization of the land to be freely transferable, and recognised implicitly the distinctiveness of property in land. Unlike in Ireland, the coextension of urbanisation and economic development in most of Britain had shielded land from being confronted by its peculiarity in this regard. This was evident in Alfred Marshall’s abrupt and dismissive questioning at George’s speech at the Oxford Union, where he insisted that there could be no such thing as a monopoly of the land, and that ‘the landlords could only get as much as competition allowed them’.³⁸ British cultural assumptions and historical experience had helped to obscure the conflict between use and exchange value in land, but the Irish case brought these questions to the fore.

³³ Sullivan, ‘Ireland’s Great Grievance’ (1881): 61

³⁴ Lord Sherbrooke, ‘Legislation for Ireland’, *The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review*, 8:45, (Nov., 1880): 679

³⁵ Sherbrooke, ‘Legislation for Ireland’, (Nov., 1880): 683

³⁶ Lord Lifford, ‘The Irish Land Question’, *The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review*, 8: 46, (Dec., 1880): 888

³⁷ Timothy W. Guinnane and Ronald I. Miller, ‘Bonds without Bondsmen: Tenant-Right in Nineteenth-Century Ireland’, *Journal of Economic History*, 56:1, (1996): 113; W. E. Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants in Mid-Victorian Ireland*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 68; 72

³⁸ Alfred Marshall, ‘Three Lectures on *Progress and Poverty*’ (1883), *The Journal of Law and Economics*, 12:1, (1969): 224; James J. Shaw, ‘The Nationalization of the Land’, *Journal of the Social and Statistical Inquiry Society of Ireland*, 8:62, (1884): 492-508

Much of the intellectual dissonance and confusion between nationalist and landed interests rested on this very divergence. It also served to highlight the distance between British constitutional freedoms and Irish land. As many pointed out, even whilst agreeing with the potential social benefits of land reform, the three F's were a contradiction in terms. An editorial in the *Times* observed, prior to the introduction of Gladstone's 1881 act, 'the "three F's" must be separately considered. "Fair rents" stands on a very different basis, both morally and economically, from "fixity of tenure" and "free sale"'.³⁹ While the other ambitions could be realised contractually, fair rents represented an imposition on propertied freedom. While the other two could be 'defined with precision', 'no satisfactory definition has ever been given', for what might be considered 'fair' in a fair rent.⁴⁰ For Lord Lifford, a Donegal landlord, fixity of tenure might sound bad, but 'in reality it obtains already [on some estates and] I do not see much practical evil in it'; similarly for free sale. But the fixing of a fair rent would be subject to both variation and litigation and, if in any way aligned to Griffith's Valuation, a mid-century land valuation survey, would result in only 'about half the rent which the landlord might equitably require for his farm'.⁴¹

The reason why fair rents, as opposed to its accompanying prescriptions, received a much more hostile reception was its intractable muddying of the already embattled boundary between use and exchange value. 'What relation has a fair rent to value', mused one observer on the question.⁴² The market, he observed, determines the value, but this is rejected in the calls for a fair rent. The separation of the land from its improvements, as George intended to do and as would be partially necessary in order to legally frame tenant right, was not feasible because it would be 'impossible for a valuer to eliminate from his calculation the annual value of agricultural improvements', being as they are often so discreet and indiscernible.⁴³ Ultimately this particular author was, not surprisingly, unable to escape the concept of contractualism when defining what is 'fair'. Without recourse to any other solid foundation, the anonymous land valuer explained that 'if there be any such thing as a 'fair rent' it must depend upon the relations between lessor and lessee, and will vary according to the circumstances attendant on each letting'.⁴⁴ The

³⁹ *The Times*, 13 Jan., 1881; Irish landlord and Anglican Canon of Peterborough, Rev. Robert Shapland Carew Blacker, reiterated this point in, *Erin: her Sisters, her Nurse, and Her Doctors*, (London: William Ridgway, 1881), (Archives of Irish-America, .047, New York University [hereafter AIA, NYU])

⁴⁰ A Land Valuer, *Fixity of Tenure at Fair Rents Impracticable as a Final Settlement of the Irish Land Question*, (Dublin: M. H. Gill and Son, 1881), 5

⁴¹ Lifford, 'The Irish Land Question', (Dec., 1880): 893-4

⁴² A Land Valuer, *Fixity of Tenure at Fair Rents Impracticable*, (1881), 6

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 7

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, 11

current popular view of a fair rent in Ireland, the author observed, relied heavily on 'custom', which was an insufficient basis for legislation.

This custom emphasised production as the only legitimate means to possession, and whilst at odds with a contractual or legislative definition, it naturally precluded other foundations for land ownership. It was a central motif of the League, expressed clearly in Bishop Nulty's famous 'Essay on the Land Question', and dominated the loudest effusions of Irish campaigners on both sides of the Atlantic.⁴⁵ A vision of land ownership that was direct, fixed and constructed in the practice of living symbiotically with the land. Linguistically, the same key elements emerge frequently, focused around the concept of productivity and producers. Emphasising the use value of land in a discourse of 'producerism', it echoed a vision of Jeffersonian republicanism that dominated mid nineteenth century radicalism on both sides of the Atlantic.⁴⁶ Davitt articulated this vision frequently, believing that 'a broad distribution of land spread intelligence', and would result in 'a condition of social peace and harmony' because it rewarded 'the manhood, the intelligence and industry of the people [...] against privileged idleness'.⁴⁷ The republican ideal of the small farmer citizen advocated prescriptions that went beyond questions of rent and embraced a totalising view of social harmony.

The hostility of the 'western agitation' to graziers, for example, represented just this very absence of a direct and rooted relationship of people to the land.⁴⁸ Land, intended for the support the people, being turned into pasture to provide meat and dairy for an export market that would be of direct benefit to only a few larger farmers and commercial men was a very direct attack on the tillage ideal of sturdy smallholders. The tensions between smaller farmers and graziers that existed within the League as a result were only ever hidden temporarily, and both Matt Harris and James Daly suggested specific and defined limits to landholding. Many graziers were not agricultural men but investors profiting from the commercialisation of the post-famine economy.⁴⁹ Opposition

⁴⁵ Thomas Nulty, *The Land Question: Letter of the Most Rev. Dr. Nulty, to the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of Meath*, (Dublin: Joseph Dollard, 1881), 13; 20

⁴⁶ Robert V. Remini, 'Andrew Jackson and Jacksonian Democracy', in Sean Wilentz, (ed.), *Major Problems in the Early Republic* (Lexington, MA.: D. C. Heath and Co., 1992), 399-406; Alexander Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic: Class Politics and Mass Culture in Nineteenth Century America*, (New York: Verso, 1990); Clancy, *The Land League Manual*, (1881), 5

⁴⁷ Michael Davitt, 'English Civilisation', in King, (ed.), *Michael Davitt*, (2003), 24; Michael Davitt, 'Random Thoughts on the Irish Land War' in King, (ed.), *Jottings in Solitary*, (2003), 186; Patrick J. Campbell and Peter Kerr, 'Davitt in Carrickmore', *Seanchas Ardmhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society*, 11:2, (1985): 386

⁴⁸ Niall Whelehan, *The Dynamiters: Irish Nationalism and Political Violence in the Wider World, 1867-1900*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 249; Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics*, (1994), 262; *Freeman's Journal*, 15 March, 1880

⁴⁹ Gerard Moran, "'Laying the Seeds for Agrarian Agitation": The Ballinasloe Tenants Defence Association, 1876-80', in Carla King and Conor McNamara, (eds.), *The West of Ireland: New*

to this rural economic recalibration was not confined to the small farmers of the west. Those in the front line of developments in the south of Ireland were perhaps even more concerned. Thomas O'Rourke of the Kerry Tenants Defence Association complained in 1879 that 'a class of well to do nothings ... act as vampires on the life blood of the nation and whose sole ambition is to turn this old and fertile land into a huge bullock walk'.⁵⁰ His hyperbolic language, laden with symbolism, suggested a natural productive fertility under attack from an unnatural and inhuman threat. A parasitic element undermining the very existence of the rural society and the social practices and commonly intelligible morality upon which Irish nationalism was constructed. Matthew Harris similarly condemned graziers in 1878 as 'more exacting and avaricious than the landlords themselves' because they lacked even the pretence of obligation and paternalism of the later.⁵¹

It was a familiar refrain among Irish nationalists that 'English law abolished the old tenure by which the land of Ireland was held *for the benefit of the people*'.⁵² This historical mythologizing had gained increased traction in the 1860s, when anthropological historicism legitimized the assessment of a 'primitive' social structure invested with historically valid and culturally accepted rights to the land. A new generation of Anglo-Irish legislators was hopeful these new insights could lead to a more benign management of the Irish, although, as in India, greater understanding was allied to a drive for greater control.⁵³ However, for Irish nationalists it not only advanced a meaningfully differentiated Irish cultural past, but suggested lessons for the future too. Irish nationalists embraced the sentiments of the *London Examiner* when it begrudgingly recalled that 'it has proved a hard task to burn out of the Irish cultivator a recollection of his ancient rights in the soil'.⁵⁴ Or Lord Sherbrooke's backhanded compliment that despite 'no qualification, mental or pecuniary, for the trade he has chosen', the Irish farmer 'follows the innate tendency of his race, and determines to be on the land and to have no master'.⁵⁵

James Clancy's potted history of the Brehon laws adopted a common theme: 'Land was owned in common by each clan', and allotted by need to the constituent

Perspectives on the Nineteenth Century, (Dublin: History Press Ireland, 2011), 84; Donnacha Sean Lucey, *Land, Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence in Ireland: The Case of County Kerry, 1872-86*, (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2011), 15

⁵⁰ Thomas O'Rourke, quoted in Donnacha Sean Lucey, *Land, Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence*, (2011), 15

⁵¹ *Connaught Telegraph*, 20 Apr., 1878

⁵² Clancy, *The Land League Manual*, (1881), 5

⁵³ E. D. Steele, *Irish Land and British Politics: Tenant-Right and Nationality, 1865-1870*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1974), 105; Dewey, 'Celtic Agrarian Legislation and the Celtic Revival', (1974): 43

⁵⁴ Clancy, *The Land League Manual*, (1881), 30

⁵⁵ Sherbrooke, 'Legislation for Ireland', (Nov., 1880): 684

families ‘according to the number of children they possessed’. Comparisons were drawn with the biblical land holding systems of the Israelites to establish religiously valid precedence: ‘No man could own the land, save the man who cultivated it, and he only so much as his domestic responsibility entitled him to’.⁵⁶ Similarly, David Power Conyngham described a legal system in which it was ‘held that the land was for the benefit of the people’. He sought to emphasize Irish distinctiveness in the matter of both land holding and the political independence that resulted from it by informing his readers that ‘on the Continent and in England the feudal system held sway, and it debased the people by keeping them dependent on the nobles who held the land. The Brehon Code held sway in Ireland until after the English invasion.’⁵⁷ In this way the laws were taken to explain a cultural preference for localism and an ingrained historical commitment to interpersonal loyalty over abstract ‘national’ identity.⁵⁸

Land reformers naturally embraced this historically grounded idea of communal land ownership. Henry George found the concept of Irish ‘tribal tenure in law’ useful to highlight the historicity of his proposals, providing them with an aura of immutable and transcendent truth. In his own inimitable way he recalled, with some decorative élan, that ‘what the English call your “new fangled and Yankee inventions”, are truths that I have heard over and over again from the likes of old men who could not speak a word of English when I sat by the peat fires of Connaught cabins’.⁵⁹ Beyond Ireland, the anthropological historicism of Belgian political economist Emile de Laveleye was an influence on George. Laveleye, like George a keen critic of Herbert Spencer, advocated agrarian republicanism, based on his study of kinship communities in his famous work *Primitive Property*.⁶⁰ Such work enabled George to claim that common property land was ‘in accordance with the first perceptions of man everywhere’, recognised not only by the Brehon Laws, but ‘by the early institutions of all ancient nations’.⁶¹ For his part, Laveleye endorsed George’s work and, to the American’s delight, compared George to de Tocqueville.⁶² Laveleye acted as a conduit for George’s vision in Europe, sending his book to friends and associates including the economist Emile Justin Menier and libertarian

⁵⁶ Clancy, *Ireland As She Is*, (1877), 30

⁵⁷ David Power Conyngham, *Ireland Past and Present: Embracing a complete history of the Land Question from the Earliest Period to the Present Time*, (New York: James Sheehy, 1884), 26

⁵⁸ Clancy, *The Land League Manual*, (1881), 209-10

⁵⁹ Henry George, ‘Letter in defense of Michael Davitt and the Irish Land League’, (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

⁶⁰ Sullivan, ‘Ireland’s Great Grievance’, (1881): 62; Emile de Laveleye, ‘The State versus the Man: A Criticism of Herbert Spencer’, *Contemporary Review*, 47, (1885): 485-508

⁶¹ Henry George, *Irish World*, 10 Dec., 1881; 23 Apr., 1881

⁶² Henry George to Edward Robeson Taylor, 19 Feb., 1880, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

socialist Agathon de Potter of Brussels, whose work had ‘very much pleased and impressed’ George.⁶³

Although a valuable intellectual construction, providing precedent of communal ownership and usufruct, reclaiming the historical possession of the soil remained subsumed within a discourse of Natural Rights. Within this tradition in Ireland, the figure of James Fintan Lalor stands out. Born in 1807 in Co. Laois to prosperous tenant farmers, Lalor’s political education was the Tithe War of the 1830s and, in particular, the Famine. Appalled at the zeal with which British legislators sought to extirpate small holders as a matter of economic faith, with no ‘voice to protect against the principle, the feasibility, the consequences’ of such a policy, Lalor directed his work to the development of a ‘social economy’, an economic system that secured social rights as preeminent over property.⁶⁴ He determined that the only means by which such a stable and contented republican society could be developed was by fostering a solid agricultural base. ‘Create the husbandman’, wrote Lalor, asserting the moral foundationalism of agriculture, ‘and you create the mechanic, the artisan, the manufacturer, the merchant. Thus you will work on the ordinance of God, in the order and with the powers of nature’.⁶⁵

It was through the primacy of natural law that Lalor understood the defence of his ideas. It was the source of a great deal of explanatory power in his work. Agriculture was the first and most significant occupation because it was ‘first in the order of nature’; living and working one’s own land was ‘as God and nature intended’, and ‘no law of nature’ forbid the starving man to steal bread.⁶⁶ Lalor connected the discourses of eighteenth century republicanism with the later radical tradition, not just in placing the right to land as central to ‘the vigour and vitality of all other rights’, but in his support for an active and disinterested public sphere.⁶⁷ A truly free country would be ‘based on a peasantry rooted like rocks in the soil of the land’.⁶⁸ He echoed Paine’s famous maxim that ‘no generation of living men can bind a generation that is not yet born, or can sell or squander the rights of man’, and came to similar conclusions that rents should be paid ‘to themselves, the people, for public purposes’.⁶⁹

⁶³ Henry George to John Swinton, 29 Apr., 1880, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

⁶⁴ James Fintan Lalor, ‘Tenants’ Right and Landlord’s Law’, (1847), in *“The Faith of a Felon” and Other Writings*, Marta Ramón, (ed.), (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2012), 86; Fintan Lalor, in Fogarty, (ed.), *James Fintan Lalor*, (1918), 19; 21; 24; 26; 65

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, 22

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, 22; 66; 85; 129

⁶⁷ Fintan Lalor, *“The Faith of a Felon”*, Ramón, (ed.), (2012), 104

⁶⁸ Fintan Lalor, in Fogarty, (ed.), *James Fintan Lalor*, (1918), 59

⁶⁹ Fintan Lalor, *“The Faith of a Felon”*, Ramón, (ed.), (2012), 140; 134

Lalor's work, like Davitt's latterly, was at pains to emphasise the natural and divine support for direct ownership of the soil by farmers, as 'permanent, and imperishable, and universal'.⁷⁰ He made clear the distinction between landlord ownership and the 'absolute allodial' possession that was by right vested in a democratic conception of the 'people of Ireland'. In this Lalor presaged the Land League's connection of land with democratic sovereignty, that the 'people' were 'the first landowners and lords paramount as well as the lawmakers of this island'.⁷¹ Lalor's democratic republicanism was a self-conscious position, his distaste for 'the crawling to get money' and his idealisation of 'heroism' and 'all the romantic passions' were part of a deliberate attempt to 'take up the mission of the United Irishmen'.⁷² In this Lalor was a conduit for the transatlantic radical republican tradition, a legacy in which the United Irishmen exemplified both the universality of Natural Rights republicanism, but also, in its romantic association with the political cultures of Ireland and the U.S., its particularity and anti-Britishness. The association of particular national and ideological traditions proved to be a powerful vehicle for both. There was an unavoidable proximity of national and political constructs, the importance of which, and the dependence of both on each, has been too often obscured by the processes of liberal modernity that have, in detaching reason from its frail human foundations, neglected the centrality of the arational identifications – 'language, value, custom, life-style, identity, allegiance' – that constitute 'culture'.⁷³ And it is these questions, those of nationality and political ideology, that the next chapter addresses.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 136

⁷¹ Fintan Lalor, in Fogarty, (ed.), *James Fintan Lalor*, (1918), 43-4

⁷² Fintan Lalor, "*The Faith of a Felon*", Ramón, (ed.), (2012), 97

⁷³ Terry Eagleton, 'The Contradictions of Postmodernism', *New Literary History*, 28:1, (1997): 3

Culture, Identity and Ideology

If Irish political life at the end of the nineteenth century was convulsed by memories and allegiances of the past, then the same can certainly be said of the U.S., where the political sediments left by the revolutionary era and discourses of the early republic were still manifest. In Ireland and the U.S., the political battles of the late eighteenth century found willing combatants in the late nineteenth. In George's view, Alexander Hamilton and Thomas Jefferson stood 'forth at all time as the personification of the conflicting ideas expressed in our two permanent parties'.¹ So too did Patrick Ford subscribe to this view of the permanency and immediacy of this particular historical conflict, castigating Hamilton's 'English Party' as the ideological kin of contemporary enemies of republicanism.² In James Clancy's words, the history of Irish struggle against the English had comprised two antithetical forces 'grappling: a rude, unorganized Democracy resisting an aggressive, piratical Feudalism'.³ As this chapter will suggest, the pervasiveness of such allusions demonstrate the critical force of cultural identity in shaping political ideologies of the time.

'Among the strongest supporters of the Jeffersonians' writes David Wilson, 'were many of the Irish immigrants who had arrived in the country' in the mid-eighteenth-century. This shared anti-British republicanism provided a durable template for assimilation.⁴ The civic republicanism of the United Irishmen involved an equivocation about commerce and wealth, especially concerning non-productive activities such as speculation, and a veneration of public virtue and national sacrifice.⁵ Nevertheless David Wilson maintains that, 'the practical significance of this classical republican outlook can easily be exaggerated; there was a wide gap between idealized notions of political philosophy and actual behaviour in everyday life'.⁶ But, as has already been argued, this stance marginalizes the strong connection between moral philosophy and social practice, and ignores how these 'idealised notions' were political acts, part of the 'actual behaviour' of everyday life, as well as shaping external perceptions of 'Irishness'.⁷ As Kevin Whelan has pointed out, the distinction between the Enlightenment radicalism of the United Irishmen and that of the Catholic majority was less substantive than is sometimes

¹ Henry George, 'Wanted: A Democratic Party', Speech to the Brooklyn Revenue Reform Club, 12 March, 1883, (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL)

² *Irish World*, 12 Oct., 1872; Gordon, 'Studies in Irish and Irish American Thought' (1977), 425

³ Clancy, *The Land League Manual*, (1881), 30

⁴ David A. Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States: Immigrant Radicals in the Early American Republic*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1998), 1-2; Miller, *Ireland and Irish America*, (2008), 255

⁵ Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States*, (1998), 5; 36; 148

⁶ *Ibid.*, 6

⁷ *Ibid.*, 175

imagined.⁸ The classical republicanism of the United Irishmen, later fragmented and subsumed within the structures of the Democratic party to which so many Irish Catholics remained loyal, helped to create a 'tough and durable tradition of working-class Irish-American republicanism'.⁹

It was also sustained in the republican anti-imperialism of much of the canon of Irish nationalism. Young Irelander Thomas Davis demanded self-rule for Ireland as 'the best guardian of public virtue', in contrast to imperial control, which produced 'a culturally debased and overly materialistic society'.¹⁰ Like others after him, Davis found both potency and political mileage in emphasising the connection between imperialism and commercialism, encompassing both the economically and socially demoralising aspects of these developments. John Mitchel, too, actively conflated the cultural values and systems of England with the 'practices and values of nineteenth century liberalism', what he described as 'The British System'.¹¹ Britain and Ireland were not merely different, but opposites or inversions, the 'two types of human society' and Mitchel's proud and vocal support for American slavery was a facet of this binary conception.¹² His romanticisation of the rural American south was strewn with republican intonations, and his defence of slavery framed as a hostility to capitalism and, like Jefferson's own hypocrisy, against the debasing effects of materialism and wage labour.¹³

This tradition was full of vitality by the 1880s. Jefferson's anti-British sentiments were well utilised by Irish nationalists seeking to establish an impeachable American authority for their animosities, as well as carving out a niche for their own Irish-American identities, separate from the Anglo-American establishment. James Clancy dwelt on Jefferson's warning that 'in spite of treaties, England is still our enemy', and maintained, like Mitchel, that England's greed had 'placed her and Ireland at opposite ends of the balance. As either rises, so the other sinks'.¹⁴ Irish-Americans sought out and took pride in the involvement of their compatriots in the American Revolutionary War, boasting that

⁸ Kevin Whelan, *The Tree of Liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the Construction of Irish Identity, 1760-1830*, (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 42

⁹ Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States*, (1998), 159; Bryan McGovern, 'John Mitchel: Ecumenical Nationalist in the Old South', *New Hibernia Review*, 5:2, (2001): 108; Michael Durey, 'The Dublin Society of United Irishmen and the Politics of the Carey-Drennan Dispute, 1792-4', *The Historical Journal*, 37:1, (1994): 89-111

¹⁰ quoted in, Niamh Lynch, 'Defining Irish Nationalist Anti-Imperialism: Thomas Davis and John Mitchel', *Éire-Ireland*, 42:1, (2007): 87

¹¹ Lynch, 'Defining Irish Nationalist Anti-Imperialism', (2007): 95

¹² John Mitchel to Fr. Kenyon, in William Dillon, *Life of John Mitchel*, vol. II, (London: K. Paul and Trench, 1888), 106

¹³ Edmund Morgan, 'Slavery and Freedom: The American Paradox', *The Journal of American History*, 59:1 (1972): 5-29; Malcolm Campbell, 'Irish Nationalism and Immigrant Assimilation: Comparing the United States and Australia', *Australasian Journal of American Studies*, 15:2 (1996): 34

¹⁴ Clancy, *Ireland As She Is*, (1877), 27; 62

'seven men of Irish birth or descent' signed the declaration of independence, and that 'half the rebel continental army were Irish'.¹⁵ Alexander Sullivan argued that liberty and prosperity were incompatible with 'English authority', and others embraced 'Washington's example [against] England's consistent perversity'¹⁶

In Ireland, Fenian republicanism openly courted these ideological affinities. America's success as a republic and an anti-British counterweight was appealing, and some urban Fenians even contemplated the idea that 'federation with the U.S.A would be more favourable than with Britain' if full independence was not possible.¹⁷ It was a variation on a familiar theme for Irish radicals, namely the image of the U.S. as a political utopia or ideal archetype; the 'Great Western Republic', or the 'great Republic beyond the Atlantic'.¹⁸ Matthew Harris compared the 'rent-tax' to the 'tea tax', concluding that both would lead to 'national independence'.¹⁹ In Irish-America, the utopian idea of Ireland as a state of the union was appealing for many reasons. The *Irish World* reported an offhand remark by an American businessman that 'Ireland ought to be in form, as she is in fact, a State of our Union', before fantasising that such a 'consummation would render Ireland immediately free, happy, and prosperous'.²⁰

The rhetorical reconstruction of the republican revolutionary period was sustained within several shared Irish and American romantic nationalist tropes; masculinity (and its necessary balance in pristine femininity), anti-Britishness, a rugged and honest demotic sensibility and an opposition to economic privilege. By the 1880s, these conceptions were put to use in opposing the perceived entrenchment of Anglo-American cultural power. The *Irish World* cautioned of a growing class aping the 'manners and customs of aristocracies', and, a little less cautiously two years later, that England 'has returned upon us in spirit and rots into the very soul of our circumventing classes, lives in our monopolies, breathes through our marts, growls through our press, putrefies our politics, and corrupts our courts'.²¹ In 1883, in an address to the Irish societies of New York

¹⁵ Patrick J. Flatley, *Ireland and the Land League: Key to the Irish Question*, (Boston: D. O'Loughlin and Co., 1881), 59; 60; Clancy, *Ireland As She Is*, (1877), 303

¹⁶ Alexander Sullivan, *Irish World*, 16 Feb., 1883, clipping from (Davitt Papers, MS 9368, Trinity College Dublin [hereafter DP, TCD]); T. L. McCarthy, *Irish World*, 8 Feb., 1879

¹⁷ Matthew Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism, 1882-1916*, (Woodbridge: Boydell and Brewer, 2006), 25

¹⁸ Clancy, *Ireland As She Is*, (1877), 304; 'Irish National Land League Relief Fund: Sums received for Relief of Distress by Irish National Land League, from Dec. 22, 1879, to April 30, 1880; also Particulars of Grants made by Land League to Local Relief Committees, &c., from Dec. 22, 1879 to April 30, 1880', (HP, MS 21,910, NLI); Rev. James Cantwell at Thurles, Co. Tipperary, 14 Nov., 1880, (LLP, MS 11,289, NLI)

¹⁹ Matthew Harris, letter to the *Irishman*, Ballinasloe, 19 June, 1880, Pamphlet, (HP, MS 21,910, NLI)

²⁰ *Irish World*, 30 Nov., 1878

²¹ *Irish World*, 7 Dec., 1878; 22 May, 1880; T. P. O'Connor, 'The Irish Situation', *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 8, (1883): 76; Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, (2002), 25

State, one speaker warned of English ‘assaults on American public opinion.’ He had observed how the great and the good tried to ‘impress us at this side of the ocean with the greatness of the debt we owe Old England; how generously her capitalists treat us! - how affectionately her aristocracy marries us! But Irishmen, all this will not do. The brawn of America is yet manly’.²²

Romanticism

Romanticism has long been a facet of Irish and Irish-American culture, sustained by both internal and external cultural pressures. Professor of Irish Studies, John V. Kelleher, was reinforcing this tendency when he described the ‘titanism and magic and piercing melancholy and doomed bravery and ineffectualness and verbal sensuality and splendid dream-haunted failure and the exquisite spiritual sensitivity of the Celt’.²³ Romantic associations held dual and often contradictory purposes. So while it helped some Irish Americans to be ‘Irish’ in ways ‘aesthetically acceptable to the American cultural mainstream of genteel respectability’, it also fostered suspicion of the moral dangers of the new industrial and commercial environment.²⁴ The beauty and purity of the natural world and of rural life served a central function in the discourse. It was not unusual for political polemics on Ireland to begin with a description of the country similar to this one by David Power Conyngham, which described Ireland’s ‘green and fertile fields, her grassy slopes, her flowing rivers and luxuriant plains [as] but the glittering robe that hides the wounds and sores of an afflicted nation’.²⁵ The romance of ‘noble failure’ that permeated Irish culture and its nationalist history implicitly rejected some elements of modernity. In much the same way as elements of Church doctrine lionised poverty, romantic discourse sometimes insisted that only ‘failure’ could guarantee integrity, by avoiding the confusing moral compromises that constituted ‘success’ in liberal-capitalist world. Romantic literature of late nineteenth century Irish-America emphasised the correlation between political or financial rise and moral descent, the latter inevitably corresponding with a rejection of Irish identity.²⁶ The poverty of certain nationalists was seen as determined evidence of both their loyalty to the Irish cause and their ‘Irishness’.²⁷

²² Dr. William B. Wallace, ‘Address to the Representatives of the Irish Societies of the Empire State’, (Devoy Papers, MS 18,048, NLI)

²³ Charles Fanning, ‘Robert Emmet and Nineteenth-Century Irish America’, *New Hibernia Review*, 8:4, (2004): 60

²⁴ *ibid.*, 60

²⁵ Conyngham, *Ireland Past and Present*, (1884), 202

²⁶ Fanning, ‘Robert Emmet’, (2004): 80

²⁷ Clancy, *Ireland As She Is*, (1877), 287

These ideas and themes were by no means unique to the Irish community, but became more associated with them than any other ethnic group.

Irish history was a central element of this romanticism. It was framed by a belief in the pre-lapsarian (or so often pre-Anglo-Saxon) greatness of early, even pre-Christian Ireland, and envisioned a nation that could be revived and reanimated with political independence. This formed the primary motif of James Clancy's *Ireland As She Is, As She Has Been, and As She Ought to Be*. Indeed it shaped the narrative of his argument in much the same way as it did in John Boyle O'Reilly's poem 'The Three Queens', where early pre-historical 'Queen Liberty' is deposed by the legalistic and bureaucratic forces of modernity, finally to have her ideals rediscovered in the final stanzas.²⁸ In a more explicit expression of this historical romanticism, David Power Conyngham's quixotic history described Ireland as suffused with 'an air of romance and chivalry in her history that invests her with an unconquerable resolve never to give up the struggle until they place the diadem of liberty upon her brow'.²⁹ The genius of 'the most learned body of men in Europe', and the moral authority of the Brehon Laws, were also essential elements for any nationalist history of Irish land.

Even Irish constructions of social roles were soaked in romantic visions. In Irish nationalist literature, idealisation of Irish nature, masculinity and the romance of rebellion coalesced.³⁰ Masculinity and femininity were also encased within traditional cultural norms, which emphasised a connection to the nationalist past and the social stasis of republicanism. As Davitt explained, established social roles were part of 'the moral instincts of our people', a commonly intelligible morality, 'in obedience to the law of Nature'.³¹ It was essential to republican society that men would develop the 'qualities that are essential to the part which he has to perform in the duties of life'.³² For women, Irish femininity 'stressed domesticated motherhood, but drew upon a mythic past to celebrate the qualities of the virtuous, strong and sacrificial peasant mother as an icon for the new nation'.³³ For men, as Alison Kibler has shown, organisations such as the AOH, Clan na Gael and the Gaelic League worked to reinforce and preserve, 'a more unabashed version of Irish hypermasculinity' that aggressively rejected the 'gentility and materialism

²⁸ John Boyle O'Reilly, *In Bohemia*, (Boston: Cashman, Keating and Co., 1886), 77-83

²⁹ Conyngham, *Ireland Past and Present*, (1884), 18

³⁰ Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, (2002), 133

³¹ Michael Davitt, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland; Or the Story of the Land League Revolution*, (London: Harper and Brothers, 1904), 155; Davitt, 'Random Thoughts on the Irish Land War', in King, (ed.), *Jottings in Solitary*, (2003), 187

³² Davitt, 'Random Thoughts on the Irish Land War', in King, (ed.), *Jottings in Solitary*, (2003), 187

³³ Eileen Janes Yeo, 'Gender and Homeland in the Irish and Jewish Diasporas, 1850-1930', in M. Schrover and E. Yeo, (eds.), *Gender, Migration and the Public Sphere, 1850-2005*, (New York: Taylor and Francis, 2010), 23

of Anglo-American Protestants'.³⁴ Pub culture, despite the efforts of the temperance movement, remained another marker for the tough masculinity of working-class Irish-American life.

Consequently, most definitions of 'Irishness' in America tended to adopt a version of masculinity that rejected effete and Anglicised standards of gentility. Not only did this enable Irish-Americans to conform to a familiar image in the U.S., the hardy and practical man of demotic and unaffected manners, the American *par excellence*, but this construct also emphasised maxims of patriotism and honesty over material wealth. While poverty meant struggle which fostered masculinity and other virtues, wealth and luxury always threatened to breed effeminacy and vice.³⁵ The Revolution had been, therefore, a struggle between 'manhood and monarchy', and of course Ireland's landlords were, *sui generis*, 'a small class of effeminate aristocrats'.³⁶ Similarly, George enjoined his audience in one lecture to feel only sympathy for a young heir, 'knowing that that enormous sum will come to him [and] surrounded by flunkeys', for 'only a miracle can make a man of him'.³⁷ This strong concept of romantic masculinity in both American and Irish-nationalist cultures possessed a 'harsher conceptual edge' too, evident in Michael Davitt's cold and vicious tone criticising those who he deemed to have failed to put up a manly struggle during the Famine.³⁸ In this Davitt was echoing Fintan Lalor, who had also attacked 'withering' manhood as 'sapping all our virtues' and 'cowardising a brave race'.³⁹ These well-worn stereotypes were put to effective use in the service of the Land League, an organisation that had inspired a 'new manhood [...] into the down trodden people'.⁴⁰ Boycotting, for example, was not only serving the national cause, but was helping Irishmen 'become men', and history would condemn Irishmen if they were 'too cowardly and mean to stand up boldly in assertion of their country's liberties'.⁴¹

Patrick Ford made use of this recognisable trope of rugged American manliness set against the corrupt and effeminate luxuriousness of Europe to critique the Catholic Church. Ford lambasted Cardinal McCloskey for his 'overly elegant carriage', which,

³⁴ William Jenkins, 'Remapping "Irish America": Circuits, Places, Performances', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 28:4, (2009): 92; Alison Kibler, 'The Stage Irishwoman', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 24:3, (2005): 5-30

³⁵ *Irish World*, 23 Nov., 1878

³⁶ *Irish World*, 20 Dec., 1879; Bell, *Peasant Proprietary for Ireland*, (1881), 24

³⁷ Henry George, Lecture at Midland Institute, Birmingham, 23rd January, 1884, (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL)

³⁸ Bew and Maume, 'Michael Davitt and the Personality of the Irish Agrarian Revolution', (2009), 65

³⁹ Fintan Lalor, "The Faith of a Felon", Ramón, (ed.), (2012), 143

⁴⁰ Henry George, 'Visit to Bishop Nulty', 1881, (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

⁴¹ Conyngham, *Ireland Past and Present*, (1884), 229; John O'Connor Power at Ballinasloe, *Freeman's Journal*, 4 Nov., 1878; Bill poster: 'Scandalous Flunkeyism and Gross Misrepresentation', (HP, MS 21,910, NLI)

although possibly ‘appropriate for European aristocrats, [...] had no place in America’.⁴² By contrast, Henry George’s description of his visit to Bishop Nulty of Meath commended the prelate for the fact his carriage was ‘a plain substantial vehicle drawn by two sturdy though not stylish horses and driven by a coachman without any affectation of livery’.⁴³ Nulty’s lack of extravagance was an imprint of his honesty and virtue. Extending beyond clerical travel arrangements, a brash rejection and hostility towards genteel Anglo-American society, its ‘knickerbocker respectability’, and its aristocratic pretensions was an important part of the appeal of Ford and his newspaper.⁴⁴ The *Irish World* took deliberate aim at the ‘superficial pharisaism of the British snobs on either side of the Atlantic’.⁴⁵ Writing a hagiography of Ford not long after his death, the Catholic writer Rev. John Talbot Smith recalled that the *Irish World* was ‘the first really vivid expression of my own feelings, the first proper expression of my natural rage against the horde of elegant Oxford and Cambridge and Harvard and Yale liars’.⁴⁶ Clearly these national enmities were also signifiers of class and translated into social conflicts in the U.S. The romantic essayist Ralph Waldo Emerson highlighted this when he wrote in the same paper of the ‘mean snobbery [of the] comfortable and “well off” who import English goods and manners, to the detriment of the American character.’⁴⁷ Despite their differences, Emerson the transcendentalist and radical Irish nationalists could agree that social practices of ‘wealthy Anglophiles [...] caused economic distress and weakened republican virtues’.⁴⁸

Pan-Celticism

Heirs to the confidence of Enlightenment rationalism, this economic aristocracy increasingly embraced the promises of scientific objectivity in humane matters offered by late-Victorian liberalism. It has already been observed that this evaluative standard engendered opacity towards non-rational (and often this translated as the non-economic) cultural imperatives in other countries, but it also obscured the formative effects and centrality of local peculiarities to its own development. Understood in this way, rooted in place and time, Irish nationalism and republican radicalism were not awkward adjuncts or even expedient allies, but mutually dependent aspects of the same opposition to British liberal-capitalism. It is instructive in this regard to note the remarkably similar cultural

⁴² Rodechko, ‘An Irish-American Journalist and Catholicism’, (1970): 528; *Irish World*, 17 Apr., 1875

⁴³ Henry George, ‘Visit to Bishop Nulty’, 1881, (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

⁴⁴ *Irish World*, 31 Oct., 1874

⁴⁵ *Irish World*, 12 Apr., 1879

⁴⁶ Rev. John Talbot Smith, *Patrick Ford of the Irish World*, (AIA.047, NYU)

⁴⁷ Ralph Waldo Emerson, ‘English manners threaten us’, *Irish World*, 4 Jan., 1879

⁴⁸ Gordon, ‘Studies in Irish and Irish American Thought’ (1977), 385

nationalist approach of Gandhian opposition to British rule in India.⁴⁹ Britain's position at the helm and vanguard of liberal capitalist modernity 'often made the British case the ideal or critical model', but it also resulted in a striking similarity in opposition.⁵⁰ In Karl Marx's words, 'England cannot be treated simply as a country along with other countries. She must be treated as the *metropolis of capital*'.⁵¹

One result of this was the growth of 'pan-Celticism', an idea which demonstrated the cultural parallels of various forms of anti-English sentiment. In an era when national characteristics were treated as both verifiable and semi-permanent, it is revealing to note the strength of the 'Celtic' scholarly tradition, as it was embraced in different ways in Ireland, Scotland and France, in providing a means of self-confident differentiation from the perceived natures and values of the English. It made use of a long tradition of associating 'Englishness' with a discomfort with intellectual or moral principle in general and anti-materialist metaphysical inquiry in particular. Its binary form was famously stated by Edmund Burke, when he denounced the French revolutionaries for 'the clumsy subtilty of their political metaphysics'.⁵² From the vantage of his narrow empiricism, David Hume similarly observed that 'the English, of any people in the universe, have the least of a national character; unless this very singularity may pass for such'.⁵³ Conversely, during the course of the nineteenth century, the Catholic Church in Ireland developed a consistent line of attack against the 'soulless individualism and materialism' of the Anglo-Protestant world.⁵⁴ So too in France, where theologian Félicité de Lamennais characterised political economy as an 'anarchy of interests and desires' and a universalisation of England, a country that was morally deceased and 'galvanised only by the convulsions of cupidity'.⁵⁵ In the 1880s, one American Catholic described, 'a certain staidness of natural character' in the English, 'which objects to being disturbed by mere chimeras'.⁵⁶ Striking a more critical note, P.J. Flatley suggested the English 'do not appear to have been mastered by any deepened conviction other than the conviction of self-interest'.⁵⁷

⁴⁹ Kaushal Kishore Mishra, 'Problem of Sovereignty in Gandhian Thought', *The Indian Journal of Political Science*, 66:3, (2005): 515-530

⁵⁰ Bevir and Trentmann, 'Critique within Capitalism', (2002), 1

⁵¹ Karl Marx, 'Confidential Communication', *Karl Marx and Frederick Engels: Ireland and the Irish Question*, (Moscow: Progress Publishers, 1971), 161

⁵² Edmund Burke, 'Reflections on the Revolution in France', (1791), *The Works of Edmund Burke*, vol. 1, (New York: George Dearborn, 1835), 481

⁵³ David Hume, 'Of National Characters', *Essays: Moral, Political, and Literary*, (1777), Eugene F. Miller, (ed.), (Indianapolis: Liberty Fund, 1985), 207

⁵⁴ J. A. MacMahon, 'The Catholic Clergy and the Social Question in Ireland, 1891-1916', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 70:280, (1981): 266

⁵⁵ Rothschild, 'Political Economy', (2011), 757

⁵⁶ Arthur F. Marshall, 'Free Thought in England', *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 5, (1880): 577

⁵⁷ P. J. Flatley, *Ireland and the Land League*, (1881), 24-5

By contrast, and as a direct reaction, Ireland, as well as Scotland and France, cultivated and asserted the existence of strong national traditions of scholarly excellence and intellectual enterprise to contrast with England's practical efficiency. There was too, certainly in Scotland and Ireland, a strong military element often highlighted, portrayed, as ever, in contrast to a bloodless and detached English rationalism. This typical congruence was expressed by M. W. Kirwan, a journalist who was formerly a commander in the *Compagnie Irlandaise* during the Franco-Prussian War, in his description of 'the time when Ireland was the land of scholars and the nurse of arms'.⁵⁸ Others focused on Ireland as 'the university of the West. She was rich in libraries, colleges and schools [...] elsewhere you would have sought in vain to find scholarship and scholars held in such high esteem'.⁵⁹ Given that the English were simultaneously constructed as Machiavellian, and as anti-intellectuals who 'only valued physical power', it would seem that romantic license smoothed out some of the contradictions inherent in these essentialisations.⁶⁰

Nevertheless, the confluence of national and social struggle against a singular and monolithic (albeit constructed) national entity provided fertile ground for transnational cooperation and the development of an idiom of pan-Celtic solidarity. As Ewen Cameron has observed, the land struggles across Britain and Ireland should not be compartmentalised, especially given the cross-pollination of ideas and the internationalist approach of those involved. 'There were a group of land reformers who were capable of thinking of the land question in a way which crossed national boundaries', of which Michael Davitt was merely one.⁶¹ In Scotland, with the establishment of Land League branches, Davitt's popularity outstripped that of Parnell, and he remained a highly popular speaker with both Irish and Scottish audiences. But this 'extended solidarity and vision of a broader radical movement', Máirtín Ó Catháin argues, was not a popularly held phenomenon, confined rather to Davitt's close coterie of radical reformers. This included the 'Philadelphian Fenian Dr William Carroll, Scottish nationalist and land reformer John Murdoch, and the Glasgow Irish trio of John Ferguson, Edward McHugh and Richard McGee', who were all supporters of George, and shared a radical republican ethos that brought the group into conflict with the Parnellite wing of the League in

⁵⁸ M. W. Kirwan, *Lecture by M. W. Kirwan, Editor of the True Witness, in reply to Reverend Mr. Bray, on the "Romish" Church, delivered in the Mechanics' Hall, March 13, 1877*, (Montreal: True Witness Office, 1877), 2

⁵⁹ Rev. James J. Moriarty, *The Mystic Key to Ireland's History: a lecture delivered on St. Patrick's Day, 1881*, (Chatham, N.Y.: The Courier Printing House, 1881), 5; 14

⁶⁰ John Ferguson at the Dublin Rotunda, *Irish World*, 16 Nov., 1878

⁶¹ Ewen A. Cameron, 'Communication or Separation? Reactions to Irish Land Agitation and Legislation in the Highlands of Scotland c.1870-1910', *The English Historical Review*, 120:487, (2005): 634

Glasgow.⁶² Davitt and his radical colleagues may have been outliers but their similar political philosophies and ambitions point to a common radical political culture, one in which the ideas of Henry George were to become centrally important. In the 1870s in the west of Scotland, Edward McHugh and Richard McGee had congregated around the Glasgow Republican Club, a group of ‘advanced liberals who gathered to read John Stuart Mill’, and engage with the work of Carlyle, Emerson and, latterly, George.⁶³ As in Ireland and the U.S., forms of non-denominational Christianity pervaded the radical language. Edward McHugh’s Catholicism was not a barrier to the spread of his ideas in the Highlands, and the Skye crofters’ religiosity allowed McHugh to use ‘arguments which had already been heard in Catholic Ireland’.⁶⁴ This radical theology, often covert rather than overt, was another key ideological branch that held this group of thinkers together.

Given the apposite intellectual environment, it is not surprising that this group readily adopted George’s ideas.⁶⁵ George, like Davitt, had already seen the potential for an alliance between disaffected Irishmen in the lowlands of Scotland and back in Ireland, and the marginalised crofters in the Highlands. After the 1881 Act, George spoke in Glasgow in critical terms of the offering, garnering applause for encouraging his audience that ‘they were part of more than a national movement’, and in the aftermath of the Kilmainham Treaty, George deliberately turned his attentions to Scotland, where he felt the ground was most fertile for his ideas.⁶⁶

John Murdoch, Scottish nationalist and founder of *The Highlander*, was perhaps the most vocal proponent of pan-Celtic radicalism. Despite making little popular impact among Scots and Scottish-American communities, he was integrated into the coterie of social radicals that adjoined the broader Land League movement.⁶⁷ Parnell, Dr. William Carroll and Terence V. Powderly all helped to facilitate a speaking tour in the U.S. for Murdoch, allowing him to access a well-established network of, not merely nationalist, but also indigenous labour radical audiences.⁶⁸ Scotland enjoyed an ambiguous position among Irish nationalists. She was considered to have compromised her nationhood for

⁶² Máirtín Ó Catháin, ‘Michael Davitt in Scotland’, *Saothar: Journal of Irish Labour History*, 25, (2000): 20

⁶³ Ó Catháin, ‘Michael Davitt in Scotland’, (2000): 22

⁶⁴ Andrew G. Newby, ‘Edward McHugh, the National Land League of Great Britain and the “Crofters’ War”, 1879-1882’, *Scottish Historical Review*, 82, (2003): 85

⁶⁵ Newby, ‘Edward McHugh’, (2003): 75; Ó Catháin, ‘Michael Davitt in Scotland’, (2000): 21

⁶⁶ *Glasgow Herald*, 18 March, 1882; Terence McBride, ‘John Ferguson, Michael Davitt and Henry George’, (2006): 424; Henry George to Edward Robeson Taylor, 30 May, 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

⁶⁷ John D. Wood, ‘Transatlantic Land Reform: American and the Crofters’ Revolt, 1878-1888’, 63:175, (1984): 92; James Hunter, ‘The Gaelic Connection: The Highland, Ireland and Nationalism, 1873-1922’, *Scottish Historical Review*, 54:158, (1975): 180

⁶⁸ Charles Stewart Parnell to Terence V. Powderly, 16 Feb., 1880, (PP, Series I: Box 2, CUA)

‘comparative prosperity’, while Ireland had ‘preferred rags and an unconquered spirit of liberty to favors won by national dishonor’.⁶⁹ Yet even in this analysis, Scotland’s relationship with England and the British Empire was still somewhat analogous with Ireland’s. This was highlighted by an *Irish World* cartoon, in which the British Empire was represented as a crumbling classical Greek temple. While the column labelled India, Ireland and Afghanistan was breaking apart, Scotland, along with Canada, Australia and Wales, formed parts of the weakened but structurally intact columns.⁷⁰ England had no column of its own, while Scotland took its place alongside Ireland with other members of the Empire.

It was, as James Hunter has described, ‘a belief that Ireland and Scotland stood in similar relation to England’s imperial power’.⁷¹ Fighting against both economic globalisation and cultural imperialism, this radical pan-Celticism tied the imperial to the commercial in similar ways that Mitchel and Davis had earlier done, and saw that the centralisation of both culture and political control was an impulse intimately connected with liberal British and Anglo-American political discourse. In its republican opposition, then, pan-Celticism was not only concerned about centralised control imposed from above, but also sought to erect barriers and controls that would limit the spread of liberal values and cultural or moral uncertainty. There was, contained within this position, a recognition that it could not survive the onslaught of British liberalism; that those particular forms of unanchored freedoms were corrosive to cultural peculiarity.

The social and economic upheaval of the 1870s and 1880s across the Atlantic world, accompanied as it was by a confident reassertion of the authority and status of Anglo-America, gave these ideas a fresh impetus and reality. In the U.S. of the 1880s this ‘Celtic’ culture often appeared as unassimilable and politically dangerous. The existence of ethno-religious features in the strikes of the 1880s only fuelled the nervousness among sections of the American middle-class, who saw in such behaviour not only the work of demagogues and the desiderata of society, but feared a ‘descent’ into European class conflict.⁷² For many, fears over working-class militancy merged into concern over the dilution of protestant Anglo-Saxonism with Catholicism and Celticism, and conservatives railed against the collective threat of ‘unrestricted immigration, rising Romanism, sinful cities, irresponsible wealth, and socialism’.⁷³ During the 1886 New York mayoral race,

⁶⁹ ‘Proceedings of the Third General Convention of the Irish National League of America, held at, Chicago, Illinois, August, 18th and 19th, 1886’, 28, (103, Box 40, ACo129, PAHRC)

⁷⁰ *Irish World*, 15 Nov., 1879

⁷¹ Hunter, ‘The Gaelic Connection’, (1975): 181

⁷² David Montgomery, ‘The Irish and the American Labor Movement’, in Doyle and Edwards, (eds.), *America and Ireland*, (1976), 211

⁷³ Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*, (1982), 78

George's Democratic rival Abraham Hewitt attacked the idea of a party of labour as inherently divisive and unrepresentative, the importation of alien European attitudes as threatening to the American idea of self-help.⁷⁴ An industrialist and a philanthropist, Hewitt was an archetype of early liberal progressivism and an advocate for civil service reform. An embodiment, perhaps, of all that working-class Irish radicalism found unpalatable.⁷⁵ By contrast, George's hybridity allowed him to segue between both sides. It was even suggested by a critic that George's monograph was part of the 'revolutionary warfare now waged by certain Americans, or Hiberno-Americans, against the institutions of this country'.⁷⁶

It should be remembered that these condemnations of Anglo-America still resonated strongly with non-Irish elements of U.S. society for whom British power still represented the apogee of venal capitalism. When populist leader Mary Elizabeth Lease used the epithet 'London banker', it possessed as much rhetorical condemnation for its geographical determinant as its occupation.⁷⁷ When Patrick Egan's appointment as the United States plenipotentiary ambassador to Chile was condemned by the British-American Society of Boston and subject to criticism in prominent establishment newspapers such as the *New York Times*, the Irishman received a staunch defence from Nebraska's Republican Governor John M. Thayer. The former Union Army General suggested that 'the sentiments and tone of your protest smacks more of the *London Times*' influences' than of enlightened American opinion and condemned the idea of a British-American society as oxymoronic.⁷⁸

Poetry and the political imagination

In sustaining the moral superiority of Irish culture and its imaginative potential as a political utopia, the role of language was central. Critics and advocates alike often supposed a particular fondness and talent for verse to be a marker of national identity, a relationship that hinted at the strong and foundational connections between language and politics generally, and poetry and political imagination more specifically. The moral abdication that can accompany an immersion in technocratic and managerial discourse was most famously and devastatingly laid bare by Hannah Arendt. As she observed first

⁷⁴ *Ibid.*, 167-8

⁷⁵ *Irish World*, 7 Dec., 1878

⁷⁶ Review of *Progress and Poverty*, *Edinburgh Review*, 157:321, (1883), 290

⁷⁷ Mary Elizabeth Lease, 'Wall Street Owns the Country', (1890), in Howard Zinn and Anthony Arnove, (eds.), *Voices of a People's History of the United States*, (New York: Seven Stories, 2004), 226; *Irish World*, 5 July, 1879

⁷⁸ Newspaper clippings from *Irish World*, 6 Apr., 1889 and a Boston newspaper, (DP, MS 9368, TCD)

hand, de-moralised and ungrounded linguistic constructs can incapacitate moral evaluation.⁷⁹ But the reverse is also true; linguistic dexterity in prose and poetry opens up new realms of thought, more attuned to moral sentiments and to the potential dangers of an imposed political rationality. As Dorothy Ross and others have observed, a growing bureaucratic statism, with its own attendant languages of managerialism, was becoming dominant in the 1880s and 1890s.⁸⁰ Of course, Irish nationalists from Mitchel and Davis onward had long associated bureaucratic control and a tendency to fetishize systematic collection of data of as an aspect of British power and control. In Clancy's history of the Famine he mocked England's proclivity for 'appointing commissioners to investigate the potato disease and make doctored reports on the number of the dead'.⁸¹

John Boyle O'Reilly provides a revealing case study of the connections between language and political imagination. Regarded as a moderate and conciliatory voice in the Irish American community, at least by his later years, O'Reilly was editor of the *Boston Pilot*. A more politically temperate organ compared with the *Irish World*, the *Pilot* had started life under Jesuit control and never lost its partiality to the Church's official position. A deported Fenian in his youth, O'Reilly remained a fervent supporter of Irish independence into later life despite rejecting much of the militancy he had previously espoused. He was also the author of three volumes of poetic verse which are characterised by an emotionally effusive idolisation of the subaltern and a mournful longing for a more emotionally stable and just community. O'Reilly's hostility towards liberal-capitalism, despite his own social and economic success, is a reminder of the degree to which these ideas remained an integral part of even moderate Irish Catholic identity. An early twentieth century interpretation even reflected on the 'socialistic poetry of John Boyle O'Reilly' as evidence of 'men in the Fenian movement who clearly saw that [revolution] was through the proletariat alone'.⁸² This revisionism aside, the surface paradox of fervent dreaming of an imagined utopia with his own vaunted position within the social world of Irish America, is illusory. His frequent criticisms of an undeserving aristocracy leading an unjust social structure with amoral abandon suggest his own social insecurities in a New England dominated by an Anglo-American elite. But more than this, his concerns represent those of a much broader constituency.

⁷⁹ Hannah Arendt, *Eichmann in Jerusalem: A Report on the Banality of Evil*, (1963), (London: Penguin, 2006)

⁸⁰ Dorothy Ross, 'Socialism and American Liberalism: Academic Social Thought in the 1880s', *Perspectives in American History*, 11, (1978): 7-79; T. H. Green, *Liberal Legislation and Freedom of Contract: A Lecture*, (Oxford: Slatter and Rose, 1881)

⁸¹ Clancy, *Ireland As She Is*, (1877), 78

⁸² Thomas Brady, 'Historical Basis of Socialism in Ireland', (New York: Socialist Labor Party, 1921), (AIA.047, NYU)

The title poem of the collection *In Bohemia* demonstrated this antipathy towards the hubristic gilded age conspicuous consumption, criticising:

*The moistureless froth of the social show;
The vulgar sham of the pompous feast
Where the heaviest purse is the highest priest*

Similarly he writes in 'The Cry of the Dreamer':

*I am sick of the showy seeming
Of a life that is half a lie*⁸³

O'Reilly's poetry persistently lauded social and spiritual ambitions over more worldly and economic concerns. These were the central concerns of 'The Priceless Things' and 'The Old Vagabond'. In the later, O'Reilly offered the comforting utopianism of self-imposed poverty as the eponymous speaker tells his audience:

And a man to be free must a poor man be, for unhappy is he who thrives:
[...]
*A man's higher being is knowing and seeing, not having and toiling for more;
In the senses and soul is the joy of control, not in pride or luxurious store.*⁸⁴

Nevertheless, O'Reilly's emotionality was not limited to anti-materialist spirituality, but also attacked structural economic issues as well. His poem 'The City Streets' was a Gilded Age lament over the rampant inequality of the era that, were it not for the rhyming meter, could have been taken directly from Henry George's own work. In it O'Reilly describes 'palaces built for trade [...] where fabulous gains are made', with 'miles of glass [...]and] polished brass'. He writes of the social dislocation that such wealth inequalities generate; that there is 'No need to speak of what's out of sight: let us take what is pleasant, and leave the rest'. After a vivid and angry description of the personal horror of poverty and the apathy it induces, O'Reilly attacks the elevation of 'progress':

*The strong and the selfish are sure to rise, while the simple and generous die obscure.
And these are the virtues and social gifts by which Progress and Property rank over Man!
Look there, O woe! where a lost soul drifts on the stream where such virtues overran*⁸⁵

Not only 'progress', but 'civilization' too (inextricably bound to the contractualism of 'statutes'), is condemned as a yardstick for measuring social or moral value, rather than Natural Rights:

⁸³ O'Reilly, 'The Cry of the Dreamer', *In Bohemia*, (1886), 45-6

⁸⁴ O'Reilly, 'An Old Vagabond', *In Bohemia*, (1886), 61-3

⁸⁵ O'Reilly, 'The City Streets', *In Bohemia*, (1886), 70-76

*'Tis Civilization, so they say, and it cannot be changed for the weakness of men.
Take care! take care! 'tis a desperate way to goad the wolf to the end of his den.
Take heed of your Civilization, ye, on your pyramids built of quivering hearts;
There are stages, like Paris in '93, where the commonest men play most terrible parts.
Your statutes may crush but they cannot kill the patient sense of a natural right;
It may slowly move, but the People's will, like the ocean o'er Holland, is always in sight.⁸⁶*

This is paralleled by a perception of the loss of moral certainty in an economic and utilitarian view of value. Thomas J. Mooney had written scathingly in the *Irish World* of the pretention of attempts 'to measure production and its value, life and its duties, society and its laws, God and His love, man and his soul'.⁸⁷ Similarly, O'Reilly opined:

*Common debts are scored and cancelled, weighed
and measured out for gold;
But the debts from men to ages, their account is
never told.⁸⁸*

Indeed O'Reilly took sarcastic aim at utilitarian predilections, commenting wryly: 'Well, then, if you will, let us look at both: let us weigh the pleasure against the pain'.⁸⁹ Allied to this are the familiar descriptors of a republican political inheritance; the centrality of masculinity, valour and patriotism, as well as the relegation of business and commercial activity as a subordinate enterprise;

*We in later days are lower? When a manful stroke is made,
We must raise a purse to pay it—making manliness a trade,*

*Sacrifice itself grows venal—surely Midas will subscribe;
And the shallow souls are gratified when worth
accepts the bribe.*

*But e'en here, amidst the markets, there are things
they dare not prize;
Dollars hide their sordid faces when they meet
anointed eyes.*

[...]

*When the soldier saves the battle, wraps the
flag around his heart,
Who shall desecrate his honor with the
values of the mart?⁹⁰*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Irish World*, 30 Nov., 1878

⁸⁸ O'Reilly, 'The Priceless Things', *In Bohemia*, (1886), 29-32

⁸⁹ O'Reilly, 'The City Streets', *In Bohemia*, (1886), 70-76

⁹⁰ O'Reilly, 'The Priceless Things', *In Bohemia*, (1886), 29-32

Ireland is of course the other central theme of O'Reilly's poetry. O'Reilly emphasises the diaspora as a central aspect of Irish nationality, a collective identity that involved those who left as much as those who stayed. O'Reilly described Ireland as the: 'Mustard seed of the nations! they scattered thy leaves to the air'.⁹¹ This took an anti-imperialist form, which sought to bind Ireland to the United States and situated Irishness, like Mitchel had done, in direct contrast to English values:

*And wherever the flag of the pirate flew, the Eng-
lish slur was heard,
[...]
That strangles the rights of others, and only itself
endures.*⁹²

[...]

*Till the world comes to know that the test of a cause
Is the hatred of tyrants, and Erin's applause!*⁹³

O'Reilly also imagined a prelapsarian golden age, a 'time traditioned!', when 'Men owned the world, and every man was free; The lowest life was noble; all were equal'.⁹⁴ In his poem 'The Three Queens', the first Queen Liberty represented a pre-feudal age of liberty and equality. She was followed by Queen Law:

*Her new code read: "The earth is for the able"
(And able meant the selfish, strong, and shrewd);
"Equality and freedom are a fable;
To take and keep the largest share is good."
Her teachers taught the justice of oppression,
That taxed the poor on all but air and sun;
Her preachers preached the gospel of possession,
That hoards had rights while human souls had none.*

The subtext of land courses through the verse. From 'earth' in the first line, to being taxed 'on all but air and sun' and 'the gospel of possession', land rent is a central thread. Queen Law also inveighed against Thomism. Under her reign:

*Then all things changed their object and relation;
Commerce instead of Nature—Progress instead of Men;*

The reordering of values away from 'Nature' signified an inversion of the divinely ordained natural order. However, the third Queen was Learning, soon to offer emancipation from the restrictions imposed by Queen Law. As the poem reaches its conclusion the centrality of the U.S. becomes clear:

⁹¹ O'Reilly, 'Ireland – 1882', *In Bohemia*, (1886), 47-51

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ O'Reilly, 'Erin', *In Bohemia*, (1886), 55-58

⁹⁴ O'Reilly, 'The Three Queens', *In Bohemia*, (1886), 77-83

*And men are learning, grain by grain, the knowledge
That worlds exist for higher ends than trade.*

[...]

*To guard the deep republican foundations
Of our majestic freedom of the West!⁹⁵*

The final poem in the collection is titled 'America'. In this lengthy entry, the role of the U.S. as the embodiment of political ideals and aspirations of Europe is emphasised. His rousing and emotional conclusion to the poem is a paean to his adopted home:

*O, this thy work, Republic! this thy health,
To prove man's birthright to a commonwealth;
To teach the peoples to be strong and wise,
Till armies, nations, nobles, royalties,
Are laid at rest with all their fears and hates;
Till Europe's thirteen Monarchies are States,
Without a barrier and without a throne,
Of one grand Federation like our own!⁹⁶*

O'Reilly's work ties together the various threads of this chapter in many respects, as it draws on a number of republican themes: masculinity, romanticism, republicanism and public virtue, the oppositional nature and Englishness and Irishness, an ambivalence with commerce and materialism, a spiritual elevation of poverty, a faith in learning, and a suspicion of centralisation and bureaucracy, among others. But as well as this, his work also represents, more broadly, the importance of cultural and linguistic forms in sustaining these self-identified and reflexive values, even in the face of compromise and acceptance of contemporary society, as an anti-modern facet of modernity itself. In some ways even his most strident and hopeful poems are laments, for it was in the context of this great commercial upheaval, the making of the modern world, that they were written.

⁹⁵ *Ibid.*

⁹⁶ O'Reilly, 'America', *In Bohemia*, (1886), 88-97

The Gilded Age: Henry George's Modernity

For we are living in a grand and wonderful time – a time when old ideas, traditions and customs have broken loose from their moorings and are hopelessly adrift on the great shoreless, boundless sea of human thought.¹

Fuelled by rapid economic growth in the United States and the transatlantic world more broadly, ideological uncertainty was a motif of the age. For some, this offered hope that ‘a great change was imminent’, but others were dismayed to find themselves in ‘an age when revolutionary ideas are in the air, and when all traditional and customary conceptions as to the nature of property have been disturbed, and have lost their solidity and definiteness’.² Economic development had precipitated changes in useable political ideologies and rhetoric as the U.S. moved inexorably from a society of independent producers (and of course slaves and slaveholders), to one where the majority of working men were wage labourers. This structural change had a huge impact on conceptions of independence and fairness. Whilst the ideal of the ‘self-made man’ and of the natural inventiveness of the American character persisted, it became harder to justify when the connection between economic success and individual labour was much less evident.³ This economic shift from the realms of production to consumption (as evident in macro-economic policy as in the rapid expansion of advertising) was mirrored by a shift in the realm of moral philosophy: from the production of moral behaviour to its consumption, intentions to effects. In political terms this metaphysical refocus was also evident, as ever-greater social complexity suggested to many that older, participatory visions of democracy were not viable any longer. Instead, government action was to be predicated not on moral principle, but on the ‘utmost possible efficiency’, and democracy repositioned and redefined as progressive state administration.⁴ As a consequence, and as this chapter will demonstrate, the shift from demands for popular *power* to demands for popular *welfare* marked George out as an anachronism, his breath-taking popularity a swansong for an older political vision.

The economic bubble generated by the Civil-War burst in the 1870s, precipitating decades of violently unpredictable cycles of boom and bust and chronic insecurity for

¹ Mary Elizabeth Lease, ‘Speech to the Women’s Christian Temperance Movement’, (1890), in Zinn and Arnove, (eds.), *Voices of a People’s History*, (2004), 226

² *Irish World*, 9 July, 1881; Standish O’Grady, *The Crisis in Ireland*, (1882), 25

³ Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*, (1982), 67

⁴ Woodrow Wilson, quoted in Adcock, *Liberalism and the Emergence of American Political Science*, (2014), 218; David Montgomery, *Beyond Equality: Labor and the Radical Republicans, 1862-1872*, (Urbana, IL.: University of Illinois Press, 1981), 14

much of the workforce.⁵ In response, widespread industrial action in the summer of 1877, in which ‘it seemed as if the whole social and political structure was on the very brink of ruin’, led to tighter government controls on trade union activity.⁶ These tensions continued into the subsequent decade, and the ‘1880s witnessed almost ten thousand strikes and lockouts’.⁷ This economic shock created a parallel uncertainty in the idea of social progress. As one writer put it in 1879, ‘until a few years past, the people of the United States looked forward to the future with a strong and general conviction that a glorious destiny awaited them [...] the absence of overgrown fortunes, the prevalent simplicity of life, and our youthful vigor preserved us, for the time being, from the vices and corruption which attend luxury’. But this confidence was replaced, as the 1880s dawned, by a ‘very general foreboding of evil [...] which evinces almost universal doubt and fear as to our future conditions’.⁸

The commercial growth of the 1880s was underpinned by the proliferation of the limited liability company, which became ‘one of the most important innovations of the era’.⁹ Necessitated by the need to rebuild in the wake of war, the incorporation of the business world fundamentally altered the social restrictions of responsibility within the economic sphere and further damaged the ties binding labour with economic reward.¹⁰ While those with utilitarian predilections welcomed the development, keen that ‘the spirit of gaming’ might be redirected to more positive ends, radical republicans saw only corrupting potential of that same spirit.¹¹ The *Irish World* lamented not only the vast size, power and unaccountability of these corporations, but regarded limited liability as designed ‘to shield theft from criminality and crime from punishment’.¹² Others saw in these developments a Faustian bargain of progress. Frank H. Horton, editor of *The Era* in New York considered ‘combination and concentration’ to be necessary for growth but also ‘deleterious to morals and manners’. In a caution to the hubris of the age, he concluded:

⁵ Montgomery, *Beyond Equality*, (1981), 3; Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*, (1982), 39; Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, (1975), 68.

⁶ *New York Tribune*, 25 July, 1877, cited in Eric Foner, *Reconstruction: America’s Unfinished Revolution, 1863-1877*, (New York: Harper and Row, 1988), 585

⁷ Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*, (1982), 89; Eric Arnesen, ‘American Workers and the Labor Movement’, in Calhoun, (ed.), *The Gilded Age*, (1996), 44

⁸ George D. Wolff, ‘Catholicity and Protestantism in Relation to Our Future as a People’, *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 4, (1879): 143-4

⁹ Montgomery, *Beyond Equality*, (1981), 8; Richard Schneirov, ‘Thoughts on Periodizing the Gilded Age: Capital Accumulation, Society, and Politics, 1873-1898’, *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, 5:3 (2006): 197

¹⁰ Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*, (1982), 83-4

¹¹ Jeremy Bentham quoted in Hilton, *The Age Of Atonement*, (1986), 257

¹² *Irish World*, 30 Nov., 1878

‘one hardly knows what he is antagonizing, when he controls the exaggeration of these forces [...we may be] following and sustaining a pernicious philosophy’.¹³

The passing of the frontier also marked another notable transition. Both the imaginative and economic possibilities offered by the expansive continental landmass were subsequently inhibited, and the character forming and immaterial qualities of the land became myths of the past rather than the present.¹⁴ Anticipating Frederick Jackson Turner, George also recognised that the availability of land had caused Americans to attribute ‘to themselves and their institutions what is really due to conditions now rapidly passing away’ and that this would make republican government more difficult.¹⁵ The 1862 Homestead Act and the proliferation of the railways both encouraged speculation, and had perhaps their most acute effects in George’s California, where questions of land and labour were brought to the fore.¹⁶

More broadly, there were a number of other factors that shaped the political and social cultures of the period. Across the Atlantic world, mechanisation increasingly stratified employment. George observed the ‘independent mechanic [...] turning into the factory hand; the small shopkeeper into a clerk; the wagoner into a brakesman; the editor into a literary operative; the farmer [...] into the agricultural labourer, who owns nothing but his blankets’, and inveighed against the consequent destruction of ‘that personal independence of the masses which is at the root of all the civic virtues’.¹⁷ The trope of the independent autodidactic artisan, intellectually ‘head and shoulders in advance of the capitalist’ in his combination of physical and intellectual labour, remained a potent vision, but with the growth of white-collar clerical, bureaucratic and managerial work, skilled and semi-skilled manual labour gradually lost status.¹⁸ While some economists welcomed the development of this ‘natural aristocracy’ of merit, George inveighed against the negative emotional and intellectual implications of the declining status of labour activity.¹⁹

Perhaps this sympathy came so easily to George because of the destitution he experienced at the outset of his career. He often exuded a very personal outrage at the wastage of human energy and ‘mental power’ on ‘the fierce struggle of our high civilised

¹³ Frank H. Horton to Henry George, 9 July, 1880, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

¹⁴ Trachtenberg, *The Incorporation of America*, (1982), 11; 16

¹⁵ Henry George, *The Irish Land Question: What it Involves, and how alone it can be Settled. An Appeal to the Land Leagues*, (London: Cameron & Ferguson, 1881), 57; Henry George, ‘Garfield or Hancock’, 1880, (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

¹⁶ Barker, *Henry George*, (1955), 180; 76-79

¹⁷ Henry George, ‘Garfield or Hancock’, 1880, (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

¹⁸ *Irish World*, 30 Nov., 1878

¹⁹ Barker, *Henry George*, (1955), 97; Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of class: Studies in English working class history, 1832-1982*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1983), 228; Economist John Bates Clark, quoted in Ross, ‘Socialism and American Liberalism’, (1978): 73

life'.²⁰ George's harmonious conception of the universe, in accordance with natural law and 'common sense', would not only stop 'exploitation', but free humanity from 'the pursuit of self-interest itself'.²¹ Mechanisation, which degraded 'men into the position of mere feeders of machines', was deplored because it deprived them of the chance to develop their human capabilities to their fullest ends.²² It was a position taken by the *Irish World*, whose correspondents also observed that the 'wage system reduces men to machines', or 'a mere adjunct to a machine', devoid of 'independence'.²³ The salvation of George's plan would be in allowing the material benefits of technological development to accrue to the worker rather than the rentier and so herald the possibility of the fullest human development.

The rapid expansion of advertising, as businesses sought control over consumer demand, also marked the culture of the period.²⁴ The mass-production of status products similarly represented a further disconnection between labour and its products, reinforcing a 'status hierarchy of gentility' through the separation of producers and consumers.²⁵ This transition, from a focus on production to consumption, intentions to consequences, precipitated and was reflected in similar processes in other intellectual discourses.²⁶ Across the North Atlantic Economy the social and ethnic divisions created by increasingly centralised wealth were compounded by the growing geographical separation. In Britain, the process of suburbanisation during the nineteenth century had seen increasing class segregation, both physically and politically.²⁷ Whereas earlier labour radicals in Britain and America had tended to see work and culture together, as part of 'an artisanal conception of activity, a visible, limited, and directed relationship to nature', changing spatial and temporal patterns of work and leisure meant that 'work centred culture began to yield to a culture orientated towards the family and the home'.²⁸

Collectively, these factors increasingly polarised class structures, with those on the bottom only able to articulate their 'position within an apparently permanent social

²⁰ Henry George, quoted in Barker, *Henry George*, (1955), 55; Henry George to his sister, 15 Sept., 1861, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 1, NYPL)

²¹ Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy*, (2002), 130

²² Henry George, *Social Problems*, (1883), (New York: Doubleday and McClure Co., 1898), 140; Henry George, 'Lecture notes for Glasgow', 17 March, 1882, (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

²³ C. H. Barlow, *Irish World*, 9 Nov., 1878; Gurth, 'THE MACHINE – That Enriches the Few, but Impoverishes the Many', *Irish World*, 15 Nov., 1879

²⁴ Raymond Williams, 'Advertising: the Magic System', *Culture and Materialism*, (1980), 177

²⁵ Lawrence Stone and Jeanne C. Fawtier Stone, *An Open Elite? England 1540-1880*, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1984), 480; Henry George, *Progress and Poverty*, (1879), 24; Ross, 'Socialism and American Liberalism', (1978): 57

²⁶ Schneirov, 'Thoughts on Periodizing the Gilded Age', (2006): 222

²⁷ Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, (1983), 186

²⁸ Leon Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy: The Knights of Labor and American Politics*, (Urbana, IL.: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 3; Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, (1983), 217

hierarchy'.²⁹ This process, as it was initiated by economic and technical changes, was mirrored on both sides of the Atlantic, and the result was ideological retrenchment. No longer a 'temporary aberration', this new 'political capitalism', embedded in the management of the state, was now an 'immovable horizon'.³⁰ In this context, Henry George provided a swansong for republicanism in the mainstream of political thought. The Knights of Labor, at their height in the mid-1880s, represented these millenarian, utopian and classical republican dreams, working explicitly towards a 'cooperative commonwealth' and individual emancipation from wage labour. But into the 1890s and beyond, growing trades unionism in the form of the American Federation of Labor, as well as middle-class progressivism, were constructed upon a defensive (or in the later case, optimistic) acceptance of the new realities rather than a concerted opposition. While the Knights and the AFL briefly came together in support of George's 1886 mayoral campaign in New York, their subsequent trajectories demonstrate this transition. In 1879 the *Irish World* had rejected the idea of 'improving the condition of the wage serfs', noting that all that was needed was to 'establish Man in his *inalienable* RIGHTS'. Trade unionism was 'in its essence selfish and one-sided' and its very purpose, 'instead of seeking to destroy Wage-Slavery, gives it open recognition and seeks to perpetuate it'.³¹ Conversely, as the 'emphasis shifted from power to welfare', the AFL maintained that 'the way out of the wage system is higher wages'.³²

Historicism

The fundamental irony of late-nineteenth-century historicism was that it actually detached historical perspective from economic thinking. Consciousness of historical contingency served to devalue historical perspective while elevating the importance of practical and contemporary concerns. Jürgen Habermas described this process as 'the neutralization of all standards [that is] fostered by historicism when it imprisons history in the museum'.³³ In the first instance, the path-breaking anthropological work of writers like Henry Summer Maine and Emile de Laveleye suggested alternatives to contemporary society and provided an intellectual recourse for radical critiques. But while these new ethnographies struck a blow against traditional Lockean assumptions and provided

²⁹ Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, (1983), 236-7

³⁰ Gabriel Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism: A Reinterpretation of American History, 1900-1916*, (New York: The Free Press, 1963), 279; Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, (1983), 237

³¹ *Irish World*, 12 July, 1879; 27 Dec., 1879

³² Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, (1983), 237-238; Schneirov, 'Thoughts on Periodizing the Gilded Age', (2006): 214

³³ Jürgen Habermas, *The Philosophical Discourse of Modernity*, (Cambridge: Polity Press, 1987), 11

promising new ideas for radicals, a conservative reaction soon set in that 'denied the usefulness of modelling the modern world on either ancient societies or the vestiges of these societies'.³⁴

The historical school of economics 'naturally suggested a further fragmentation or relativism'.³⁵ Wider analysis beyond efficiency was no longer within the economists' domain, which became increasingly confined to 'the gospel of results'.³⁶ Newly professionalised political scientists repudiated the political languages of the past, as well as any attempt to reference universal or unchanging ideals or standards. Antebellum college curricula had tended to subordinate economic and political questions into courses on moral philosophy.³⁷ By the 1890s, however, Woodrow Wilson was teaching his students at Princeton that all rights rested on 'convenience', and were formed by 'the state of opinion and the stage of social convention'.³⁸ Natural Rights were unceremoniously elbowed from the professional discourse of political science in favour of the more 'scientific' state. 'Liberty', explained Columbia University's John W. Burgess, was not a natural condition but 'a creation of the state'.³⁹ Managerialism, both in form and function, came to dominate the political arena, and cloaked in the pretension of value-free scientific neutrality, promised a solution to the ideological torment of the past. Not surprisingly, George noted this transformation with disappointment. 'The change in the character of party leaders is very marked', he observed. No longer an 'expounder of political principles', contemporary politicians aped the 'manager' and were devoid of 'mental power and culture'.⁴⁰

The newly professionalised discipline of economics was no longer required to defend ideas or policy advice with reference to other, non-economic judgements or values. The growth of the managerial state gave economists privileged access, and they tended to eschew engagement in wider popular debate as unnecessary. The uninitiated were in this way excluded by economists' shield of scientific objectivity. The mathematical language of marginalism meant that economists could 'professionalise more readily around neoclassical theory than around the doctrines of the historical, inductive school'.⁴¹ The 1880s saw the introduction of economic journals from Columbia,

³⁴ Sandra den Otter, 'Freedom of Contract, the Market and Imperial Law-making', in Bevir and Trentmann, (eds.), *Critiques of Capital*, (2002), 61

³⁵ Robert L. Church, 'Economists as Experts: The Rise of an Academic Profession in America, 1870-1917', in L. Stone, (ed.), *The University in Society*, vol. II: *Europe, Scotland, and the United States from the 16th to the 20th Century*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1974), 587

³⁶ George, *A Perplexed Philosopher*, (1892), 117

³⁷ Church, 'Economists as Experts', (1974), 574

³⁸ Rodgers, *Contested Truths*, (1987), 159

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 159

⁴⁰ Henry George, 'Garfield or Hancock', 1880, (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

⁴¹ Church, 'Economists as Experts', (1974), 593

Harvard and the University of Pennsylvania, accompanied by an increase in technically specialised language, enabling professional economists to propagate their ideas ‘without fear of reprisal from powerful amateurs’ like George.⁴² As the land reformer J. K. Ingalls seethed, ‘in the intricate mazes of trade, finance, demand and supply, with which political economists seek to smother natural rights with conventional technicalities, the truthful issue is eluded’.⁴³

For George, his position as an outsider was a strength, evidence of his intellectual autonomy and honesty. He encouraged his readers not to accept the conclusions of academics without personal investigation, for ‘while we may not be scientists or philosophers we too are men’.⁴⁴ In response, some academics sought to defend their authority and to ‘silence men who know not of what they speak’, such as Alfred Marshall when he led a group of Oxford undergraduates in shouting down George’s discussion after a talk at the university.⁴⁵ The deafness was mutual. The *Irish World* mocked the ‘learned Professor’ who ‘comes to lift ye out of your ignorance’ and to ‘show you how to “produce” into a big heap for Capital’, although others were more serious in reminding that ‘no class of men enjoys a monopoly of thinking’.⁴⁶

The hegemony of social class was also evident in the process of professionalisation, and the increasing emphasis on the rights of property over the freedom of trade represented the imposition of ‘the values and interests of their social class’ as it reacted to the threats of republicanism.⁴⁷ The remarkable degree to which American universities were ‘directly beholden to capitalist philanthropy’ made it difficult for young academics to take a dissenting position.⁴⁸ ‘On such subjects [as politics and economics]’, George warned, ‘the masses of men cannot safely trust authority’, as it rested on ‘the views and wishes of those who profit or imagine they profit from the wrong’.⁴⁹ He observed correctly how scientific objectivity buttressed a socio-economic hegemony, noting that ‘every extension and application of systematized knowledge to the arts seems to tend to the concentration of power and wealth’.⁵⁰

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⁴² *Ibid.*, 573; 592

⁴³ Ingalls, *Land and Labor*, (1877), 3

⁴⁴ George, *A Perplexed Philosopher*, (1892), 238

⁴⁵ Benton De Witt, (ed.), *A Correspondence between an amateur and a professor*, (1898), 18; Alfred Marshall, ‘Three Lectures on *Progress and Poverty*’ (1883), (1969): 217-226; Elwood P. Lawrence, ‘Henry George’s Oxford Speech’, *California Historical Society Quarterly*, 30:2, (1951): 117-123

⁴⁶ *Irish World*, 12 July, 1879; James Walker, *The National Inheritance*, (London: F. Farrar, 1873), 3

⁴⁷ Church, ‘Economists as Experts’, (1974), 571

⁴⁸ Ross, ‘Socialism and American Liberalism’, (1978): 55; 62

⁴⁹ George, *A Perplexed Philosopher*, (1892), 235

⁵⁰ Henry George, ‘Garfield or Hancock’, 1880, (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

We have science such as it is – this science of second causes. Poets and theologians are all dead. There is no God, nothing but unconscious force, which hears no prayers.⁵¹

Dominant scientific paradigms are inseparable from their social foundations, and central to many of the new sciences of society was the idea that ‘social growth and social life have their laws as fixed as those of matter and motion’.⁵² There is an unavoidable interdependency between the interpretation of the natural world and the socio-culturally constructed ideas and languages through which this interpretation takes place. Scientific endeavour is as constrained as any other enterprise by these limitations, and consequently anthropocentric language invites, and often demands, comparisons to be drawn between the constructed understandings of natural phenomena and social life, colouring these social analyses with a veneer of naturalism.⁵³ Given this, paradigm shifts in scientific knowledge can be correspondingly observed in social, political, economic and philosophical ideas.⁵⁴ It was evident in Woodrow Wilson’s complaint that the framers of the U.S. constitution had been labouring under the mistaken judgement that the universe, and therefore society, operated under unchanging mechanical laws. He denied this Newtonian interpretation in favour of understanding social organisation as an evolving organism.⁵⁵ The romantic socialist Edward Carpenter observed astutely in 1885 that: ‘The various theories and views of nature which we hold are merely the fugitive envelopes of the successive stages of human growth – each set of theories and views belonging *organically* to the moral and emotional state which has been reached, and being in some sort the expression of it’.⁵⁶

Malthusianism and Social Darwinism famously existed in close proximity in this regard, with both Charles Darwin and Alfred Russel Wallace crediting Malthus’ work for providing indication and direction in their discoveries.⁵⁷ There can also be no doubt that Darwin’s discoveries helped to naturalise Malthusianism. A correspondent from

⁵¹ Professor Edward Hitchcock, Congregationalist and Geologist, in *Irish World*, 23 Nov., 1878

⁵² Covering quote, Benton De Witt, (ed.), *A Correspondence between an amateur and a professor* (1898)

⁵³ Helena Cronin, ‘The Battle of the Sexes Revisited’, in Alan Grafen and Mark Ridley, (eds.), *Richard Dawkins: How a scientist changed the way we think*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2006), 14-26

⁵⁴ Raymond Williams, ‘Social Darwinism’, *Cultural and Materialism*, (1980), 102; Daniel C. Dennett, ‘The Selfish Gene as a Philosophical Essay’, in Grafen and Ridley, (eds.), *Richard Dawkins*, (2006), 101-115

⁵⁵ Woodrow Wilson, ‘What is Progress?’, (1912), *The New Freedom: A Call for the Emancipation of the Generous Energies of a People*, (New York: Doubleday, Page and Co., 1918), 45-6

⁵⁶ Edward Carpenter, ‘Modern Science: A Criticism’, (1885) in *Civilisation, its cause and cure, and other essays*, (London: G. Allen & Unwin, 1921), 52 [my emphasis]

⁵⁷ Williams, ‘Social Darwinism’, *Cultural and Materialism*, (1980), 86; Donald Winch, ‘Darwin Fallen Among Political Economists’, *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, 145:4, (2001): 415-437

Germany who was supportive of George's views on land and rent admitted a divergence from his view on population. He was confidently Malthusian because his 'study of zoology and physiology leads [sic] me to acknowledge the struggle for existence caused by the misproportion between population and food'.⁵⁸ Of course social Darwinism was an oversimplified iteration of the scientific thesis, but even in this form it infiltrated many aspects of Victorian intellectual life not least, in Herbert Spencer, one of the dominant philosophical figures of the age.

Historicism may have provided Social Darwinism with its socially predictive force, but its pseudo-ethical force was reliant on the idea of 'progress'; a buzzword, if such a thing existed, of Anglo-American culture. Woodrow Wilson revelled in the concept of progress, as 'coming naturally to the lips of modern man, as if the thing it stands for were almost synonymous with life itself'.⁵⁹ The speed and scale of industrial development in the late nineteenth century inspired this cultural tendency towards self-confident modernism. The fear of the negative potential of rapid industrial development was expressed so vehemently because of the unreflective confidence of those upon whom modernity had dumped its munificence, and who accordingly viewed their position as a justification for exerting previously unimaginable control over the natural and human world. This unquestioned superiority, buttressed by imperial expansion and theories of racial hierarchy, left those convinced of it exposed to complacency.

Originally a scientific term, 'progress' initially held no positive or negative value judgement, being merely the description of the development of events. It gained its positive association with the idea of civilization during the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, refined and indeed confirmed as a historical fact during the Enlightenment by thinkers also possessed of that particular self-confidence born of seeing apparently new, limitless horizons. From the late eighteenth to the late nineteenth century, materialist teleologies helped to enshrine the concept of progress and orientate the cultural sphere towards the future rather than the past. The future was no longer a 'source of disruption' but a defining feature of the present.⁶⁰

Those on the Irish republican left, who looked back to an imagined golden age of political and social stasis were not rejecting such future-orientated thinking, but 'appropriating past experience with an orientation to the future' in their politically fertile interpretations of Irish history.⁶¹ Such a perspective explains why Michael Davitt's use of the term 'progress' oscillated between its positive and negative connotations. He talked of

⁵⁸ Otto Zacharias to Henry George, 5 Apr., 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

⁵⁹ Wilson, 'What is Progress?', (1912), *The New Freedom*, (1918), 42

⁶⁰ Habermas, *Philosophical Discourses of Modernity*, (1987), 12

⁶¹ *ibid.*, 13

the ‘irresistible advance which the cause of societary progress is daily making to overthrow [...] monopoly’, and attacked landlordism for preventing ‘industrial progress’.⁶² At the same time his ire was directed at English “‘progressive civilization” of the present day [which] is lauded at the expense of that by which it was preceded’.⁶³ As with the idea of ‘civilization’, the inheritance of the Irish Enlightenment had provided dual and contradictory meanings. So despite demolishing the justification of this idea of ‘progress’ as only a ‘mode of comparison [which] forms no just criterion’, Davitt’s teleology ceded the terrain of the future to this form of English ‘progressive civilization’.⁶⁴

However, Davitt’s uncertain and ambivalent attitude towards ‘progress’ is evidence of a broader transition in political discourse. ‘Society generally is divided’, wrote the anarchist Sidney H. Morse, ‘on this new, all engrossing subject of Industrial Progress’.⁶⁵ In Davitt’s work, traces of the multiple competing influences of new political discourses are evident alongside traditional republican linguistic formations. Davitt provided some of the most direct and sophisticated defenses of Natural Rights.⁶⁶ In an articulate justification of land nationalization, he dismissed ‘claims of prescriptive right’ as a ‘lame’ utilitarian argument, and told an audience in Aberdeen: ‘That only has a right to exist which is consonant with right itself’.⁶⁷ But when Davitt claimed that the failure of English civilization was primarily its inability to provide a ‘rational apportionment of its progressive results among all its classes’, he was not only utilising the concept of progress but suggesting that wealth distribution could be achieved rationally. Such a claim echoed the developing socialist progressivism evident in the period.⁶⁸ If it is, as Stedman Jones has suggested, in the interstices of conflicting political discourses that the engines of material change are revealed, then Davitt’s defence of his land nationalisation scheme during his trip to New York in the summer of 1882 offers a glimpse of this process. He expressed his republican principles in overtly socialist discourse when he said that the ‘land struggle was a war by labour against the ownership by the wealthy of the means of production, namely the land of Ireland’.⁶⁹

⁶² Davitt, ‘Ireland’s Share of the British Constitution’, in King, (ed.), *Jottings in Solitary*, (2003), 45; 180

⁶³ Davitt, ‘English Civilization’, in King, (ed.), *Jottings in Solitary*, (2003), 21

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*, 21; Davitt, ‘Random Thoughts on the Irish Land War’, in King, (ed.), *Jottings in Solitary*, (2003), 187

⁶⁵ *Irish World*, 30th November, 1878

⁶⁶ Laurence Marley, *Michael Davitt: Freeland Radical and Frondeur*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2007), 36

⁶⁷ *Aberdeen Daily Free Press*, 30th Oct., 1882, (DP, MS 9361.679, TCD); Andrew G. Newby, “‘Put Not Your Faith in Irish Parliamentary Politics”: Michael Davitt, Scotland and “Loyal Opposition”, 1879-1890’, in Lane and Newby, (eds.), *Michael Davitt*, (2009), 131-148.

⁶⁸ Davitt, ‘English Civilization’, in King, (ed.), *Jottings in Solitary*, (2003), 22

⁶⁹ Pdraig Lane, ‘Agricultural Labourers and the Land Question’, in Carla King, (ed.), *Famine, Land and Culture in Ireland*, (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2000), 109

Others were more confidently able to process, reclaim and repackage the concept of 'progress'. The land reformer and anarchist J. K. Ingalls, at a meeting of the Labor League in New York, managed to incorporate nearly all the linguistic nodes of the gilded age ideological conflict to his own cause when he declared: 'That laws conferring upon wealth unlimited power to *monopolize* the soil are in violation of clearly-defined relations existing in *nature*, are incompatible with civil *rights* and the social and *moral instincts* of mankind, and are likewise destructive in tendency to those normal *incentives to industry and frugality* upon which the *progress* and well-being of the race depend'.⁷⁰ Others too were able to comfortably draw together the idea of Natural Rights within a conception of 'progress'. At the Boston convention of the Irish National League of America in 1884, a resolution pointed to 'evidences of gratifying *progress* in placing the people of Ireland on a higher plane, and securing for them and their *natural rights* a more adequate consideration from the intelligence of mankind'.⁷¹ One supportive correspondent wrote to George that 'man's gospel' would be 'one gigantic stride for [the] *progress* of mankind'.⁷²

'Science is, so to speak, the banner of our age', wrote a sceptical Edward Carpenter; 'it is perhaps the most widely accepted standard of human advance'.⁷³ Given this assessment, the strident response of those who rejected this encroaching scientism is fully understandable.⁷⁴ *Faith and Modern Thought*, an 1876 treatise on the subject by theologian and professor Ransom Bethune Welch, attacked Darwin, Spencer, Huxley and a host of other 'high priests of positivism'.⁷⁵ Without the guidance of a higher power, Welch reasoned, 'human knowledge can be no longer verified; sense and understanding both wander, lost, without the light and without a guide'.⁷⁶ He, like so many others, attacked the 'self-styled modern thought with shameful contradiction of its pretensions to progress [that] exalts nature above God, and matter above mind'.⁷⁷ A regular writer in the *American Catholic Quarterly Review* agreed.⁷⁸ It was not so much scientific advance in itself, as much as the sense that scientific reasoning had overstepped a boundary from the material into the moral and metaphysical realms. 'So wonderful has been the success which has crowned its advance in almost every other department, that many minds have

⁷⁰ Ingalls, *Land and Labor*, (1877), 11 [my emphasis]

⁷¹ 'Resolutions adopted at the Boston Convention of the Irish National League of America, August, 1884', (Coll. 103, Box 40, ACo129, PAHRC)

⁷² Percy G. Maier to Henry George, 1 Nov., 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

⁷³ Carpenter, 'Modern Science: A Criticism', (1885), 3

⁷⁴ Rev. S. Fitzsimons, 'A Glance at the Conflict between Religion and Science', *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 6, (1881): 1-18

⁷⁵ Ransom B. Welch, *Faith and Modern Thought*, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1876), 271

⁷⁶ Welch, *Faith and Modern Thought*, (1876), 269; 237

⁷⁷ *Ibid.*, 242

⁷⁸ A. de. G., 'Position of the Intellectual World as Regards Religion', *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 5, (1880): 439

been led to believe, and perhaps do still believe, that it is able to solve' moral and theological problems.⁷⁹ These critiques concluded on similar grounds to radical republican assessments of industrialization, that an increasingly narrow materialism 'virtually converts man, despite free-will, into an exquisite automaton', and in rejecting the harmonious order of the natural world, launched humanity instead 'into the sea of passion, on a frail craft, without compass, rudder, or sail'.⁸⁰

For critics, this scientism was perhaps best embodied by Herbert Spencer, whose 'sociological-philosophical theory of extreme individualism' made him one of the most influential political philosophers in nineteenth century Britain.⁸¹ Spencer became the intellectual symbol of liberal utilitarianism, and reaction against his ideas became a signal of opposition to these forces more generally. In defence of the Catholic Church, one writer began by sarcastic mockery of its persistence 'in clinging to the skirts of Thomas Aquinas, instead of falling at the feet of Herbert Spencer, and worshiping him at the altar of the unknowable'.⁸² Whilst Spencer and George had much in common intellectually, there was an enormous gulf in their ideas. Spencer's early support for land nationalisation caused George to react with anger to his subsequent materialistic and effectively utilitarian defence of private property in land, calling him 'a traitor to all that he once held', a view shared, although less viscerally, by Alfred Russel Wallace.⁸³ In his *A Perplexed Philosopher*, written in 1892 towards the end of his career, George described Spencer's 'Synthetic Philosophy' as 'the most pretentious that ever mortal man undertook', and accused Spencer of being seduced by materialism and esteem, effectively cowed by economic hegemony.⁸⁴ George's criticisms of Spencer's evolutionary philosophy focused on its determined materialism, 'its ignoring of the spiritual element, from its assumption that, matter and motion given, their interactions will account for all that we see, feel or know'.⁸⁵ Frustrated by Spencer's, admittedly flimsy, evolutionary ethics, George revealingly asked: 'Where in such a philosophy is a basis for moral ideas to be found? [...] all his efforts to obtain something like a moral sanction reach no further than expediency'.⁸⁶ This was, of course, the root of the issue for radical republicans, that 'Mr.

⁷⁹ A. de. G., 'Position of the Intellectual World as Regards Religion', (1880): 436

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, 440; 442

⁸¹ Coats, 'The Classical Economists and the Labourer', (1971), 202

⁸² John MacCarthy, 'The Public Press and the Public Morals', *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 8, (1883): 120

⁸³ George, *A Perplexed Philosopher*, (1892), 167; Alfred Russel Wallace, 'Herbert Spencer on the Land Question: A Criticism', (1892) in Alfred Russel Wallace, *Studies: Scientific and Social*, (London: Macmillan, 1900), 333

⁸⁴ George, *A Perplexed Philosopher*, (1892), 98; 101

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, 105

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*, 116-117

Spencer's philosophy makes no distinction between motives and results, nor does it admit of any'.⁸⁷

The same criticism could be applied to economic theory. The birth of neoclassical economics in the form of marginalism, in removing the ever-uncertain relationship between use and exchange value and incorporating them into the concept of marginal utility, finally enabled the discipline to escape other normative considerations. As Francis Edgeworth, the pioneering marginalist, wrote: 'the first principle of economics is that every agent is actuated only by self interest'.⁸⁸ 'As to the sufficiency of common sense', perhaps George's most trusty rhetorical tool, Edgeworth scoffed at its meaninglessness when not allied to 'the sovereign science'.⁸⁹ Edgeworth's contemporary Henry Sidgwick, a colleague and intellectual inspiration, had provided the ethical equivalent. Sidgwick anticipated many early twentieth century philosophers by seeking to reduce the role of moral philosophy. He had, by his own admission, no interest in the 'antecedents of this [ethical] cognition', and, offering himself a position of value free scientific objectivity, he explained that 'my treatise is not dogmatic: all the different methods developed in it are expounded and criticised from a neutral position, and as impartially as possible'.⁹⁰ What he offered was not dogma, but 'ethical science', approached with the 'same disinterested curiosity to which we chiefly owe the great discoveries of physics'.⁹¹ Sidgwick's hopeful attempt at a science of ethics simply found that it could not prove anything beyond the self. Moral maxims could not be scientifically proven to exist between people, so they must exist in the self. In a turn of phrase suggestive of the power of the idea of nature, Sidgwick found that 'Hedonism – the law of universal pleasure seeking – attracted me by its frank naturalness'.⁹²

Just as the marginal revolution concretised economic science around a central principle that had effectively subsumed within it the previous elements of internal discord by removing the recourse to an external principle, Sidgwick's 'rational egoism' represented an entrenchment of utilitarianism in a new form, reinforced by an internal moral intuition that was singular, universalisable and atomistic; that of self-interest.⁹³ It represented the antithesis of the *Irish World's* opinion that 'the essence of all evil in this world is selfishness [which] worships the creature instead of the creator', but Sidgwick's

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*, 117

⁸⁸ Francis Y. Edgeworth, *Mathematical Psychics: An Essay on the Application of Mathematics to the Moral Sciences*, (London: Kegan Paul, 1881), 16; Philip Mirowski, 'Physics and the 'marginalist revolution'', *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, 8, (1984): 361-379

⁸⁹ Edgeworth, *Mathematical Psychics*, (1881), 3

⁹⁰ Henry Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, (1874), (London: Macmillan, 7th ed., 1907), vi

⁹¹ Sidgwick, *The Methods of Ethics*, (1874), vi

⁹² *Ibid.*, xv

⁹³ *Ibid.*, xvi-xvii

philosophical abstractions were reifications of real economic developments.⁹⁴ It can be seen then, that the intellectual processes, taking form in the 1880s were underpinned by a broader shift in metaphysical assumptions. ‘The disunity of property and production’, as Jeffrey Sklansky explains, ‘disrupted the whole chain of self-command in classical moral philosophy and political economy’⁹⁵ This ‘unmooring’ of neoclassical economics from objective conceptions of value and the correspondence of labour with value was one of huge significance for psychology, sociology and philosophical conceptions of both the individual and market society.

George’s networks

Taken as a whole, these were formative intellectual influences on George, and his ideas were shaped by these contemporary concerns. This is even more evident when looking at George’s personal networks and associates. He became good friends with labour activist John Swinton. Born in Scotland, Swinton had been an editorial writer for the *New York Times* before becoming a prominent voice in labour circles.⁹⁶ It was George who initiated contact, writing to solicit letters for publication in 1875. He added that from what he had seen, ‘I know that you and I think alike on important subjects’.⁹⁷ Always an active self-publicist, many of George’s political and personal relationships began in this way, but his ideas were also formed in a dialogue with friends like Swinton. By the late 1870s, as George was writing and lecturing more frequently on the land question, he was also sending his notes and lectures to Swinton, receiving advice and publicity for his work in return. Swinton was crucial in providing introductions for George in New York while the later was still based in San Francisco in the late 1870s.⁹⁸ It was during this period that George began to cultivate informal connections with socialists from across the US. One correspondent suggested to George that the Socialistic Labor Party would be a good vehicle for George to publicise his ideas, and, certainly in one instance, a branch of the organisation later sought to purchase *Progress and Poverty* in bulk for distribution.⁹⁹ Although he was ideologically indiscriminate in fostering these connections, trying to

⁹⁴ ‘Trans-Atlantic’, *Irish World*, 23 Nov., 1878

⁹⁵ Sklansky, *The Soul’s Economy*, (2002), 8; MacIntyre, *After Virtue*, (1981), 62; Alan Gilbert, ‘An Ambiguity in Marx’s and Engels’s Account of Justice and Equality’, *The American Political Science Review*, 76:2, (1982), 343; Andersen, ‘Morality in Three Social Theories’, (1990): 330

⁹⁶ John Swinton’s obituary, *New York Times*, 16 Dec., 1901

⁹⁷ Henry George to John Swinton, 6 Apr., 1875, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

⁹⁸ John Swinton to Henry George, 10 Apr., 1878; Henry George to John Swinton, 2 June, 1878, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

⁹⁹ Charles Thompson to Henry George, 9 Apr., 1879, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL); Socialist Labor Party of New Haven, CT., 30 Jan., 1883, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 4, NYPL)

keep as many friends and supporters as possible, he acknowledged that he and Swinton differed on some key issues. He wrote to his friend in May of 1879, 'I look on you as one of the few men I know who have seen the light which I have seen and would fight the fight. [...] The pain is in finding that we differ, when we ought to be together'. George attributed this to the exigencies of place, adding 'if you were here you would stand as I do'.¹⁰⁰

There were many others too, who embedded George in an extensive transatlantic radical network, and despite political differences, offered great support and assistance to each other. George's tours of Britain and Ireland would have been near impossible without these networks. Henry Hyndman, the errant Marxist who formed the Social Democratic Federation, helped to organise George's first transatlantic visit. In return George worked to get Hyndman's writing published in the U.S., 'to oblige my friend Hyndman who has been very kind to me here'.¹⁰¹ Hyndman, a 'literary man [...] living in fine style in a fashionable street', made a good impression of George, and the two got on well. George was even hopeful that, although Hyndman 'has been lately a good deal under the influence of Karl Marx, [...] I think I have already shaken him in this, and will get him out of it before I get through'.¹⁰² Their mutual friend, the prominent Christian Socialist Rev. Stuart Headlam, provided George with contacts for lectures on his second tour of Britain and Ireland, a process that heavily influenced lecture locations, and the two men shared correspondence with each other.¹⁰³ On his first arrival in London, Dr. Clarke, a 'Scotch Radical' and later crofter M.P. for Caithness, greeted George and provided him with accommodation.¹⁰⁴ Fr. Thomas Dawson, an Irish parish priest at St. Anne's in Rock Ferry, Birkenhead, became and remained a close friend and confidante of George, and remained so throughout his life, providing sage advice and perspective on matters of Irish politics. The journalist John Denvir, author of *The Irish in Britain*, was another who corresponded with and formed a good impression of George.¹⁰⁵

Of all the fruitful friendships that George developed, it was that with Patrick Ford which had the greatest impact on his career. Sometimes dismissed as demagogic or self-interested, George was instead greatly impressed by Ford's strength of character,

¹⁰⁰ Henry George to John Swinton, 6 May, 1879, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

¹⁰¹ Henry George to anon. 25 Aug., 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

¹⁰² Henry George to Patrick Ford, 28 Dec., 1881; Henry George to Patrick Ford, 9 March, 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

¹⁰³ Including the Georgist economist and clergyman John Elliotson Symes, A. W. Coats, 'John Elliotson Symes, Henry George and Academic Freedom in Nottingham during the 1880s', in A. W. Coats, *The Sociology and Professionalization of Economics*, vol. II, *British & American Essays*, London, (Routledge), 2003, 157-168; d'A. Jones, *The Christian Socialist Revival*, (1968), 103; 106

¹⁰⁴ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 28 Dec., 1881, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

¹⁰⁵ Henry George to John Denvir, 14 Feb., 1882; Henry George to Patrick Ford, 18 Feb., 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

describing him as ‘a single hearted devotee to principle’.¹⁰⁶ An opinion shared by William O’Brien, who colourfully described Ford as possessed of a ‘solemn, self-immolating, remorseless, yet intensely religious nature [...] whom you might expect to see either recommended for beatification as a saint or blown up by an infernal machine[...] fired by his own hand’.¹⁰⁷ Ford came to occupy a pivotal place in the intersection of Irish nationalism and social radicalism, his ideas as well as his forthright editorial style partly forged in the crucible of abolitionist politics, during his time working for William Lloyd Garrison’s *Liberator*, a title he would meaningfully appropriate for his own paper’s masthead.¹⁰⁸ Through the *Irish World* his influence was extensive, in one assessment ‘the only man, who ever exercised any considerable influence over the Irish race, who has never made a public speech’.¹⁰⁹ It was Ford who introduced George to Michael Davitt, who then promised to get the Land League to endorse his plan.¹¹⁰ While Ford’s paper embraced George and his ideas, it had already advocated for a similar scheme involving the state appropriation of ground rents before the publication of George’s book.¹¹¹

Also based in Brooklyn, the ‘Spread the Light’ Club, an outgrowth of the Greenback-Labor party and a Knights of Labor district assembly, connected George to labour activists often more radical than himself. Inspired by the idea that education must precede liberation, a dictum much endorsed by Patrick Ford, the organisation drew support not only from the *Irish World*, but also from local paper the *Brooklyn Eagle*. By its own estimation the Club was ‘organized for the purpose of diffusing knowledge on Social and Scientific subjects among the masses to enable them to assert their rights against the universally felt influence of domineering corporations and monopolies’.¹¹² The reference to scientific knowledge offers a hint at its proto-socialism, and of the organisation’s significance on the path from the Knight’s republicanism to an avowedly socialist platform.¹¹³

George delivered the club’s inaugural address, and his ‘humble friends’ at the organization wrote to George congratulating him on his newly found success, and for opening ‘the eyes of the intelligent men who edit the better class of American

¹⁰⁶ Henry George to McClatchy [?], 27 Jan., 1881, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL); Rev. John Talbot Smith, *Patrick Ford of the Irish World*, (AIA.047, NYU)

¹⁰⁷ William O’Brien, *Recollections*, (London: Macmillan and Co., 1905), 274

¹⁰⁸ Greene, ‘The Impact of Henry George’s Theories’, (1956), 80; James P. Rodechko, *Patrick Ford and his Search for America: A Case Study in Irish-American Journalism*, (New York: Arno Press, 1976), 30

¹⁰⁹ O’Brien, *Recollections*, (1905), 274

¹¹⁰ Henry George to Edward Robeson Taylor, 20 Nov., 1880, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

¹¹¹ ‘The Government [...] should be recognized as the Landlord of all the lands of the nation’.

‘Ground Rents of towns and cities also to be controlled by Government’, *Irish World*, 16 Nov., 1878

¹¹² Handbill advertising George’s inaugural talk at the Brooklyn Spread the Light Club, 12 Dec., 1880, (PP, Series I: Box 2, CUA)

¹¹³ Theodore F. Cuno to Terence V. Powderly, 25 Feb., 1881, (PP, Series I: Box 2, CUA)

newspapers'.¹¹⁴ Even so, what would continually prove the most problematic tranche of George's intellectual offering, his refusal to condemn interest on capital, was rejected by the Spread the Light Club. Denunciations of all forms of usury were commonplace in the pages of the *Irish World*, unsurprising given its number of anarchist contributors, but for George, if capital was stored labour then interest on capital was warranted, not least because he defined the returns to capital as that portion which would be used to increase or improve production, and therefore necessary for technological development. The Brooklyn Spread the Light Club strongly disagreed with this position, primarily on the basis that interest from capital severed the link between labour and reward, writing a condescending letter to George: 'no one is infallible, and we are confident, that even you will some day or other advance with Patrick Ford, Michael Davitt, and other humanitarian philosophers and liberty lovers "toward higher ground"'.¹¹⁵

In point of fact, George was frequently questioned about this reluctance to attack capital. It was perhaps a rather naïve assumption, but George's response was that 'Nature gives nothing to man without labour, and he can transfer that right to whoever he pleases'.¹¹⁶ If George's scheme had been enacted but his imagined commonwealth not realised, he indicated that he would have turned his attentions to concentrations of capital, but he was 'convinced that the sins that are attributed to capital are simply the results of monopoly'.¹¹⁷ His defence of interest set him apart from many other labour radicals, and indeed the *Irish World*, where the accumulation of capital through interest was seen as 'the backbone of centralization' so detested.¹¹⁸ This type of dialogue was common and demonstrated one of George's primary difficulties; that of being attacked from the left and the right, from the defenders of property and from the advanced socialists.

Socialism

As so vividly demonstrated by the Brooklyn 'Spread the Light' Club, the 1880s was a period in which the term socialism, often used in unreflective or subtle ways and openly contested, was in flux. As material developments render them obsolete, 'particular

¹¹⁴ 'Spread the Light Club', Matthew Maguire, William Horan, Theodore F. Cuno and John G. Caville, to Henry George, 17 Apr., 1881, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁶ Henry George, 'Lecture at Midland Institute', Birmingham, 23 Jan., 1884, (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL)

¹¹⁷ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁸ *Irish World*, 16 Nov., 1878

political languages do become inapposite in new situations'.¹¹⁹ Before and during the 1880s, 'socialism' encompassed a broad church of ideas, a fluid concept that was often, but not always, collectivist or statist in some variety.¹²⁰ John Stuart Mill's definition of socialism in his 1869 addendum to *Principles* recalled the radical tendencies of declaiming the illegitimacy of wealth from property, 'a denunciation of what they term usury', and collective ownership of the land.¹²¹ Conversely, it appeared to John Elliott Cairnes 'that the idea which "Socialism" conveys to most minds [is] rather certain modes of action – more especially the employment of the powers of the State for the instant accomplishment of ideal schemes'.¹²² Rejecting its relevance as a cooperative ideal, this practical understanding of socialism was echoed by Arnold Toynbee in 1883, who defined it simply as 'the protection of the State not only to women and children, but, if need be, to men', although he made clear he rejected socialism 'in the continental sense'.¹²³ This perception represented the conflation and relation between advanced liberalism, forms of statism that sought to better society through increased knowledge, organisation and control, and the amorphous definition of 'socialism'. Of the new generation of American economists, men such as Richard T. Ely talked of socialism as equivalent with state intervention, a development that offers the possibility of both social amelioration and greater efficiency.¹²⁴

Others, like the Bishop of Omaha, James O'Connor, saw a more fundamental and holistic theory that aimed at a 'community of goods, and co-operation in labor', and rejected 'isolated individual effort, in the production and the distribution of the fruit of man's toil'.¹²⁵ Ideological strife marked the discussion of this topic in the *Irish World* as the paper hosted a running debate between Philip Van Patten of the Socialist Labor Party and Sidney Morse, one of the paper's own anarchist correspondents on 'socialism' versus 'individualism'.¹²⁶ The paper's editorial line certainly remained cautious that 'there are some things [the state] can never do'.¹²⁷ Others denied any incompatibility. One writer asserted: 'I am a socialist and an individualist – I do not believe in the old dogma of surrendering individual rights or liberty on which to establish a society or general government', but, at the same time, 'no true individualism [...] can ever exist in the world

¹¹⁹ Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, (1983), 22

¹²⁰ Claey's, 'Non-Marxian Socialism', (2011), 527; Ross, 'Socialism and American Liberalism', (1978), 12

¹²¹ Mill, 'Chapters on Socialism' (1869), in *Principles of Political Economy*, (1848), 375-6

¹²² Cairnes, *Some Leading Principles of Political Economy*, (1878), 265

¹²³ Toynbee, "Progress and Poverty," *A Criticism of Mr. Henry George*, (1883), 24

¹²⁴ Adcock, *Liberalism and the Emergence of American Political Science*, (2014), 152; Ely, *Recent American Socialism*, (1885)

¹²⁵ O'Connor, 'Socialism', (1883), 222

¹²⁶ *Irish World*, 1 March, 1879

¹²⁷ *Irish World*, 14 Dec., 1878

without socialism'.¹²⁸ This republican socialism, so conceived, was a rejection of statism. Conversely, for the Scottish theologian Robert Flint, Professor of Divinity at Edinburgh, socialism consisted of 'any theory of social organization which scarifies the legitimate liberties of individuals to the will or interests of the community'.¹²⁹ This idea of individualism subsumed within the state was a conceptualisation that many socialists agreed with.¹³⁰

For George, his relationship with socialism endured the same complexities. He was no socialist in a Marxian sense; George thought that the opportunities for human and social perfectibility lay in the personal and intellectual fulfilment that was only possible within a market society, but his willingness to identify with socialists during the early and mid-1880s shines light on the complex career of the concept. Whilst in Britain on his first tour, George made little or no attempt to downplay the socialistic implications of his ideas. Speaking on the platform with land nationalisers, he often discussed 'true socialism' as the goal of his crusade and barely mentioned the concept of the 'single-tax'.¹³¹ His use of the terms 'co-operative' and 'socialist' as almost interchangeable echoed Mill and was suggestive of Owenism, 'while his rhetoric, with its religious tone and its appeals to love and charity, was almost that of Christian socialism'.¹³² In this George was well in accord with the emotional appeal of socialism, which was embraced by many with a 'fervor equalling the enthusiasm of the early Christians'.¹³³ George's conception of the individual was inseparable from individual liberty, but did not involve a rejection of social duties, norms and even restrictions. He spoke of 'the truth that each individual must act upon and be acted upon by the society of which he is a part [...] and the life of each be dominated by the conditions imposed by all'.¹³⁴ It was not an individualism that rejected the communality of general equality imposed by social ties, but one that rejected the devaluation of the individual inherent in all firm hierarchies. He hoped for 'a commonwealth in which the family affections might knit their tendrils around each member, binding with links stronger than steel the various parts into the living whole'.¹³⁵

¹²⁸ *Irish World*, 2 Oct., 1880; Kate Gannett Wells, 'The Pathos of Socialism', *The Unitarian Review and Religious Magazine*, 25:4, (1886): 347

¹²⁹ Robert Flint, *Socialism*, (1894), (London: Isaac Pitman, 1906), 17

¹³⁰ 'Gronlund Talks', *The San Francisco Call*, 4 Jan., 1895

¹³¹ Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, (1975), 85

¹³² *Ibid.*, 88; John Plowright, 'Political Economy and Christian Polity: The Influence of Henry George in England Reassessed', *Victorian Studies*, 30:2, (1987), 235-252; Claeys, *Money, Machinery and the Millennium*, (1987), 131

¹³³ Laurence Gronlund, *The Cooperative Commonwealth in its Outlines: An Exposition of Modern Socialism*, (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1884), preface; Stedman Jones, 'Religion and the origins of socialism', (2010), 171-189; Henry George, 'Lecture on the New Constitution', 1877, (HGP, Series II: Box 12, NYPL); Henry George, 'Lecture notes: 1877', (HGP, Series II: Box 12, NYPL)

¹³⁴ Henry George, 'Moses', (HGP, Series II: Box 13, NYPL)

¹³⁵ *Ibid.*

Yet he maintained of his project that ‘there is in it no glimpse or gleam of communism or socialism’, and the way in which he reflected that charge back against his political opponents, men like Charles A. Sumner who George labelled a ‘German socialist’, reveals much about the plasticity of the term, as well as the national associations it carried.¹³⁶ The explicitly and avowedly socialist movements were heavily populated by German-Americans, and it was German socialism in particular that was condemned by the Jesuit Rev. Thebaud as reliant upon materialism and evolutionary theory, deifying the state ‘to the total exclusion of free will and moral accountability’.¹³⁷ The *Irish World* also described socialism as a distinctly German phenomenon, ‘representing as it does the revolt of the thinking men of Germany’. By contrast the paper argued, outside of Germany, ‘the Individualists, or, as they style themselves, the anarchical collectivists, are not only in the right, but in the majority’.¹³⁸ Language divisions only exacerbated the fissures in the U.S. socialist movement, with the distinct German-American tradition suspicious of the republicanism of organisations such as the Knights and the Greenback Labor Party. In his letters to Powderly, Philip Van Patten of the SLP detailed the German socialists hostility to the plebeian moralism of these groups and the mainstream political ambitions of the Greenbackers, whom they feared were being subsumed within the Republican Party.¹³⁹ The contrast with ‘German socialism’ highlights the symbiosis between Irish and American republicanism, both of which relied, in general terms, on a ‘pre-capitalist culture [...as] the incubator of resistance to capitalist development’.¹⁴⁰

The individualism, or ‘anarchical collectivism’, treated so sympathetically by the *Irish World*, at least in the early 1880s, alludes to a familiar resemblance between these traditions and radical republicanism. The paper had a number of regular anarchist contributors in this period, such as Henry Appleton, Joshua King Ingalls, Sidney H. Morse and Dyer Lum, who were also associated with Benjamin Tucker and his anarchist paper *Liberty*.¹⁴¹ For Tucker, almost mirroring George’s declaration, ‘the Anarchists are simply unterrified Jeffersonian Democrats’.¹⁴² George also recognised the similitude of his work with the libertarian socialism of Belgian ‘rational socialist’ Agathon de Potter. George was

¹³⁶ Henry George to John Swinton, San Francisco, 6th May, 1879, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

¹³⁷ Rev. Aug. J. Thebaud, S.J., ‘Socialism at the Present Day’, *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 5, (1880): 47

¹³⁸ *Irish World*, 2 Oct., 1880

¹³⁹ Philip Van Patten to Terence V. Powderly, 20 May, 1880, (PP, Series I: Box 2, CUA); Philip Van Patten to Terence V. Powderly, 15 July, 1880, (PP, Series I: Box 2, CUA)

¹⁴⁰ Eric Foner, ‘Why is There No Socialism in the United States?’, *History Workshop*, 17, (1984): 63

¹⁴¹ Whelehan, *The Dynamiters*, (2012), 286-288

¹⁴² Vincent, ‘Visions of a Stateless Society’, (2011), 434

very taken with De Potter's ideas and was still referencing him, despite his unfamiliarity to most audiences, in his lectures and speeches in 1884.¹⁴³

Through Rousseau and Proudhon, the anarchist tradition shared many philosophical foundations with radical republicanism. In the U.S., the individualist anarchist concept of 'equitable commerce' echoed the Aquinian doctrine of 'just price'.¹⁴⁴ As wealth was created only by labour, 'equivalents, then, are *not* exchanged when the *producer* sets his *price above cost*', the value of a commodity should be set by the cost of production rather than 'the *value* of the thing produced to the *purchaser*'.¹⁴⁵ These ideas drew heavily from Thomist ideas; that money was only a means of exchange and that an increase in money without labour was an unnatural perversion. It was in this way that the accumulation of profit from the market was considered as equivalent to usury. 'Twice in every exchange', observed Ingalls, 'in buying and again in selling, the actual producer is subjected to be victimized by monopoly and its parasites'.¹⁴⁶ As we have seen, George was criticised for rejecting this particular conclusion.

George's understanding of the 'noble dreams of socialism' was also steeped in an American romantic tradition. The singularity of Unitarian theology, 'that God was one, that there was but one spirit ruling, pervading and regenerating the world', formed much of the basis of a Transcendentalist philosophy that found its natural home in the republican and abolitionist hub of New England.¹⁴⁷ This particular tradition of American romanticism, represented by Emerson, Thoreau and Whitman, was suffused with a nebulous yearning for rural and communitarian lifestyles and, blending the individual and the collective, often emphasised a unity of man and nature.¹⁴⁸ Despite his often practical and economically ambitious personality, George shared aspects of this anti-materialist romanticism. He harboured desires for, and sometimes daydreamed of, a simpler existence akin to that at Thoreau's Walden Pond. He wrote longingly that he

¹⁴³ Henry George, lecture notes for Cambridge, 10 March, 1884, (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL); Henry George to John Swinton, 29 Apr., 1880, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

¹⁴⁴ Vincent, 'Visions of a Stateless Society', (2011), 448; 451; David DeLeon, *The American as Anarchist: Reflections on Indigenous Radicalism*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 71

¹⁴⁵ *Irish World*, 14 Dec., 1878

¹⁴⁶ *Irish World*, 7 Dec., 1878; 12 July, 1879; 27 Dec., 1879; J. K. Ingalls, 'Land Reform in 1848 and 1888', in Frank H. Brooks, (ed.), *The Individualist Anarchists: An Anthology of Liberty (1881-1908)*, (New Brunswick, N.J.: Transaction, 1994), 151-2; J. K. Ingalls, *Reminiscences of an Octogenarian in the Field of Industrial and Social Reform*, (New York: Holbrook, 1897); Ingalls, *Land and Labor*, (1877), 9

¹⁴⁷ Rev. Henry A. Brann, 'American Rationalism', (1880): 255; Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 106; *Farewell Sermon of the Rev. O. B. Frothingham*, 27 Apr., 1879, (New York: G. P. Putnam's Sons, 1879)

¹⁴⁸ Mark Bevir, 'British Socialism and American Romanticism', in Bevir and Trentmann, (eds.), *Critiques of Capital*, (2002), 76

‘would like to get away from cities and businesses, with their jostlings and strainings and causes, altogether, and find some place on one of the hill sides, [...] where I could gather those I love and live content with what nature and our own resources would furnish’.¹⁴⁹

These sentiments reveal a deeper seam in George’s personality and thought, an affinity and sympathy with the idyllic naturalism of this romantic reaction against industrial consumerism, what the Chartist and land reformer Thomas Ainge Devyr described as the ‘distressing [...] crush and struggle of life’.¹⁵⁰ George’s early journalistic work in particular tends toward the poetic and the philosophical in this regard, showcasing his romantic and utopian anti-materialism. George’s 1857 article ‘The Poetry of Life’ stands as an excellent example of this tendency:

There is in every occurrence of daily life poetry plainly apparent to him who rightly views it. The man of business whose powers of mind are constantly directed to the sole end – wealth; and whose soul is warped by the cold calculations of interest till it becomes impossible for him to perceive the beautiful and ennobling in nature and in man cannot see it. The profligate whose whole end and aim is compared by the oft repeated phrase “eat, drink and be merry”, cannot perceive it. The misanthrope soured by misfortunes perhaps the result of his own folly, regards life as a bitter jest; cannot perceive it. It is only the man who still continues to nurture a portion of that divine flame of which his creator constructed the noblest of his works; who sometimes withdraws from the noise and bustle of the busy world to come apart with his own soul, and makes companions of the great thoughts [...] who regards man not as a machine or beast of burden.¹⁵¹

Naturally, this American romantic tradition tended towards a rejection of socialism in its statist or paternalist guise in much the same way as George and the *Irish World*. As Ralph Waldo Emerson wrote in the paper, the present state of American society was ‘favourable to Progress and antique inequalities’.¹⁵² For both these groups, socialism tended to underestimate the value of the individual personality because it was a ‘materialist ideology denying the paramountcy of moral reformation’.¹⁵³ Socialism, such as it could or should ever emerge, would develop naturally out of harmonious and moral interrelations between humanity.

However, George’s increasing opposition to ‘socialism’, and the growing shrillness with which he refuted the accusation, had more to do with the developing focus of the

¹⁴⁹ Henry George to his sister, San Francisco, 15 Sept., 1861, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 1, NYPL)

¹⁵⁰ Thomas Ainge Devyr, *The Odd Book of the Nineteenth Century, Or ‘Chivalry’ in Modern Days, A Personal Record of Reform – Chiefly Land Reform, for the last fifty years*, (New York: T. A. Devyr, 1882), 156

¹⁵¹ Henry George, ‘The Poetry of Life’, (1857), (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL); Henry George to Catherine George, San Francisco, 2 Feb., 1879, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

¹⁵² *Irish World*, 4 Jan., 1879

¹⁵³ Bevir, ‘British Socialism and American Romanticism’, (2002), 76; 79

term during the 1880s than any sizeable shift in George's own ideas. By the end of the decade, the equivalence of socialism with state control was hard to escape, and George was now adamant that his ideas should not be categorised with socialism. He voiced his criticism that, 'socialism begins at the wrong end; it pre-supposes pure government; its dream is simply of a benevolent tyranny'.¹⁵⁴ In 1891, he worried that 'the advocacy of socialism [would lead to] all sorts of dangerous things', up to and including atheism.¹⁵⁵ As socialism became more precisely defined, the unity of the traditional producerist republican principles that bound together members of the various labour associations disintegrated.¹⁵⁶ The Knights of Labor were undermined by internal elements keen on a more explicitly socialist agenda, as well as the accommodationist trades unionism of the AFL. Socialism also tore apart the broad church of New York's Central Labor Union later in the decade, but the divisions were evident, if not acute, at the beginning of the decade. The Brooklyn 'Spread the Light' Club recognised early that 'we know very well that you [George] are an individualist while we have placed ourselves upon the side of collectivism'.¹⁵⁷ In the same way that the increasingly statist liberalism had claimed the ideological territory of 'progress' for its own, socialism also had the lure of the modern on its side. The renowned American labour activist Joseph Labadie believed the future lay in forms of communitarianism rather than individualism. As a member of the Knights in Detroit, Labadie observed that 'the true labor men [...] have left the party and joined the Socialists. [...] I have no hesitancy in saying that that is the future party'. Whilst he did 'not concur in some of their idealistic theories', he thought it was a matter of certainty that 'their fundamental principles will eventually prevail'.¹⁵⁸ It was in this context of ideological instability and transition that the Land League was well positioned to make a significant contribution.

¹⁵⁴ Henry George, in Henry George and Henry M. Hyndman, *The Single-Tax Versus Social Democracy: Which Will Most Benefit the People, Verbatim report of the debate in St. James's Hall, July 2, 1889*, (London: The Twentieth Century Press, 1906), 30

¹⁵⁵ Henry George to Fr. Thomas Dawson, 18 May, 1891, (HGP, Series I: D, Box 11, NYPL)

¹⁵⁶ Kim Voss, *The Making of American Exceptionalism: The Knights of Labor and Class Formation in the Nineteenth Century*, (Ithaca: Cornell University Press, 1993), 79; Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy*, (1983), 228-9

¹⁵⁷ Brooklyn 'Spread the Light Club' to Henry George, 17 Apr., 1881, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

¹⁵⁸ Joseph Labadie to Terence V. Powderly, 7 Dec., 1879, (PP, Series 1: Box 2, CUA)

The Land War and the League: Republican Praxis

By the mid 1870s Ireland's cultural and economic life remained inseparable from the land. Despite some urban growth, Ireland was still predominantly rural. The 1881 census records only 24 per cent of the population living in towns over 2,000, with that percentage varying between only 7.6 per cent in Connacht and 38.3 per cent in Leinster. Urban life, outside of Dublin and Belfast, was largely an extension of rural life, sharing similar concerns and remaining socially and economically dependent on agriculture.¹

Since the Famine, rising agricultural prices and comparatively stable rents had created some burgeoning prosperity, especially in the south and east of the country.² The upheaval of the 1840s had also had a significant, albeit unevenly spread, demographic impact, reducing the numbers of smaller farmers and labourers and leaving, especially in the south and east, a more accentuated class structure dominated by larger farmers, graziers and labourers. Although not as economically stratified as England or Scotland, outside of Connacht, where there was 'chronic poverty' among small farmers, 'tenants were in a relatively privileged position in Irish society' compared with urban and rural labourers.³ In the south west, the post famine era heralded the development of an 'agrarian capitalism', with an increasing commercialisation of agriculture throughout Ireland.⁴ However, these socio-economic developments were not smooth or even. For all the changes wrought by the Famine, by 1870 landlords owning 1,000 acres or more possessed 81 per-cent of Irish land. Whilst there was, as James S. Donnelly Jr. has argued, a revolution of rising expectations, it was based on uncertain foundations, and economic dangers lurked just beneath an outwardly expanding economy.⁵

The Land War was directly precipitated by a partial crop failure that soon threatened to turn into widespread distress. There was a collapse of the potato crop in 1877, with significant credit extended by shopkeepers bridging the gap, but the subsequent failure in 1879 left even this means of survival overstretched. The potato harvest in 1879 was less than half the yield of the previous year and forebode tough times ahead; indeed

¹ Gerard Moran, 'The Land War, Urban Destitution and Town Tenant Protest, 1879-1882', *Saothar: Journal of Irish Labour Studies*, 20, (1995): 17; W. E. Vaughan, 'Ireland c.1870', in W. E. Vaughan, (ed.), *A New History of Ireland*, v.5: *Ireland Under the Union, 1801-70*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 781

² Vaughan, 'Ireland c.1870', (1989), 756-8

³ *Ibid.*, 781; 754

⁴ Lucey, *Land, Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence*, (2011), 8

⁵ James S. Donnelly Jr., *The Land and People of Nineteenth-Century Cork: The Rural Economy and the Land Question*, (London: Routledge, 1975), 250; Samuel Clark, 'Strange bedfellows? The Land League alliances', in Campbell and Varley, (eds.), *Land questions in modern Ireland*, (2013), 94-5

by 1880 evictions increased dramatically as a result.⁶ Bishop Nulty of Meath could not remember having seen ‘such depression in trade and such universal poverty among the farming and grazing classes in this Diocese’.⁷ Crucially, as the Bishop made clear, the distress was not confined only to those who subsisted directly off the land but threatened ‘respectable’ farmers and graziers too. Dairies in Cork reported a fall in butter production ‘in consequence of the scarcity of grass’.⁸ Immediately comparisons were drawn with the Famine, and popular memories, once reanimated, shaped much of the approach towards the impending crisis. The resuscitation of vivid recollections determined many minds that lessons learned from those years should not be forgotten.⁹ The deanery of Tralee sought to remind those with the power to help that ‘the present year is the most disastrous [...] since the calamitous famine of ’47 and ’48’.¹⁰ So too in January of 1879 did the *Kerry Sentinel* report that the ‘precarious’ situation of the Irish agricultural economy had not been as dangerous since the Famine.¹¹ The nationalist tradition that had proclaimed the Famine as the malignant construction of British misrule found expression at the very beginnings of the land agitation. At the Land League’s first meeting in Irishtown, County Mayo, Michael O’Sullivan reminded his audience that ‘we cannot shut our eyes to the lessons of the past’, namely that the ‘exterminators’ needed to be removed.¹²

Despite the evocations, and there were certainly comparisons to be drawn, the decline of subsistence farming since the Famine had substantively changed the nature of the crisis.¹³ Henry George later observed that the deprivation was ‘a financial famine. In any part of Ireland the man who has money in his pocket can get all he wants to eat’.¹⁴ Developing communication and interaction with Irish-America in particular had also broadened popular horizons somewhat. In T. M. Healy’s assessment, ‘the spread of education and general intercourse with America has made the people conscious that their lot was paralleled by that of no other nation in the world’.¹⁵ The extensive reach of credit, extended to farmers by shopkeepers and banks, had created a much more interdependent

⁶ Average of 590 evictions p/a between 1877-1879, 1880 saw 10,657, rising to 26,836 in 1882, from Daniel Crilly, *Irish Evictions*, (London: Irish Press Agency, 1887), 7-8; *Irish World*, 6 and 13 May, 1882

⁷ Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, (1975), 16

⁸ *Irish World* 5 July, 1879

⁹ Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics*, (1994), 204

¹⁰ *Galway Vindicator* 8 Nov., 1879

¹¹ Lucey, *Land, Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence*, (2011), 42

¹² *Connaught Telegraph*, 26 Apr., 1879

¹³ Liam Kennedy, ‘Farmers, Traders, and Agricultural Politics in Pre-Independence Ireland’, in Clark and Donnelly, (eds.), *Irish Peasants*, (1983), 343

¹⁴ Henry George, ‘The Irish Question from an American Standpoint’, 1886, (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL)

¹⁵ Healy, *Why There is an Irish Land Question*, (1881), 88; ‘Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of the Irish National Land League, held at Buffalo, New York, 12 and 13 January, 1881’, (Richmond Va.: P. Keenan, 1881), 14, (George D. Cahill Papers, Series III, Box. 5, Boston College [hereafter GDCP, BC])

economy.¹⁶ With many farmers indebted to them, it was local shopkeepers and merchants who had a significant stake in their debtors' survival; a fact which helps to explain their over representation in the Land League itself.¹⁷

Increasing mechanization in British agriculture had led to a reduction in seasonal remittances, but it was the pressure of competition from American agriculture that proved to be particularly damaging to the Irish economy.¹⁸ It was a painful irony that it had been the combination of considerable British financial investment and an emigrant Irish workforce that facilitated the 'westward expansion and the rapid commercialization of North American agriculture', opening up an entire continent for beef exports.¹⁹ The growing impact of international capital, and American natural resources, in creating more dynamic but dyspeptic markets was a distinctive aspect of this increasingly integrated North Atlantic Economy. As Bishop Nulty complained, 'Mullingar was famous for the superiority of its Beef and Mutton and only imagine these Americans under-selling us even here'.²⁰ There was an awareness that 'American produce was flooding their markets', and of the challenges imposed by the intemperate climate of international competition.²¹

Although the convergence of differing strands of Irish nationalism at the 'New Departure' was a novel development, tenant-farmer frustration was not an unfamiliar ally of political independence. Irish nationalists had for decades been able to, as James Fintan Lalor demonstrated in 1848, 'assert land as the site of a national autonomy'.²² A precursor of the League's agrarian agitation, Galway's Ballinasloe Tenants' Defence Association, unlike earlier TDAs, built its success around an appeal to the more radical demands of smaller tenants.²³ Presaging the Land League, these included calls for the mobilisation of public opinion, so as to ensure that Irish people did not have to 'take their rule *or their customs* from Britain'.²⁴ More significantly perhaps was their motto: 'Our doctrine is, that the land was made for the people, and the people for the land; and we strongly deny the

¹⁶ W. E. Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants in Mid-Victorian Ireland*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1994), 213

¹⁷ Kennedy, 'Farmers, Traders, and Agricultural Politics', (1983), 343; Samuel Clark, 'The Social Composition of the Land League', *Irish Historical Studies*, 17:68, (1971): 455-6

¹⁸ Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics*, (1994), 203; Gerard Moran, "Near Famine': The Roman Catholic Church and the Subsistence Crisis of 1879-82', *Studia Hibernica*, 32, (2002): 157

¹⁹ Justin Kastner, *Food and Agricultural Security: An Historical, Multidisciplinary Approach*, (Santa Barbara, Ca.: Praeger, 2010), 7

²⁰ Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, (1975), 16

²¹ 'American and Canadian Food', *Freeman's Journal*, 22 Sept., 1879; Henry George, 'The Irish Question from an American Standpoint', 1886, (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL)

²² Sara L. Maurer, *The Dispossessed State: Narratives of Ownership in 19th-Century Britain and Ireland*, (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 118

²³ Moran, "'Laying the Seeds for Agrarian Agitation'", (2011), 74; Lucey, *Land, Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence*, (2011), 23

²⁴ *Connaught Telegraph*, 12 May, 1877

right of absolute ownership of the soil'.²⁵ Here, the connection between soil and nationhood was now openly assessed. Inspired by the neo-Fenian radicalism of Matthew Harris and Michael O'Sullivan, the Ballinasloe group, as well as Harris' relationship with Michael Davitt and James Daly, the *Connaught Telegraph's* proprietor, was the organisational and ideological embryo for the League itself.²⁶ It was Davitt, however, very much an unconventional nationalist, both definitively of the Irish republican tradition and yet strangely outside it, willing to test its boundaries and probe the outer reaches of its implications, who would become the emotional heart of the League.

The first mass meeting of what was to become an international organisation was in Irishtown, County Mayo, on 20th April, 1879. The immediate success of the meeting in securing a reduction in rent from the landlord subjected to this specific protest served as a catalyst and an example for future activities. James Daly, the Mayo politician, activist and owner of the *Connaught Telegraph*, was a key figure at the Irishtown meeting, and his paper became a League organ. Initiating a tactic of the Land League itself, Daly published local rentals next to their Griffith's valuations, the government's land survey completed in the 1850s and 60s, in order to highlight the discrepancy.²⁷ As with the later influence of Patrick Ford's *Irish World*, the support of Daly's *Telegraph*, along with other papers such as Timothy Harrington's *Kerry Sentinel*, served to highlight their importance as a mouthpiece for the League, both organisationally and ideologically; Daly himself 'hailed the Press as a deliverer'.²⁸

Daly was already active in the local tenants' defence association and committed to the idea of peasant proprietorship. It was his friendship with Davitt that was key to the mass meeting taking place, even though the radical publisher John Ferguson would attend in Davitt's place.²⁹ Resting upon a republican image of rural Ireland, one that rejected mechanisation, centralisation and wage labour, Daly was representative of Paul Bew's 'Land League Ideal'. In a view shared by contemporary Fenians, as well as 'with many subsequent Irish politicians', Daly had 'an Arcadian vision of pre-Famine tillage farming and regularly called for grazing farms to be distributed into 10 to 50 acre tillage

²⁵ *Connaught Telegraph*, 12 May, 1877

²⁶ Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics*, (1994), 213; Paul Bew, *Land and the National Question in Ireland, 1858-82*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1978), 54; Brian Casey, 'Matt Harris and the Ballinasloe Tenant Defence Association, 1876-9', in Brian Casey, (ed.), *Defying the Law of the Land: Agrarian Radicals in Irish History*, (Dublin: History Press Ireland, 2013), 90-99; Gerard Moran, 'Matthew Harris, Fenianism and land agitation in the west of Ireland', in Campbell and Varley, (eds.), *Land questions in modern Ireland*, (2013), 226

²⁷ Gerard Moran, 'James Daly and the Rise and Fall of the Land League in the West of Ireland, 1879-82', *Irish Historical Studies*, 29:114, (1994): 193

²⁸ O'Brien, *Recollections*, (1905), 224

²⁹ Elaine McFarland, *John Ferguson, 1836-1906: Irish issues in Scottish politics*, (East Linton: Tuckwell Press, 2003), 90-4

farms.³⁰ In doing so, Daly wrote, 'a good many graziers will go to the wall, but few will pity them', for they had taken land from 'deserving tenants', and had 'shown themselves completely indifferent to the conditions of their fellow farmers'³¹

In emphasising the use value of land over its exchange value, Daly's position was an explicit rejection of the socially corrosive impact of a free market approach to land, and this refusal to accept the market as a determiner of a 'just' price remained a central plank for the Land League. Evident too is the sentiment that distance from physical labour on the soil itself, actual production, undermined the moral foundations of society which were rooted in the direct and linear connection between physical labour and its reward, both moral and material. The hostility towards graziers, that they had not adopted farmers' moral code, was partly based on their subversion of the purpose of the land in this equation, but also on the destruction of pre-existing modes of practices and socio-moral roles, which undermined their loyalty to the wider community.³² Daly's 'active role was one of the primary reasons why the movement advanced so rapidly', and his formulation and expression of this position clearly had popular traction.³³

Almost as a portent for the future of the League, the next meeting was held at Westport on the North Atlantic coast on the 8th June, 1879, looking westwards towards its expansion in the United States. While Davitt was the organisational force behind this second gathering, the Westport meeting was particularly notable for the introduction of Charles Stewart Parnell, and with him a slowly emerging division between the radical and the parliamentary aims of the League. A natural politician, Parnell's 'political sagacity' was highly rated by many supporters and opponents.³⁴ Viewed as somewhat above the coarse world of the majority of Irish nationalists, much of the respect that Parnell enjoyed was due to his elevated social position and his distinctiveness from both Catholic nationalists and his fellow Protestant landowners.³⁵ This 'un-Irishness' was a peculiar advantage in his chosen political ventures, distinguishing him from the general population and offering an outlet for something approaching an Irish cultural cringe.³⁶ As such he was a beneficiary of class snobbery, able to command respect and attention in a way that the others could not. James Clancy's analysis of Parnell's appeal was not

³⁰ Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics*, (1994), 268; Paul Bew, 'The Land League ideal: achievements and contradictions', in P. J. Drudy, (ed.), *Ireland: Land, Politics and People*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982), 77-92

³¹ *Connaught Telegraph*, 20 Jan., 1877

³² Jones, 'The Cleavage between Graziers and Peasants', (1983), 413

³³ Moran, 'James Daly and the Rise and Fall of the Land League', (1994): 194

³⁴ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 10 Nov., 1881, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

³⁵ Donald Jordan, 'John O'Connor Power, Charles Stewart Parnell and the Centralisation of Popular Politics in Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies*, 25:97, (1986): 46

³⁶ Henry George, *Irish World*, 28 Oct., 1882

unusual. He wrote of the aristocrat: 'The typical Irishman is impulsive; Parnell, on the contrary, moves with the deliberation of an accomplished chess-player'. The problematic issue of his English ancestry was neutralized by the 'healthy American blood' inherited from his mother.³⁷

Parnell argued at the Westport meeting for the suitably elastic proposition that 'a fair rent is a rent a tenant can reasonably pay according to the times'.³⁸ In its early stages, the pliability of this policy meant that there was no clear objective for the emergent Land League. The nascent divisions were evident in the obvious differences of opinion at the meeting. Fenian Michael O'Sullivan, a close friend of Matthew Harris, raised the spectre of class when he said: 'The people are beginning to revolt – to feel that if they did not stand up against such inequity, they would be almost as criminal as the landlords and graziers themselves'.³⁹ For his part, Parnell played down the possibility of intra-nationalist division, not least because the land issue was primarily a tool for Parnell, one he hoped could offer sufficient unity and purposefulness to secure parliamentary ambitions for a constitutional settlement to the Irish question. Parnell's distance from popular opinion was frequently evident and he had little sentimental commitment or feeling for the land question in particular, once inquiring innocently whether 'the people feel very keenly on the land question?'⁴⁰ He was above all else a political animal, with a keen sense of smell when it came to acquiring power.

As the poor harvest of 1879 turned economic hardship into destitution for many in the west, the Land League's ability to respond positively and materially gave it 'credibility in the eyes of Mayo farmers and demonstrated that it was more responsive and effective than was the Westminster government'.⁴¹ From the beginning, one of the League's primary purposes was the distribution of financial aid to those in rent arrears and living under threat of eviction, a strategy that cemented a loyalty and affection for the League from many suffering tenants. Letters to the League's central branch demonstrate the depth and breadth of hardship, but also the perception of the League as an arbiter and authority itself. Letters often detailed not only personal injustices, but the names and addresses of capricious landlords and information on those who broke social codes and took farms or favours from landlords.⁴² The League was also implored to help the families of men imprisoned or impoverished as a result of their radical activity, such as Patrick

³⁷ Clancy, *The Land League Manual*, (1881), 23-4

³⁸ Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, (1975), 21; or a 'just rent', *Freeman's Journal*, 4 Nov., 1878

³⁹ Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics*, (1994), 227

⁴⁰ Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, (1975), 22; Henry George to Francis G. Shaw, 30 May, 1882; Henry George to Annie George, 4 May, 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

⁴¹ Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics*, (1994), 246

⁴² Accounts of rents in arrears, Co. Leitrim, (LLP, MS 829I, NLI)

McManus, a small shopkeeper whose wife and four children were in need of financial assistance after he was imprisoned in Kilmainham. Another letter sought funds and recognition for a bailiff, John O’Keeffe, thrown out of employment for joining the League and refusing ‘to serve or execute any legal document whatever for or on behalf of a landlord’.⁴³

As these instances make clear, the Land League was much more than vehicle for political nationalism or a charity for the distribution of funds. It served as a substitute Irish state, collecting money, alleviating hardship and mitigating the worst effects of the economic crisis. Incorporating a full platform for the economic and political reconstitution of Ireland, and supporting forms of social control and community cohesion, it offered an alternative central structure and sought to impress itself as the legitimate voice of Ireland as part of a newly constituted public sphere. Describing the League as a ‘Vehmgericht’, the *Pall Mall Gazette* declaimed what republican nationalists welcomed, namely that ‘those who wish to live in Ireland can only do so by accepting popular opinions’.⁴⁴ Chief Secretary William Forster similarly confessed that ‘in Ireland the Land League is supreme ... I am forced to acknowledge that to a great extent the ordinary law is powerless’.⁴⁵

As the centre of the movement drifted away from the small tenant farmers of the west, the interests of the larger southern and eastern farmers became ascendant in what Matthew Harris poignantly described as the ‘union of the shark with its prey’.⁴⁶ Strategic ambitions gradually became discordant with the aims of smaller tenants. One of these was support for ‘Ulster Custom’, a variation of tenant right. The entitlement of an outgoing tenant to sell their stake in the property was a secondary market in rents, as existing and prospective tenants traded the surplus rental value on farms let under the market price. Consequently, as Timothy Guinnane and Ronald Miller have observed, the willingness of landlords to acquiesce to this shows how it acted as a form of security deposit for them, as any outstanding debts owed by the outgoing tenant would be covered by the money paid by the incoming tenant for a stake in the property.⁴⁷ For farmers without the means to make improvements, or whose rentals were very high, this was of limited use. Similarly,

⁴³ *Ibid.*, letter dated 23 April, 1881

⁴⁴ *Pall Mall Gazette*, quoted in *Irish World*, 14 Dec., 1878

⁴⁵ Foner, ‘Class, Ethnicity and Radicalism’, (1981), 155; Donald Jordan, ‘The Irish National League and the ‘Unwritten Law’: Rural Protest and Nation-Building in Ireland 1882-1890’, *Past and Present*, 158, (1998): 146-171

⁴⁶ Moran, ‘James Daly and the Rise and Fall of the Land League’, (1994): 200

⁴⁷ Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants*, (1994), 68; 72; Guinnane and Miller, ‘Bonds without Bondsmen’, (1996): 114

the 'rent at the point of bayonet' policy had limited efficacy among poorer farmers.⁴⁸ The more radical edge and an aggressive anti-landlord tone of tenant right gatherings across Galway and Mayo were notable for their contrast to League meetings in the south and east, where the social and economic distance between farmers and labourers were greater, and the concentration and consolidation of increasingly large farms had made many farmers in these areas wealthy and comfortable with economic expansion.⁴⁹

What the geographical and class tensions highlight is that the Land League may have enjoyed a very broad support base and a generalised rhetorical ambition, but beneath this there was a chasm of difference over the 'cultural understandings of the land struggle'.⁵⁰ For larger farmers, achieving independence from landlords and ownership of their farms meant not only greater financial stability, but also the opportunity for growth, and they 'considered the land system to be economically backward, supporting an aristocracy on the one hand and ineffective small farmers on the other'.⁵¹ This inevitably jarred with the political rhetoric of agrarian republicanism as well as the ambitions of the smaller farmers themselves. But despite the significant geographical contrasts in economic necessity, the political rhetoric employed by the League remained decidedly radical. So while larger farmers saw the chance to realise acquisitive ambitions, it remained impossible to express these popularly or collectively. The form of land league rhetoric then, went some way to shaping the limits of collective action, even for larger farmers.

The focus on peasant proprietorship, 'a farmer who owns the land he tills', was a broad enough principle to encompass larger and smaller farmers, but its political connotations clearly went further.⁵² The prospect of ownership itself not only ensured the value of labour on the land returned to the 'tiller', but a whole palate of associated individual and societal benefits would also ensue. The example of the France and the Low Countries was seen as particularly instructive. Here farmers 'practice agriculture not blindly, and as if it were to be contemned, but as a noble occupation, which demands the exercise of the noblest faculties of intelligence, and procures for those that follow it

⁴⁸ Andrew Shields, "'Serving the farmer": the tenant right movement in the West, 1848-57', in King and McNamara, (eds.), *The West of Ireland*, (2011), 61-62; Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics*, (1994), 265

⁴⁹ Michael Turner, 'Output and productivity in Irish agriculture from the Famine to the Great War', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 17, (1990): 76; David Fitzpatrick, 'The Disappearance of the Irish Agricultural Labourer, 1841-1912', *Irish Economic and Social History*, 7, (1980): 66-92; Lucey, *Land, Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence*, (2011), 9

⁵⁰ Anne Kane, 'Theorizing Meaning Construction in Social Movements: Symbolic Structures and Interpretation during the Irish Land War, 1879-1882', *Sociological Theory*, 15:3, (1997): 261

⁵¹ Kane, 'Theorizing Meaning Construction', (1997): 261

⁵² Sullivan, 'Ireland's Great Grievance', (1881): 61

fortune, social importance, and public respect'.⁵³ As this makes clear, Land League rhetoric remained focused around traditional republican theses. One of the more central anchors was the idea of civic duty. At Carrickmore, County Tyrone, T. C. Harrington entreated his audience to: 'Let no man think it is not his duty to assist the people and free them from the oppressor'.⁵⁴ It was a matter of regret, he continued, that 'any class of our countrymen should be found so lost to a sense of duty and honour and be brined to run at the throats of their fellow countrymen'.⁵⁵ As has already been noted, the concept of duty was an important element of republican virtue and socially constructed morality. It was necessary not only to engender the requisite unity for proto nation building, but also, in an interrelated ambition, to motivate the purposeful action, such as boycotting, required to withstand rootlessness and atomisation.

Labourers and the Land League

How class operated in late nineteenth century Ireland and how it intersected with Irish identity in the period is not a settled question. It has been argued that the binary fact of possession of land operated to demarcate two, essentially separate classes in Ireland. As Pádraig Lane has suggested, those without land were not only deemed separate, but were 'frequently regarded as being outside the conventional standards of decency'.⁵⁶ Nevertheless, at least in the west, the lines that separated the small tenant farmer and the landless labourer were thin and permeable, with people falling in and out of land tenancy or engaging with both, so that the 'poor western peasant may be looked on as the connecting link between the "small holder" and the labourer'.⁵⁷ But although rural class structure was graduated, the very fact of land possession itself continued to confer dignity and social worth such that it was highly prized.⁵⁸ These cultural norms broadly excluded labourers as a class from being conceptualised within Irish nationality.⁵⁹

⁵³ Edmondo de Amicis, *Holland and its People*, cited in Sullivan, 'Ireland's Great Grievance', (1881), 63; *La petite culture* as the *Irish World* called it: 'the people who till the land shall, by that title, own the land they till', 30 Nov., 1878

⁵⁴ Campbell and Kerr, 'Davitt at Carrickmore', (1985): 389

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 390

⁵⁶ Pádraig G. Lane, 'Poor Crayturs: The West's Agricultural Labourers in the Nineteenth Century', in King and McNamara, (eds.), *The West of Ireland*, (2011), 35; Pádraig G. Lane, 'The Irish agricultural labourer in folklore and fiction', *Saothar: Journal of Irish Labour History*, 28, (2003): 81

⁵⁷ 'A Guardian of the Poor', *The Irish Peasant: A Sociological Study*, (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1892), 103

⁵⁸ Samuel Clark, *Social Origins of the Irish Land War*, (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979), 38; Fitzpatrick, 'The Disappearance of the Irish Agricultural Labourer', (1980): 68

⁵⁹ John W. Boyle, 'A Marginal Figure: The Irish Rural Labourer', in Clark and Donnelly, (eds.), *Irish Peasants*, (1983), 311-338

Regardless of marginal improvements during the course of the century, the economic condition of agricultural labourers remained poor, still marked by meagre wages, inadequate housing and irregular employment. In the years preceding the Land War, efforts to alleviate these issues, such as the effort to unionise Irish labourers by the English National Agricultural Labourers Union, foundered on the rocks of Irish political and national aspiration.⁶⁰ The Irish Agricultural Labourers Union which emerged from these efforts survived in Ireland until the beginning of the Land War, being subsequently subsumed within the League's wide ranging economic and political ambitions.⁶¹

This did not obviate the tensions between farmers and labourers, however. During one notable confrontation in Shannagarry, Cork, 150 labourers protested and obstructed a Land League meeting in the village. In this vicinity many of the labourers felt better treated by the local landlord, who employed a good number directly. The hostility was mutual, with one tenant farmer's considered opinion that all the 'good' labourers had left for the United States, leaving only the trouble-makers behind.⁶² There was some concern from the League that landlords were seeking to undermine tenant farmers by appealing directly to labourers and highlighting hypocrisy of their exclusion from the message of 'the land for the people'.⁶³ At a public meeting in Thurles in November 1880, reference was made to the 'insidious attempts made by the landlords to put the agricultural labourers against the tenant farmers'.⁶⁴ The labourers were of course not blind to the implications of the League's rhetoric. A placard in County Wexford in 1880 asked:

how long are we going to stand this vile treatment from the hands of the farmers, when you all know they have no more right to the land than we have? The land shall be ours as well as the farmers. Rise Up! We are the strongest party in the land, the real bone and sinew, that will wrest part of the soil from our oppressors.⁶⁵

Changing patterns of land use and agricultural mechanisation also inspired some Luddism, and a 'growing number of outrages against ploughs and herd'.⁶⁶ Nevertheless, in national terms the attempts by the Property Defence Association to exacerbate tensions between labourers and farmers were broadly unsuccessful. Support from agricultural

⁶⁰ Pamela Horn, 'The Irish Agricultural Labourers' Union in Ireland', *Irish Historical Studies*, 17:67, (1971): 345

⁶¹ Fintan Lane, 'P. F. Johnson, Nationalism, and Irish Rural Labourers, 1869-82', *Irish Historical Studies*, 33:130, (2002): 194

⁶² Lane, 'P. F. Johnson', (2002): 204-5

⁶³ *Kerry Sentinel*, 14 Sept., 1880

⁶⁴ Edward Marum, Thurles, Co. Tipperary, 14 Nov., 1880, (LLP, MS 11,289, NLI)

⁶⁵ Lane, 'P. F. Johnson', (2002): 204

⁶⁶ Pádraig G. Lane, 'Agricultural Labourers and Rural Violence, 1850-1914', *Studia Hibernica*, 27, (1993): 82

labourers was critical to the success of League activities such as boycotting. In this regard, Henry George was correct to observe that ‘the strength of the Land League does not, and never did, lie in the farmers themselves, but in the circumambient population of which they were but a part’.⁶⁷ This was something labourers themselves asserted. At a labourers’ National Convention in Dublin, led by P. F. Johnson and Peter O’Leary, the League was described as ‘the most powerful social and political institution ever formed in the British Isles’, its success due to ‘the support given to it by the labourers of Ireland’.⁶⁸

An awareness of the potential dangers of a schism prompted the Land League leadership to include ameliorative demands for labourers on their plank. The condition of labourers was addressed at League meetings, and League rhetoric was potentially inclusive of them. Repetition of images such as the ‘tillers of the soil’ left open the possibility of engagement with agricultural labourers as well as small tenants.⁶⁹ There were certainly those within the League whose genuine concern did extend to the labouring community, particularly Davitt, Thomas Brennan, Andrew Kettle and the Unitarian minister Rev. Harold Rylett. Given this, ‘possibilities did exist at the time for the creation of a viable labour-nationalist movement’ but the risk of dividing a potentially powerful alliance of farmers doomed the chance of a significant labouring involvement in the League.⁷⁰

At League meetings labourers were addressed only indirectly, and although their conditions and ambitions were treated sympathetically, they remained clearly an afterthought. It was recognised that ‘the position of the [...] agricultural labourer in Ireland, is second to the position of no man in such a position on the face of the world’, but farmers clearly had to be encouraged to see the cause of the labourer as more than merely incidental to their own. Even then, while the labour of farmers proved their title to the land, that of the farm workers should be recompensed merely by ‘a fair remuneration’.⁷¹ Discussed in terms of their conditions, labourers were broadly excluded from the language of ‘rights’. In the U.S., although there was a degree of mutual consideration between the League and representatives of the labourers, they remained distinct. Patrick Egan sought lecture opportunities for labourers’ representative Peter O’Leary, but had to remind Patrick Collins, the president of the U.S. executive, that ‘members of the League at home are deeply interested in this question, and anxious to do

⁶⁷ Henry George, *Irish World*, 16 Sept., 1882; Boyle, ‘A Marginal Figure: The Irish Rural Labourer’, (1983), 328

⁶⁸ *The Pilot*, 5 Nov., 1881

⁶⁹ *Freeman’s Journal*, 28 Aug., 1879

⁷⁰ Fintan Lane, ‘Michael Davitt and the Irish Working Class’, in Lane and Newby, (eds.), *Michael Davitt*, (2009), 81

⁷¹ Campbell and Kerr, ‘Davitt at Carrickmore’, (1985): 389

all that lies in their power to improve the labourers' condition'.⁷² Despite their 'friendly feeling', labourers remained outwith the League's central ambition, and their uneasy relationship remained a 'perennial reality'.⁷³ That the Labourers (Ireland) Acts of the 1880s received hostility from some farmers, irritated at its cost and imposition on them, was testament to 'the failure of rural society to fundamentally recognise the validity of the economic plight of rural labourers as a social group', permanently excluded as they were from the sacralised image of Gaelic Ireland and its republican intonations.⁷⁴

Perhaps as a result of this, separate labourers' agitation was too localised, reactionary and intermittent to possess or to achieve any substantive aims, remaining an emotionally cathartic activity. The growth of labourers' organisations after the demise of the Land League was testament to their awkward and partial incorporation in the organisation, especially given the overlapping support. In the autumn of 1882, in the wake of the Kilmainham Treaty, George perceived that 'the laborers are waking up to the bitter consciousness that after all they have done and suffered there is nothing even promised for them'.⁷⁵ The *Kerry Sentinel* reminded its readers the next month that 'the needs of the farmer, once the theme of urgent agitation, pall before the crying necessities of the agricultural labourer'.⁷⁶ Despite this, and Davitt's abortive attempt to unify nationalists in an Irish Labour and Industrial Union, no significant labourers' movement grew to challenge either the Land League itself, or its conception of Irish nationhood.⁷⁷

Given this agrarian focus, it is no surprise that urban workers received even less attention. Despite his radical inclinations, even Davitt failed to engage with the political energies of urban workers, who were also labouring under heavy rents.⁷⁸ Gerard Moran notes that in Limerick City average rents increased by 50 per cent in the two years from 1878 to 1880, but this created no significant protests.⁷⁹ As with the rural labourers, there was hope in the early stages of the Land War that urban grievances could be incorporated into the national platform. A 'Land and Labour' mass meeting was held in Dublin's Phoenix Park on 14th March, 1880, at which, 'considering the difficulty of interesting the population of a great city in a purely agricultural agitation' (and the weather), the *Freeman's Journal* estimated an 'exceedingly remarkable' 30,000 in attendance.⁸⁰ The

⁷² Patrick Egan to Patrick A. Collins, 29 Nov., 1881, (Patrick A. Collins Papers, Series 1, Box 2, Boston College [hereafter PACP, BC])

⁷³ Lane, 'P. F. Johnson', (2002): 204

⁷⁴ Lane, 'Poor Crayturs', (2011), 49

⁷⁵ Henry George, *Irish World*, 16 Sept., 1882

⁷⁶ *Kerry Sentinel*, 13 Oct., 1882

⁷⁷ Lane, 'Poor Crayturs', (2011), 46

⁷⁸ Lane, 'Michael Davitt and the Irish Working Class', (2009), 82

⁷⁹ Moran, 'The Land War, Urban Destitution', (1995): 24

⁸⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 15 March, 1880; 21 Feb., 1880

League's leaders watched a procession of Dublin tradesmen before the crowd were informed that, as George would later reiterate, 'land is the source and labour is the creator of all wealth [therefore] monopoly of land is alike contrary to justice and reason', and that 'rent is the direct antagonism of labour'.⁸¹ Thomas Brennan also evinced a labour internationalism, asserting that 'in Ireland, as in every other country in the world' there was 'an unholy conspiracy against the rights of labour', and that Dublin's labourers would remain underpaid until they recognised that 'they had a cause in common, not only with the workers of Ireland, but with the workers of the world'. In a rousing finale he concluded: 'Up, then, men of Dublin, and with liberty and labour as your watchword, strike for the emancipation of enslaved humanity'.⁸² It is curious, however, that with the notable exception of Brennan, urban workers in attendance were not incited to support the league because of urban rents or in solidarity against international capital, but primarily through national loyalty, and because rural depopulation would drive down wages in the city. Despite the optimistic tone of the meeting, the League remained unable to reframe its core appeal in order to properly encompass city dwellers.⁸³ Ultimately, urban life did not accord with Ireland's national or international vision of itself. The narrative of rural Ireland and its republicanism suggested wage-workers, and even urban dwelling itself, was a less virtuous position than smallholding independence.

On his first tour of Ireland, Henry George spoke at the 'historic Rotunda' at the top of Sackville Street. 'An immense audience', 'wild with enthusiasm', attended his first speech in November 1881, at least according to George's own account.⁸⁴ In early May of 1882 he spoke again at the same venue on his return journey from England. The lecture was attended by Anna Parnell, Thomas Sexton and Alfred Webb among others, and with the hall decorated with American flags, George received 'a great ovation, one that has rarely been accorded to even the most popular Irishman'.⁸⁵ Unlike most of the speakers at the Phoenix Park meeting, George tried to demonstrate the essential and elementary relationship between labour and land. Attempting to tailor his talk for an urban audience, he looked for 'something as simple and as striking which will show the relation of the operative and industrial classes to the land'.⁸⁶ In the speech itself George offered a comparison between Ireland and revolutionary America, flattering sensibilities by

⁸¹ *Freeman's Journal*, 15 March, 1880

⁸² *Ibid.*

⁸³ Moran, 'The Land War, Urban Destitution', (1995): 24

⁸⁴ Henry George to Edward Robeson Taylor, 20 Nov., 1881, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL); Henry George to Patrick Ford, 15 Nov., 1881, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

⁸⁵ Henry George, 'Lecture on the Irish Land Question, Dublin Rotunda', 10 June, 1882, (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL)

⁸⁶ Henry George to Francis G. Shaw, 28 April, 1882, and Henry George to M.M [?], 3 May, 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

suggesting that Ireland was ‘destined to play an important part in the history of the world at this epoch’.⁸⁷ A reference to Davitt’s recent speech in Liverpool, in which the Irishman had partially adopted George’s scheme, drew loud applause; but as George pointed out, the ‘Land for the People’ had been much discussed, still ‘there were many men, who did not give to it its full true meaning’.⁸⁸

The Church and the Land League

My husband gets letters continually from clergymen encouraging him in his work, but always refusing to allow their names to be used. Why is this? Right is right.⁸⁹

The expanded fifty-three person executive proposed at the founding of the League included thirteen priests. Right from its earliest days, parish priests, who lived and worked amongst their congregations, were often sympathetic to the aims of the League. However, there were strong divisions among the hierarchy. The most supportive prelates were Archbishop Croke of Cashel, and Bishops Dorrian, Nulty, MacCormack, and Duggan. Arrayed in opposition were Cardinal McCabe of Dublin, Archbishop McHale of Tuam, and Bishop MacEvilly of Galway, as well as several others.⁹⁰

The personal experiences of particular bishops heavily influenced their attitudes towards the Land League’s activities. Bishop Duggan of Clonfert, for example, one of the most confident and outspoken supporters of the League had remained heavily involved in parish work since his ordination. He had also experienced the Famine first hand, and its horrors had continued to haunt him.⁹¹ Duggan had been involved in the Tenant Right Movement in the late 1840s and 1850s, and his own father had been evicted from his farmland in the 1850s. Duggan deplored any ‘infringement on the just rights of man’, considered as distinct from the landlords’ contractual rights.⁹² He added, in terms reminiscent of George and the *Irish World*, that a solution to the land question would only be found by settling on ‘principles in conformity with the eternal laws of Equity and Justice’.⁹³ Appearing before the Richmond Commission in June 1880, Duggan observed

⁸⁷ Henry George, ‘Lecture on the Irish Land Question, Dublin Rotunda’, 10 June, 1882, (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL)

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

⁸⁹ Annie George to Fr. Thomas Dawson, 5 June, 1887, (HGP, Series I: D, Box 11, NYPL)

⁹⁰ Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, (1975), 24

⁹¹ Thomas Brett, *Life of the Most Reverend Patrick Duggan, Bishop of Clonfert*, (Dublin: W. Leckie, 1921), 70; 123; John Bradley, ‘Archbishop McGettigan, the Catholic Bishops of Ireland and the Irish Land Bill 1881’, *Seanchas Ardmhacha: Journal of the Armagh Diocesan Historical Society*, 17:2, (1998): 132

⁹² Shields, “‘Serving the farmer’”, (2011), 59

⁹³ ‘The Bishops of Ireland’, in MacSwynnie, (ed.), *America’s Sympathies with Ireland*, (1881), 7, (P.001.1830, PAHRC)

that Irish culture remained at a variance with English contractual law, and that ‘those who legislate for us do not understand us’.⁹⁴

As the League grew, so did the involvement of the clergy. While this led to some awkward compromises as priests found themselves sharing a ‘platform with men who had some very hard things to say about an Irish propertied class’, clerical involvement was necessitated by the growing popularity of the league.⁹⁵ Many prelates, too, recognised the danger posed to their own authority by abstaining from the conflict. Patrick Dorrian, Bishop of Down and Connor, observed that ‘some bishops and priests are short-sighted in opposing the active policy’.⁹⁶

For prelates who went further and actively voiced support for the activities of the League, the threat of sanction from Rome was never far away. Hailing from a family of prominent religious men, the especially outspoken Thomas Croke was an academically gifted theologian. He received a doctorate from the Jesuit College in Rome before teaching classics and divinity in Carlow and at the Irish College in Paris.⁹⁷ Croke was an open and vocal supporter of the League, such that he was even asked to step in as its leader after Parnell’s imprisonment.⁹⁸ No doubt aware of the contradictory pressures of such an appointment, he refused the position, much to the disappointment of the conservative elements of the league who had hoped his influence would have been a check on its more radical tendencies.⁹⁹ It would have perhaps been a forlorn hope in any case, as Croke’s private expressions reveal an even stronger and more single minded support for the Land League and opposition to British rule; a ‘mean and merciless’ power to which the Irish should pledge themselves ‘never to make peace with’.¹⁰⁰

Having been accused of using ‘language of a socialistic tendency’, Croke claimed that it was not the ‘first time that clandestine charges have been made against me in Rome’. In defining his opponents as ‘Englishmen’, ‘Irish aristocrats’, and ‘anti-Irish ecclesiastics’, and construing Irish Catholicism as a distinctly national and demotic religion, he concluded that, ‘I have the satisfaction of knowing, that I stand higher in the estimation of the Irish race, at home and abroad, than any living Irish ecclesiastic but one. This is probably the head and front of my offending’.¹⁰¹ Croke’s acknowledgement of the significance of popular will and sentiment highlighted the dual purpose of the Roman Catholic Church in Ireland, both as Roman Church and as *de facto* popular state, a

⁹⁴ Brett, *Life of the Most Reverend Patrick Duggan*, (1921), 142-3

⁹⁵ Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, (1975), 25

⁹⁶ *Ibid.*, 38

⁹⁷ ‘The Bishops of Ireland’, (1881), 3-4, (P.001.1830, PAHRC)

⁹⁸ Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, (1975), 25

⁹⁹ Fanny Parnell to Patrick A. Collins, 10 Nov., 1881, (PACP, Series 1, Box 2, BC)

¹⁰⁰ Most Rev. T. W. Croke to John Dillon, Thurles, 23 Nov., 1881, (Harrington Papers, MS 8577, NLI)

¹⁰¹ Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, (1975), 26

position that was directly threatened by the Land League. This problem was exacerbated by Edward McCabe's opposition to the League. Following the death of his predecessor, the *Irish World* had boldly warned that 'it will not do to place in Ireland, under pretence of religion, a Cardinal whose proclivities are against Irish aspirations'.¹⁰² These warnings went unheeded, and the new Archbishop of Dublin expressed his belief that the actions of Parnell had 'brought the country face to face with revolutionary and communistic doctrines'.¹⁰³ In response, Croke bemoaned McCabe's distance from popular sentiment, observing with incredulity that 'for the first time in Irish history, an Irish bishop has been served with threatening notices that he would be shot'.¹⁰⁴ In this, Croke's criticism was not of the threat itself, but with McCabe for transgressing popular sentiment, a position that tacitly admitted a form of popular consent in ecclesiastical control. When McCabe's pastoral denouncing the 'No-Rent Manifesto' for striking 'at the foundation on which society rests – the rights of property', was read out in churches, some left in disgust.¹⁰⁵ McCabe's attempts to exert strict control over the Church, and particularly over the behaviour and pronouncements of specific bishops, were generally unpopular at a clerical level, and McCabe admitted that 'I find it very hard to keep some of the young priests in this Diocese quiet'.¹⁰⁶ It is obvious that the balance of power lay at a popular level, with the Church requiring tacit consent more than Catholics needed their leadership.

Even those like Archbishop John MacEvilly who were opposed to the actions of the Land League, recognised the extent to which popular sympathies, and by extension the local priesthood, stood with the organisation. MacEvilly wrote to Tobias Kirby of the Irish College in December, 1879 to counsel Rome against issuing a denunciation of the League. Despite his opposition, he was forthright about the social and economic suffering in the country and shared his concerns in language similar to the republican tone of the League itself, complaining that the 'poor tenant [is] robbed of the fruit of the sweat of his brow, obliged to pay double rent for the land his own labor reclaimed from utter barren worthlessness'.¹⁰⁷

Many others in the Church hierarchy recognised further that their influence would be significantly diminished, if not irrevocably damaged, if they did not find a way to play a part in this new politics. Bishop Duggan told George in a meeting 'that the movement could not be stopped', and that 'the present attitude of religious authority will,

¹⁰² *Irish World*, 30 Nov., 1878

¹⁰³ C. J. Woods, 'The Politics of Cardinal McCabe, Archbishop of Dublin, 1879-85', *Dublin Historical Record*, 26:3, (1973): 103

¹⁰⁴ Woods, 'The Politics of Cardinal McCabe', (1973): 103

¹⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 105

¹⁰⁶ Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, (1975), 48

¹⁰⁷ 'The Bishops of Ireland', (1881), 10, (P.001.1830, PAHRC); Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, (1975), 29

if persisted in produce the same results as in France. It will do what persecution could not do – divorce the people from their Church. The only hope he said was that the people would force the Bishops along'.¹⁰⁸ But Roman authority did inhibit clerical support for the League, and made tentative endorsements even more significant. The most socially radical prelate, Dr. Thomas Nulty, the Bishop of Meath, was under 'a good deal of pressure' from Rome. As George explained: 'the people, as far as I have talked to them seem to well understand that the Bishop does not speak his free, full opinion', and George was 'satisfied that pressure comes from Rome'.¹⁰⁹ Duggan had also confirmed to him, 'in as many words', 'that absolute orders from Rome are holding back such men as he and Nulty'.¹¹⁰ The two men spoke for hours, but Duggan insisted that George should make no public mention of his forthright opinions. George agreed to this but lamented to Ford in private over 'how this movement would flame up if men like Dr. Duggan and Bishop Nulty could come right out'.¹¹¹ Pope Leo XIII's 1883 circular *De Parnellio*, was the culmination of this pressure for Roman intervention, but its limited impact demonstrated the futility of such top-down interference in the face of popular support.¹¹²

Collectively, the Irish Bishops constructed a response to the proposed Land Act at a meeting in Dublin in April, 1881. They welcomed the bill, but offered suggestions for 'alterations in its details', without which 'the Bill must fail to effect a satisfactory settlement of the land question'.¹¹³ The position of the Catholic hierarchy was a tacit attack on the operation of the market in land, by arguing for the perpetuity of tenure to be granted to all present and future tenants. In further limiting the power of the landlords to extract rent, the Bishops attempted to shift the definition of rent away from the market, making it incumbent on the landlords to demonstrate why existing rentals were unfair to them and needed to be raised. By so doing, the legal owners of the land would have to, by implication, justify their right to any rent at all. This was a clear attempt to restructure the debate away from exchange value and towards use value.

The Catholic hierarchy argued that tenants should have virtually all the rights due to them as owners. Not only security and a right to their interest in the land, but also the right to 'sell or transfer part of such holdings whilst retaining the remainder in their own possession, also to bequeath such holding in parts to more than one member of their

¹⁰⁸ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 8 Dec., 1881, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

¹⁰⁹ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 22 Nov., 1881, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

¹¹⁰ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 8 Dec., 1881, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*; Henry George to Patrick Ford, Dublin, 28 Dec., 1881, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

¹¹² Vincent Comerford, 'The Parnell Era, 1883-91', in Vaughan, (ed.), *A New History of Ireland*, v.6, (1989), 54; Larkin, *The Roman Catholic Church*, (1975), 162-194

¹¹³ John Bradley, 'Archbishop McGettigan, the Catholic Bishops of Ireland', (1998): 146

family or to such others as they may select'.¹¹⁴ To this they added the agrarian position that: 'We are convinced that the sub-division of extensive holdings within reasonable limits will, instead of impeding, largely promote the permanent improvement of land and the general industry of the country'.¹¹⁵ They rejected the dominant metropolitan economic consensus that too many tenant holdings were too small to be profitable and that only the concentration of ownership would increase economic production. Their divergence from this position points to sympathy for a republican perspective that saw the tiller of the soil as the most effective agent for economic and social production, seeing the material and moral benefits of land ownership. Gladstone's response clearly recognised the radical implications of the Bishops' demands, as he consoled 'that Her Majesty's government while they will welcome any amendment from whatever quarter that may tend to improve the Bill, cannot hold out the expectation of their acceding to any changes which would give it a new character'.¹¹⁶

At a local level, the involvement of parish priests in the League was directly encouraged by the leaders of the movement, aware that it would cement its position by providing moral authority and administrative assistance where it was lacking. Canon Magee, Parish Priest of Castlebar was one of the first to speak out in favour of the agitation, and from then on there appeared an increasing number of priests on the Land League platforms. Fr. John of Malley of The Neale, and the noted radical priest Fr. Patrick Lavelle, held in great esteem for his willingness to stand against hierarchical authority, also added gravitas to the early movement in Mayo and encouraged greater support.¹¹⁷ This effectively opened the gates for priestly involvement, and Donald Jordan estimates that there was clerical representation at 18 of the 22 land meetings in Mayo between October and December 1879 and then at 68 per cent of the meetings in 1880 and 1881.¹¹⁸ Priests had to strike a careful balance between attempting to preserve order by resisting the more radical pronouncements from both speakers and the gathered crowds, 'without jeopardising their clerical authority'.¹¹⁹ It also involved a tense relationship between priests and their hierarchy. It was George's impression that 'the majority of the clergy are I am inclined to think, with the people and the no-rent fight, but they are for the most part "bulldozed"'.¹²⁰

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 147

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 147

¹¹⁶ William Gladstone to Archbishop Daniel MacGettigan, 29 April, 1881, in *Ibid.*, 151

¹¹⁷ Gerard Moran, *A Radical Priest in Mayo: Fr. Patrick Lavelle: The Rise and Fall of an Irish Nationalist, 1825-1886*, (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1994)

¹¹⁸ Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics*, (1994), 243

¹¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 241

¹²⁰ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 10 Nov., 1881, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

The published accounts of its relief fund show the League relying on local clergy to distribute relief funds where there was no branch nearby, and in some cases simply sending small sums of money to priests directly.¹²¹ The priests' clerical role in the League often came as a result of their prominence in local relief committees. Gerard Moran estimates that 1,319 priests were members of 769 relief committees established during the years 1879 and 1880, making up over 17 per cent of the total membership of such committees, and that many local relief committees subsequently morphed more or less seamlessly into local Land League branches, as was the case in Castlebar in the January of 1880.¹²² As widely trusted, and because they had first-hand knowledge of the economic realities in their locales, they tended to be prominent in both accounting and administering the funds. Their humanitarian role, as well as the recognition by some priests of social deprivation as a systemic political issue led Henry George to be 'very much impressed by the clergy of Ireland as a class'.¹²³

The result of this involvement was to firm up the clerical-nationalist alliance. The loyalty of the priests to the land cause was returned. Timothy Harrington reminded one mass meeting that even if other Churches supported the wealth, 'we in Ireland at least can boast a ministry, who throw their hat in with the people and against the people's oppressors'.¹²⁴ The broadly sympathetic stance of the clergy in Ireland allowed them to develop their central position in the mythology of Irish culture, as the saviour and the ambassador of the Catholic Irish. The Scottish reformer and journalist James Redpath, in a speech in Boston that was, in the best transatlantic traditions, reprinted in the *Connaught Telegraph*, eulogised the Irish priest as 'the tongue of the blind Sampson of Ireland [...] He toils for them from dawn till midnight'.¹²⁵

Republican praxis

The means of protest and rebellion employed by the League reflected the social structures and ideologies behind them. 'Irish culture contained an accepted element of ritualised rebellion', and this was utilised during the Land War to express popular frustrations on both sides of the Atlantic.¹²⁶ Isolated acts of nocturnal violence went hand in hand with

¹²¹ 'Irish National Land League Relief Fund: Sums received for Relief of Distress by Irish National Land League, from Dec. 22, 1879, to April 30, 1880 also Particulars of Grants made by Land League to Local Relief Committees, &c., from Dec. 22, 1879 to April 30, 1880', 4 (Heffernan Papers, MS 21,910, NLI)

¹²² Moran, 'Near Famine', (2002): 164-6

¹²³ Henry George to Richard George, 10 Feb., 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

¹²⁴ Campbell and Kerr, 'Davitt at Carrickmore', (1985): 392

¹²⁵ *Connaught Telegraph*, 19 June, 1880

¹²⁶ Lucey, *Land, Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence*, (2011), 195

public protests, threatening letters and unspoken intimidation and were directed at civic authorities as well as members of the community considered to be transgressors. While every effort was made on the part of the League's executive to distance itself from the most violent attacks, and indeed much was made of the peaceable disposition of the Irish population, threats and intimidations were as critical as emotional catharsis as they were expressions of communal solidarity.¹²⁷ The large and often threatening crowds that gathered to observe evictions or sheriff sales were there to emphasise the power of the community and to prevent others from taking advantage of available land. 'Landgrabbers' in particular had been the focus of agrarian violence and ritualised intimidation over the course of the preceding century, and attacking them was effectively a means of dissolving the market in land.¹²⁸ Transgressors were subject to consistent forms of attack, often reinventions or resuscitations of culturally familiar means of remonstrance; the persistence of images of coffins on threatening letters being one example. Whiteboyism, prevalent in the south of Ireland from the mid-eighteenth to the mid-nineteenth century, had been 'a vast trades' union for the protection of the Irish peasantry'.¹²⁹ Flaring up intermittently over the period, and seemingly demonstrating an implicit class-consciousness, 'secret agrarian societies had habituated people in the countryside to communal action, to political direction, to moral sanctions as well as physical, and to the use of their very numbers to intimidate authority'.¹³⁰ These forms of popular violence, ranging from the highly organised to the disjointed and amorphous as a means of protection against landlord power, 'firmly rooted in a rural culture which dictated behaviour and punished those who violated cultural norms', were gradually allied to notions 'of access to property as a natural right' and used effectively during the Land War.¹³¹ A letter to the editor of the *Connaught Telegraph* argued that action against landgrabbers had Biblical support: 'Yes ... this very law was laid down by God himself – Thou shalt not covet thy neighbours goods'.¹³²

¹²⁷ Conyngham, *Ireland Past and Present*, (1884), 249; T. D. Sullivan, (ed.), *Condemnations of Crime: Compiled from Speeches delivered at meetings of the Land League and National League in Ireland, 1879-1887*, (London: The Irish Press Agency, 1888); Moran, 'The Land War, Urban Destitution', (1995): 19; 26

¹²⁸ Pole, 'Sheriffs' Sales during the Land War', (2005): 401; Paul E. W. Roberts, 'Caravats and Shanavests: Whiteboyism and Faction Fighting in East Munster, 1802-11', in Clark and Donnelly, (eds.), *Irish Peasants*, (1983), 69

¹²⁹ George Cornwall Lewis, *On local disturbances in Ireland, and on the Irish church question*, (London: B. Fellowes, 1836), 99

¹³⁰ Oliver MacDonagh, 'Ideas and Institutions, 1830-45', in Vaughan, (ed.), *A New History of Ireland*, v.5, (1989), 202; Lucey, *Land, Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence*, (2011), 196

¹³¹ Gordon, 'Studies in Irish and Irish American Thought', (1977), 360; Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics*, (1994), 155

¹³² *Connaught Telegraph*, 27 March, 1886

This collective action required unity of purpose and there were many mechanisms to achieve this, some more threatening than others. Speakers at Land League meetings regularly encouraged those in attendance to 'be true to one another', but with the implicit power of social control. At Thurles, a speaker warned: 'Let no man betray his neighbour'.¹³³ Here, as evident elsewhere, there was a close proximity, and indeed a reciprocal relationship, between the threat of violence and non-violent moral force nationalism.¹³⁴ The shouts of violence from the crowd at Land League meetings ('shoot him' 'kill them') was part of the performative texture of the proceedings as speakers often interjected, ostensibly cooling tensions, but, by dint of acknowledgment, timing, and redirection, also embraced the power of the physical threat behind the moral campaign. Although Thomas Brennan rejected calls for violence, he found it useful to note on the platform that when France 'was getting shut of her landlords, [she] did not give them twenty-years' compensation. No; she gave them twenty feet of a rope (Cheers)'.¹³⁵

As well as this, members who paid rents 'in excess of what the League deemed just' were often expelled from the protection of the organisation and sometimes boycotted.¹³⁶ The Land League aided this community discipline, but, contrary to contemporary police reports, they were not coercive, relying instead on collective cultural agreement for enforcement. The League was symptomatic rather than instigative in its role. Tenant farmers banded together 'to pledge ourselves not to take any farm from which another man may have been ejected through inability to pay rent; and we will watch over such an ejected family as over our own, and do all we can to have such a family restored to its farm'.¹³⁷ Even after the League itself was suppressed, and there existed no official body with any power to enforce such rules, 'this policy was still largely adhered to within rural society'.¹³⁸

Public force and intimidation were, however, also central elements. Evictions and the serving of writs were public events, attended and watched over by members of the community who sometimes intervened in the situation. Letters to the central executive of the Land League claiming expenses to cover legal costs for 'obstructing the bailiff in the service of writs' suggest it was not uncommon. This action was often effective too. Many

¹³³ Rev. James Cantwell, Thurles, Co. Tipperary, 14 Nov., 1880, (LLP, MS 11,289, NLI)

¹³⁴ L. Perry Curtis, Jr., 'Moral and Physical Force: The Language of Violence in Irish Nationalism', *Journal of British Studies*, 27:2, (1988): 155

¹³⁵ Thomas Brennan, Cardenstown, 23 May, 1880, in Hugh Oakeley Arnold-Forster, *The Truth about the Land League, its Leaders, and its Teaching*, (London: National Press Agency, 1882), 14

¹³⁶ Jordan, 'The Irish National League and the 'Unwritten Law'', (1998): 154

¹³⁷ Second Resolution of the Drumlish and Ballinamuck Farmers Defence Association, 'An Appeal made by the Drumlish and Ballinamuck Farmer's Defence Association, on behalf of the many poor Farmers of the Parish of Drumlish, who are threatened with Eviction from their homesteads', Drumlish, Co. Longford, 17 April, 1881, (103, Box 34, P.001.1801, PAHRC)

¹³⁸ Lucey, *Land, Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence*, (2011), 125

farms that were ‘not taken’ following an eviction. The Ballantubber branch, for example, noted proudly that ‘since last report, two land-grabbers gave up the lands they had taken lately in this parish’.¹³⁹ The *Irish World* recounted with obvious delight the tale of an ejectment server ‘made to eat the precious documents found on his person [before] repeatedly calling on the Supreme being to witness he never would be again caught in the locality of a similar errand’.¹⁴⁰ Fr. Thomas Conefrey of Drumlish also noted with satisfaction how, in January 1881, members of his parish had ‘prevented five hundred police and a company of Her Majesty’s dragoons from serving processes’. He described how, ‘for four days, about twenty thousand persons, armed with pitchforks, &c., and marching to the sound of drums, confronted the police and dragoons, and for a time successfully obstructed the serving of processes’.¹⁴¹ The communality of these proceedings is evident, and the protection and sheltering of evictees was as important as preventing the land being taken on by new tenants.¹⁴² One report of the sale of a tenant’s property noted that ‘some pleasant banter was indulged in during the sale’.¹⁴³ In providing a public sphere that embraced illiberal social obligation by setting limits on the social and economic activities of the individual, the Land League and the broader ‘Irish agrarian agitation in the late nineteenth century represented to a large extent the creation of structures and practices which amounted to a *de facto* system of alternative government’.¹⁴⁴

The government and many landlords did not see collective action. Intellectually, emotionally and often geographically distant from events, the official perspective intoned that demagogic forces had agitated a traditionally supine population. The meticulousness with which the British government attempted to uncover links between the Land and National Leagues and agrarian outrages demonstrated the challenge posed by moral suasion and collective action to their own legal liberal framework. The government required Land Leaguers to physically damage or threaten another individual’s person or property.

Boycotting

¹³⁹ Ballantubber, Co. Mayo, Financial return, Dec., 1880, (LLP, MS 8291, NLI); Kenward Philip, *Boycotting: Or Avenging Ireland’s Wrongs*, (New York: Richard K. Fox, 1881), 13

¹⁴⁰ *Irish World*, 5 July, 1879

¹⁴¹ Rev. Thomas Conefrey, ‘An Appeal made by the Drumlish and Ballinamuck Farmer’s Defence Association’, Drumlish, Co. Longford, 17 Apr., 1881, (103, Box 34, P.001.1801, PAHRC)

¹⁴² Letter from Cahir, Co. Tipperary branch, 11 Oct., 1880, (LLP, MS 8291, NLI)

¹⁴³ ‘Mr. Richard Warburton, of Garryhinch, and his Tenants Protest Against Rack Rents in Queen’s County’, *Leinster Leader*, 19 March, 1881, (P.001.1837, PAHRC)

¹⁴⁴ Philip Bull, ‘The Formation of the United Irish League, 1898-1900: The Dynamics of Irish Agrarian Agitation’, *Irish Historical Studies*, 33:132, (2003): 420

If one form of protest embodies this effort at collective action, as well as the potency of the idea of loyalty to community over other impulses, it is boycotting. After the defining instance of boycotting against the eponymous Captain, the *Times*, making its familiar howl at Irish implacability, claimed ‘a more frightful picture of triumphant anarchy has never been presented in any community pretending to be civilized and subjected to law’.¹⁴⁵ But despite the claims of Captain Boycott himself that he was subject to a malicious conspiracy, there was little if any overarching executive Land League control of the affair. As Donald Jordan writes, ‘in actuality, the initial impulse to lay siege to the inhabitants of Lough Mask House came from the tenants themselves’.¹⁴⁶ The tactic was only encouraged rather than initiated by the League itself.

Boycotting highlighted interdependence and demanded loyalty. Parnell’s definitive statement on boycotting delivered at Ennis, in September of 1880, encouraged leaving transgressors ‘severely alone’, isolating them from the community. As he made clear, such a tactic depended on there being ‘no man so full of avarice, so lost to shame, as to dare the public opinion’ and break the ‘unwritten code of laws’. The conception of republicanism articulated here was strikingly at odds with British liberalism, which relied on the singularity of personal, private and professional interactions as unique, discreet events that did not impinge on others not party to them, nor on wider society itself. By emphasising the power of the individual to make his own choices, as free from political or legal coercion, the influence of social obligation had been obscured. In this way, part of the hidden cultural structure that had created liberalism, including the concept of public duty, which, as we have seen, required social shame, was disregarded. Parnell’s reference to shame affirmed the importance of practical rationality needed to underpin collective action. As such, boycotting, strikes, and indeed all forms of collective action that sought to set cultural limits on the social and economic activity of the individual, and ‘assail the rights of uninterested third parties’, were both illiberal and republican, setting off confounding and fearful hallucinations of a pre-enlightened age for many English and American liberals.¹⁴⁷

It was perhaps especially evident in the U.S., where the efficacy of this, ‘system of social excommunication’, was becoming more widely recognised.¹⁴⁸ Proponents noted its applicability to different contexts, such as the combination against the *New York Herald* that reduced its circulation significantly.¹⁴⁹ During the 1882 freight handlers’ strike on the

¹⁴⁵ *Times*, 18 Oct., 1880

¹⁴⁶ Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics*, (1994), 289

¹⁴⁷ ‘Two Kinds of Boycotting’, *Century Illustrated Magazine*, 32:2, (June, 1886): 321

¹⁴⁸ Philip, *Boycotting*, (1881), 19

¹⁴⁹ ‘Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of the Irish National Land League, held at Buffalo, New York, 12 and 13 January, 1881’, 22, (GDGP, Series III, Box. 5, BC)

east coast, the breaking of the strike was attacked with a boycott. Jeremiah Murphy, the union president said: 'We propose to boycott them. We shall have circulars containing their names printed and distributed over the city, and sent home to Ireland, too', adding, of course, 'we shall not harm them; they needn't fear that'.¹⁵⁰ The U.S. had of course its own long history of 'moral economy' protests, encompassing machine breaking, threatening letters, public displays and petitions, and these were embodiments of the 'economic egalitarianism' of certain threads of republican discourse, not just reactions against power, but moral and political acts themselves.¹⁵¹ Nevertheless, Anglo-Americans such as William Graham Sumner found these new developments shocking and disquieting. Sumner saw quite clearly the challenges it posed to liberal individualism, observing that it was 'the severest trial to which our institutions have yet been put'.¹⁵² As one writer summarised, 'However un-Christian or immoral these cases of boycotting may be or may become, it is practically impossible to frame a legal indictment against them'.¹⁵³ A judge in Jefferson City Missouri tried to ban boycotting as 'a system and name foreign to our institutions and language', and elsewhere it was described as 'essentially as inhuman as it is un-American'.¹⁵⁴ There was a sense that it was important to settle 'the question that boycotting is a crime'.¹⁵⁵

Boycotting was treated with such hostility by the governments in Washington and London, and more generally by liberal society in Britain and America, because it highlighted a paradox of liberal capitalism. In the absence of physical coercion the law stood powerless to condemn an individual's choice to withdraw personal interaction or economic patronage from another individual, even if this was done in a collective fashion. That these behaviours were not always 'choices', simply understood, merely highlighted the difficulty of incorporating non-rational behaviours such as loyalty into a liberal framework. While liberalism necessitated freedom from social obligation, civic republicanism elevated the concept of public duty. Not only this, but boycotting posed a direct challenge to the power of the state by interposing itself between the state and the

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in Gordon, 'Studies in Irish and Irish American Thought', (1977), 354; Michael Gordon, 'The labor boycott in New York City, 1880-1886', *Labor History*, 16:2, (1975): 184-229; Edward T. O'Donnell, *Henry George and the Crisis of Inequality: Progress and Poverty in the Gilded Age*, (New York: Columbia University Press, 2015), 127

¹⁵¹ Sean Wilentz, *Chants Democratic: New York City & the Rise of the American Working Class, 1788-1850*, (New York: Oxford University Press, (1984), 167, 170; Sklansky, *The Soul's Economy*, (2002), 15; Ruth Bogin, 'Petitioning and the New Moral Economy of Post Revolutionary America', *William and Mary Quarterly*, 45, (1988): 392; 424-5

¹⁵² William Graham Sumner, 'Industrial War', *The Forum*, 2 Sept., 1886, 7

¹⁵³ 'Two Kinds of Boycotting', *Century Illustrated Magazine*, 32:2, (June, 1886): 320

¹⁵⁴ *John Swinton's Paper*, 13 Sept., 1885; Sherman D. Thatcher, 'Boycotting', *New Englander and Yale Review*, 9:201, (Dec., 1886): 1038

¹⁵⁵ 'Boycotting A Crime', *The Independent*, 38, (1 July, 1886): 20; 'Boycotting the Unboycottable', *Puck*, 15, (2 July, 1884): 284

individual. A boycott claimed 'large local sovereignty', and as such it threatened 'to usurp or to nullify the state's function of punishing or protecting the individual citizens'.¹⁵⁶ It was for this very reason that American anarchists welcomed the practice as socially organic collective mobilisation. An improvement on 'the practice of appealing to legislators for special and invasive legislation', boycotting should be welcomed, according to the anarchist paper *Liberty*. 'What manlier, more "American" course could they take'.¹⁵⁷

In order to be purposeful, collective action had to be based on a shared identity; these in themselves being, in essence, cultural and arational limitations on personal freedoms. If one identifies with something, one cannot do the opposite, no matter how beneficial it might be, without compromising a sense of one's own personal identity. The absence of loyalty, either to a community, an identity, or even a nation, enables an individual to act without restriction and to develop more fully their own interests. This was well understood by Rousseau in his formulation of republican society in which the importance of collective loyalty is evident in the association of virtue and patriotism: 'Certain it is that the greatest marvels of virtue have been produced by love of fatherland: this gentle and lively sentiment which combines the force of amour propre with all the beauty of virtue, endows it with an energy which, without disfiguring it, makes it into the most heroic of all the passions'.¹⁵⁸ The perspective was evident when Davitt explained the importance of Ireland's 'enthusiastic fidelity to their National Faith'.¹⁵⁹ As Davitt explained, this religio-cultural distinctiveness and collective loyalty was the only thing that could maintain public 'heroism or sublime pursuit of noble aims'.¹⁶⁰

British and American liberalism often struggled to comprehend the purpose and motivations of those who sought to limit personal freedoms and to cling to traditional, absolute and deontological justifications for their decisions and activities. Classical liberal individualism rejected these social strictures and understood progress as individual and relative advancement. Such a perspective was an inoculation against collective action, and, by undermining the power of social censure, encouraged ambition and personal advancement. Once the power of cultural approbation was broken, with shame and duty weakened republicanism proved to be a fragile edifice. Without the power and purposefulness of collective action, the concepts that lay behind it were inevitably worn away.

¹⁵⁶ 'Two kinds of Boycotting', *Century Illustrated Magazine*, 32:2, (1886): 321-2

¹⁵⁷ 'Liberty and Boycotting', *Liberty (Not the Daughter but the Mother of Order)*, 31 Oct., 1891

¹⁵⁸ Jean Jacques Rousseau, 'Discourse on Political Economy', (1755), in Gourevitch, (ed.), *The Social Contract*, (1997), 16

¹⁵⁹ Davitt, 'English Civilisation', in King, (ed.), *Michael Davitt*, (2003), 31

¹⁶⁰ Davitt, 'Ireland's Share of the British Constitution', in King, (ed.), *Michael Davitt*, (2003), 59-60

Georgism and Irish-America: class, culture and social radicalism

'Among the various European races whose members have become citizens of the United States in large numbers, there is, perhaps, none from which it has been more difficult to erase the foreign sentiments and qualities, and to merge indistinguishably in the body of the people, than the Irish', wrote one American observer. The reasons for this, he made clear, were threefold. There was their 'clannish nature', a tendency to congregate in cities; there was race and religion, with 'the Irish Celts being Roman Catholics almost to a man'; and finally their lack of wealth: 'for although we cannot boast that all native born Americans are rich, yet it is true that the Irish come over here poor, and that so far they have not succeeded in acquiring any great amount of capital, and with it the views and sentiments of the capitalist'.¹ Whilst subsequent historiography has profitably complicated these generalisations, they are indicative of contemporary Anglo-American perspectives of the Irish, and, taken in context, can help to disentangle the cultural peculiarities of both sides.

Although contemporary opinion suggested the Irish community in the US was 'clannish', there were significant class tensions in Irish-America. As Patrick Ford sullenly complained, 'there are fully 25,000,000 of Irish blood in the United States, [if only they] understood themselves and would come together, things would be as we could wish them to be'.² Others shared this frustration at the genteel rejection of 'Irishness' by the 'lace-curtain' Irish. As Matthew Harris observed, 'it is a strange fact, but as true as it is strange, that the higher you go up the social scale the less national Irishmen become'.³ In Frederick Engels opinion 'the worst [thing] about the Irish is that they become corruptible as soon as they stop being peasants and turn bourgeois'.⁴ While ethnic identification certainly declined during the early decades of the twentieth century, it is possible to set the bar too high in demanding, as Alan O'Day does, 'cohesive self-sustaining communities'.⁵ It is narrow perspective to ask why Irish-Americans did not devote all their energies to their distant homeland, when most were rightly concerned with surviving and flourishing in their new environment, something that should be taken as a given.⁶ As Matthew Frye

¹ Lawrence Lowell, 'Irish Agitation in America', *Forum*, 4:4, (Dec., 1887): 401

² Patrick Ford to Michael Davitt, 19 Jan., 1899, (DP, MS 9483/6742, TCD)

³ Matthew Harris, letter to the *Irishman*, Ballinasloe, 19 June, 1880, Pamphlet, (HP, MS 21,910, NLI)

⁴ Matthew Harris, letter to the *Irishman*, Ballinasloe, 19 June, 1880, Pamphlet, (HP, MS 21,910, NLI); Frederick Engels to Karl Marx, 27 Sept., 1869, in *Ireland and the Irish Question*, (1971), 274

⁵ Alan O'Day, 'Imagined Irish Communities: Networks of Social Communication of the Irish Diaspora in the United States and Britain in the Late Nineteenth and Early Twentieth Centuries', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 23:2-3, (2005): 406; Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1985), 554

⁶ Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, (1966), 46

Jacobson among others has argued, 'Irish nationalism and Irish "Americanism" became mutually reinforcing' in a socially hostile environment.⁷ Energies devoted to 'self-improvement', like that advocated in Ford's *Irish World*, also helped to foster an 'Irish-American' identity.

Particularities of place also had an enormous effect on the structures and characteristics of different Irish communities. Regionalised studies of the Irish diaspora have teased out the specificities of the effects of the host community on the culture of the newcomers. New England, as a bastion of establishment Anglo-America, shaped the Irish community and its avenues for political power in profoundly different ways to the metropolis of New York. The mining towns of Pennsylvania's anthracite region fostered an industrial solidarity that was hugely different to Irish-American culture in California, where Chinese immigration and the absence of a long established community were formative influences. In the American South, argues David Gleeson, intra-Irish competition and religious distinction became less important in the face of a unifying Confederate and 'Southern' identity.⁸ Across the west in general, where the image of the rugged frontiersman was embraced over strictures of eastern gentility, more socially radical ambitions for Irish national liberation were embraced.⁹ California offered \$50 to Devoy in 1882, whereas Massachusetts provided nearly \$20,000. In contrast, 'California's and Colorado's 85,000 Irish-born gave as much to Ford's Land League Fund as did the 400,000 Irish-born in Massachusetts and Connecticut'.¹⁰ The clarity of land issues in a sparsely populated area, and the lack of an entrenched political establishment or an Americanized Irish elite, created a more hospitable environment for radical republican rhetoric.

Timothy Meagher's insightful study of Worcester, Massachusetts also highlights the variety of ways in which Irish diasporic life was shaped by the nature of their new environment. Meagher detects a gradual process of accommodation between the Irish and 'Yankee' communities in 1880s Worcester. Here, as elsewhere, the Irish-American community sought incremental integration rather than assimilation, adopting American cultural forms whilst maintaining a distinct but sanitised 'Irish' identity.¹¹ An Irish

⁷ Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, (2002), 25

⁸ Gleeson, 'Smaller Differences', (2006): 91; Kevin Kenny, 'Twenty Years of Irish American Historiography', *Journal of American Ethnic History*, 28:4, (2009): 67-75; Malcolm Campbell, 'Ireland's Furthest Shores: Irish Immigrant Settlement in Nineteenth-Century California and Eastern Australia', *Pacific Historical Review*, 71:1, (2002): 59-90

⁹ David Emmons, *The Butte Irish: Class and Ethnicity in an American Mining Town, 1875-1925*, (Urbana, IL.: University of Illinois Press, 1990), 293-295

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 296

¹¹ Philip Gleason, 'The Melting Pot: Symbol of Fusion or Confusion', *American Quarterly*, 16:1, (1964): 20-46, Donna R. Gabaccia, 'Is Everywhere Nowhere? Nomads, Nations and the Immigrant Paradigm of United States History', *The Journal of American History*, 86:3, (1999): 1115-1134

community not large or concentrated enough to secure direct political representation itself, it required interaction and affiliation with native elements. Middle class Irish alliances with wealthy democratic businessmen provided civic benefits and jobs, while the city's clergy adopted the new liberal integrationist position of the American Church led by Cardinals Ireland and Gibbons.¹² Worcester's economy was dominated by small businesses with few large workforces, especially when compared to the large industry in Fall River, home to another large Irish community. This comparatively artisanal picture led to 'an ambivalent, complicated relationship with local capitalists'.¹³

Meagher's Worcester can be usefully contrasted to Victor Walsh's work on Gilded Age Pittsburgh. Here Walsh found great variation among Pittsburgh's Irish community, which he ascribed to their place of origin. In some of the poorest areas of the city where large numbers of Irish from Gaeltacht areas congregated together there was little interest aroused in support of Irish national causes, either Skirmishing or the Land League.¹⁴ Conversely, Irish American nationalism was strongest in areas of more settled Irish migration, and particularly among the immediate post-famine migrants, generally from the province of Munster.¹⁵ Nevertheless, this provincial baggage was gradually discarded when Irishmen intermixed in the workplace. In Walsh's words, 'iron mills acted as cultural crucibles in which the parochial loyalties of Connaught men were remolded into nationalist sympathies'.¹⁶ Parallel with this, Walsh also highlights the strong interconnections between Irish national and socially radical movements. A Land League branch in Pittsburgh, whose membership came from the city's large iron mills, had a Clan na Gael officer and member of the Iron and Steel Workers Union as secretary, and a former Greenback-Labor Party delegate as President, as well multiple connections to the Knights of Labor.¹⁷ It was not uncommon, especially in industrial Pennsylvania, for Land League branches and Knights of Labor district assemblies to be effectively coterminous, with one meeting immediately following the other, such was the 'symbiotic' relationship between the Irish national cause and American labour.¹⁸

The Land League's reports of received funds can also reveal a lot about the dynamics of different Irish communities. Unsurprisingly, Irish groups in the U.S. tended to give much more financial assistance than those in Britain. Between December 1879 and April 1880, Pittston, Pennsylvania, contributed more than treble the amount that the cities

¹² Meagher, *Inventing Irish America*, (2001), 135; 148; 154

¹³ *Ibid.*, 143

¹⁴ Victor A. Walsh, 'A Fanatic Heart: The Cause of Irish American Nationalism in Pittsburgh during the Gilded Age', *Journal of Social History*, 15, (1981): 190

¹⁵ Walsh, 'A Fanatic Heart', (1981): 191

¹⁶ *Ibid.*, 195

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 192-3

¹⁸ Powderly, *The Path I Trod*, (1940), 179; Foner, 'Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism', (1981), 169-170

of Manchester or Glasgow could offer.¹⁹ The largest contributors in the U.S. matched the concentrations of working class Irish communities, particularly San Francisco and Oakland in the West, Chicago in the mid-West and the industrial cities of Philadelphia, Brooklyn, Jersey City, Lowell and Fall River. The combined sums from New York and Boston alone made up over half of the total. More revealingly, whilst the New York contributions varied in size, coming from a multiplicity of individual and collective sources, from small personal contributions to larger ones through the *Irish World* or the New York Irish Relief Fund, the Boston contributions came predominantly through John Boyle O'Reilly and in fewer but larger and rounded sums, often of as much as £1,000 or £2,000.²⁰ These contrasts reflect the social and political differences between these cities.

For Kerby Miller Irish nationalism was 'a medium for cultural hegemony' used by the Catholic Irish-American middle class to ensure that more radical domestic concerns were left alone.²¹ Miller rejects the conclusions of Eric Foner and David Montgomery and adopts Thomas Brown's thesis of bourgeois assimilation and middle-class hegemony.²² In doing so, he accepts a rigid class stratification through which he argues that the existence of 'petty entrepreneurs' and shopkeepers moved local issues away from the 'proletarian' and towards the 'bourgeois'. But, as is clear from Meagher's study of the Irish in Worcester, these are not necessarily appropriate categories for the Irish-American context. The language of republicanism co-opted support from unskilled workers and small employers alike, and as such the framework of class that Miller employs is harder to sustain in relation to nineteenth century popular radicalism.²³

Some linguistic clues shed light on the perpetuation of the republican vision. In Worcester, as elsewhere, there was familiar criticism of local 'whiggery', with one letter to a local paper announcing 'Patrick Ford is the man and to his noble paper and not to Boston whiggery is due the success of the Land League in America'.²⁴ So too did Davitt, writing to John Devoy, express fears of a 'Whig dodge' to take control of the Land League from the more radical elements.²⁵ His ally Patrick Egan also attacked the 'worthless rotten

¹⁹ 'Irish National Land League Relief Fund: Sums received for Relief of Distress by Irish National Land League, from Dec. 22, 1879, to April 30, 1880 also Particulars of Grants made by Land League to Local Relief Committees, &c., from Dec. 22, 1879 to April 30, 1880', 4 (Heffernan Papers, MS 21,910, NLI)

²⁰ *Ibid.*

²¹ Miller, *Ireland and Irish-America*, (2008), 270

²² *Ibid.*, 272

²³ 'Patrick Joyce, *Visions of the People: Industrial England and the question of class, 1848-1914*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1991), 329

²⁴ Meagher, *Inventing Irish America*, (2001), 191

²⁵ Michael Davitt to John Devoy, 16 Dec., 1880, in William O'Brien and Desmond Ryan, (eds.), *Devoy's post bag, 1871-1928*, vol. II, (Dublin: Fallon, 1948), 23

whigs' turning back towards home rule.²⁶ In one sense the term was a loose approximation to 'middle class' or 'bourgeois' in so far as it represented a class interest. However, descended from an earlier political discourse, it possessed less of an economic delineation than an ideological one. It was used as a replacement for 'liberal' when constituting a slur or attack, such as in Egan's denunciation of the 'tribe of whig coercionists', or George's moan that there was 'a great deal of "whiggery" in this Land League'.²⁷ In the U.S., the Whigs had represented the project of economic modernisation and federal centralisation, and on both sides of the Atlantic represented a market-oriented position.²⁸ So although there existed a 'crude kind of class antagonism', 'Whig' did not directly imply a class determinant, but an opponent of republicanism, and these were the constructs within which the Land League drew its battle lines.²⁹

There were other important ideological and geographical divisions within Irish republican nationalism. The popularity of Denis Kearney among the working-class Irish of California was one such example. Using the universalist language of radical republicanism alongside xenophobic and racialised anti-immigration rhetoric, Kearney struck out against both economic injustice and Chinese immigration, a message to which many Californian Irish were receptive. For George, too, his first experience of popular Irish support was on this very platform of workers' rights and Chinese exclusion, two sides of the same coin for those in the west.³⁰ He attacked the Chinese in his letter to John Stuart Mill as 'a most undesirable element of the population'.³¹ Perhaps Mill's attempt to disabuse George of these prejudices was at least partially successful, for Kearney was a step too far for George, who considered him to be a demagogue and rabble-rouser without an intelligent political platform, and with 'no principle whatever'.³² Revealingly, opinion in the east was divided. The *Irish World* was delighted that 'when Denis Kearney was East, New England culture was shocked at his awful adjectives', adding 'God Bless Denis! He is the hero of the hour'.³³ Kearney's denunciations of 'shilocks [sic] and land-grabbers' clearly demonstrated shared hostilities.³⁴ Terence Powderly, Grand Master of the Knights

²⁶ Patrick Egan to John Devoy, 17 Feb., 1881, in O'Brien and Ryan, (eds.), *Devoy's post bag*, (1948), 108

²⁷ Patrick Egan to INLL Dublin office, 31 July, 1881, (Harrington Papers, MS 8583, NLI); Henry George to Patrick Ford, 28 Dec., 1881, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

²⁸ Paul K. Conkin, *Prophets of Prosperity: America's First Political Economists*, (Bloomington, IN.: Indiana University Press, 1980), 202

²⁹ Meagher, *Inventing Irish America*, (2001), 194

³⁰ Edward Connolly [People's Reform and Anti-Chinese Party of San Francisco] to Henry George, 25 Aug., 1877, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

³¹ Henry George to John Stuart Mill, 22 Aug., 1869, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL)

³² Henry George to John Swinton, [n.d.], 1880, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL); Henry George, *Irish World*, 9 July, 1882; John Stuart Mill to Henry George, 23 Oct., 1869, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL); Henry George, *Oakland Daily*, 20 Nov., 1869, (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

³³ *Irish World*, 24 May, 1879

³⁴ Denis Kearney [unsigned] to Terence V. Powderly, 29 March, 1878, (PP, Series I: Box 2, CUA)

of Labor, was however suspicious of him, despite the protestations of a friend, Charles Litchman, that 'you do not get a correct idea of him [...] although his language may be rough, his actions seem those of a sincere man'.³⁵ Fragments of class tensions are visible here, but also the exclusionary implications of demands for social cohesion.

Social cohesion, the 'clannishness' that was earlier referred to, was reinforced by a number of other, less xenophobic, forces. As has already been highlighted, the association of 'Irishness' and poverty or subalternism was well established, and the romanticism of Irish American literature, often drawing on Catholic themes, usually accepted 'Irish' and 'Irish poor' as coextensive. The 1898 novel *Père Monnier's Ward*, for example, highlighted the social dislocation that wealth could create, and criticised the cultural distance that the socially mobile Irish often put between themselves and the rest of the community. In the book, a New York priest condemned 'those political chaps who talked Ireland, and, thanks to the foolish Irish, rose to big positions [and] as soon as his purse was fat enough, turn on them, insult them, and know them no more'.³⁶ For its author, Walter Lecky, commitment to Ireland was used as 'a moral barometer of his characters'.³⁷ Charles Fanning's study of Finley Peter Dunne and his literary creation Mr. Dooley similarly highlighted this socio-geographical dislocation too, as a significant tension in Irish-American life, and one in which rhetoric and action often appeared to be at odds.³⁸ Charles Fanning pointed out that, 'when the drive for respectability comes at the expense of one's neighbors, Mr Dooley exposes it as a creeping disease, one fatal to community'.³⁹ Perhaps as a result of these ideological constraints, many middle-class Irish-American did remain wedded to a subaltern vision of Irish identity.

As we have already seen in the work of John Boyle O'Reilly, these conceptions of Irishness and their linguistic formulations shaped the reflexive self-identification of Irish culture and its political formulations. But some historians have interpreted this as hypocrisy, or at least collective self-deception, especially when it emerged from genteel sources.⁴⁰ At the very least, the 'fanatic heart' beating inside the well-heeled and respectable Irishman was the source of psychological tension.⁴¹ It led Thomas Brown to argue that 'behind Irish radical rhetoric were fundamentally conservative demands' and

³⁵ Charles H. Litchman to Terence V. Powderly, 26 June, 1878; Charles H. Litchman to Terence V. Powderly, 29 Aug., 1878; H. F. Willman to Terence V. Powderly, 21 March, 1880, (PP, Series 1: Box 2, CUA)

³⁶ Walter Lecky, *Père Monnier's Ward: A Novel*, (New York: Benzignier Brothers, 1898), 196

³⁷ Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, (2002), 125

³⁸ Peter Finlay Dunne, in Charles Fanning, (ed.), *Mr. Dooley and the Chicago Irish: The Autobiography of a Nineteenth-Century Ethnic Group*, (Washington: Catholic University of America Press, 1976), 122

³⁹ Fanning, 'Robert Emmet', (2004): 81

⁴⁰ Miller, *Ireland and Irish-America*, (2008), 267

⁴¹ Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, (1966), 153-4

that despite their support for 'equal rights' and attacks on 'the citadels of privilege in business and politics', what the Irish really wanted was middle-class respectability.⁴² Certainly, there was no struggle to find examples of former radicals, like George D. Cahill or Patrick A. Collins, who moved relatively seamlessly from Fenian agitation to comfortable gentility, and, in the case of the latter, U.S. Congress.

The growing wealth of this radical segment as they achieved increasing success in their business and professional lives can be read in the ever increasing ostentation of the gilded invitations to the Fenian annual ball.⁴³ But there was no inherent paradox in their republicanism. Brown saw Irish hypocrisy and power lust because he was working on the assumption that there was a sharp divide between dangerous social radicalism and respectable ethnic nationalism.⁴⁴ However, there is a lack of sympathy in viewing the 'lace-curtain' Irish as adopting an inauthentic radical veneer, or Irish workers converting to socialism. Their ideological baggage - in turns republican, moralistic, socially conservative - could be and was easily adapted to life as a proletarian radical or a bourgeois paternalist. Instead, Brown 'denies that radical tradition of Irish republicanism', as well as obscuring its interdependence on American republicanism.⁴⁵

Most problematically, this position undermines Irish opposition to concentrated wealth and monopoly by defining it more 'as evidence of Irish frustration, which demanded a demonology, than of Irish objectives', or even as 'the intoxication of words for a newly literate people'.⁴⁶ Relegating the ideas expressed, Brown suggests that 'it seems likely that the democratic indignation of the *Irish World* rather than its theories commended it to the agitator and tenant farmer'.⁴⁷ The removal of intellectual agency neglects the ideological currents running underneath the rarefied political sphere, the moral frameworks that underpin political action and the shared cultural foundations of political activity. While Brown dismisses Irish political ideology as 'Jeffersonian wrappings', in relation to the construction of practical rationality, the division of practice and ideology is misleading.⁴⁸ The intersections of national and anti-capitalist premises meant that even the ethnic nationalism that flourished in the years following the collapse of the Land and National Leagues, in aiming at the 'de-Anglicization of the Irish people', had to emphasise the existence of dramatic variances in mental frameworks between

⁴² *Ibid.*, 46

⁴³ Invitations to Annual Ball of the Fenian Brotherhood, (GDGP, Series II, Box 5, BC)

⁴⁴ Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, (1966), 118

⁴⁵ Gordon, 'Studies in Irish and Irish American Thought', (1977), 385

⁴⁶ Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, (1966), 53-54

⁴⁷ *Ibid.*, 107

⁴⁸ *Ibid.*, 54

Anglo-Americans and the Irish.⁴⁹ In doing so, in reinforcing a particular and separate 'Irishness', even these 'safer' cultural activities implicitly threatened the dominant American culture of liberal capitalism.

But while expressions of social radicalism were, as 'performative utterances' also political acts, and should be seen as such, there were nevertheless some very real social tensions within the Land League, particularly in the U.S. For many members, their interest in the land question, such as it was, was predicated on the concern, expressed by one speaker at the first convention of the U.S. organisation, that 'the Irishman who comes to Buffalo and loses interest in the mother country, not only loses the respect of his countrymen, but of Americans'.⁵⁰ This social group, generally small business owners themselves and often second generation immigrants, worked to carve out an appropriate vision of Irish republican nationality in their rhetoric, one that appealed to social conservatism, and stability. In an open letter attacking Patrick Ford, John Byrne, vice-President of the INLA, asserted: 'I belong to a class in this country, in commercial and professional life, very proud of our Irish birth and blood [...] We cannot believe in wild theories and schemes which business training teaches us are usually actuated by selfish, and oftimes dishonest motives'.⁵¹ As Byrne's comment suggested, social class, as well as geography, accounted for much of the division in the Land League. A Massachusetts Land Leaguer noted what he saw as a more genteel temperament from the well-heeled Boston Irish; living 'among the Yankees' he said, 'one of the things we have learned from them is steadiness of purpose'.⁵²

With the League in Ireland appearing to take a more radical turn in the autumn of 1881 with the No Rent Manifesto, the claim of 'lace-curtain' Irish-Americans that nationalist activity engendered American respect looked less secure. One American attacked Irish-Americans as 'naturalized citizens, who avail of our free institutions' trying to 'embroil the country of their adoption in a civil war' and accused them of compromising the American government by their actions.⁵³ Another writer observed that it was 'the duty of a foreigner who becomes naturalized to discard the national sentiments in which he was nurtured'.⁵⁴ In this view, the Irish-American agitation bordered on the

⁴⁹ Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, (2002), 31

⁵⁰ 'Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of the Irish National Land League, held at Buffalo, New York, 12 and 13 Jan., 1881', 23, (GDGP, Series III, Box 5, BC); Enda Delaney and Donald MacRaild, 'Irish Migration, Networks and Ethnic Identities Since 1750: An Introduction', *Immigrants & Minorities*, 23:2-3, (2005): 130

⁵¹ John Byrne, 'A Manly Protest', newspaper clipping, (Devoy Papers, MS 18,049(5), NLI)

⁵² George D. Cahill to Alexander Sullivan, 18 May, 1883, (GDGP, Series I, Box 4, BC)

⁵³ Anon to Patrick A. Collins, 20 Oct., 1881, (PACP, Series I, Box 1, BC)

⁵⁴ Lowell, 'Irish Agitation in America', (1887): 397

treacherous, and, perhaps worse, 'diminishes their respect for private property'.⁵⁵ Views such as these encouraged the conservative League executive in the U.S. to direct even more scorn at Patrick Ford and the *Irish World*. For some of the Irish-American middle class, a homeland in turmoil and in thrall to radicals reflected even more poorly on them than one under the heel of British domination. Even the behaviour of the Irish clergy was too much for some. C. F. Moonan of New York wrote to Collins that 'the priests of Ireland are permitted to take too much upon themselves' and that 'it is over to you as President of the Land League in this country to take immediate action about the unwise and unpatriotic letter of Archbishop Croke'.⁵⁶

Given the political disparities, the creation of a centralised administration in the U.S. was never fully stable. At Parnell's invitation, the amorphous and semi-autonomous groups of sympathisers in the United States came together under an umbrella organisation with a central executive, 'for the purpose of rendering moral and financial aid to the Irish National Land League of Ireland'.⁵⁷ At the first conference a provisional Central Council was selected. It included three Manhattan priests, including Rev. Dr. Edward McGlynn, the Georgite radical who would go on to great popularity as the recalcitrant priest of the urban poor. Also included were John Devoy, Thomas Kinsella, John Boyle O'Reilly, Fr. Lawrence Walsh, Terence Powderly, and Alexander Sullivan. The first convention, held in Buffalo in January, 1881, attempted to formulate an acceptable constitution and to facilitate 'organised, united and efficient action' among local branches that were emerging and operating in a state of semi-independence.⁵⁸ The appearance of men such as Terence Powderly, however, served as a reminder of the internal political tensions that stemmed from these haphazard origins. Despite this, the executive considered it imperative that the Land League in the U.S. would be only an auxiliary network designed to offer 'moral and financial aid' to the Irish movement, making no attempt to dictate strategy, or, more importantly, facilitate the transmission of any degree of agitation into the U.S.⁵⁹ This political neutrality on U.S. matters was set into the constitution, although few from either side of the political spectrum appeared to adhere to it.

The quarterly reports of the organisation give a good indication of the progress of the Land League in the U.S. By July 1881, the total number of branches had increased to

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*, 407

⁵⁶ C. F. Moonan to Patrick A. Collins, 22 Oct., 1881, (PACP, Series I, Box 1, BC)

⁵⁷ Printed untitled handbill, New York, 30 March, 1880, (Devoy Papers, MS 18,048, NLI)

⁵⁸ Clancy, *The Land League Manual*, (1881), 21

⁵⁹ *Constitution of the Land League adopted at Buffalo*, New York, 12 and 13 Jan., 1881, (Richmond Va.: P. Keenan, 1881), 6, (GDCCP, Series III, Box 5, BC)

763 from 597 in the previous quarter, with many areas yet to officially report.⁶⁰ By the end of the year the land league in America had over 1,000 branches and 300,000 members.⁶¹ But it was not the conservative nationalist element, dominant at the head of the league, that was fuelling membership and growth. Nor did paeans to political neutrality in the U.S. have much traction, either with the mass of membership who saw how the land question represented a wider nexus of economic issues, or with a leadership keen to condemn social radicalism. The subsequent National League even worried about ‘the attempt of English capitalists to get hold of the land’ in the U.S., and sought ‘the enactment of national and state constitutional amendments [to] insure the republic against the reopening of the Irish Land question upon American soil’.⁶²

American and Irish traditions of republicanism coalesced seamlessly within the League itself, with branch names of the Land and the National Leagues demonstrating the overlapping affinities and parallels. The names ranged from the Archbishop McHale Branch, and the more generic Celtic Sons Branch, to ones named for Thomas Davis, Emmet, Mitchel, Tone, Davitt, Andrew Jackson, Sarsfield, Sexton, Liberty, Ironsides and Free Soil.⁶³ Davitt’s was the most popular name for a branch by a considerable distance, followed by Parnell and Emmet. Working Class Pittsburgh boasted one named for Irish World. It was in Philadelphia where invocations of the American revolutionary generation were most common. The city had branches named for Commodore Barry and Commodore Stewart, both naval commanders who fought Britain in the American Revolutionary War and the War of 1812 respectively, with the latter having the added advantage of being an ancestor of Parnell.⁶⁴

The totals raised by these branches across the United States were impressive. For the thirteen months between January 1881 and February 1882, Thomas Flatley, League secretary at the time, estimated a total of over \$200,000.⁶⁵ Yet this is only a part of the story, with huge sums being sent either direct to Dublin or Paris, or via the *Irish World*. There was also a great degree of fluctuation, with a collapse in donations between 1881 and 1882. Massachusetts had raised \$81,000 in 1881, a figure which fell to under \$16,000 in 1882. In fact as early as July, Thomas Flatley was forced to deny the ‘alleged falling off of

⁶⁰ ‘Second Quarterly Report of the Irish National Land League of the United States for Quarter ending July 10, 1881’, (Devoy Papers, MS 18,048, NLI)

⁶¹ Janis, *A Greater Ireland*, (2015), 75

⁶² Thomas Sexton and Alexander Sullivan, ‘Second Annual Convention of the Irish National League of America; Boston 13-14 Aug., 1884’, (Devoy Papers, MS 18,048, NLI)

⁶³ Irish National League, Philadelphia, ‘Financial Report of the Treasurer of Municipal Council I.N.L of Phila., for fiscal year ending May 31, 1886’, (103, Box 40, AC0130a, PAHRC)

⁶⁴ ‘Annual Report of Thomas Flatley, Secretary of the Irish National Land League of the United States, submitted at the Second Annual Convention held in the City of Washington, D.C., April 12 and 13, 1882’, (Buffalo: Union and Times Print, 1882), (P.001.1876, PAHRC)

⁶⁵ Circular from Thomas Flatley, Boston, 24 Feb., 1882, (GDGP, Series III, Box 5, BC)

the Land League in this country'.⁶⁶ The quarterly reports reveal the sums raised in 1882 to be around a third of those achieved in 1881. Individual branches also demonstrate this collapse well. The South Boston branch managed to extract \$1,400 dollars from its 308 members in 1881, but a meagre \$55 was collected the following year; so too in Connecticut where the Ansonia branch proffered only \$100 dollars to the national treasurer, despite amassing an impressive total of \$2,635 the previous year. In Bridgeport, Connecticut, the Parnell branch's respectable total of \$376, one of the highest for that state in 1882, paled into comparison with its previous effort of over \$1,000.

The sums provided for the cause naturally vary widely between states and between different areas, but they reveal certain disparities in Land League support. For one thing, the official League Executive had very little influence on the west coast. No branches from California even appear in the League's reports from the first quarter of 1881, and the 50 that appear in the next quarterly report sent their money direct to the League's treasurer Patrick Egan in Paris. This was not an insignificant amount either. During the third quarter of 1881, the League reported \$16,711 from California that made its way across the Atlantic without passing through the hands of its official treasurer Rev. Walsh, although it is likely that this was the yearly (recorded) total for the state.⁶⁷ Even on the east coast, however, there are some striking differences. Connecticut sent more than all other states apart from Massachusetts (including Pennsylvania and New York) during the first and third quarters of 1881, no doubt due in part to it being the home state of the treasurer. The Pennsylvania coal-fields could not muster huge amounts for the official League coffers, providing only \$12,516 to Rev. Walsh in 1881, compared with Massachusetts' impressive \$81,706. Not only that, but the state's contribution per branch per quarter, at between \$65 and \$72, was also nearly half that of New York (\$134-162), Connecticut (\$105-107) and Massachusetts (£127). These disparities are partly explained by the fact that Pennsylvanian and Californian branches were more likely to direct their funds through the *Irish World*. This was perhaps also evident in the figures for the state of New York, where \$23,472 was sent to the League's U.S. treasurer Fr. Lawrence Walsh in 1881, but \$36,524 went directly to Ireland.⁶⁸ The *Irish World* claimed a significant amount of the monies raised for Land League causes. By 1884, according to the paper's own estimates, it had received and distributed over half a million dollars for 'patriotic objects'

⁶⁶ Thomas Flatley, 'Second Quarterly Report of the Irish National Land League of the United States for quarter ending July 10th, 1881', (GDCP, Series III, Box 5, BC); 'Annual Report of Thomas Flatley', (1882), (P.001.1876, PAHRC)

⁶⁷ 'Third Quarterly report of the Irish National Land League of the United States, Boston, Mass., 8 Nov., 1881', (GDCP, Series III, Box 5, BC)

⁶⁸ 'Annual Report of Thomas Flatley', (1882), (P.001.1876, PAHRC)

over the preceding 8 years. Of this total, an impressive \$343,072.92 was accounted for by the Land League fund alone.⁶⁹

The size and clout of the New York City branches also gave them considerable independence from the national leadership. The vast numbers of Irish Americans in the city, and in nearby Brooklyn, meant that most branches were affiliated under a municipal executive. In Brooklyn, the city's 28 centralised branches together sent \$6,200 directly to Patrick Egan in 1881. New York City was divided into the Parnell Land League council, with 38 numbered subsidiary branches, and the INLL Executive council with around 30 branches. The Parnell council had more branches located on the outskirts of the city compared with its INLL counterpart which was focussed primarily on lower Manhattan. Other differences also emerge from the figures. The Parnell council primarily, although not exclusively, remitted its monies to Rev. Walsh in modest sums recorded quarterly. Membership of its branches ranged from high double to low treble figures, much like most other branches across the rest of the east coast states. In stark contrast, the INLL cohort boasted extraordinary membership numbers, with individual branches containing many hundreds of members. For example, Ward 23 on West 45th Street claimed 1,383 members, while a mere 10 blocks south on West 35th Street another Michael Davitt branch recorded 1,460 members. The INLL council of New York City sent its money in two large sums, totalling nearly \$21,000 for 1881, straight to Egan in Paris. Unsurprisingly this was much more than the Parnell council could muster. Even for the subsequent lean year, the INLL cohort raised \$4,932.50 set against the Parnell council's \$3,549.46.⁷⁰ Of course, the ghost in all of these figures is the *Irish World*.

The Irish World and Irish print culture

Irish influence on American journalism had long been notable, from Matthew Carey and William Duane in the late eighteenth century through to Thomas D'Arcy McGee in the nineteenth. Irish presence in the ranks of journalists, editors and proprietors continued through the Civil War era and the Gilded Age. Precociousness at journalistic and literary endeavour was a familiar Irish conceit, and it emerged as a powerful vehicle for Irish ethnic identification.⁷¹ The importance of this particular calling was expressed in a typically republican idiom by the Boston *Pilot's* editor John Boyle O'Reilly when he intoned that 'the freedom and purity of the press are the test of national virtue and

⁶⁹ *Irish World*, 16 Feb., 1884, (DP, MS 9368, TCD)

⁷⁰ 'Annual Report of Thomas Flatley', (1882), (P.001.1876, PAHRC)

⁷¹ 'The Irish, both Catholic and Protestant, have ever been brilliant in journalism', Rev. John Talbot Smith, *Patrick Ford of the Irish World*, (AIA.047, NYU)

independence. No writer, however humble, is free from the burden of keeping his purpose high and his integrity white'.⁷² As part of this identification, Irish-American newspapers adopted a unique tone. As David Doyle writes: 'Irish journalists developed a conscious *esprit* to prioritize human interest and moral principle, for them inseparable, in their stories'.⁷³ It is indicative of the difference between Irish and Anglo-American print culture that while the *North American Review* was repleat with articles attempting to dissect and understand the shift in moral reasoning and perspective that accompanied this new commercial age, there was no similar moral uncertainty exhibited in the Irish press.⁷⁴ The *Irish World* was explicit about its position in moral and philosophical debates. The paper proclaimed that 'we must take a new departure from expediency, which gives to the world only shams, and build upon Principle, which upholds reality. We must go to work prepared to recognize and to act up to *all* the demands of justice'.⁷⁵

The *Irish World* was the most important Irish-American newspaper by the early 1880s. With a weekly circulation of 60,000, it dwarfed most other Irish Catholic papers.⁷⁶ It was also perhaps the most important labour paper.⁷⁷ Its circulation was what one observer called 'a vast propaganda' across the transatlantic Irish Catholic community. Ford and his paper were cheered at Land League meetings in Ireland.⁷⁸ Bishop Nulty requested more copies of the paper to be sent to him because, as he explained to George, 'some of his priests consider the *Irish World* like land, common property'.⁷⁹ 'Years before the Land League', writes Eric Foner, "the land for the people" had become the motto of the *Irish World*.⁸⁰ The popularity of the paper caused William O'Brien to proclaim 'some vast Irish-American invasion, [...] there was scarcely a cabin the West to which some relative in America did not despatch a weekly copy of the *Irish World*'.⁸¹ Even its opponents

⁷² John Boyle O'Reilly, Inaugural address as President of the Boston Press Club, 8 Nov., 1879, in James Jeffrey Roche, *Life of John Boyle O'Reilly; together with his complete poems and speeches*, (New York: Cassell Publishing Co., 1891), 195

⁷³ Doyle, 'Irish Elites in North America', (2002): 42

⁷⁴ 'Anon', 'What Morality Have We Left', *North American Review*, 132:294, (1881): 497-512; Simon Newcomb, 'The Standard of Value', *North American Review*, 129:274, (1879): 223-237; E. C. Youmans, 'Spencer's Evolutionary Philosophy', *North American Review*, 129:275, (1879): 389-403; Ralf Waldo Emerson, 'The Sovereignty of Ethics', *North American Review*, 126:262, (1878): 404-420 see conversely, James A. Cain, 'Right and Wrong', *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 6, (1881): 728-745; John MacCarthy, 'The Public Press and Public Morals', *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 8, (1883): 120-138

⁷⁵ *Irish World*, 16 Nov., 1878

⁷⁶ Rodechko, *Patrick Ford and his search for America*, (1976), 48

⁷⁷ John M. Davis, editor of the Philadelphia labour paper, *The Trades*, spoke of his ambition 'to make a second *Irish World*.' John M. Davis to Terence V. Powderly, 19 Dec., 1879, (PP, Series I: Box 2, CUA); Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows*, (2002), 57

⁷⁸ Foner, 'Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism', (1981), 161

⁷⁹ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 10 Nov., 1881, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

⁸⁰ Foner, 'Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism', (1981), 160

⁸¹ O'Brien, *Recollections*, (1905), 273

recognised its influence. George Trevelyan, Chief Secretary for Ireland, declared Ford ‘not only the most powerful newspaper editor in America, but of all time’, and Standish O’Grady feared that ‘the land for the people [has] through the agency of the *Irish World* [...] seized the democratic imagination’, the paper ‘spreading its peculiar light in every nook and corner of the land’.⁸² An important part of the *Irish World*’s popularity, as recognised by T. M. Healy, was that ‘Ford’s [paper] has original cables’.⁸³ Rather than relying on pro-British press association dispatches, like other Irish-American titles, this direct control of the means of communication was a major boon for the *Irish World*. Ford had also expanded his printing operation and distribution in the late 1870s, making the paper available on the day of its publication in all major east coast cities.⁸⁴ These developments, as well as his insistence on high wages for his large editorial and typographical staff, came at a cost, especially considering Ford’s inability to secure significant advertising revenue from large Irish-American businesses. As a result, and despite ever increasing circulation, the paper was ‘on the brink of failure in the early 1880s’.⁸⁵

While George’s direct influence in Ireland may be difficult to measure, the thrust of his ideas and opinions were certainly filtered through to the wider population through the medium of the *Irish World*. When he was introduced in Belfast, local priest Fr. O’Boyle reminded the crowd that George was ‘even more welcome to us in that he is closely connected with a paper that has championed our cause with sincerity and power’.⁸⁶ The *Irish World*’s radical influence may not have had a direct impact on Land League policy, but it did have a huge popular influence. The growing authority of Patrick Ford’s paper on both sides of the Atlantic was aided by the ‘Spread The Light’ fund, an initiative to finance the distribution of free copies of the paper, often directed at specific and specified villages, that further enhanced Ford’s influence and George’s popularity. After delivering a speech in Liverpool, George was delighted to be able to report back to Ford that ‘wherever the *Irish World* has reached [, people] do thoroughly appreciate you. Even in Liverpool nothing could exceed the enthusiasm with which they received your name’.⁸⁷

That the *Irish World* was apparently so popular should give credence to the proposition that the radical element of the Land League support was a significant section of the Irish demographic. The collection of funds became a competitive measure between rival factions in the Irish-American community, and ‘the destination of funds was a

⁸² George O. Trevelyan, quoted in Talbot Smith, *Patrick Ford of the Irish World*, (AIA.047, NYU); O’Grady, *The Crisis in Ireland*, (1882), 25

⁸³ T. M. Healy to Patrick A. Collins, 1 Jan., 1882, (PACP, Series I, Box 2, BC)

⁸⁴ *Irish World*, 8 Feb., 1879

⁸⁵ James P. Rodechko, *Patrick Ford and his search for America*, (1976), 40-6

⁸⁶ Fr. O’Boyle at St. Mary’s Hall, Belfast, *Irish World*, 25 March, 1882

⁸⁷ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 9 March, 1882, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

conscious political decision' where the *Irish World* clearly came out on top.⁸⁸ A particularly conservative branch, that of Quincy, Massachusetts, took the effort of correspondence with executive treasurer Laurence Walsh in order to confirm the monies they provided to him still went through Patrick Egan and had no contact with the *Irish World*, such was the ideological hostility.⁸⁹

The power and influence of Ford's newspaper threatened respectable middle-class control of the movement, and he was viewed with great suspicion by many who saw him as a demagogue looking to profit from resentment. Writing to congratulate the League's President, Patrick A. Collins, on a successful disposition of 'the "claimant" Patrick Ford' and victory over the 'enemy within', the secretary of the Manchester, New Hampshire branch also lamented that 'we have been pestered with a few men from the Celtic Debating Club – a Fenian organisation who seem to have come into our league with the purpose of preventing it from getting the free support of our Irish citizens'. As a result of this entryism, 'we have scarcely had a meeting lately in which they have not dragged in the name of the *Irish World*'.⁹⁰ The struggle for the soul of the League in the U.S. permeated the Ladies Land League too, where after an open conflict with Anna Ford, Fanny Parnell confessed that 'it will require my utmost efforts to keep it [the Ladies League] from falling under the control of the *Irish World*, and I may fail'. 'I think that an open rupture with the *I. W.* is now not only inevitable, but a duty, and not only a duty, but a measure of good policy'.⁹¹ Across the ocean, these divisions were not as clear, and Ford and his paper were received less cautiously by many, such as Thomas Walsh, who wrote to Collins from London to 'thank the Irish people on the American continent for their help' and informed him that his society had sent a resolution of thanks to three North American newspapers, two in Canada, but only the *Irish World* in the US, 'believing the [...] papers to be representative'.⁹² James Redpath highlighted this gulf in the standards of class and gentility when he bemoaned the Irish League executive sending Michael O'Sullivan, a man with 'no dignity of character', to the U.S., whereupon the *Irish World* gave him a lecture series. Redpath added: 'again the home people are tied like a tin-kettle to Ford's coat tails'.⁹³

Ford was viewed more sympathetically among the more socially radical elements of the Irish based leadership, but unsurprisingly the Parnellites were rather more cool.

⁸⁸ Foner, 'Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism', (1981), 168

⁸⁹ George D. Cahill to Rev. Laurence Walsh, 14 March, 1883, (GDGP, Series I, Box 4, BC); Patrick Egan to Land League executive, 19 June, 1881; 3 July, 1881, (Harrington Papers, MS 8583, NLI)

⁹⁰ Christopher A. Gallagher to Patrick A. Collins, 17 March, 1881, (PACP, Box 1, BC)

⁹¹ Fanny Parnell to Patrick A. Collins, 25 Sept., 1881, (PACP, Box 1, BC)

⁹² Thomas Walsh to Patrick A. Collins, 27 Apr., 1881, (PACP, Box 1, BC)

⁹³ James Redpath to Patrick A. Collins, 8 May, 1881, (PACP, Box 1, BC)

The lack of any open hostility toward ‘our friends at the Irish World of New York’, was in part due to the vast sums that his propagandising and fundraising provided.⁹⁴ Much of the intra-American hostilities, and the sensitivities they aroused, were opaque to leaders on the other side of the Atlantic who soon became aware of the need to spread their affections more cautiously. Patrick Egan found himself apologising to Patrick Collins for sending Ford ‘a more lengthy telegram than I forwarded to you’, and had to reassure the president of the League that ‘nor was there the slightest intention of in any way passing over your organization or giving any special recognition to the Irish World’.⁹⁵ He reassured Collins that they would send future official communications through his organisation, but reminded him that ‘the Irish World has been an exceedingly powerful ally and a very good friend of our movement from the very beginning and we could not nor would not do anything like throwing them over’.⁹⁶ Egan also defended Thomas Brennan’s right to contact Ford directly as a private arrangement, ‘not to be taken in any sense as official’.⁹⁷

By the end of 1881, what had started as hostile opposition between the two American factions had descended into revolt. Ford, having the upper hand in popular support and visibility, was able to take the moral high ground and force the official leadership to precipitate the open division, whilst maintaining an apparently conciliatory tone. He even offered Collins a perceptibly demeaning hand of friendship to create ‘a union of the two sections of the land league’ at the Chicago convention; Collins did not reply.⁹⁸ Collins, on the other hand, seeming at the end of his tether with fighting to assert his ‘official’ dominance of the American Land League, refused calls from the leadership in Ireland to stand on a national platform with Ford. T. P. O’Connor wrote that Ford would put his name to it without mentioning the *Irish World* and that Collins should sign ‘without any title appended’, adding that he thought ‘Mr Ford’s request reasonable under the circumstances’.⁹⁹ Such a deprivation of Collins’ official status was a clear insult; not to mention that Ford had insisted on extending the resolution beyond a vague reference to the ‘Irish question’ to the inclusion of the plank ‘That the land in Ireland belongs of right

⁹⁴ Patrick Egan to Thomas Brennan, 22 May, 1881, (Harrington Papers, MS 8577(1), NLI)

⁹⁵ Patrick Egan to Patrick A. Collins, 7 March, 1881, (PACP, Box 1, BC)

⁹⁶ Patrick Egan to Patrick A. Collins, 7 March, 1881, (PACP, Box 1, BC)

⁹⁷ *Ibid.*

⁹⁸ Patrick Ford to Patrick A. Collins, [two cables], 7 Jan., 1882; James Mooney to Patrick A. Collins, 17 Apr., 1882, (PACP, Box 2, BC)

⁹⁹ T. P. O’Connor to Patrick A. Collins, [cable no.2], 8 Nov., 1881, (PACP, Box 2, BC)

to the people of Ireland'.¹⁰⁰ The political power Ford possessed was plain, and O'Connor was left to plead with Collins to 'for the sake of unity accept conditions'.¹⁰¹

Fanny Parnell wrote to Collins the next day to proclaim that she had succeeded in removing the names of Miss Ford and Mrs Shelly from the books of her local branch. 'It was only a local victory over the I.W. but still I feel proud of it'.¹⁰² Such a petty campaign against the *Irish World* demonstrates the extent of the marginalisation and concern of the conservative wing. While Collins remained frustrated at the lack of support, the Irish leadership soon became bored of squabbles. They were more concerned about not alienating *Irish World* money and support, and, perhaps significantly, remained oblivious to the degree to which the middle-class Irish-American imperative of respectability was important.¹⁰³ It was evident when Egan wrote to Collins in March, 1882, appealing to him to 'avoid quarrel with [the] Irish World [as] any public scandal [in] America would simply ruin [the] cause at home can you not meet them half way'.¹⁰⁴

From Patrick Ford's perspective, his paper was the mouthpiece of Catholic working-class, Irish-America. If so, the content of the paper belies the suggestion that working-class Irish-Americans were uninterested in political philosophy. In appealing to his audience, Ford published articles on serious moral, philosophical and economic topics, 'a weekly education in the trans-Atlantic radical tradition', that the *Tipperary Advocate* welcomed as 'advanced philosophy in the most interesting guise'.¹⁰⁵ The close proximity of the newspaper with republican socialism has already been established, but the paper consistently ran articles on political philosophy, including a serialisation of the famous debate between Bastiat and Proudhon, which had been translated by the individualist anarchist Benjamin Tucker. The paper's success is also a rejection of the position that a raw, power-hungry and politically realist approach to politics dominated Irish-American life. A newspaper of such popularity demonstrating an ease and familiarity with both serious politics and theoretical abstraction should then be taken seriously. It was certainly a point not lost on Fanny Parnell, who worried that 'while the paper is safe enough for educated people and contains some excellent ideas, it is a paper calculated to do much

¹⁰⁰ T. M. Healy and Eugene Sheehy to Patrick A. Collins, [cable], 9 Nov., 1881; Patrick A. Collins to T. P. O'Connor, 16 Nov., 1881, (PACP, Box 2, BC)

¹⁰¹ T. P. O'Connor to Patrick A. Collins, [cable no.2], 8 Nov., 1881, (PACP, Box 2, BC)

¹⁰² Fanny Parnell to Patrick A. Collins, 10 Nov., 1881, (PACP, Box 2, BC)

¹⁰³ 'Patrick Egan to Patrick A. Collins, 28 Nov., 1881, (PACP, Box 2, BC); Quincy Branch (Boston), INLL to its President John Cavanagh, [n.d.], (GDGP, Series I, Box 4, BC)

¹⁰⁴ Patrick Egan to Patrick A. Collins, [cable], 13 March, 1882, (PACP, Box 2, BC)

¹⁰⁵ Foner, 'Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism', (1981), 158; *Tipperary Advocate*, quoted in *Irish World*, 5 Apr., 1879

mischief in the hands of an only partially educated and simple-minded peasantry'.¹⁰⁶ Her concerns were shared by the British Government, which did all in its power to prevent copies reaching recipients in Britain and Ireland, with George shocked that the Post Office 'have no scruple about opening anything'.¹⁰⁷

This social radicalism was not in contradiction with Ford's vigorous endorsement of various forms of self-improvement for the Irish-American working class. He advised his readers 'to seek vocational training, informed them of better employment opportunities, called for personal cleanliness and temperance, and cited examples of political treachery'.¹⁰⁸ Ford also urged the urban Irish to leave the city if possible and resettle on western lands, running a weekly column which featured suggestions on possible locations.¹⁰⁹ Like the *Boston Pilot*, the *Irish World* supported the Catholic colonization movement to the Midwest, the 'yearning to "occupy and possess the land" [which had] grown in force and breadth of late years'.¹¹⁰ The first colony purchased by the Irish Catholic Colonization Association of the United States in 1880 was Greeley Co. Nebraska, and various important figures in the Irish-American community were involved in the project, from Cardinal Gibbons to John Boyle O'Reilly.¹¹¹ The Irish National League of America, also endorsed Irish colonization 'for Irish immigrants who would otherwise be compelled to toil without hope of competence in the larger cities'.¹¹²

This republican individualism was a form of collective ethnic self-help. Temperance offers another perfect example. It became an important issue, particularly among second generation Irish Americans, who sought to dispel a persistent image, still maintained by many American papers, of the Irish as inveterate drinkers with a culture wedded to alcohol.¹¹³ Community leaders such as Terence V. Powderly and John Boyle O'Reilly also adopted the temperance cause with vigour, and the Knights barred publicans and brewers from their organisation. However, temperance within the Catholic Irish community remained fundamentally distinct from its Protestant counterpart in some important ways, but primarily in its opposition to prohibitive legislation, preferring the moral rectitude required from abstaining.¹¹⁴ Irish temperance rejected top-down

¹⁰⁶ Janis, 'Petticoat Revolutionaries', (2008): 21

¹⁰⁷ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 7 Jan., 1882; 4 Feb., 1882; Henry George to John Denvir, 14 Feb., 1882; Henry George to Patrick Ford, 18 Feb., 1882, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

¹⁰⁸ Rodechko, 'An Irish-American Journalist and Catholicism', (1970): 525

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 527

¹¹⁰ 'The Catholic Movement in Western Colonization – Colonization in Nebraska', *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 6, (1881): 434

¹¹¹ 'Catholic colony, Greeley County, Nebraska', (103, Box 34, P008.880, PAHRC)

¹¹² 'Resolutions adopted at the Boston Convention of the Irish National League of America, Aug., 1884', (103, Box 40, AC0129, PAHRC)

¹¹³ Meagher, *Inventing Irish America*, (2001), 165

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 166

centralising controls as likely to devoid the process of the moral value inherent in exercising agency. As 'Trans-Atlantic' explained, the cultivation of 'moral courage' was a perpetual struggle in which it was 'obligatory on man, individually and collectively, to work out his own salvation in the moral, social, and political state'. The imposition of restrictions from above would 'abrogate this law [and] take from man the power to do either good or evil'.¹¹⁵ By the late nineteenth century, social liberalism was moving steadily away from such an approach. T. H. Green described it as 'poor sophistry to tell us that it is moral cowardice to seek to remove by law a temptation which every one ought to be able to resist for himself'.¹¹⁶ But the *Irish World* maintained that the practice of moral exertion was required in order to cultivate virtues, a cardinal tenet of classical republicanism, and that codification and control entailed the death of judgement and practical wisdom. The increased efficiency of bureaucracy was insufficient to outweigh the loss of individual moral virtue.

Ford also used his newspaper to vigorously oppose anti-Catholicism in American public life. Much of Ford's publishing was proudly Catholic, unequivocally equating the Church with the Irish community as a whole. As well as printing practical information useful to members of the Church, Ford 'gave expression to Catholic attitudes on courtship and marriage, divorce, suicide, and education. Intricate theological issues were discussed and simplified in an attempt to provide greater clarity and meaning for immigrant readers'.¹¹⁷ Ford's anti-clericalism peaked in the early 1880s, when hierarchical opposition to social radicalism and Georgism was also at its height, but despite his occasionally vituperative pronouncements on the Church's excesses, he was keen to maintain cordial links with the hierarchy. Even in 1881 he wrote to his Archbishop, Cardinal McCloskey, to apologise for an article published eight years previously, which had attacked 'practices which seemed to be a deviation from the spirit of the simplicity of the Church'.¹¹⁸ In the years that followed, Ford returned to a more sympathetic attitude to the Church, even swapping New Year's cards with McCloskey's successor, Archbishop Corrigan, and defending the Church against increased Protestant nativism in the wake of the Haymarket bombing.¹¹⁹

Urban politics

¹¹⁵ *Irish World*, 23 Nov., 1878

¹¹⁶ Green, *Liberal Legislation*, (1881), 22

¹¹⁷ Rodechko, 'An Irish-American Journalist and Catholicism', (1970): 527

¹¹⁸ Patrick Ford to Cardinal McCloskey, 31 March, 1881, (Cardinal McCloskey Papers, A-27, AANY [hereafter CMP])

¹¹⁹ Patrick Ford to Michael A. Corrigan, 5 Jan., 1885, (ACP, C-8, AANY); Rodechko, 'An Irish-American Journalist and Catholicism', (1970): 531

It became a firm assumption in the U.S. that ‘the Irish are much addicted to politics, and have a natural talent for it’.¹²⁰ Urban Democratic machine politics, which the Irish in New York and Philadelphia famously dominated, sought marginal but tangible gains for Irish-Americans. New York’s famous Tammany Hall operated as a ‘miniature, private welfare state’ which was concerned with practical gains for the ethnic community.¹²¹ As such, those involved were little interested in any structural change, and certainly were not idealists. It was not a surprise then that ‘Irish working-class discontent, mounting ominously in the 1880s, found no adequate outlet in the urban Democratic machines’.¹²² Nevertheless, like the Church, Tammany had to be flexible enough to accommodate developments from below. Whilst initially opposing the growth of the American Land League, Tammany Hall’s ‘Honest’ John Kelly changed tack in 1881. Sensing the centre ground of Irish-American political opinion shifting under his feet, he became a vociferous opponent of monopolies and financial privilege, and he did so in ‘language scarcely less extreme than Patrick Ford’s’.¹²³ Tammany’s support for the Land League was not particularly ideological, but ‘simply meant that, as usual, its finger was on the pulse of the Irish community’.¹²⁴

Because of their apparent commitment to patronage over principle, the dominance of Irish-Americans in the urban machine politics of cities like Chicago and New York is seen as the primary evidence for the prevalence of Irish-American power politics over ideological commitments. If ‘ideology’ is construed solely as a theoretical and abstract position, it is clear why it would have little application for Irish machine politics. Thomas Brown takes this position, noting that ‘nothing strikes the historian of the American Irish so forcibly as their desire to wield power’, and that the clergy as well as local and nationalist politicians were ‘possessed by the need to bend others to their will’.¹²⁵ However, Irish preponderance in such institutions is better understood in terms of collective action, that the most powerful driver of machine politics was the desire to retain the community in its cohesive whole; and Tammany Hall seen as ‘the social system of an

¹²⁰ Lowell, ‘Irish Agitation in America’, (1887): 402

¹²¹ Melvyn Dubofsky, *When Workers Organize: New York City in the Progressive Era*, (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1968), 21; Peter McCaffery, *When Bosses Ruled Philadelphia: The Emergence of the Republican Machine, 1867-1933*, (University Park, PA.: Pennsylvania State University Press, 1993)

¹²² Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, (1966), 146; Tammany, founded in 1789 by an Irish Catholic William Mooney, continued to use the Jeffersonian designation ‘Democratic Republican’ and adored their seal with the Phrygian cap of liberty, Nathan Glazer and Daniel Patrick Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot: The Negroes, Puerto Ricans, Jews, Italians, and Irish of New York City*, (Cambridge, MA.: MIT and Harvard University Press, 1963), 220-1

¹²³ Foner, ‘Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism’, (1981), 177

¹²⁴ *Ibid.*, 166

¹²⁵ Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, (1966), 133

Irish village writ large'.¹²⁶ Brown's 'Irish Power Thesis' comes into question when looking at 'the magnitude of public sector resources and of Irish willingness to exploit them for group economic gain'.¹²⁷ There were not enough patronage positions available to offer, and, in addition, there were a number of other ways in which power could have been more effectively exploited. There was a narrowness to Irish political achievement in this sphere, focusing more on enforcing static hierarchies than implementing wholesale changes.¹²⁸ More than anything, this would suggest the primary importance of such activities as securing a cohesive and sustainable ethnic community.

The kind of social activity employed by Tammany machine politics was antithetical to the burgeoning American democratic discourse of market-based liberal pluralism for a number of reasons. Power relationships within the Irish community were based on a number of contingencies, such as loyalties of place or community, reciprocity, and religious deference. These structures explain the potency of Tammany Hall control and influence, a type of power that was based on ethnic and reciprocal loyalties and hierarchies that denied the pre-social and cultural independence of the market and the public sphere. This was much to the chagrin of the traditional American elites who were used to control based on other forms of more subtle power, mainly economic, and could couch their criticism of Tammany in attacks on demagoguery, despotism, sprinkled with appeals to liberty and freedom.

Brown accepted this second narrative in his analysis, but what he described as Irish-America's 'politics of realism, free of the American liberal's moralizing and distrust of the uses of power', was really the opposite, a rejection of centralising control.¹²⁹ The clearest example is that of the Civil Service reform movement, which grew rapidly in the early 1880s. The Irish broadly opposed it, because, according to Brown, 'in their view it was simply a device to shut them out of office'.¹³⁰ But this interpretation understands this phenomenon with no reference to a broader conception of the rhetorical construction of Irish-American identity. What he conceives of as a desire to maintain control is more coherently framed in an ideological context. The embrace of professionalisation represented the evangelism of efficiency and managerialism over values and ideas, and Irish opposition to this owed much to national prejudices, a distaste for the 'British

¹²⁶ Meagher, *Inventing Irish America*, (2001), 127; Glazer and Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, (1963), 225

¹²⁷ Steven P. Erie, 'Politics, the Public Sector and Irish Social Mobility: San Francisco, 1870-1900', *The Western Political Quarterly*, 31:2 (1978): 275; Steven P. Erie, *Rainbow's End: Irish-Americans and the Dilemmas of Urban Machine Politics, 1840-1985*, (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1988), 25

¹²⁸ Erie, 'Politics, the Public Sector and Irish Social Mobility', (1978): 276; Glazer and Moynihan, *Beyond the Melting Pot*, (1963), 229

¹²⁹ Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, (1966), 134

¹³⁰ *Ibid.*, 140

system'. The Civil Service reformers were not only overwhelmingly protestant and Anglo-American, but in the construction and operation of their professional networks in which philanthropy and civil reform appeared as merely an adjunct of finance and industry, this group represented a pseudo-aristocratic establishment; the great and good devoted to patrician principles of improvement. Ford described their intentions as 'to import and slavishly imitate the manners of the English aristocracy, deride republican simplicity, bring into contempt democratic institutions, and violate in the most approved style every moral precept and every Christian principle'.¹³¹

The corruption of Boss Tweed in the early 1870s had provoked a fear of the usurpation of political influence among wealthier New Yorkers, and socially elite reform organisations, such as the Union League Clubs, were explicit attempts to reclaim their earlier authority.¹³² The New York Committee of Seventy, the group pushing for civil service reforms, had its origins in the Union League Club, an organisation devoted to the idea that 'Eminent men with ancestors in Colonial stock had too long retreated from public life'.¹³³ For Irish Americans in New York, this nexus of wealth and aristocratic pretention appeared both English and anti-republican.

Political centralisation was considered an English tendency. George wrote that Westminster was 'much more centralized. [...] a government by the upper classes', where 'aristocratic and monarchical ideas [...] largely permeate common thought'.¹³⁴ E. E. Hale wrote similarly in the *North American Review* of his amazement at 'such responsibilities as fall of Parliament'.¹³⁵ In contrast, Irish nationalism tended to reject centralisation as a corollary of their experiences of British imperial power.¹³⁶ The Land League, in seeking independence from Westminster, found it useful to attack unitary and centralised power as a concept and, of course, local self-government was the third ambition stated in the constitution of the Irish National League, which it described as 'the abolition of the principle of nomination by Government to membership' of the boards of education, fisheries, farming, valuation and management of the police.¹³⁷ The Irish MP Justin McCarthy explained that 'the present centralized system of doing business in Westminster, of managing there all the local affairs of England, Ireland, Scotland, and Wales, is *of necessity* a failure'.¹³⁸

¹³¹ *Irish World*, 1 Jan., 1877

¹³² O'Donnell, 'Henry George and the "New Political Forces"', (1995), 196

¹³³ Gordon, 'Studies in Irish and Irish American Thought', (1977), 405; O'Donnell, 'Henry George and the "New Political Forces"', (1995), 198

¹³⁴ Henry George, *Irish World*, 1 Apr., 1882

¹³⁵ E. E. Hale, 'Social Forces in the United States', *North American Review*, 137:323, (1883): 405

¹³⁶ Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, (2007), 108; *Irish World*, 13 Sept., 1879; 2 Sept., 1882

¹³⁷ 'Constitution of the Irish National League', (Heffernan Papers, MS 21,910, NLI)

¹³⁸ Justin McCarthy, M.P., quoted in Conyngham, *Ireland Past and Present*, (1884), 241

This localism was a central tenet of American republicanism too, enunciated by George in his condemnation of ‘the gradual centralization and extension of government, in its gradual conversion into a *machine* independent of, and above, the people’.¹³⁹ This opposition to an intangible bureaucratic control was interwoven into an opposition to both the administrative structure of the British Empire and the technocratic necessities of the developing capitalist economy, the two mainstreams from which the practices of bureaucratic control developed. In the republican tradition bureaucracy was dangerous partly because it operated as a denial or obfuscation of the existence of power and of unequal relationships. In detaching duty and responsibility from the exercise of power, Hannah Arendt would later describe this ‘rule by nobody’, in which ‘no men, neither one nor the best, neither the few nor the many, can be held responsible’, as the most tyrannical form of power.¹⁴⁰ The Irish experience had provided ample experience of the exertion of this type of deaf power in the totalitarianism of the market. It was recognised cogently and famously by Archbishop John Hughes in his description of the Famine: ‘The vice inherent in our system of social and political economy is so subtle that it eludes inquiry; you cannot trace it to the source. The poor man on whom the coroner holds an inquest has been murdered, but no one killed him. [...] Who did it? No one did it. Yet it was done’.¹⁴¹ In his role as a popular interpreter of Irish republicanism, Davitt eloquently updated this disquiet and unease with centralised power in the 1880s. Noting the connection between the growth of imperial bureaucracy and the decline of the concept of civic virtue Davitt warned of ‘the mercenary class of officials who are seldom heard of by the public’.¹⁴²

For all this high-mindedness, opposition to bureaucratic centralisation was both difficult, and very often not achievable. The difficult balance between the bureaucratic developments necessitated by increasing complexity and the desire not to become beholden to dehumanised systems were represented in Irish debates over the form and function of charity. The same bureaucratic and technocratic impulses that were shaping commercial and political life across the Atlantic world were also influencing traditional faith-based charitable efforts. It was, as ever, not a straightforward process. Many Catholics found the dispassionate efforts of scientific charity distasteful and morally ambiguous; what John Boyle O’Reilly mocked as ‘That Organised Charity, scrimped and

¹³⁹ Henry George, ‘Garfield or Hancock’, 1880, (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

¹⁴⁰ Hannah Arendt, *On Violence*, (New York: Harcourt Brace, 1970), 38-9

¹⁴¹ This version of the Archbishop’s speech, delivered in New York, 20 March, 1847, is recounted in Davitt, *The Fall of Feudalism*, (1904), 51-2

¹⁴² Davitt, *Ireland’s Share of the British Constitution*, in King, (ed.), *Jottings in Solitary*, (2003), 60-61

iced, in the name of a cautious, statistical Christ'.¹⁴³ Nevertheless, there were tensions in the Irish perspective on charity, not least because many others saw the practical benefits of such a system, not only in terms of efficiency, but also in transmitting (and being seen by Protestant reformers to transmit) respectable, middle-class values to the recipients of the charity.¹⁴⁴

As Deborah Skok's portrait of Chicago's St Vincent de Paul Society demonstrated, competing intellectual discourses often entangled to produce awkward syntheses. The Chicago SVP adopted the principles of bureaucratic organisation only in a partial and haphazard fashion as many within it remained committed to the idea that organised philanthropy was a hollow replacement for social obligations. Despite its partial resistance, the efficiency and benefits of business-like administration, a new mode of practice, meant that the society adopted the procedures of charitable bureaucracy, and eventually SVP came to adopt a similar 'suspicion of the poor.'¹⁴⁵

George and the American Catholic Church

Comparable tensions were evident in the Catholic Church. In 1891, writing after over a decade of collusion and conflict with the supranational behemoth, George forlornly hoped 'that the spirituality of the Church could in some way be separated from its political and corrupt machines, which turn into merchandise the efforts and sacrifices of the men and women who are really God's servants'.¹⁴⁶ Much as it was for the Church in Ireland, the 1880s proved to be a tumultuous and transformative time for American Catholic Church.¹⁴⁷ The Land League played a prominent role in a process of acculturation, in Foner's view breaking the American Catholic Church's 'inertia on social questions', and in Brown's releasing 'long-repressed energies' of simmering anti-clericalism.¹⁴⁸ There was, at least initially, a broadly positive response from the hierarchy to the general aims of the Land League. John Ireland, Bishop of St. Paul, said during Parnell's visit that 'no fault can be found with the agitation [...] the means are legal, the

¹⁴³ O'Reilly, 'In Bohemia', *In Bohemia*, (1886), 15; Lynch, 'Defining Irish Nationalist Anti-Imperialism', (2007): 100

¹⁴⁴ Deborah S. Skok, 'Organized Almsgiving: Scientific Charity and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul in Chicago, 1871-1918', *U.S. Catholic Historian*, 16, (1998): 19-20

¹⁴⁵ Skok, 'Organized Almsgiving', (1998), 31; For the same process in Liverpool, see John Belchem, *Irish, Catholic and Scouse: The History of the Liverpool-Irish, 1800-1939*, (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2007), 91

¹⁴⁶ Henry George to Fr. Thomas Dawson, 22 Dec., 1891, (HGP, Series I: D, Box II, NYPL)

¹⁴⁷ Robert E. Curran, 'Confronting "The Social Question:" American Catholic Thought and the Socio-Economic Order in the Nineteenth Century', *U.S. Catholic Historian*, 5:2, (1986): 165-193

¹⁴⁸ EFoner, 'Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism', 1981, 170; Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, (1966), 148

demands reasonable'.¹⁴⁹ This tone shifted as Parnellism gave way to Georgism in the U.S., and particularist demands over Irish land broadened into labour radicalism. The hostility was not surprising. Seeing a radical theology encased in a reactionary institution, George actively sought to relieve the hierarchy of power over American Catholics by highlighting 'the distinction Catholic theology makes between the Church and Church officialism'.¹⁵⁰

Like its Irish counterpart, the American Church was conscious of the precarity of its position within the community, which resulted in considerable tension among prelates and the more activist parish priests.¹⁵¹ In New York, the *Academia*, a collective of well-educated, impassioned and socially-radical priests, caused significant problems for their superiors with outspoken attacks on wealth inequalities and support for the aims of the League and of Henry George. This active incursion into politics proved to be unsettling for many members of the hierarchy and the more conservative members of the lay community. Brooklyn's Fr. Sylvester Malone, a friend and collaborator of the notorious Fr. Edward McGlynn and fellow member of the *Academia*, was one of many who used the pulpit to defend the land league.¹⁵² Malone was also a Georgist, who later explained that Henry George had 'translated into political economy and civil government the doctrines always inculcated by my church'.¹⁵³ Many other independently minded priests such as Fr. John Crimmins agreed with the principles of the League in defiantly radical and republican terms, fighting for 'the oppressed Irish in their efforts to enjoy life and the fruits of their labors in their native land'.¹⁵⁴ From the beginning of the 1880s, popular support for these priests shocked and unnerved the hierarchy and highlighted the power of the lay community.¹⁵⁵ Popular opposition to the Church's officialism was perhaps most evident in the more than 75,000 parishioners that gathered to protest against clerical authoritarianism after McGlynn was removed from his post at St Stephen's.¹⁵⁶ Just as in

¹⁴⁹ *The Pilot*, 13 March, 1880

¹⁵⁰ Henry George to Fr. Thomas Dawson, 9 Dec., 1888; Henry George to Fr. Thomas Dawson, 22 Dec., 1891, (HGP, Series I: D, Box 11, NYPL)

¹⁵¹ Robert E. Curran, 'Prelude to "Americanism": The New York Academia and Clerical Radicalism in the Late Nineteenth Century', *Church History*, 47:1 (1978): 48-65

¹⁵² Fr. Sylvester Malone, *New York Tablet*, 2 Apr., 1881; Also sympathetic to McGlynn were Frs. Crimmins, Ducey, Burtzell, Farrell

¹⁵³ *The Standard*, 9 Apr., 1887, cited in Greene, 'The Impact of Henry George's Theories', (1956), 203

¹⁵⁴ Fr. John Crimmins, *New York Tablet*, 18 Feb., 1882

¹⁵⁵ Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, (1966), 122

¹⁵⁶ Edward T. O'Donnell, 'Soggarth Aroon, The Rise and Fall of Rev. Edward McGlynn', in T. Golway (ed.), *Catholics in New York: Society, Culture, and Politics, 1808-1946*, (New York: Fordham University Press, 2008), 158; Robert E. Curran, 'The McGlynn Affair and the Shaping of the New Conservatism in American Catholicism, 1886-1894', *The Catholic Historical Review*, 66:2, (1980), 184; Annie George to Fr. Thomas Dawson, 5 June, 1887, (HGP, Series I: D, Box 11, NYPL)

Ireland, many local priests displayed the political inclinations of their parishioners, and, like in Ireland, it was also evident in clerical involvement in Land League branches.¹⁵⁷

There were also some supportive prelates in the U.S., although proportionally fewer than in Ireland. Perhaps John J. Williams, Archbishop of Boston, was among the most prominent supporters of the League, lauding its efforts to rectify Ireland's 'almost total alienation of the soil and its consequent evil of an intruded and rapacious landlord class'.¹⁵⁸ Similarly, Augustine E. Toebbe, the Bishop of Covington, Kentucky, leapt into the fight to 'obtain for the Irish people their *natural rights* and all that pertains thereto', adding that he was a member of the League, 'having paid my initiation fee to Mr. Patrick Ford, editor of the *Irish World*'.¹⁵⁹ But these statements of unqualified and radical support were outliers, and even the more liberal hierarchy were restrained in their opinions of the League and of George in particular.

More broadly, suspicion towards George and the *Irish World* faction was partly a class issue, and the conservative hierarchy was no exception to this. First Cardinal John McCloskey and then, after 1885, Michael A. Corrigan in the Archbishopric of New York aimed to soften both Irish nationalist sentiment and its radical social inflections. McCloskey was certainly gentler than Corrigan in this, but nevertheless expressed a concern shared by many Catholics that opposition to English rule might, 'incite perhaps the anger and disgust of the American people against us'.¹⁶⁰ He maintained this position through the rise of the Land League too, maintaining a cold distance from Charles Stewart Parnell on his visit, and reminding his flock that 'agitation in America of Irish political questions seems unwise. The political interests of our people are here, and in the questions of their homes in America'.¹⁶¹ But the hierarchy's control over their priests and their congregations was never properly secure, as McCloskey had learned in the 1860s when his denunciation of Fenianism had prompted dissent in local churches.¹⁶²

Beneath the public dictates of the hierarchy, the Land League, George and their labour radicalism had stirred many loyal Catholics. Faced with conflicting allegiances, the difficulties confronted by Irish American Catholics were manifest in the letters sent to Archbishop Corrigan seeking clarification and advice. Richard M. Carney of 155 East 80th

¹⁵⁷ Walsh, 'A Fanatic Heart', (1981): 196

¹⁵⁸ Henry Clay, quoted in Aurelius MacSwynnie, (ed.), *America's Sympathies with Ireland*, (1881), 13, (P.001.1830, PAHRC)

¹⁵⁹ Bishop Augustine E. Toebbe, quoted in Aurelius MacSwynnie, (ed.), *America's Sympathies with Ireland*, (1881), 18, (P.001.1830, PAHRC)

¹⁶⁰ Cardinal McCloskey and the Fenian Movement, *New York Herald*, 3 March, 1866, (CMP, A-31, AANY)

¹⁶¹ 'Interview with Cardinal McCloskey on the Irish Relief Fund', *New York Herald*, 3 Jan., 1880, (CMP, A-32, AANY)

¹⁶² Cardinal McCloskey and the Fenian Movement, *New York Herald*, 3 March, 1866, (McCloskey CMP, A-31, AANY)

Street, New York asked straightforwardly: 'Can I remain in communion with the Catholic Church, while accepting the land theories of Henry George?' He added that he considered George's plan worthy because 'there would be a more equal division of the land which God undoubtedly made for all', before signing off by asking 'Reverend Sir to favour a troubled soul with a reply'.¹⁶³ Another correspondent was concerned about whether the secrecy and ritual of the Ancient Order of United Workmen meant that it was forbidden by the Church. He enclosed a copy of its by-laws and constitution, 'marked in ink several places which I think is not altogether rights [sic]', and pleaded for a response in order to heal familial discord: 'If you decide that the order is under the ban of "Our Holy Mother the Church", my father will immediately withdraw, but if your Grace decides otherwise it will calm my mother's fears'.¹⁶⁴ Another wrote asking for clarification on the Church's position on usury: 'I have seen the statement in the public [...that the] Church forbids the taking of Usury'.¹⁶⁵ And yet others expressed dismay and consternation that their fellow Catholics were being drawn into 'Protestant ways of thinking', 'putting forth Henry George's land tax theory', and expressing 'opinions as to their wrongs and rights which, if put into action, will surely lead to troubles for themselves'.¹⁶⁶

The suspicion, especially among wealthier Catholics, that George's supporters were being drawn into 'Protestant ways of thinking' has been mirrored in the assumption of much historiography that the confessional divide was a chasm. In a strictly ecumenical sense, the decline in absolute authority of the priesthood and hierarchy can be seen as a growing 'protestantisation'. However, as argued earlier, the theological and practical grounds for such a profound distinction in regards to the Irish Church in particular are misplaced. The American liberal hierarchy allowed lay Catholics, such as Patrick Ford, to shape the content and scope of a Catholic social theory. For his own part, Ford returned the favour by vigorously defending the Church as a radical and subaltern institution from attacks by Protestant America.¹⁶⁷ As has been observed of this process, there was actually 'less contradiction than maturation' and there were 'modest and unselfconscious paths to modernity by believing Catholics'.¹⁶⁸

The remarkable popularity of Edward McGlynn, or the *Soggarth Aroon* ('the people's priest') as he was known, was one of the starkest examples of the willingness of parishioners to defy ecclesiastical authority. In the eyes of one patronising Unitarian, 'the

¹⁶³ Richard M. Carney to Michael A. Corrigan, 14 Dec., 1884, (ACP, C-7, AANY)

¹⁶⁴ Thomas J. Doyle to Michael A. Corrigan, 15 Apr., 1886, (ACP, C-7, AANY)

¹⁶⁵ James Vincent to Cardinal McCloskey, [n.d.], (CMP, A-30, AANY)

¹⁶⁶ Robert T. Rea to Michael A. Corrigan, 26 Apr., 1886, (ACP, C-11, AANY); Bishop Francis Silas Chatard to Michael A. Corrigan, 30 Sept., 1890, (ACP, C-15, AANY)

¹⁶⁷ Rodechko, 'An Irish-American Journalist and Catholicism', (1970), 531

¹⁶⁸ David N. Doyle, 'The Irish in Chicago', *Irish Historical Studies*, 26:103, (1989): 299-300

McGlynn Catholics seem to have caught glimpses of a world of liberty, on whose threshold they still hesitate'.¹⁶⁹ McGlynn was both the most popular and the most forthright of the coterie of radical priests in the *Academia*, and he had been an irritant to his superiors for some time. McGlynn had been instrumental in a well-publicised opposition to Catholic education in the early 1870s, as well as fighting passionately against racism, once telling his congregation that 'the Blessed Virgin was a color'd woman', a thought that discomfited some of his parishioners and the Church hierarchy.¹⁷⁰ Demurring from ecclesiastical authority, McGlynn held that 'land is rightfully the property of the people in common, and that private ownership of land is against natural justice, no matter by what civil or ecclesiastical laws it may be sanctioned'.¹⁷¹

McGlynn's open battle with his Archbishop pitted his personal popularity against the Church's establishment in an ideological war. The perpetually enraged Bishop McQuaid of Rochester, a strong ally of New York's Corrigan, was deeply concerned about 'his influence over good priests', writing that 'the Doctor was leading many young priests astray by his ability to fascinate them'.¹⁷² Corrigan's running battle with McGlynn provoked popular disquiet with the Archbishop. Annie George, Henry's Catholic wife, was disheartened that the open disagreements had arrayed many Irish Catholics against their Archbishop. 'It is sad to hear', she wrote, 'as I did last night the name of the highest dignitary, hissed loudly and strongly by Irish Catholics men and women'.¹⁷³ McGlynn's excommunication in 1887, tirelessly campaigned for by Corrigan, drew out the fissures in the transatlantic Irish Church, with comparatively 'progressive' elements, such as Cardinal Manning of Westminster and Archbishop Walsh of Dublin, seeking to have McGlynn's case re-examined by Rome.¹⁷⁴ In New York, however, Archbishop Corrigan, proved to be a resolute nemesis for both George and McGlynn. Committed to Roman authority, Corrigan's position as the youngest ever American bishop, assisted by a rapid rise through the episcopal ranks, had limited his personal experience of parish life and helped fashion his strict, traditionalist and domineering attitudes.¹⁷⁵ For him, the primary problem with McGlynn's populism was a lack of deference and respect for authority, his own in particular. He considered the issue a matter of 'rebellion'.¹⁷⁶ Corrigan was outraged

¹⁶⁹ Horace L. Trauble, 'Freedom and Half-Freedom: The McGlynn Incident', *The Unitarian Review*, 29:6, (June, 1888): 540

¹⁷⁰ Anon to Cardinal McCloskey, St. Stephens, New York, 21 Jan., 1871, (CMP, A-28, AANY)

¹⁷¹ Edward McGlynn to Richard Burtzell, 20 Dec., 1886, (Public record of McGlynn Case, MSS:L.3, AANY)

¹⁷² Bernard McQuaid to Michael A. Corrigan, 27 Dec., 1886, (ACP, C-16, AANY)

¹⁷³ Annie George to Fr. Thomas Dawson, 5 June, 1887, (HGP, Series I: D, Box II, NYPL)

¹⁷⁴ Henry George to Fr. Thomas Dawson, 22 Dec., 1887, (HGP, Series I: D, Box II, NYPL)

¹⁷⁵ James J. Greene, 'The Impact of Henry George's Theories', (1956), 146

¹⁷⁶ Archbishop Corrigan to Anon., 24 Dec., 1889, (Public record of McGlynn Case, MSS:L.3, AANY)

that Fr. Burtzell, considered a McGlynn co-conspirator, had ‘preached a funeral sermon over the remains of a poor woman who died under censure’, and questioned Papal authority.¹⁷⁷ McGlynn’s involvement in George’s campaign arguably agitated the conservative hierarchy more than any other factor as it provided the imprint of clerical consent, although this was by no means their only grounds for opposition. After McGlynn’s excommunication and George’s decline in popularity, Corrigan suggested disingenuously that the Church now ‘has no quarrel with the George land doctrine except that it considers it poor political economy’.¹⁷⁸ James Healy, Bishop of Portland, Maine, subsequently wrote with incredulity to Corrigan, rightly unable to believe that this was his position, but Corrigan’s need to distance George’s land theories from theological conflict was itself very revealing.¹⁷⁹

Corrigan’s allies in the American hierarchy, such as Bishop Gilmour of Cleveland, Ohio, Chatard of Vincennes, Indiana, Healy of Portland, Maine, and, particularly, Bernard McQuaid of Rochester, New York, provided advice and support in his ongoing battle with McGlynn and his faction of radical priests, as well as the visits of dangerous Irish rebels like Fr. Sheehy and Mgr. Capel.¹⁸⁰ They worked hard to undermine and discredit McGlynn and to secure his excommunication; ‘send everything to Rome’, counselled McQuaid. It was his considered opinion that Corrigan should not fight McGlynn on theological grounds but attack his character. McQuaid advised Corrigan to dwell on the difficulties ‘he has brought on the cause of Catholic education by neglecting to provide schools for his children, [...] and be careful to make known how easy it would have been for him, with his large and able congregation, to pay off the heavy debt that still weighs down the parish’. McQuaid went on to suggest accusing McGlynn of embezzlement.¹⁸¹ The intrigues at Rome demonstrate an unwillingness to fight McGlynn theologically on the land issue, or to take on George’s ideas directly, but rather to emphasise insubordination to authority. Corrigan became locked into a cloak and daggers struggle with those in the Church who either harboured some sympathy for McGlynn, or were worried about the potentially damaging effects of an open Catholic censure of George. Information was relayed to Corrigan that ‘Dennis [O’Connell, the Cork-born and South Carolina-raised Rector of the North American College in Rome] is acting a double part’, circulating a

¹⁷⁷ *Ibid.*,

¹⁷⁸ ‘The Catholic Church’s Position Toward McGlynn, Henry George and Powderly’, newspaper clipping, James A. Healy to Michael A. Corrigan, 27 March, 1888, (ACP, C-15, AANY)

¹⁷⁹ James A. Healy to Michael A. Corrigan, 27 March, 1888, (ACP, C-15, AANY)

¹⁸⁰ Bishop Chatard warned Corrigan that McGlynn had come to speak in Cleveland while Bishop Gilmour was away, Frances Silas Chatard to Michael A. Corrigan, 10 Aug., 1882, (ACP, C-2, AANY); Bishop Healy reported that Fr. Sheehy was due to preach in Portland, Maine. James A. Healy to Michael A. Corrigan, 15 Nov., 1881, (ACP, C-2, AANY)

¹⁸¹ Bernard McQuaid to Michael A. Corrigan, 11 Dec., 1886, (ACP, C-16, AANY)

petition 'to have the examination and the question of the condemnation of George's theories delayed until [the moderate and sympathetic] Cardinals Gibbons and Manning could be communicated with'.¹⁸²

It became an all-consuming battle for Corrigan and McQuaid. Indeed, for the latter, animosity towards McGlynn seems to have been an invigorating experience. More than any other member of the hierarchy, Bishop Bernard McQuaid was notable for his animated fury at McGlynn and other radicals. He warned Corrigan that after the removal of McGlynn, the problem would not be eradicated and that 'the next one you will have to gag or squelch will be [Fr.] Ducey'.¹⁸³ The one positive he could muster about the issue was that it brought 'to the surface much scum that it is good to get rid of'.¹⁸⁴ The battle waged against McGlynn and his supporters was brutal and vindictive. Miss Ellen Garvin, a maid in McGlynn's rectory at St. Stephen's, was reported as a McGlynn sympathiser by a member of the congregation and subsequently dismissed after this information reached the Archbishop.¹⁸⁵ Corrigan even sought out theological opinion in Rome on the possibility of ensuring excommunication for those who merely attended a McGlynn meeting.¹⁸⁶ The campaign was as far as the production of a poorly forged confession from McGlynn that he had been married to woman named Anna Salomon in 1866.¹⁸⁷

In the spirit of conciliation (and self-promotion), George wrote to Corrigan in an attempt to soften his views. He attached Bishop Nulty's famous letter in order to show that 'he fully shares the views I hold with respect to property in land', as well as enclosing his own work, to which he declared the hope that the Archbishop would conclude similarly to Cardinal Manning, that 'there was nothing in the principles I have advocated in regard to the treatment of the land that the Church had ever condemned'. George also reminded the Bishop of what must have surely been a niggling concern; that outright condemnation of himself, and especially McGlynn, 'would but give point to the assertions of those who are striving to alienate workingmen from the Church'.¹⁸⁸ But George's voice was not alone. Archbishop Corrigan's correspondence included pleas for leniency on organisations such as the Knights of Labor. One noted that since 'many of our people belong to them', hostility would make it seem as though 'the Church takes sides with the rich and powerful against them, and imprudent action would be [likely] to alienate many of them'.¹⁸⁹

¹⁸² Charles E. McDonnell to Michael A. Corrigan, 9 Feb., 1888, (ACP, C-19, AANY); O'Connell was close to Cardinal Gibbons having served as his secretary in Baltimore

¹⁸³ Bernard McQuaid to Michael A. Corrigan, 17 Jan., 1887, (ACP, C-16, AANY)

¹⁸⁴ Bernard McQuaid to Michael A. Corrigan, 13 Jan., 1887, (ACP, C-16, AANY)

¹⁸⁵ Thomas F. Lynch to Michael A. Corrigan, 20 Jan., 1888, (ACP, C-19, AANY)

¹⁸⁶ Rev. Elias F. Schauer, C.S.S.R to Archbishop Corrigan, 20 May, 1888, (ACP, C-20, AANY)

¹⁸⁷ 'Enclosed purportedly written by Edward McGlynn', AANY, (G.67, folder 2)

¹⁸⁸ Henry George to Michael A. Corrigan, 30 Sept., 1886, (ACP, C-8, AANY)

¹⁸⁹ Rev. Msgr. George A. Doane, to Michael A. Corrigan, 3 June, 1886, (ACP, C-7, AANY)

However, there were also missives thanking the Archbishop for his strident tone and uncompromising position toward the 'Anarchical theories' and 'ominous evils'.¹⁹⁰

As George's letter had noted, the McGlynn schism presented the American Church with a similar risk to the one facing the Irish church over the League; that a stern opposition would risk alienating significant numbers of the faithful. 'The McGlynn affair is taking in this country a very nasty phase', noted one American prelate, 'it will array the labor party and the Irish national party against the Church'.¹⁹¹ While the liberal modernisers were able to see more clearly the details of George's scheme and the dangers of an unwieldy and thoughtless denunciation, the conservative element of the hierarchy looked on in fearful bewilderment at the actions of some of their colleagues. The fact that the United States' most senior churchman, Cardinal Gibbons, the Archbishop of Baltimore, was not at all hostile to the Knights or the League certainly riled conservative prelates. Unsurprisingly, Bishop McQuaid was not restrained in his reaction to Cardinal Gibbons, and wrote to his confidante Corrigan, 'How does his Em. feel now about his pets, the Knights of Labor? [...] For the countenance his Em. gave them, he will have to suffer'.¹⁹² Discussing the Irish hierarchy in the wake of Dr. Nulty's pastoral, Mgr. Brann, a close supporter of Corrigan and notable Catholic critic of George, exclaimed: 'They have all gone crazy!'.¹⁹³ At the head of the liberal faction, Cardinal Gibbons' opposition to such reactionary proceedings led to 'insinuations thrown out in the papers that I was championing the cause of Dr. McGlynn'.¹⁹⁴ Typically enervated, McQuaid was baffled by the friendly behaviour of the liberal hierarchy and spluttered his outrage to Corrigan: 'In Chicago the Archbp. dined with Davitt at the house of Alexander Sullivan who shot a man in the public street. [...] In Baltimore his Eminence gives an audience to the same Davitt'.¹⁹⁵ The public disagreements of the Church hierarchy precipitated by the League had created the space for the League's more radical offshoots in the form of George, McGlynn and Patrick Ford to gain traction with many Catholics where they may otherwise have failed. The schism may have damaged the authority of the Church, but the influence of the liberal hierarchy allowed it to maintain its position as avowedly Irish and

¹⁹⁰ J. S. Dennis to Michael A. Corrigan, 27 Nov., 1886, AANY, (ACP, C-7, AANY); J. W. Edmonds York to Michael A. Corrigan, 8 Jan., 1887, (ACP, C-12, AANY)

¹⁹¹ Patrick W. Riordan, Bishop of San Francisco to John J. Keane, 24 Jan., 1887, cited in Greene, 'The Impact of Henry George's Theories', (1956), 159

¹⁹² Bernard McQuaid to Michael A. Corrigan, 28 Dec., 1887, (ACP, C-16, AANY)

¹⁹³ 'I cannot believe that he means all that his words [imply]', Henry A. Brann to Michael A. Corrigan, 19 Jan., 1887, (ACP, C-6, AANY); Another wrote: 'but whence does the poison of liberal Catholicity (if it be Catholic faith at all) now come to us', James A. Healy to Michael A. Corrigan, 18 March, 1891, (ACP, C-15, AANY)

¹⁹⁴ Cardinal Gibbons to Michael A. Corrigan, 30 Apr., 1887, (ACP, C-15, AANY); Gibbons was supported by the *Irish World*, 23 Nov., 1878

¹⁹⁵ Bernard McQuaid to Michael A. Corrigan, 1 Feb., 1887, (ACP, C-16, AANY)

nominally subaltern. Although his ire was often deployed in a scattergun approach, McQuaid was at least partly correct to consider ‘Cardinal Manning and Bp. Nulty responsible for much of George’s influence’.¹⁹⁶

As well as exerting ecclesiastical authority and sanction, the battle against Georgism also had to take place on an ideological plane. Especially for the ultramontane hierarchy, the issue of whether private property was sanctioned explicitly by natural law, or merely a facet of civil law, became a primary concern. The popularity of George’s ideas among American Catholics prompted at first a flurry and then a steady stream of tracts and articles defending the rights of property against ‘socialism’ and explicitly attacking George himself. Although there was active opposition to both George and McGlynn from the early 1880s, it was George’s popularity during the 1886 Mayoral elections, which coincided with the elevation of Michael Corrigan to the archbishopric of New York the previous year, that really catalysed the clerical counteraction. As we have seen, the Archbishop of New York worked tirelessly to silence McGlynn, but he also directed a propaganda campaign against George’s ideas on an intellectual level. In 1886 Corrigan released a pastoral letter which elicited praise for emolliating the disenchanted ‘led astray by Mr. George’.¹⁹⁷ Of course the Archbishop’s, or indeed the Church’s, interest in formulating theologically coherent defences of the current political economy was not merely theoretical, given the profits it extracted from rent. In the same letter in which the Archbishop hoped for ‘Divine Providence to thwart the machinations of evil minds’ like McGlynn and George, he ended on a positive note; that he had heard from the Bahamas that ‘they have discovered a gold mine there in the shape of fibre manufacture which yield a large profit’. To which he had ‘secured 1,000 acres at \$1.20 per acre’.¹⁹⁸

In this spirit, many prelates embraced the challenge posed by George’s radical ideas. The Bishop of Omaha, James O’Connor, offered an idiosyncratic and perfunctory history of socialism from Plato to Rousseau before asserting that ‘the fundamental error of socialism, and the chief reason why it has been condemned by the Church, is its denial of private dominion, or ownership’.¹⁹⁹ The right to private property in land, according to the Bishop, derived not from the state, or from compacts made between families ‘before civil society’, but rather rested obliquely on the ‘right to live, and, therefore a right to the means of living’.²⁰⁰ What became a common theme of these criticisms, exhibited in

¹⁹⁶ Bernard McQuaid to Michael A. Corrigan, 22 Jan., 1887, (ACP, C-16, AANY)

¹⁹⁷ E. Ellery Anderson, to Michael A. Corrigan, 23 Nov., 1886, (ACP, C-6, AANY)

¹⁹⁸ Michael A. Corrigan to Bernard McQuaid, 12 March, 1889, (ACP, C-18, AANY)

¹⁹⁹ O’Connor, ‘Socialism’, (1883): 224

²⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, 225

O'Connor's analysis and elsewhere, was a determined avoidance of differentiating between property in land and in movable goods. Secondly, there was a presupposition of the Lockean argument of initial abundance, under which the first occupier 'improved the soil, at the expense of his time and labor, without interfering with the right of others to do as he had done'.²⁰¹

A common explanation offered by Catholic critiques for social unrest and its attendant promises of economic emancipation was, perhaps unsurprisingly, that of a rising godlessness. Rev. Victor Cathrein, a Jesuit priest who wrote one of the more assiduous refutations of George's work, claimed that threats to landed property only emerged when 'the religious spirit had most degenerated'.²⁰² Cathrein's work is somewhat unusual for its comfortable and unambiguous defence of privilege and inequality, but others tended to struggle to confront the new intellectual propositions of the period. Another notable critic of George was Rev. Dr. Henry A. Brann, whose anti-George articles and papers littered the Catholic journals of the decade. In his pamphlet 'Henry George and his Land Theories', Brann's tactic was to taint George's ideas with the stigma of national treachery, asserting that 'the theory of Mr. George is essentially anti-American'.²⁰³ Based on a rather limited reading of the history of land nationalisation, which encompassed for Brann merely Herbert Spencer (a name well placed to rile committed Catholics and an Englishman no less) and Canadian writer William Brown, he concluded that 'the theory of land-nationalization, of the destruction of private property in land, and of making the state the only landlord, never grew naturally out of American soil. [...] it was wafted either by an eastern gale from England or a blizzard from Canada'.²⁰⁴ In fact, Brann not only asserted George's un-Americanism, but caricatured him as anti-republican, as favouring socialism and centralisation. He wrote 'that Americans, natives of the soil, should preach a crusade against our republican rights of property, is a matter for serious reflection'.²⁰⁵

In searching for a sustainable moral principle onto which to anchor their defence of the status quo, some writers descended into an awkward muddle over what was and what was not permissible. Here the Bishop of Omaha provided another example, tying himself in knots over what degree of collective bargaining by workers should be acceptable, and what the behaviour of employers could be in reaction to it. On this topic he wrote:

²⁰¹ *Ibid.*, 225

²⁰² Cathrein, *The Champions of Agrarian Socialism*, (1889), 9

²⁰³ Brann, *Henry George and his Land Theories*, (1887), 3

²⁰⁴ *Ibid.*, 4

²⁰⁵ *Ibid.*, 3

They may, for instance, as a rule, and where no undue advantage is taken of the actual necessities of employers, determine the rate of wages under which they will not work, but they cannot hinder others who are willing to work at lower rates. Every man has the right to hire his time and his labor on whatever terms he pleases, or even to give them for nothing, and he can be restricted in the exercise of this right only by public authority. But employers are not free to introduce bodies of cheap laborers into localities where usage has established the equity of certain rates of compensation. They can do so only when the demands of workmen have become extortionate or unreasonable, and even then they should pay the established rates to the newcomers.²⁰⁶

Often, a sense of complacent authority emerges from such glib and imprecise attempts to address the problem of labour relations. But this attitude was repeated in many denunciations of more abstracted 'socialism' as well as of George in particular. One particularly laborious repudiation of Emile de Laveleye's work on early forms of ownership denied the preponderance of hunter-gatherer societies because: 'Cain was a husbandman, and of Noe we read that he planted a vineyard'.²⁰⁷ From this the Rev. Cathrein was able to extrapolate that the existence of such settled agriculture proved the individuation of land from the beginning of the world. Historical evidence of collective agriculture was denied on the assumption that someone must have been the final legal authority, and therefore an owner, who may have merely allowed collective production as a form of joint liability to ensure the continued extraction of rents.²⁰⁸ His defence of private property was, then, a Lockean construction of first occupancy as 'right reason tells us that a thing without an owner becomes the property of the first occupant'.²⁰⁹

It is not surprising that contemporary theologians and respected prelates were unable to find a solution to the problem bequeathed by Aquinas, of an unimpeachable Natural Rights defence of private property, or at least one that could be used against George's plan. Cathrein did accept that 'every man has a natural right to appropriate for his use as much as is strictly necessary for the immediate preservation of his life', but, for obvious reasons, demurred from discussing this point further.²¹⁰ He asserted that 'private property is an institution of natural right', and that 'the goods of the earth, however, were undoubtedly created for the benefit of all men; their use should be, according to God's intention, as extensive as possible, and the earth should yield for all men the means required for their subsistence', but as his theoretical position developed, he was only left

²⁰⁶ O'Connor, 'Socialism', (1883): 239

²⁰⁷ Cathrein, *The Champions of Agrarian Socialism*, (1889), 28

²⁰⁸ *Ibid.*, 23

²⁰⁹ *Ibid.*, 44

²¹⁰ *Ibid.*, 46

with utility as a defence. As men will not work unless guaranteed that ‘the fruit of his toil will be reaped by himself’, exclusive individuation is suggested as the only mechanism by which to ensure ‘the means that are requisite for the development of human kind’.²¹¹ Rev. Henry Brann also argued along these lines, admitting ‘that poverty might, indeed, be a consequence of *land*-monopoly used contrary to the laws of justice and charity; but private ownership is naturally a means to wealth’.²¹² Brann’s and Cathrein’s justifications for private property rested only on the expediency of increasing production, suggesting by implication that a more productive socialisation of land would have been acceptable. Rev. Henry Brann repeated with glee George’s belief that ‘If private property in land be just, then is the remedy I propose a false one’, but could not himself provide a justification beyond expediency and orthodoxy.²¹³ Similarly, both theologians were open to the idea that ‘the law of nature is equally indifferent to communal or to private ownership’, and that if George had only argued ‘the superior advantages of a common to private ownership, no one would accuse him of holding unsound opinions’.²¹⁴ The disingenuousness was striking, and the logic profoundly flawed, given the subsequent argument could claim only that the right to land rested on its greater utility and productive effort.

Leaving aside the issue that George meant to ensure the separation of value-added production from the ‘unearned increment’, and that his scheme did not deny the efficacy of individuation (both common obfuscations employed by attempted rebuttals), what is revealing about Cathrein’s and Brann’s arguments, and the reason why George’s own provoked such reactionary fear, was the instability of Natural Rights defences of property in land. Either land was created by God for mankind, required for the preservation of life, *or* it was property like any other, and its title of ownership had to be justified in the same fashion, by creation or first occupancy, and enforced only by force of might and legal statute. Some opponents wrestled with the second position, attacking the idea that there was any solid distinction between land and moveable property.²¹⁵ This position clearly had its own pitfalls for defenders of the status quo, not least the backtracking necessary after they had demonstrated that everything that was produced relied on the soil and on socially constructed labour which was owed, in part or totality, back to the community. This was the problem faced by Rev. Edward Higgins, a Jesuit and president of St. Xavier College in Cincinnati, after he had rejected the Lockean basis for

²¹¹ *Ibid.*, 46

²¹² Brann, *Henry George and his Land Theories*, (1887), 7

²¹³ *Ibid.*, 5; 6

²¹⁴ *Ibid.*, 8; 7

²¹⁵ *Ibid.*, 16

ownership in labour and first occupancy. He argued that ‘the truth is that the producing or making of a thing is neither the original nor the exclusive source of private ownership. That which you make or produce is yours, provided the materials out of which you produce it are yours. If the materials are not yours, no amount of labor can make the product yours’. Whilst Higgins was trying to show how easily George’s ideas led to socialism, in rejecting the Lockean basis for possession of natural goods, he provided no solid alternative. If the original materials were not owned by an individual, and labour could not provide a title; it followed that if all things came originally from nature, then all things cannot be owned. ‘Admit this principle, then, and there is an end of *all* private property, and Proudhon was right when he declared that all property is theft’.²¹⁶ A similar example was demonstrated in Brann’s argument. He stated that ‘the authority of the state is from God, and that the state has the right of eminent domain [...] to curtail private ownership for the benefit of the whole community’, but, having endorsed this immediately backtracked from the suggestion, adding, ‘how far this right of eminent domain may extend we are not going to discuss’.²¹⁷

Higgins decision to take up his quarrel with Locke rather than George by rejecting the Lockean basis that man has a right to himself, and therefore to the results of his labour, left the reverend doctor with a rather unstable defence of private property in land resting only in ‘man’s right to self-preservation’. This gave the right, presumably by force of might when faced with exclusive domination by others, ‘to take, use and consume’, nature’s gifts.²¹⁸ He concluded that property in land is just and right because land ‘by its nature is capable of being possessed and used by some to the exclusion of others’, whereas air and light, other natural gifts, are not capable of being exclusively possessed. So it had nothing to do with their necessity for human life, but rather the fact of the opportunity of individual domination.²¹⁹

Too often, although not surprisingly, clerical defences of the status quo found it much easier to attack an amorphous and ill-defined ‘communism’, to which could be attributed all dystopian imaginings, than to critique individual proposals specifically. As James J. Green noticed, ‘in what might be called the anti-Georgist element of the Catholic hierarchy, there was little effort to distinguish the principles of Henry George from just plain socialism’ as well as a failure ‘to deal directly with Georgist fundamental arguments’.²²⁰ It is both curious and revealing that the social elements and tendencies cast

²¹⁶ Rev. Edward A. Higgins, *Fallacies of Henry George, Exposed and Refuted: The True Philosophy of the Land Question*, (Cincinnati: Keating & Co., 1887), 11-2

²¹⁷ Brann, *Henry George and his Land Theories*, (1887), 6

²¹⁸ Higgins, *Fallacies of Henry George*, (1887), 16

²¹⁹ *Ibid.*, 16

²²⁰ Greene, ‘The Impact of Henry George’s Theories’, (1956), 161; 189

as central to the nefarious modern socialistic doctrines under critique, ‘the scientist, the agnostic, and the communist’, or ‘humanism’, ‘evolutionists’, and ‘SCIENCE’, were those that George often denounced too.²²¹ This was one of the reasons why it proved so difficult to develop a coherent theological denunciation of George specifically and why, as a result, he was labelled a socialist, to be condemned by association. Strawmen abounded as a result. Sometimes it can be hard to determine whether this was deliberate or a result of honest confusion. In Brann’s case, however, it is quite clear. Despite appearing to understand the difference between the unearned increment and the improvements on the land when he asked facetiously ‘must we for the future build our houses on stilts, to keep the improvement separate from the thing improved?’,²²² Brann continued to offer analogies that failed to address the difference:

If I clear a field, fence it in, build a house on it, I have put my labor in concrete form. A barren and useless spot that had belonged to nobody has been converted by my industry into a productive one. Now if you deprive me of this field, am I not deprived of ‘the product of human exertion?’ He continued: ‘But on what title can the community confiscate the increase in value on my lot, since the community is not always the producer of this increase, and, even when it is so, is not the necessary cause but only the accidental occasion of it? Does the mere accident of the growth of the town up to my lot, or the building of a railroad-station near my farm, give title to the community or to the railroad company to confiscate the fruit of my industry and of my foresight?’²²³

Brann did not clarify how this growth could be due both to ‘accident’ and to ‘foresight’, or indeed how the ‘fruit of my industry’ is involved in external growth.²²⁴ He privately confided to Archbishop Corrigan as much as is obvious to the careful reader of his work, that he had ‘read a good deal’ to fully understand what he was critiquing, ‘except on the “unearned increment”, on that I could find nothing’.²²⁵ The same obstacle had confronted Higgins, who, evidently not a reader of Mill, dismissed the issue as nonsense: ‘nor can we stop to analyze that ingenious but visionary speculation which Mr. George styles the “unearned increment”’.²²⁶ Indeed much of the deafness on both sides related to this misunderstanding over the differentiation of land and property on which the unearned increment rested. A presumptuous correspondent attempted to explain the difference

²²¹ *ibid.*, 161; Cathrein, *The Champions of Agrarian Socialism*, (1889), 10; 15; 14

²²² Brann, *Henry George and his Land Theories*, (1887), 15

²²³ *Ibid.*, 14-5

²²⁴ *Ibid.*, 18

²²⁵ Henry A. Brann to Michael A. Corrigan, 19 Jan., 1887, (ACP, C-6, AANY)

²²⁶ Higgins, *Fallacies of Henry George*, (1887), 8

between ‘the products of labor on one hand’, and ‘land’, to the Archbishop, for he feared that ‘in your case they are very often confused, [...] and confounded’.²²⁷

Faced with the insurmountable challenge of a solid theological refutation of George, Brann finally abandoned his pretence to intellectual rigour. ‘Has Mr. George ever built an orphan asylum or an institution of beneficence’, he inquired sarcastically. Casting for aspersions, Brann informed his readers: ‘we do not know that he is even a believer in the divinity of Christ’, and that ‘Mr. George is very fond of the Irish, especially at election time’.²²⁸ As a finale, Brann deduced that, given George’s assertion that man can dispose of that which he has produced in any way he wishes, ‘Mr. George’s theory leads logically to child-murder’.²²⁹ Although replying to George was, he considered, beneath the dignity of the Archbishop, Brann confessed that he had been ‘spoiling for a fight with Henry George for the last month’, and asked for Corrigan’s ‘say so’ to ‘leave him to me’.²³⁰ Such frothing anger is understandable given the very real threat posed by George’s personal popularity among Irish Catholics in the U.S., but also, critically, his achievement in recasting an internally consistent and radical theology for a popular audience.

In the longer term the counter-reaction to this remarkable resurgence of republican discourse created by Georgism, embedded in the language and constructs of the late eighteenth century, was manifold. Within the Catholic Church specifically, George brought attention to the ‘immediate presence of a great social problem’, but the Church recognised too that George’s republican radicalism, its reliance on natural law and its moral presumptions, posed a more profound threat to its authority and its ideological foundations than Marxism or trade unionism.²³¹ The labour turmoil of the 1880s, invigorated so much by George, eventually prompted *Rerum Novarum*. The Pope’s famous encyclical was, if not a direct response to George, initiated by a need for a response to his popularity and the theological uncertainty he had provoked. Archbishop Corrigan certainly saw the Pope’s encyclical as a direct response to George’s theories.²³² Corrigan’s secretary in Rome, Rev. Charles E. McDonnell, wrote to his superior regarding a denunciation of George’s work that the ‘Holy See wishes to have these theories and the whole question of socialism thoroughly examined and studied’.²³³ George too believed

²²⁷ George E. Swani to Michael A. Corrigan, 22 Nov., 1885, (ACP, C-12, AANY)

²²⁸ Brann, *Henry George and his Land Theories*, (1887), 21; 13; 11; appendix

²²⁹ *Ibid.*, 17

²³⁰ Henry A. Brann to Michael A. Corrigan, 8 Dec., 1886, (ACP, C-6, AANY)

²³¹ Higgins, *Fallacies of Henry George*, (1887)

²³² Michael A. Corrigan to Thomas S. Preston, 22 Dec., 1891, (ACP, C-18, AANY)

²³³ Rev. Charles E. McDonnell to Michael A. Corrigan, 25 Jan., 1888, (ACP, C-19, AANY)

himself to be the intended target of Pope Leo XIII's pronouncement.²³⁴ The Church's attempt to both refute and absorb Georgism was mirrored by the arrayed political and intellectual reaction in other spheres.²³⁵ As it is possible to observe from these reactions, what marked George and the Irish Land Campaign out as so threatening, and what accounted for much of their popular support, was the enunciation of their demands in a language of Natural Rights and republican freedom.

Slavery and Freedom

In framing the conflict as a defence of Natural Rights, the Land League's rhetoric helped to place the question of Irish land on an international stage, and at a critical ideological juncture, a time when these familiar political and philosophical assumptions were dissolving. 'This agitation' Michael Davitt explained, 'has lifted the Irish land question out of insular obscurity, and focused upon it the public opinion of America, France, and England'.²³⁶ For a period in the early 1880s, many U.S. ex-abolitionists took up a brief but passionate interest in Irish affairs, adopting the cause as a new moral crusade and, through the discourse of Natural Rights drawing parallels with their battles against slavery.

The U.S. Civil War still loomed large in the American political imagination of the 1870s and 1880s, and, on both sides of the Atlantic, references to slavery were used to emphasize the injustice of the Irish experience. Slavery offered a number of fruitful avenues for comparison. The abolition of a politically powerful and well-established social and economic institution provided a template to dispel accusations that radical land reform was itself utopian. 'The time is coming', wrote James Walker in 1873, 'when individual landlordism will be out into the same category with slaveholding'.²³⁷ Like the private ownership of land, slavery had represented the triumph of vested rights over Natural Rights, and 'landlordism was doomed just as truly as slavery had been doomed'.²³⁸ Bishop Nulty of Meath began his own attack on landlordism by offering the comparison with slavery as proof that 'no amount of sanction or approval' can be a justification for

²³⁴ C. J. Nuesse, 'Henry George and 'Rerum Novarum': Evidence is Scant that American Economist Was a Target of Leo XIII's Classic Encyclical', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 44:2, (1985): 241-254

²³⁵ Cardinal Gibbons to Cardinal Simeoni, 26 Feb., 1887, quoted in the *Standard*, 9 Apr., 1887; P. Finlay, 'Socialism and Catholic Teaching', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 8:31, (1919): 353; J. A. Ryan, *Distributive Justice: The Right and Wrong of Our Present Distribution of Wealth*, (New York: MacMillan, 1916)

²³⁶ Michael Davitt at Kilconly, 4 Jan., 1880, in Sullivan, (ed.), *Condemnations of Crime*, (1888), 17

²³⁷ Walker, *The National Inheritance*, (1873), 16

²³⁸ *Irish World*, 9 July 1881; Henry George, "Lecture notes and text: 'Malthusian Theory'" (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

allowing a moral wrong ‘to live on a moment longer’. Indeed the prelate described the private ownership of land as ‘the twin sister of slavery’.²³⁹ George concurred: ‘The century which has seen the abolition of slavery all over the civilized world, will, in my opinion, not close before, all over the civilized world, private property in land will receive its deathblow’.²⁴⁰

In Ireland itself, a reflexive association with the subaltern made the condition of slave a useful comparator, and, as Paul Townend has shown, rhetoric comparing the Irish to ‘enslaved Africans’ was well established by the 1870s.²⁴¹ During the Land War it was a common reference point; the status of ‘slave’ was invoked at League meetings to describe the *de facto* position of the tenant farmers and, by extension, the Catholic Irish majority.²⁴² Rev. James Cantwell, chair of the Land League branch at Thurles, told an assembled crowd that they should ‘unite with all Ireland in saying that you do not mean to live slaves in your native land’.²⁴³ In Richard Fox’s collection of Land League ballads, multiple references to ‘slavery’ sat in juxtaposition to national freedom.²⁴⁴ In much the same way, Thomas Flatley felt the League had elevated Irishmen in the U.S. from being perceived as ‘foolish slaves’, and T. P. O’Connor later described the Land War as ‘the last day of slavery and the dawn of emancipation’.²⁴⁵

But there was a more fundamental connection between slavery and landlordism that served to highlight the particularly republican conceptions of freedom being utilized in Irish nationalist discourse. When Bishop Nulty of Meath proclaimed that ‘the vast majority of tenant farmers of Ireland are at the present moment slaves’, he was expressing the view that the monopoly of land was akin to slavery because it fostered dependency, both economic and mental. It was this ‘degrading dependence’, rather than merely a lack of political or physical liberty, that was ‘the definition of slavery’ according to the Bishop.²⁴⁶ George was equally forthright: ‘Taking land enslaves men’.²⁴⁷ Similarly, G. W. Peavey wrote in the *Liberator* that, land monopoly was ‘just such an infringement of

²³⁹ Thomas Nulty, *The Land Question: Letter of The Most Rev. Dr. Nulty, to the Clergy and Laity of the Diocese of Meath*, (Dublin: Joseph Dollard, 1881) 9

²⁴⁰ Henry George, *Irish World*, 10 Dec., 1881

²⁴¹ Paul A. Townend, ‘Between Two Worlds: Irish Nationalists and Imperial Crisis, 1878-1880’, *Past & Present*, 194, (2007): 145; Matthew Kelly, ‘Irish Nationalist Opinion and the British Empire in the 1850s and 1860s’, *Past & Present*, 204, (2009): 147-8

²⁴² Account of Land League meeting at Thurles, Co. Tipperary, 14 Nov., 1880, (LLP, MS 11,289, NLI)

²⁴³ Rev. James Cantwell and M. W. Kirwan, at Thurles, Co. Tipperary, 14 Nov., 1880, (LLP, MS 11,289, NLI)

²⁴⁴ *Parnell’s Land League Songster*, (New York: Richard K. Fox, 1880), Stephen D. Dillaye, *Irish World*, 30 Nov., 1878

²⁴⁵ Thomas Flatley, ‘Second Quarterly Report of the Irish National Land League, United States, for quarter ending July 10th, 1881’, (Devoy Papers, MS 18,048, NLI); T. P. O’Connor, *Memoirs of an Old Parliamentarian*, (London: Ernest Benn, 1929), 114

²⁴⁶ Nulty, *The Land Question*, (1881), 9

²⁴⁷ Henry George, ‘Lecture notes: Land and Labor’, 12 Apr., 1883 (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL).

natural law and equal rights as that of seizing a human being and selling him'.²⁴⁸ In the late eighteenth-century, Wolfe Tone had talked of the conflict 'between the people and the few monopolists, whose power and pre-eminence exist by their slavery', but the persistence of this conception of slavery in both republican and Irish radical discourses was highlighted by the aging Irish Chartist Thomas Ainge Devyr, who wrote in 1884 that 'without land, slavery is inevitable and will be as enduring as the land itself'.²⁴⁹

Evocations of slavery were not solely rhetorical tools to foster political action in Ireland, but demonstrated distinctly republican conceptions of liberty; as something embedded in social justice, rather than springing from the Lockean pre-social individual. They asserted this expansive conception of freedom by reiterating the republican, or 'neo-Roman', idea that slavery was not defined by physical or political impediments, but by dependence.²⁵⁰ 'No longer enslaved or made dependent by force of law' wrote Mill in his *Chapters on Socialism*, 'the great majority are so by force of poverty'.²⁵¹ Or, as former abolitionist Henry Ward Beecher proclaimed at a reception for Parnell in Brooklyn, 'he that possesses the land possesses the people'.²⁵² This broader, social understanding of freedom can be seen in Matthew Harris' view that 'the right to be free can have no meaning [unless] you concede with it the right to exist, and the right to partake of the sustenance which God has given to all created beings'.²⁵³ The experience of former slaves in the American south served to reiterate the point, and American reformers were not slow to emphasize the pyrrhic freedom achieved for sharecroppers.²⁵⁴ Perhaps Patrick Ford put forward the clearest expression of this view, which rejected British liberalism as narrow and inadequate, in a series of public letters to William Gladstone in 1881:

We want for man something more than the semblance of the thing called 'Liberty' – something more than the hollow privilege of casting a vote for one of two caucus-made politicians. We loathe demagogues and are grieved at wage-serfs, who, when politically drunk, shout 'Freedom,' and dance in their chains. What art thou, Freedom? [...] Descending from God's right hand, thou art a substantial good to the children of men. Thou art lands, and homes, and happy firesides, and schools, and popular intelligence, and manly character, and womanly

²⁴⁸ quoted in *Irish World*, 16 Nov., 1878

²⁴⁹ Wolfe Tone, 'A Vindication of the Conduct and Principles of the Catholics of Ireland', (1793), in, William Theobald Wolfe Tone, (ed.), *Life of Theobald Wolfe Tone*, vol. I, (Washington, D.C.: Gales and Seaton, 1826) 422; Thomas Ainge Devyr, *John Swinton's Paper*, 23 March, 1884

²⁵⁰ Philip Pettit, 'The Tree of Liberty: Republicanism: American, French, and Irish,' *Field Day Review*, 1, (2005): 29-41; Quentin Skinner, *Liberty before Liberalism*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1997)

²⁵¹ Mill, 'Chapters on Socialism' (1869), in *Principles of Political Economy*, (1848), 377

²⁵² *The Pilot* 17 Jan., 1880

²⁵³ Matthew Harris, letter to the *Irishman*, Ballinasloe, 19th June, 1880, Pamphlet, (HP, MS 21,910, NLI)

²⁵⁴ O'Donnell, 'Henry George and the "New Political Forces"', (1995): 85; *The Pilot*, 17 Jan., 1880

virtue – all under the hallowed influence of Religion, uncontaminated by statecraft. This is the Irish World's idea of Freedom.²⁵⁵

The linguistic and ideological debt that the land struggled owed, in part, to the abolitionist cause helps to explain the involvement of anti-slavery grandees in the Irish fight. James Redpath, Wendell Phillips, Henry Ward Beecher, William Lloyd Garrison Jr., and Francis G. Shaw were just some of the more prominent supporters of the Land League. For Shaw, a wealthy New England abolitionist in the twilight of his life, the question of land reform inspired by the Irish agitation 'gripped [him] as nothing had since the last days of the Civil War'.²⁵⁶ The old abolitionists and anti-slavery republicans embraced the Irish cause as they had the institution of slavery; as a moral crusade, 'in which compromise with sin was itself a sin'.²⁵⁷ This perspective had also been incubated in the younger generation of labour radicals, a number of whom, like both Henry George and Patrick Ford, had worked for abolitionist newspapers early in their careers.²⁵⁸

Boston's eminent orator and abolitionist Wendell Phillips was, from early in the Land War, an important ally for the League's executive in that city, counseling advice and offering support to its president.²⁵⁹ The weight and authority of his respected opinion lent credence to the League, and his sympathy and advocacy were proudly exhibited.²⁶⁰ But for Phillips, the true power and significance of the Irish cause lay in its internationalist implications. In his estimation, the grand narrative of Irish history proudly proclaimed the Irish as implacable foes of England.²⁶¹ He saw the Irish struggle against England and its repercussions as 'a hand-to-hand fight, and one of the last battles, between democracy and aristocracy'.²⁶² Britain, but in its cultural construction England, still represented for these aging republican reformers, the apotheosis of capital and corruption. It remained during the nineteenth century a by-word for the worst and most egregious examples of land monopoly and industrial degradation.²⁶³ James Redpath reflected this perception when he stridently asserted that, 'England was called a Christian nation, and the middle and lower classes may be Christians, but the rich people worship property, and their

²⁵⁵ Patrick Ford, *The Criminal History of the British Empire*, (New York: The Irish World, 1915), 63

²⁵⁶ Lorien Foote, *Seeking the One Great Remedy: Francis George Shaw and Nineteenth Century Reform*, (Athens, OH.: University of Ohio Press, 2003), 173

²⁵⁷ Eric Foner, *Free Soil, Free Labor, Free Men: The Ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War*, (New York: Oxford University Press, 1970), 109

²⁵⁸ John Swinton had been employed by Horace Greeley's *New York Tribune* and Ford by William Lloyd Garrison's *Liberator*

²⁵⁹ Wendell Phillips to P. J. Flatley, 9 May, 1882, (PACP, Box 4, BC)

²⁶⁰ Wendell Phillips quoted in Clancy, *The Land League Manual*, (1881) 8

²⁶¹ Wendell Phillips, *Daniel O'Connell: The Irish Patriot*, 5-6 (AIA.047, NYU)

²⁶² Wendell Phillips, 'The Money Power or the Masses', *Irish World*, 9 Nov., 1878

²⁶³ Bronstein, 'Land Reform and Political Traditions', (2002), 33-4.

creed is “The Rights of Property”²⁶⁴ Redpath, a Scottish born journalist and abolitionist, was perhaps ‘the most energetic and indefatigable’ non-Irish activist.²⁶⁵ He had long taken an interest in the Irish cause, his work for the home country earning him the esteem of Irish-Americans, and several Land League branches were named after him.²⁶⁶

In embracing the Irish cause, both on geopolitical and ideological grounds, these aging radical republicans saw themselves as fighting the same battle as the one that had defined their lives. The Irish cause and the land question, intertwined as they were, rested on the same moral foundations as the anti-slavery crusade. They had opposed the vested right of property in other humans on the grounds of Natural Rights, and they were now opposing the vested right of private property in land on the grounds of Natural Rights.²⁶⁷ The Land War, the popular assertion of land as a natural right, offering a statement about the nature of freedom and the principles of republicanism, took this conflict, albeit briefly, to the heart of Anglo-American liberalism. As George wrote in the *Irish World*, ‘that American who understands the Irish cause and does not sympathize with it is a rascal and a traitor to the principles upon which his government is founded’.²⁶⁸ Ireland was embraced as both the most direct and the most symbolic theatre in an intellectual war that pitted Natural Rights against philosophical positivism and an egocentric concept of rationality.²⁶⁹

²⁶⁴ ‘Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of the Irish National Land League, held at Buffalo, New York, 12 and 13 Jan., 1881’, 22, (GDCP, Series III, Box 5, BC)

²⁶⁵ Greene, ‘The Impact of Henry George’s Theories’, (1956), 69

²⁶⁶ James Redpath, ‘The Famine in Ireland’, 11 June, 1880, (PACP, Box 4, BC); Redpath, *Talks About Ireland*, (1881), 32; Arctic, Rhode Island; Lawlor, Iowa; Ithaca, New York; and Carmelton, Pennsylvania, all had Redpath branches. Wendell Phillips had one in Boston.

²⁶⁷ Henry George, *Irish World*, 10 Dec., 1881

²⁶⁸ Henry George, draft letter to *Pall Mall Gazette*, ‘Lecture notes, 1882’, (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL)

²⁶⁹ Andersen, ‘Morality in Three Social Theories’, (1990): 330

An American in Ireland: Liberalism and Republicanism

Henry George's relationship with Patrick Ford provided the opportunity for him to visit Ireland and Britain as a correspondent for the *Irish World*. From the beginning George saw it as a chance for personal investigation, networking and publicity as much as for any journalistic purposes.¹ The Land League helped to organise George's visit, with a League member meeting George off the steamer, and the American was allowed to use the League offices as a base for correspondence, reporting on Irish politics back to the paper and on gossip and political machinations in his private letters to Ford. He reached Ireland in early October 1881 and found 'much that rouses my indignation'. More than widespread poverty, George was horrified by the activities of the state, under which, he declared with typical passion, 'the first principles of human belief are being trodden under foot by an irresponsible dictatorship'.² To Ford he expressed his dismay at the 'reign of terror I found here' and his shock that he had been warned on arrival to adopt a pseudonym lest he be arrested.³ He wrote to his commissioning newspaper: 'there were two great Englishmen whom I wished could have been alive to visit [Kilmainham Jail], Charles Dickens and John Stuart Mill. [...] it would require the author of "On Liberty" to fitly warn his countrymen of what such treatment of *suspected* men really means'.⁴

But it was on his second trip around Ireland in August of 1882, that George received a direct appreciation of British force in Ireland. Accompanied by James Leigh Joynes, an undermaster at Eton and reporter for *The Times*, George was twice taken in by police on suspicion of being 'a dangerous character who had conspired with certain other persons to prevent payment of rent'.⁵ Although generally horrified at the coercive nature of the British state, George found the situation laughable. As he wrote to his wife, 'I was extremely amused at the idea of this Englishman [Joynes] getting arrested'.⁶ The magistrate on both occasions allowed the men to go free. Typically the American managed to turn the whole debacle into a promotional event. George recollected in the *Irish World* that when his 'papers were restored to me, and as the magistrate expressed a desire to read the whole of "The Irish Land Question," I asked him to accept a copy, and

¹ Henry George to Edward Robeson Taylor, 12 Sept., 1881; Henry George to Sir George Grey, 26 Sept., 1881; Henry George to Annie George, 17 May, 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

² Henry George to Thomas Briggs, 29 Oct., 1881, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

³ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 10 Nov., 1881, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

⁴ Henry George, *Irish World*, 10 Dec., 1881

⁵ Anna George de Mille, 'Henry George: The Fight for Irish Freedom', *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, 3:2, (1944): 270

⁶ Henry George to Annie George, August, 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

gave one each to the sub-Inspector and the constables who had personally been very polite to me'.⁷

A minor scandal, the events were reported in the Irish press and raised in the Commons by George's supporter and fellow radical Joseph Cowen, M.P. for Newcastle. With American newspapers and Congressmen pressuring James Lowell, the American ambassador in London, to act on behalf of George and demanding 'an apology for this outrage upon American citizenship', the event offered an opportunity for Irish members to jovially prod George Trevelyan, Chief Secretary for Ireland, about the 'danger' his government posed 'to tourists in Ireland'.⁸ T. M. Healy offered a more pointed remark, asking Trevelyan whether he was aware that George 'was considered by two Cabinet Ministers to be a person of so much importance that they invited him to dine with them at the Reform Club?'⁹ George had dined with John Bright and Joseph Chamberlain on the invitation of Walter Wren, also a radical liberal politician. The men 'started on Irish affairs with the soup,' with George forthright about the situation. Of his dining companions he was more favourably inclined, noting that 'Chamberlain is an extremely bright man' who has 'evidently been reading the *Irish World*'.¹⁰

In the face of political repression, George was delighted and impressed with the sympathy and the activity of the Catholic clergy as a positive force for the land cause. First and foremost among the hierarchy in this regard was Dr. Thomas Nulty, Bishop of Meath, whose 'Essay on the Land Question' had also depicted the Land War in republican terms. Nulty assumed that although private property in land resulted from original sin, its possession could only ever be justified in usufruct. As such, possession was dependent on use, and it being 'held mainly for the benefit of the public, and for the advancement of the general interest of the community'. From this Nulty drew some very Georgite conclusions. The value of the land 'is constantly progressive and increasing in a direct ratio to the growth of the population', and therefore 'the rents which the landlords draw from their lands is an income which they derive from the sale of what are avowedly God's gifts'. Nulty concluded that 'rent is, then, always a monopoly'. He condemned the refusal to differentiate between land and its products as dissembling and attempts to avoid the affront and injustice of rent. Like George, he directly connected the question of rent to urban conditions, to artisans and labourers, as depriving 'every man in the community of a substantial portion of the hard-earned fruits of his labour'. Landlords robbed both

⁷ *Irish World*, 22 Aug., 1882

⁸ Congressman C. C. Mason (Indiana) to Patrick Ford, 28 Aug., 1882, *Irish World*, 9 Sept., 1882; Frank O'Donnell, M.P. (Dungarvin), HC Deb. 10 Aug., 1882, vol. 273, col. 1383

⁹ HC Deb. 10 Aug., 1882, vol. 273, col. 1383; Henry George to Patrick Ford, 28 Feb., 1882, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

¹⁰ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 22 Apr., 1882, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

labour and capital, and so a single tax on land 'should be regarded as a most just and natural tax'.¹¹ Although the Bishop quoted heavily from Cairnes and Mill, his examples, rhetoric, metaphors and his conclusions are redolent of George, and suggest a great reliance on *Progress and Poverty*.

Given this, George was naturally delighted with the Bishop when they met. He privately wrote to Ford that his 'visit to Bishop Nulty was most delightful. [...] Here is a Christian Bishop. [...] I never met a man that seemed to me to more fill the idea of a Rev. Father in God. How I wish he were Pope'.¹² Much of this appreciation was due to their shared opinions on economic and social questions. According to George's published account of his meeting (to which the Bishop later took umbrage), Nulty had said he had 'come to the conclusion that there could justly be no private property in land which as the scriptures declared was the gift of the creator to all his children [...] land must be made common property to which the equal right of the humblest should be fully acknowledged'.¹³ The Bishop had been clear that private individuation (in usufruct) was a good thing, and George's looseness with the term 'private property' concerned the Bishop, who wrote to George to 'request that you will, if you make any alluding to me keep to what I have published exclusively'.¹⁴ George insisted, correctly, that he had not misrepresented the prelate, but the discomfort felt by Nulty demonstrated the ambiguity in the term 'private property'.

All was soon forgiven. Both men had enjoyed a fruitful meeting, with George particularly absorbed by the Bishop's tales of eviction, suffering and the consequent moral degradation. In George's account the Bishop was also enraged by the adoption of grazing as a more profitable and stable enterprise for the landlords.¹⁵ Equally, so impressed was Nulty that he later wrote to George that '*Progress and Poverty* appeared to me to be the best work ever written on the science of Political Economy since the publication of "The Wealth of Nations". Believe me my dear Mr. George that your real strength lies in scientific writing, you think too deeply ever to become a [...] newspaper correspondent'.¹⁶

More evident in Ireland than it had been across the Atlantic was George's inability to accept the strength of Irish national sentiment, which he felt too often indulged in 'little

¹¹ Nulty, *The Land Question*, (1881), 9; 13; 20; 23; 25; 30; 34; 39; 37

¹² Henry George to Patrick Ford, 10 Nov., 1881, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

¹³ Henry George, 'Visit to Bishop Nulty', 1881, (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

¹⁴ Thomas Nulty to Henry George, 12 Nov., 1881, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL); Henry George to Thomas Nulty, 13 Nov., 1881, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

¹⁵ Henry George, 'Visit to Bishop Nulty', 1881, (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

¹⁶ Thomas Nulty to Henry George, 27 Feb., 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

hatreds' rather than confronting broader socio-economic issues.¹⁷ While he was able to garner some strong support among urban radicals and Fenians, there is no doubt that, alongside the divisions within the League's leadership, George's refusal to make sufficient allowances for national sentiment harmed his cause in Ireland.¹⁸ George supported Irish independence, denouncing in unequivocal terms the horrors and injustices of British misrule, and he was of course politically inclined toward devolving power and localisation in any case.¹⁹ He was happy to praise Ireland, its past, and the 'greatness of the Irish nation abroad' for their 'strength of family and patriotic attachments'.²⁰ So strong was his fear, however, that legislative independence would obscure and undermine the economic question he was often at pains to deny the distinctiveness of Irish malaise. While Irish nationalists claimed that English rule had been particularly injurious to Ireland, maintaining the opposite was central to George's thesis, in which Ireland was his exemplar. George's opinion was that, 'such little differences, if they exist do not affect the general fact'.²¹

Beyond a refusal to accept Irish political and economic distinctiveness, George was also criticised for his offhand dismissal of nationalism (as opposed to independence), which 'may have prejudiced your Irish readers against you'.²² His friend and critic Fr. Thomas Dawson asked him to, 'make more allowances for "mere Irish Nationalists", as you playfully called them in conversation'.²³ Dawson chided George and asked him to remember that the denial of Irish nationhood had made 'devotedness to the cause of Irish nationality' appear as 'the noblest and most sacred of earthly duties'.²⁴ It would appear that George's lukewarm support for Irish independence undermined the basic functions of his plan in many Irish eyes. A letter from Mary Hamilton of County Down explained the situation from her own experiences of evangelising for George in her area. She wrote that her neighbours did not object to the 'principles' involved and 'would willingly see their ground rents belong to the state and usable for the community – but all Irishmen distrust their rulers and would be loath to give up their lands to any government which is not in their own hands'.²⁵ George had already made clear that 'nationalization of the land does not mean the ownership by the British government', pointing out that

¹⁷ Henry George to Thomas Briggs, 29 Oct., 1881, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

¹⁸ Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal*, (2006), 25

¹⁹ Henry George, 'Lecture notes, Britain', (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

²⁰ Henry George, 'Lecture notes, 1882', Glasgow, 17 March, 1882, (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL)

²¹ Fr. Thomas Dawson to Henry George, 21 Sept., 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL), annotation

²² Fr. Thomas Dawson to Henry George, 21 Sept., 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ *Ibid.*

²⁵ Mary Hamilton to Henry George, 10 March, 1883, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 4, NYPL)

'townshipization' or 'communization' would be equally appropriate descriptors.²⁶ 'Yet it appears', he lamented, 'to have weight with people who are caught by a phrase without stopping to think'.²⁷ Evidently, George's inability to properly clarify that principle and to dwell on the political, harmed his cause in Ireland.

Another central plank of George's work that ran aground in Ireland was his favourable view toward free trade. It was, as has been shown, also an important element for many radical republicans for whom it represented a necessary enlargement of personal liberty. In George's own forthright words: 'I object to the tariff: It is wasteful; It is demoralizing; It is opposed to liberty; It fosters national race hatreds'.²⁸ Davitt, too, shared this radical inclination. 'I am a free trader', he wrote, 'because I believe in freedom – freedom political, racial, and economic for all'.²⁹ The ideal of 'free trade' had been 'one of the nineteenth century's greatest visions of emancipation', itself emanating from the Paineite idealism that animated George and Davitt.³⁰ However, the concept was embedded within national political cultures, and during the course of the century, it was in Britain alone that anti-free trade discourse slipped out of the radical purview, and where the ideal became 'a transcendent national ideology'.³¹

In Ireland and America, however, the question remained much more controversial, and 'free trade' could more readily appear to be a dangerous imposition. Richard Burke, originally of Roscommon but now of West Virginia, wrote to George that while he 'heartily' endorsed his 'idea of land tenure', 'I am unable to concur with the free trade theory'. Although the correspondent gave no specific reason for this, he added that he left Ireland and the Catholic ministry there for the U.S., 'rather than abide the miseries of Ireland under the land system'.³² The painful experiences of mid-Victorian Ireland, economic suffering exacted under the guise of the freedom of the market, shaped powerful and lasting perceptions of this particular doctrine. A similar answer came from Charles O'Brien, editor of *The American Celt*. It was O'Brien's view that above all else, George's commitment to free trade would impair his Irish support. There were some staff at his paper, he conceded, who were favourable to the policy, 'but the great majority of

²⁶ Henry George, *Irish World*, 2 Sept., 1882

²⁷ *Ibid.*

²⁸ Henry George, 'Lecture notes: Brooklyn Revenue Reform Club', 14 Feb., 1883, (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL)

²⁹ Michael Davitt to John D. Fitzgerald, quoted in Laurence Marley, *Michael Davitt*, (2007), 152

³⁰ Frank Trentmann, 'National identity and consumer politics: free trade and tariff reform', in Donald Winch and Patrick O'Brien, (eds.), *The Political Economy of British Historical Experience, 1688-1914*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 217

³¹ Trentmann, 'National identity and consumer politics', (2002), 237, 219, 225

³² Richard Burke to Henry George, 2 Feb., 1883, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 4, NYPL)

Irishmen who are acquainted with the issue are tariff men, chiefly because, as you say, it is against English interests'.³³

The strong and resilient association of free trade with British commercial interests had certainly bred a corresponding hostility among Irish nationalists, independent of any theoretical basis. Thomas Davis and Isaac Butt had earlier supported protectionism for Ireland; Parnell favoured it, and even Davitt admitted its potential to stimulate home industries.³⁴ The proximity of free trade to the evangelising and 'prophetic aspect of Protestant nationalism', as well as its liberal imperialist guise in the late nineteenth-century, led some to level the charge of an Anglo-American conspiracy.³⁵ And it is true that the Cobdenite ideal of globalised free trade was a product of British culture.³⁶ In the U.S. it marked a dividing line in republicanism, between wealthy Anglo-American New England, and the more demotic Mid-western and Southern Jeffersonian traditions, where popular sentiment was usually opposed to free trade and its attendant globalisation.³⁷ There, as in Ireland, agrarian traditions emphasised the connection between 'national husbandry and national greatness', seeing in free trade the seeds of the decline of that agrarian base.³⁸ As free traders often expressed its benefits in terms of cheaper consumption, the proximity to production in these regions also made its dangers more evident.³⁹ The question of free trade was a notable and unusual area of disagreement between the *Irish World* and George. The paper argued for the 'protection of home industry' as a means to achieve 'independence and self-reliance' and to help eliminate speculators and middlemen who thrived in the specialisation that accompanied the globalisation of trade.⁴⁰ Later, the paper attacked 'Free Trade sophistries' as the 'coddled theory' of classical liberalism and the bourbon democrats.⁴¹ It seems safe to suggest that, along with his lukewarm embrace of nationalism, George's support for free trade did not help his cause in Ireland.

The decline of the League

³³ Charles O'Brien to Henry George, 16 Feb., 1883, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 4, NYPL)

³⁴ Marley, *Michael Davitt*, (2007), 147, 153; Paul Bew, *Enigma: A New Life of Charles Stewart Parnell*, (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2011), 122

³⁵ Trentmann, 'National identity and consumer politics', (2002), 223; Marc-William Palen, *The 'Conspiracy' of Free Trade: The Anglo-American Struggle over Empire and Economic Globalisation, 1846-1896*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2016), 267

³⁶ Trentmann, 'National identity and consumer politics', (2002), 238

³⁷ Palen, *The 'Conspiracy' of Free Trade*, (2016), 268

³⁸ Trentmann, 'National identity and consumer politics', 228

³⁹ *Ibid.*, 229, 235

⁴⁰ *Irish World*, 16 Nov., 1878

⁴¹ *Irish World*, 6 April, 1889, clipping in (DP, MS 9368, TCD)

Gladstone's 1881 Irish Land Act was at once a consummation and a sublimation of the ambitions and ideals that drove the Land War and, consequently, it accentuated pre-existing divisions within the League in regards to both programmatic and ideological visions. In effectively granting the 'three F's', it recognised both the potentially coercive nature of freedom of contract and tenants' right to a stake in their land whilst retaining the rights of the landlords with no pressure for them to sell, as well as introducing a 'quasi-judicial commission' to adjudicate on rent reductions.⁴² Many tenants received a rent reduction, and consequently landlords themselves were more assured of being paid. Concession, accommodation and amelioration were the Act's substantive intentions, and no doubt a great practical achievement, but in doing so, in offering government improvements over Natural Rights, it shifted Ireland incrementally towards the social liberalism of Britain's modernity. With it, the 'old radical dream' of 'economic democracy [...] instead of *social* democracy' moved further into the past.⁴³ The 'whole Bill is tinctured with that stale argument of the "sacred rights of property"', explained Captain George W. Bell, whilst it forgets 'the sacred rights of man to *live*'.⁴⁴ This is what League treasurer Patrick Egan recognised when he complained that the Bill did not go very far to 'win back "the land for the people"', and instead 'a considerable proportion of its provisions go to consolidate and perpetuate the evil'.⁴⁵

The land act firmly took the wind out of more radical sails and exacerbated the class tensions within the League and in the country more generally. Larger farmers tended to support the bill, but 'the left-wing and more militant elements of the league', notably Davitt and John Devoy, refused to do so.⁴⁶ This division fatally undermined much of the impetus and unity of action that had carried the League until this point. Despite the entreaties of some of the League's leadership to 'stand together as one man' and not waste their efforts on 'delusive lawsuits', many farmers discovered that the rent arbitration courts could offer effective relief and so took up the opportunity to reject the League, and their hopes of land ownership, for the chance to pay reduced rent with greater security of tenure.⁴⁷ While many larger farmers received much from the Act, 'smallholders, who constituted the vast majority of Mayo farmers, benefited least from the legislation'.⁴⁸

Nationally, opinion was divided. Suspicious of Westminster's machinations, the *Kerry Sentinel*, for example, remained opposed, pointedly observing that: 'it is difficult for

⁴² R. V. Comerford, 'The politics of distress, 1877-82', in Vaughan, (ed.), *A New History of Ireland*, v.6, (1989), 47

⁴³ Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, (2007), 363

⁴⁴ Bell, *Peasant Proprietary for Ireland*, (1881), 17

⁴⁵ Patrick Egan to T. C. Harrington, 31 July, 1881, (Harrington Papers, MS 8583, NLI)

⁴⁶ Lucey, *Land, Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence*, (2011), 85

⁴⁷ Patrick Egan to T. C. Harrington, 31 July, 1881, (Harrington papers, MS 8583, NLI)

⁴⁸ Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics*, (1994), 311

anyone who peruses the new land bill to escape the conclusion that it was specially devised to see Irishmen at variance with one another'.⁴⁹ In contrast, the *Freeman's Journal*, cautious but broadly supportive of the League, lauded Gladstone's efforts and insisted that he was never doubted by the 'Irish Prelates, by the body of the Irish leaders, or by the great heart of the Irish people', although it admitted the act would be 'launched in this country with considerable misgiving'.⁵⁰ Certainly part of this misgiving, Patrick Egan was incensed at the editorial, describing it as a 'libel' on the Irish leaders. 'As to "the great heart of the Irish people"', he continued, 'I think I have had some opportunities of knowing how it beats [...] and I can say without fear of contradiction that "the great heart of the Irish people" loathes and detests Gladstone, Bright, Forster and the whole tribe of whig coercionists'.⁵¹ Egan warned supporters of the League 'to be wakeful and watchful' for the 'whig reactionary movement which will assuredly be attempted [...] an effort will be made to raise a chorus of "thanks to Gladstone"';⁵² or the expression, as T. P. O'Connor subsequently recalled, of 'that irrational spirit of undue exultation which is the chronic condition of the Whiggish section of Irish politicians'.⁵³

The Land Act's failure to immediately quell the agitation led to Parnell's arrest and the suppression of the League. Parnell's subsequent call for non payment of rents, the so-called No Rent Manifesto, was viewed by some as an opportunistic development, given that he had missed the opportunity to put such a measure into force at the beginning of the year when enthusiasm and energy was at its height.⁵⁴ That said, some were hopeful that it could presage significant gains for the League. Patrick Egan excitedly cabled Patrick A. Collins in America to say, 'London yesterday admits complete failure coercion and triumph no rent manifesto England howling for more repression proposed to evict people by whole counties this also must fail no surrender everywhere'.⁵⁵ The American radicals who had huddled round the Irish cause as the vanguard of a new political future of social justice were also enthused. Louis F. Post, Georgist and editor of the labour paper *Truth*, compared the Manifesto to the Declaration of Independence and the Emancipation Proclamation and as 'the beginning of a contest between defrauded industry and luxurious idleness which will soon overleap all political boundaries'.⁵⁶ At a No Rent Rally in New York, attended by over 41 different trades unions, the Manifesto was described as 'the death knell of thralldom sounding from the little Isle of Erin', and the gathering

⁴⁹ *Kerry Sentinel*, 26 April, 1881

⁵⁰ *Freeman's Journal*, 25 July, 1881

⁵¹ Patrick Egan to T. C. Harrington, 31 July, 1881, (Harrington papers, MS 8583, NLI)

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ T. P. O'Connor, 'The Irish Situation', *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 8, (1883): 77

⁵⁴ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 22 Nov., 1881, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

⁵⁵ Patrick Egan to Patrick A. Collins, [cable], 24 Nov., 1881, (PACP, Series I, Box 1, BC)

⁵⁶ *Truth*, 30 Jan., 1882

resolved to advocate for its universal extension, believing that ‘the industrious population of Ireland is engaged in the grandest battle ever fought for the rights of human beings’.⁵⁷

Patrick Ford’s enthusiastic embrace of the manifesto highlighted once more the huge ideological differences within the within U.S. Land League, and Egan had to placate Collins that, although Ford had telegraphed to suggest a rent strike, ‘the ‘No Rent’ Manifesto was deliberately decided upon and actually written before Mr. Ford’s telegram reached me’.⁵⁸ Nevertheless, Ford’s enthusiastic embrace of the Manifesto as a radical strategy certainly fostered a colder attitude among the more conservative elements. Under the headline, ‘The Real Aim for Ireland’, the Boston *Pilot* editorialised that it was ‘time for Irishmen to take their attention off the Land Act and the “No Rent” policy’, for the ‘outside world’, presumably Anglo-America in particular, ‘will sympathize far more with an open demand for Home Rule than with an organized war on landlords’.⁵⁹ The paper even insinuated that Patrick Egan was a ‘paid servant’ of Patrick Ford.⁶⁰

With the League’s male leaders in prison, the Ladies’ Land League took up the mantle under the leadership of Anna and Fanny Parnell. ‘The Ladies run the whole business of relief and support’, reported George back to America. ‘Anna Parnell is “boss”. Of her ardour and grit there is no question’, but he added that ‘the men in Kilmainham still keep direction’.⁶¹ With Parnell imprisoned the Manifesto was not quite a success, ‘What a pity it is that the Irish farmers have not obeyed the No Rent Manifesto!’ wrote a disheartened Fanny Parnell, who lamented that its failure has simply resulted from it being ‘issued six months too late’.⁶² Anna Parnell later confided that, ‘no rent has practically failed, though it has served its purpose’.⁶³ In a more sombre analysis Henry George informed Ford of his opinion, endorsed by John Ferguson and Harold Rylett, that ‘the movement has gone on by the force of innate ideas and not by good management’, with the loss of Davitt particularly detrimental.⁶⁴ Having visited Donegal, Derry and Belfast, he had observed that the refusal of rent could ‘not stand much strain’, with farmers often happy with rent reductions rather than the potential for more radical and

⁵⁷ Matthew Maguire, ‘Address adopted at the workingmen’s “No Rent Rally”, 30 Jan., 1882, *Irish Nation*, 2 Feb., 1882; O’Donnell, ‘Henry George and the “New Political Forces”’, (1995), 165

⁵⁸ *Irish World*, 29 Oct., 1881; Patrick Egan to Patrick A. Collins, 6 Dec., 1881, (PACP, Series I, Box 2, BC)

⁵⁹ *The Pilot*, 5 Nov., 1881

⁶⁰ Patrick Egan to Patrick A. Collins, [cable], 21 Nov., 1881, (PACP, Series I, Box 2, BC)

⁶¹ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 22 Nov., 1881, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL); Janis, ‘Petticoat Revolutionaries’, (2008): 5-27

⁶² Fanny Parnell to Patrick A. Collins, 10 Nov., 1881, (PACP, Series I, Box 2, BC)

⁶³ Henry George to Annie George, 3 May, 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

⁶⁴ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 8 Dec., 1881; Henry George to Patrick Ford, 4 Feb., 1882, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

ambitious reforms.⁶⁵ Combined with an increase in localised agrarian violence over the winter of 1881, middle-class support for the League collapsed.⁶⁶

In April of 1882, George travelled to Paris to meet with Patrick Egan, where the two men discussed their disappointment that funds was being dispersed to cover temporary difficulties without doing much 'permanent' good.⁶⁷ George had earlier reminded Egan of 'the expediency of not putting too great a strain on America' without demonstrating tangible progress on the land issue, and observed that it was not right that 'money contributed by radical men for radical purposes should be used for what is really conservation'.⁶⁸ Egan refused divert funds to the distribution of the *Irish World* in Ireland, subsequently revealing that such a suggestion had earlier been proposed, but 'if persisted would have made a split'.⁶⁹ Neither Egan nor George were to know, however, that the Land League would soon be facing its demise. Parnell had concluded a deal with Gladstone to secure the former's release from prison, as well as debt cancellation for many tenant farmers in the form of the 1882 Arrears of Rent Act, in exchange for an end to the rural violence and rent strikes. But no sooner had Parnell been released from prison, the 'Phoenix Park murders' of the newly appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland and his assistant drastically changed the constitution of Irish politics.

Faced with the dual blow of the murders and the Kilmainham Treaty, the radical and agrarian elements of the League were side-lined. Dillon, Egan, and eventually Thomas Brennan left for the more politically hospitable climate of the United States, and Davitt too found himself marginalised and politically inhibited. Parnell's release, according to George, elicited 'a vague feeling of distrust and suspicion [and] did not excite the enthusiasm that a little while before would have been confidently looked for', and he described the rooms of the Ladies' Land League on receipt of the news as resembling a wake.⁷⁰ George gossiped to Ford about the disappointment, commenting that James J. O'Kelly said Parnell lacked 'moral rectitude' and Bishop Nulty's 'confidence in P[arnell] seems to be gone, says he could not understand or explain his actions'.⁷¹ As Parnell reasserted authority, the land question gradually disappeared from view in favour of a

⁶⁵ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 14 Jan., 1881, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL) on his observations having returned from Donegal, Derry and Belfast

⁶⁶ Comerford, 'The politics of distress', (1989), 49; Lucey, *Land, Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence*, (2011), 91, 93

⁶⁷ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 20 April, 1882, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

⁶⁸ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 24 May, 1882; Henry George to Patrick Ford, 22 Nov., 1881, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

⁶⁹ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 20 April, 1882, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

⁷⁰ Henry George, 'Interview on Irish nationalist politics', 1882, (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL)

⁷¹ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 6 June, 1882, (HGP, Series I: B, NYPL)

constitutional settlement in the form of the new National League, in which Parnell sought to 'prevent the spread of radical ideas and to bring the people into lines of thought and of action which agreed with the notions of the English liberals'.⁷² Consequently, the National League was never able to fully capture the same dramatic levels of potential that the Land League marshalled, its force severely diminished as soon as the radical impetus was drained. The marginalisation of the land question was, in George's view at least, 'the surrendering of a great principle [...] and the giving up of vantage which had been won by much effort and sacrifice'.⁷³

Corresponding changes occurred in the U.S., where the transition from a Land into a National League was even sharper. Alexander Sullivan vocalised this in his opening remarks at the Second Annual Convention of the Irish National League of America at Boston in August of 1884 by portraying the land question as narrow, class-based and complete: 'As the Land League accomplished the relief of a class, the National league represents the aspirations and the resolve of an entire people'.⁷⁴ By 1886 the constitution of the INLA did not mention the land, focussing instead on raising awareness of Irish politics in America, developing Irish manufacturing, and promoting the study of Irish history and language. By this point the organisation was dominated broadly by middle class home rulers, seeking stability in Irish-America above other considerations, and extending their 'heartfelt thanks' to the 'great liberal leader' Gladstone.⁷⁵ With Patrick Egan, and later John Fitzgerald, at its head and its central offices relocated to Lincoln, Nebraska, internecine rivalry and interstate conflict became its primary activity.⁷⁶

George's disappointment with the developing affairs in Ireland was tangible, remarking to his wife at the end of May that he felt 'disgusted with the Irish business'.⁷⁷ He had become heavily invested in the Land War, noting back in 1881 that 'my sympathies are so strongly in this fight against such tremendous odds of every kind that it is impossible not to feel myself in it'.⁷⁸ After becoming so involved in the political manoeuvres at the time of the Kilmainham Treaty and the Phoenix Park murders, the result of it all left him emotionally drained and very much disillusioned with Irish politics. He looked forward to

⁷² Henry George, 'Interview on Irish nationalist politics', 1882, (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL)

⁷³ Henry George to Terence V. Powderly, 25 July, 1883, (PP, Series I, Box 8, CUA)

⁷⁴ Alexander Sullivan, 'Second Annual Convention of the Irish National League of America; Boston 13-14 Aug., 1884', (Devoy Papers, MS 18,048, NLI)

⁷⁵ Constitution of the Irish National League of America (1886); 'Resolutions of the Irish National League of America adopted at the Boston Convention in August of 1884', (Devoy Papers, MS 18,048, NLI); 'Proceedings of the Third General Convention of the Irish National League of America, held at Chicago, Illinois, August 18 and 19, 1886', 23, (103, Box 40, ACo129, PAHRC)

⁷⁶ 'An Exposure of the Reprehensible Means employed by John Fitzgerald, of Lincoln, Neb. And Alexander Sullivan, of Chicago, Ills. To prevent Mr. William O'Brien, from lecturing for the Irish National League of Philadelphia', (1887) (103, Box 40, ACo130a, PAHRC)

⁷⁷ Henry George to Annie George, 22 May, 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

⁷⁸ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 28 Dec. 1881, (HGP, Series I: A, NYPL)

discussing the political fallout with Davitt; their ideological affinity meant that George would 'feel clearer after seeing him'.⁷⁹ He retained the hope that the continuing popularity of Davitt and Brennan was a sign that 'our ideas are steadily though silently spreading' and the 'the people are really in advance of their leaders'.⁸⁰ In the longer term, however, George's chastening experience in Irish politics signalled not only a decrease in his attentions towards the island, but was accompanied by a significant improvement in his political fortunes on the other side of the Atlantic, where his ideas were gaining far more traction and attention.

While the political impetus of the Land League was ebbing away, another dramatic development dominated the summer of 1882 for George and his radical cohort. Davitt's speech at the League Hall, St. Anne's Street, Liverpool in early June sent shockwaves through the League when he explicitly advocated his own form of land nationalisation. By Davitt's own account, he had been a supporter of George's ideas since he encountered the man himself, having read *Progress and Poverty* several times, and apparently telling George that 'if a copy of that book can be put in every workman's club and Land League and library in the three Kingdoms the revolution will be made'.⁸¹ Nevertheless, Davitt still had reservations. Cautious of harming the national movement, George saw that Davitt feared the claim of having been 'captured by Henry George and the *Irish World*'.⁸² This caution shaped the outline of his own plan as he attempted to develop a proposal that would bridge the gap between George's ideas and the tenant farmers' commitment to peasant proprietary.

Davitt's new position was called 'National Peasant Proprietary' or the 'National Land System'. It was essentially Georgist but took pains to emphasise the fact that individuation of land would not be prevented. Davitt was explicit in his desire to avoid what he saw as the inevitable consequence of peasant proprietorship, that it would 'only extend the absolute ownership of land: an ownership which will always be in the market for purchase and re-consolidation into large estates'.⁸³ In his Liverpool speech, Davitt claimed that the enunciation of his plan was 'a task that should have been performed long ago', and denied, though some would claim it, he said, that his opinion presently was any different than it had been when he and Parnell 'first stood together upon a public

⁷⁹ Henry George to Annie George, 17 May, 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

⁸⁰ Henry George to Francis G. Shaw, August, 1882; Henry George to John Swinton, 23 June, 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL); Henry George Patrick Ford, 9 March, 1882, (HGP, Series I: B NYPL)

⁸¹ Henry George to Francis G. Shaw, 30 May, 1882, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

⁸² *Ibid.*; Henry George to Patrick Ford, 24 May, 1882, (HGP, Series I: B NYPL)

⁸³ Michael Davitt, 'Irish Social Problems', *To-Day*, (April, 1884): 255; McBride, 'John Ferguson, Michael Davitt and Henry George', (2006): 425

platform in Westport'.⁸⁴ Davitt heavily downplayed the difference between his plan and peasant purchase, keen to emphasise that 'farmers would possess all the security that a peasant proprietary has to offer'.⁸⁵ His scheme, he said, was simple: 'We should only have to abolish landlordism and rent for land, and place such a tax upon all land values as would meet the public expenditure', which Davitt estimated at ten per cent.⁸⁶ He again reminded his audience that the farmer would have 'absolute security of tenure from the State, subject to the payment of this nominal tax; while the property which his capital and industry would create in the land which he cultivated would be his'.⁸⁷

At Liverpool Davitt explained that 'the right of all men to participate in the benefits of the soil by the State ownership thereof can be claimed from the fact that land is a natural agent, and that the value of land arises from and is maintained by the aggregation of population and the exercise of industry by a people'.⁸⁸ For Terence McBride this was Davitt 'reaffirming not just the traditional alliance of Irish nationalism and advanced liberalism but also making direct demands for wealth redistribution through government effort'.⁸⁹ Although Davitt shifted gradually toward democratic socialism, this analysis underplays the degree to which Davitt's scheme remained strongly wedded to traditional republican radicalism. Far from advocating a system of progressive taxation, Davitt, like his American ally, sought to 'remove all the taxes that now fall upon the mercantile, commercial, professional, and industrial classes'.⁹⁰ His conception of the state was not as a liberal interventionist one, but that it would 'simply be the steward of the national property'.⁹¹ To equate it with social liberalism obscures some profound differences in ambition. Condemning the 'prescriptive rights of an unjustly privileged class', Davitt did not merely seek material elevation, but a political and moral transformation through providing the means 'sufficient to supply themselves with [...] independency'.⁹² Rather than being avowedly progressive, Davitt aimed 'simply' for the 'resumption of that state of ownership of the soil which obtained amongst all nations anterior to the system of land monopoly which the Government has established for the aggrandisement of a privileged section in society'.⁹³

⁸⁴ *Liverpool Mercury*, 7 June, 1882

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*; *Glasgow Herald*, 7 June, 1882

⁸⁹ McBride, 'John Ferguson, Michael Davitt and Henry George', (2006): 426

⁹⁰ *Liverpool Mercury*, 7 June, 1882

⁹¹ *Ibid.*

⁹² *Ibid.*

⁹³ *Glasgow Herald*, 7 June, 1882

Davitt's taxation of land values meant that the possession of the land was dependent upon its productive use, an emphasis on labour as a natural right to possession, and a position in accord with Bishop Nulty's argument regarding usufruct. Beyond this, freedom of sale and the absence of taxation would, Davitt hoped, lead to 'a community of industrious people being removed above the fear of want and regulating their lives like rational beings'.⁹⁴ His arguments were widely reported, with *The Times* devoting three columns to it.⁹⁵ George's excitable publisher remarked that the attention was even an opportunity to republish *Progress and Poverty* in quarto form.⁹⁶ However, the plan was always too radical to be supported by the more conservative Parnellite wing of the Land League, and Davitt, 'too patriotic to insist too much on his own views', agreed to disassociate his 'personal' plan from the wider aims of the movement.⁹⁷ Nevertheless, National Peasant Proprietary represented Davitt's capacious ability to gather and blend ideas and it remained one of the more curious untested syntheses of the period. Unfortunately for both Davitt and George, his ideas did not fall on fertile political ground, a problem not helped by his impending journey across the Atlantic on the White Star steamship *Germanic*. Even before he had left Ireland Davitt must have sensed a critical storm brewing in response to his speech. Although George was soon to depart for the U.S. himself, Davitt refused to allow the American to accompany him from Liverpool to Cork on his way to the ship. This was, George believed, partly because of his status as an 'outsider'.⁹⁸ George noted that 'our opponents play on jealousy and I am "an American socialist", "communist", "I.W. emissary", etc'.⁹⁹ His disappointment with Davitt's behaviour was palpable by August. He wrote to Ford that 'it seems to me [a] pitiable weakness when a man's enemies can thus make him afraid of and unjust to his friends'.¹⁰⁰

Davitt's second tour of the U.S. in the summer of 1882 was a mixed achievement. After the notoriety of his Liverpool platform, and his enthusiastic reception by Ford, Fr. Edward McGlynn and Robert Blissert upon his arrival in New York, Davitt spent much of his lecture tour downplaying the significance of his proposal and deferring to the authority of Parnell. On his departure, Fr. McGlynn encouraged Davitt to 'explain not away one tittle of it, but preach the gospel in its purity'.¹⁰¹ Davitt's tour had irritated both

⁹⁴ *Liverpool Mercury*, 7 June, 1882

⁹⁵ *The Times*, 7 June, 1882

⁹⁶ Circular by publisher J. C. Durant, (1882), (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

⁹⁷ Anon to Patrick A. Collins, 15 June, 1882, (PACP, Series I, Box 2, BC); Michael Davitt, *Land Nationalisation; Or, National Peasant Proprietary: Michael Davitt's Lectures in Scotland*, (Glasgow: Cameron and Ferguson, 1884), 32

⁹⁸ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 13 June, 1882, (HGP, Series I: B NYPL)

⁹⁹ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 8 June, 1882; Henry George to Patrick Ford, 30 May, 1882, (HGP, Series I: B NYPL)

¹⁰⁰ Henry George to Patrick Ford, 3 Aug., 1882, (HGP, Series I: B NYPL)

¹⁰¹ O'Donnell, 'Henry George and the "New Political Forces"', (1995), 294.

political wings, with conservatives irate at his disloyalty to the national movement, and social radicals disappointed at what they perceived as a supine redaction of his scheme. Upon his return to Ireland, Davitt was confronted with Parnell's attempts to establish his moderating authority on the remnants of the League.¹⁰² A new organisation was required, and Davitt offered a proposal for a 'National Land and Industrial Union of Ireland'. It was an ambitious plan that suggested decentralisation within a democratic structure of parish, district, county and provincial hierarchies. Davitt's union would be very properly a substitute state. Not only did it advocate political and franchise reform, but also the establishment of cooperative loan societies and mechanics institutes throughout Ireland, with a focus on developing national industries, fisheries, agricultural improvement, 'the scientific and practical education of the labouring classes', and the encouragement of Irish language and literature. Neo-Chartist demands for increased representation, franchise extension and the payment of parliamentary representatives were also included. As for land, the proposal resolved for 'The complete abolition of the present landlord system', however the following line, which added 'the substitution of such a one as shall make the land of Ireland the property of the People of Ireland', had been subsequently crossed out. Such minor changes were insufficient, and Davitt's proposal was 'submitted to and strongly disapproved of by Parnell, Aug. 82'.¹⁰³

Meanwhile, George's return to the US was greeted with fanfare; his reputation having grown immeasurably during his absence. He recalled: 'I was received at the Cooper Institute, the largest hall in town, by an immense audience, principally of workingmen', and was later 'banqueted at Delmonico's', one of New York's finest restaurants.¹⁰⁴ The opening address at this grand reception was delivered by the Irish labour radical Robert Blissert, who explained to those assembled that the survival of the principles of American republicanism depended on George's mission. Irish issues were conspicuous by their absence.¹⁰⁵

Whilst George had been across the Atlantic, Fr. Dr. Edward McGlynn, the disobedient pastor of St. Stephen's, Manhattan, had been receiving more and more attention. A devotee of George's work, McGlynn saw in George's fiery rhetoric a resonance with the poverty and unemployment in his urban parish. The esteem was soon mutual; George describing McGlynn as 'a most intelligent and earnest man'.¹⁰⁶ While

¹⁰² Bew, *Enigma*, (2011), 106

¹⁰³ 'Proposed Scheme of Reform and Organisation', (DP, MS 9398, TCD)

¹⁰⁴ Henry George to Fr. Thomas Dawson, October, 1882, NYPL, HGP, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

¹⁰⁵ Gordon, 'Studies in Irish and Irish American Thought', (1977), 486; O'Donnell, 'Henry George and the "New Political Forces"', (1995), 305

¹⁰⁶ Henry George to Fr. Thomas Dawson, 29 Nov., 1882, (HGP, Series I: D, Box 11, NYPL)

George pressured the *Irish World* to distribute McGlynn's speeches in Ireland, the ballooning popularity of both men presented an opportunity for labour radicals, and one of whom had 'been advocating the idea among the K. of L. that they try to hire you and Father McGlynn for the campaign and keep you in the field all the time'.¹⁰⁷ During Davitt's visit over the summer of 1882, McGlynn joined him to address a crowd reported by the *Irish World* to be 35,000 strong, under the banner of the newly formed Central Labor Union.¹⁰⁸ The CLU would later grow to replace the radicalism of the Land League, draining many Irish radicals from the National League, leaving it as a smaller, less powerful and more conservative movement.¹⁰⁹ As Jeremiah Murphy, president of the Longshoreman's Central Union remarked, many in the Land League had complained that the 'radicals will destroy the movement'. Well, he retorted, 'when the radical element left, where is the Land League?'¹¹⁰ Not only was the CLU created out of the disaggregation of the Land League, but its declaration of principles placed land at the centre, basing its justification on natural law. In fact, the statement on land was lifted directly from Bishop Nulty's famous pastoral on the subject.¹¹¹ Namely that the failure to provide all with a share of the 'common inheritance', would be an 'impious resistance to the benevolent intentions of his Creator'.¹¹² But the CLU also represented the gradual transformation of republican radicalism into socialism. Evident in its statement that 'capital, *in its modern character*, consists of unpaid labor in the shape of profits wrongfully extorted from the producer', the seeds of the CLU's incipient socialism and rejection of George's singular focus on land can be seen.¹¹³

Transatlantic republicanism

In Ireland, as in the U.S., the persistence of a discourse of Natural Rights during the nineteenth-century gave oppositional political movements a powerful tool, access to the idea of the inherent order and justice of the natural world. Unlike Britain, where utility more quickly came to dominate political discourse, revolutionary residue meant that the U.S. remained, at least superficially, more wedded to a discourse of Natural Rights, where 'eternal laws obtained a wider respect than did a frank avowal of contingency'.¹¹⁴ This

¹⁰⁷ Henry George to Fr. Thomas Dawson, 1 Feb., 1883, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 4, NYPL); G. Y. Malcolm to Henry George, Flint, Michigan, 8 Dec., 1882, NYPL, HGP, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

¹⁰⁸ *Irish World*, 15 July, 1882

¹⁰⁹ O'Donnell, 'Henry George and the "New Political Forces"', (1995), 276

¹¹⁰ Jeremiah Murphy, *Irish World*, 28 Oct., 1882, 8

¹¹¹ *Truth*, 17 April 1882

¹¹² Nulty, *The Land Question*, (1881), 14

¹¹³ *Truth*, 17 April, 1882 [my italics]

¹¹⁴ Huston, 'The American Revolutionaries', (1993): 1088

eighteenth-century imprint sustained the radical potential of republican discourse in the teeth of an enveloping industrialisation. It is no surprise that the *Irish World* framed its arguments in the republican language of Natural Rights; seeking to ‘secure to each his natural rights’, to prevent ‘usurpations of natural rights’, and arguing that equal entitlement to ‘the opportunities of Nature’ was ‘self evident’ and an ‘inalienable right’.¹¹⁵ But it was evident in Ireland too, and the rhetoric of Irish political culture during the Land War was striking in its recourse to this transatlantic republican political tradition. A resolution from the Kildare Branch of the INLL from May, 1881, showed the extent of this language: ‘That the people of Ireland have an *inalienable* right to live in their own country, on *the fruits of their labour*, and that to confiscate *the fruits of labour* and to evict them, for the nonpayment of an *unjust* and exorbitant rent, is a violation of their *natural rights*’.¹¹⁶

The language of rights also provided a defense against charges of socialism or communism, as it was characterized as not only distinct from, but in direct opposition to, the ‘sophistry’ and utopianism of ‘the vicious vocabulary of the continent’.¹¹⁷ As has already been noted, the distinction from continental or German socialism remained significant. This juxtaposition was in evidence when John Walsh scoffed at the idea the Land League was influenced by ‘communism’ or ‘nihilism’. It was instead ‘the voice of the people demanding their God-given rights – the right of every man to live on the soil of his birth’.¹¹⁸ It can be seen in the warning from a Land League platform that ‘no Communistic doctrine would be preached’; instead this battle was to ensure ‘that justice was done to everyone’, and in evidence again when Rev. Joyce told his Westport audience that ‘we don’t want anything Communistic’, only ‘justice for the tenants, to root them in the soil which God created for their benefit’.¹¹⁹ That the two positions could be conflated, however, suggests also the dangerous proximity of Natural Rights radicalism to the fluid and fissiparous concept of ‘socialism’.

As this proximity suggests, and as has been argued, ‘from its inception the language of rights had an ambiguous character’ as it entailed a direct conflict between the right of possession and ‘a defence of resistance and common property *in extremis*’.¹²⁰ For this very reason, efforts to contain the radical potential of Natural Rights were a permanent feature of the nineteenth century. As a language of opposition, Natural Rights remained incredibly powerful. With the early tremors of the market revolution in the

¹¹⁵ *Irish World*, 16 Nov., 1878; 27 Dec., 1879; 23 Apr., 1881; 19 Aug., 1882; 9 Sept., 1882

¹¹⁶ Resolution from Kildare Branch of INLL, 28 May, 1881, (Heffernan Papers, MS 21,910, NLI) [my italics]

¹¹⁷ Patrick Meehan, Cloneen, 13 June, 1880, in Sullivan, (ed.), *Condemnations of Crime*, (1888), 46

¹¹⁸ John Walsh, Straide, 1 Feb., 1880, in *ibid.*, 48

¹¹⁹ Mr. McAlpine, Irishtown, 2 May, 1880, in *ibid.*, 50; Rev. Joyce, Westport, 9 June, 1879, in *ibid.*, 52

¹²⁰ Richard Tuck, *Natural rights theories: Their origin and development*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979) 3; 80

Jacksonian period, fears over ‘new-style moneyed despots and the new-style tyranny of wage-labor’, made the language of rights and republicanism the only patriotic place to turn for the disillusioned.¹²¹ Daniel T. Rodgers and Mary O. Furner have characterised the Gilded Age in the same way, as a period in which the emergence of ‘middlemen’, traders and capitalists sparked a rediscovery of ‘Natural Rights’ and a ‘resurgence of republicanism [in] reaction to the failure of market ordering’.¹²² Stressing the rediscovery and resurgence of the discourse, however, can obscure the continuities. The image of a nation, in Thaddeus Stevens’ words, of ‘small, independent landowners [as the] guardians of republican liberty’ was a permanent feature American intellectual life, frequently remoulded and reconstructed in the face of new economic and political realities.¹²³ This was certainly George’s own historical perspective, in which he conceived of the republican ideal, as the dominant feature of U.S. history, engaged in a long and continuous struggle:

There has always been in this country a certain interest which Jefferson and Van Buren styled the money power, which De Tocqueville denominated, “the aristocracy of manufacturers,” which has sought to obtain control of the government. Its aims are aristocratic; its theories are diametrically opposed to those on which our institutions are based. It instinctively favors a strong and elaborate government; it constantly seeks to use governmental powers for its own aggrandisement. Its political philosophy is centralization; its political economy is protective tariffs [...]; its religion is the cant with which in all ages servile preachers have flattered the rich and powerful. It is hardly a class; it is seldom a party; it is something so vague and indeterminate as only to be defined roughly by the terms ‘interest’ or ‘power’; yet it is something very tangible in its influences and effects.¹²⁴

In antebellum America, radicals such as Dr. Cornelius Blatchley, a product, like George, of Philadelphia’s nonconformist and revolutionary heritage, insisted ‘that those who worked with their hands were entitled to the full product of their labor’.¹²⁵ Created by God, land should be for ‘*general* use and benefit and not for *individual* aggrandizement’.¹²⁶ As Sean Wilentz makes clear, for radicals like Blatchley, ‘the basic flaws of American

¹²¹ Rodgers, *Contested Truths*, (1987), 72

¹²² *Ibid.*, 72; Mary O. Furner, ‘The republican tradition and the new liberalism: social investigation, state building, and social learning in the Gilded Age’, in M. J. Lacey and M. O. Furner, (eds.), *The state and social investigation in Britain and the United States*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993), 172

¹²³ Thaddeus Stevens, quoted in, Ellis, ‘Radical Lockeanism’, (1992): 835

¹²⁴ Henry George, ‘Speech made during Presidential campaign, 1876’, (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

¹²⁵ Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, (1984), 159; Sklansky, *The Soul’s Economy*, (2002), 114

¹²⁶ Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, (1984), 159

society grew from violations of natural law'.¹²⁷ Like George, they exemplified how the radical power of egalitarian Christianity could be used to reinvigorate classical republicanism. Plainly visible is the familiar triumvirate of 'Christian ethics, republican politics and the labor theory of value'.¹²⁸ Another predecessor of George, and also from Philadelphia, was Thomas Skidmore, perhaps one of the first Americans to translate republicanism into an explicitly labour orientated programme. He was involved in the New York Workingmen's Party of 1829, one of the world's first labour parties.¹²⁹ Skidmore was intellectually nourished on the work of Thomas Paine, and once into adulthood he consumed a wider diet of political philosophy, including Locke, Rousseau and Jefferson.¹³⁰ From this he concluded, as later would George, that all social and economic oppressions stemmed from the iniquitous distribution of land.¹³¹ Although Skidmore may have been an outlier, with some extreme prescriptions, similar rhetoric demands found a home nearer the political mainstream in the producerist rhetoric of Andrew Jackson and the 'Locofoco' wing of the Democratic party, who also railed against middlemen, bankers, financiers and various incarnations of speculators.¹³² In the U.S. of the 1840s, it was represented by the National Reform Association, an organisation which attempted to resettle urban workmen on western lands. It was founded by George Henry Evans, who had previously been involved in the Workingmen's Party, and the Irish Chartist Thomas Ainge Devyr. Centred around small townships with a limit to landholdings so as to encourage sociability and the development of a civil society, Evans' aim was not to make the labourer an 'acquisitive capitalist in his own right' but to create small communities of self-sufficient farmers and craftsmen.¹³³

This Paineite democratic radicalism was also central to the Chartist campaigns of the 1830s and 40s. In their rejection of Malthusianism, the Chartists, like their transatlantic cousins, demonstrated their optimistic perspective on the possibility of human perfectibility, and an 'end to the monopolisation of the land was in fact the main Chartist solution to the existence of industrial capitalism'.¹³⁴ Whilst the Chartists drew from same political and intellectual sources, they faced an altogether different economic and demographic condition in Britain than the National Reform Association, and the

¹²⁷ *Ibid.*, 159

¹²⁸ *Ibid.*, 160

¹²⁹ Feuer, 'The North American Origin of Marx's Socialism', (1963): 61, 65; Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, (1984), 183

¹³⁰ Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, (1984), 184

¹³¹ *Ibid.*, 185; Pessen, *Most Uncommon Jacksonians*, (1967), 108

¹³² Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic*, (1990), 206

¹³³ Feuer, 'The North American Origin of Marx's Socialism', (1963): 53; Ellis, 'Radical Lockeanism', (1992): 831; Bronstein, 'Land Reform and Political Traditions', 32

¹³⁴ Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, (1983), 155

Chartist Land plan was limited in scale, ambition and success.¹³⁵ These contrasting geographical realities were correspondingly manifested in national political philosophies, and the Chartists struggled ‘to make their land-reforming ideas cohere with their liberal national ethos’.¹³⁶ It represented the fact that, in Britain, the discourse of Natural Rights increasingly became ‘the language of backwaters and eddies, not of the mainstream of British political life’.¹³⁷

The transatlantic lives of men like Devyr and John Francis Bray embodied the longstanding connections between land, republicanism and reform movements of both sides of the Atlantic. Bray, a radical republican who spent his early years in the United States before moving to Britain, was an active Chartist who published his influential *Labour’s Wrongs and Labour’s Remedy* in 1839.¹³⁸ In its opposition to centralisation and monopoly, argued forcefully in a producerist language of Natural Rights, it represented a powerful exposition of this ideology.¹³⁹ Bray chose to return to the United States, perceiving it as the ‘ideal environment for social change and the achievement of pastoral utopias’, later joining the Knights of Labor, as well producing some of the ‘intellectual groundwork for the Populist movement’.¹⁴⁰ Bray was an influence on George, who made use of the former’s intellectual exertions about the equality of human wants and rights when lecturing on the fundamental difference between land and other forms of property.¹⁴¹ Devyr, too, after being active in the Chartists and the National Reform Association, went on write for the *Irish World* and became an active supporter of George’s plan.¹⁴² For Hendrick B. Wright, a lawyer and Democratic (later Greenback) congressman whose life spanned the century, the Irish fight for independence was a mirror of his own republican convictions. Recalling his support for O’Connell’s repeal movement, Wright claimed that any person ‘living under a republican government’ who did not support the Land League lacked ‘exalted manhood’, before going on to affirm the status of land as a ‘common inheritance’ and denounce the ‘harsh croaking voice of monopoly’ which was ‘subverting the cherished theories of our fathers’.¹⁴³ Like others, Wright not only linked the Irish land struggle with earlier radicalism, but saw it as part of a more universal

¹³⁵ Malcolm Chase, ‘Wholesome Object Lessons’: The Chartist Land Plan in Retrospect’, *The English Historical Review*, 118:475, (2003): 59-85

¹³⁶ Bronstein, ‘Land Reform and Political Traditions’, 35

¹³⁷ Rodgers, *Contested Truths*, (1987), 63

¹³⁸ Jamie Bronstein, *John Francis Bray: Transatlantic Radical*, (Pontypool: Merlin Press, 2009), 32

¹³⁹ Bray, *Labour’s Wrongs and Labour’s Remedy*, (1839)

¹⁴⁰ Bronstein, *John Francis Bray*, (2009), 35, 51

¹⁴¹ A handwritten transcript by Henry George from *Labor’s Wrongs and Labor’s Remedy*, ‘Notes and extracts re: Britain’, (HGP, Series II, Box 12, NYPL)

¹⁴² Gordon, ‘Studies in Irish and Irish American Thought’, (1977), 480; Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, (1984), 373; *Irish World*, 23 Nov., 1878

¹⁴³ Hendrick B. Wright to Terence V. Powderly, 11 March, 1881, (PP, Series I, Box 2, CUA)

emancipation in which 'there is quite as much necessity for an American, as an Irish Land League'.¹⁴⁴

Wright was right, Irish land had played a significant role in fostering agrarian republicanism for more than one generation of radicals. And the 'residual but ineradicable individualist presuppositions', the inherent individualism of Natural Rights theories, was as evident in Ireland as it was in the U.S.¹⁴⁵ The historiographical tension which has often portrayed the Irish tenant farmer as either resolutely individualistic or inclined towards localised communitarianism is deceptive. Oliver MacDonagh's observation that the achievement of a 'communal vision' of Irish land being through peasant proprietorship and individual ownership 'was a mere paradox, nothing more' hints at this Jeffersonian conception of individual proprietors forming a harmonious and unified community that was embedded in the Land League 'ideal'.¹⁴⁶ In an agrarian society such as Ireland, land, for the farmer, 'represented the external manifestation of his personality'.¹⁴⁷ Just as Davitt suggested that no man should 'have more than he can till', popular emotional ties to land were not accumulative, and did not represent a source of external power, but were intertwined with labour, character and identity, both personal and national.¹⁴⁸ In the American context, the populists, like their predecessors the Greenback-Labor Party, embraced this same perspective. In seeking to reclaim the 'fruits of the toil', they too, like the Land League, were overtly cognisant of a connection between active labour and biological fertility, reinforced by biblical authority.¹⁴⁹ The populist and poet, and second generation Irish immigrant, Ignatius Donnelly echoed this connection between labour, value, land, and personality, when he wrote that it was 'right and wise and proper for men to accumulate sufficient wealth to maintain their age in peace, dignity and plenty', but also that (*qua* Aristotle) there should be 'a maximum beyond which no man could own property'.¹⁵⁰

Across the North Atlantic, and throughout the nineteenth-century, the enmeshed conceptions of republicanism, popular justice and religious Natural Rights were evident in the egalitarian demands of various interlocking working-class movements. If an intellectual thread ties them together, it was surely the spectral presence of Thomas Jefferson and Thomas Paine. Through them, currents of radical thought stretching back

¹⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁴⁵ Tuck, *Natural rights theories*, (1979), 3; Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, (1983), 156

¹⁴⁶ Oliver MacDonagh, *States of Mind: Two Centuries of Anglo-Irish Conflict, 1780-1980*, (London: Pimlico, 1983), 51; Bew, 'The Land League ideal', (1982), 86-7

¹⁴⁷ Schneirov, 'Thoughts on Periodizing the Gilded Age', (2006): 218

¹⁴⁸ Davitt, *Land Nationalisation*, (1884), 10

¹⁴⁹ The Omaha Platform of the People's Party of America (4 July, 1892), in Zinn and Arnove, (eds.), *Voices of a People's History*, (2004), 229-30

¹⁵⁰ Ignatius Donnelly in Ellis, 'Radical Lockeanism', (1992): 840

to the English commonwealth of the 1640s can be detected, evident in references to the debilitating effects of the 'Norman Yoke'.¹⁵¹ The Paineite radicalism of the American Revolution had not yet been realized, and its abortive potential retained a hold on the republican imagination. Even in the 1880s, the *Irish World* continued to fight for the same demands of the anti-federalists in the early republic, arguing for the dissolution of the standing army, abolition of senate and presidential veto and refusal to contract a national debt.¹⁵² George enjoyed the idea that he was a torch-bearer for Jefferson's intellectual legacy, his ideas representing 'the Republicanism of Jefferson and the Democracy of Jackson'.¹⁵³ While Woodrow Wilson was instructing his students at Princeton to reject Thomas Jefferson's 'false and artificial [and] un-American' reliance on Natural Rights, the *Irish World* was exalting him as 'the truest embodiment of the animating principle of the American Revolution'.¹⁵⁴ Although this radicalism was crumbling in places, it still had resonance, and by the late nineteenth century, across the north Atlantic world, George's popularity again reconvinced this 'pre-existing radical constituency'.¹⁵⁵

It should also be remembered that republican discourse had fertilised a number of distinct strands of thought by the later nineteenth century, and many of its tenets were employed to reject the promises of radical labour egalitarianism. As the artisan base of post-Revolutionary America fractured over course of the nineteenth-century, so too did republicanism, directed largely on class lines.¹⁵⁶ The evangelical, collegiate Republicanism of the historicist economists bore more resemblance to tory socialism. Men such as Richard T. Ely, John Bates Clark and Henry Carter Adams were 'republicans' in this sense, they looked forward to the development of a 'stable, two-class society based on the republican division between people and natural aristocracy', in which the paternalist state would represent society.¹⁵⁷ As Richard T. Ely explained, 'there are three chief agencies through which we must work for the amelioration of the labouring class, [...] these are Science, the State and the Church'.¹⁵⁸

But while the surface rhetoric was republican, the moral framework, based on science and organicism, was fundamentally altered. The shift away from Natural Rights

¹⁵¹ Wilentz, *Chants Democratic*, (1984), 194; Edmund F. Dunne, *Ireland: Rights, Wrongs and Remedies*, (1881), 29, (103, Box 34, P.001.1804, PAHRC)

¹⁵² *Irish World*, 16 Nov., 1878; *Pilot* 17 Jan., 1880; *Irish World*, 25 March, 1882

¹⁵³ Henry George, 'To the voters of San Francisco', newspaper clipping, 3 May, 1878, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL); Henry George, 'Wanted: A Democratic Party', 12 March, 1883 (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL).

¹⁵⁴ *Irish World*, 8 Feb., 1879; Daniel T. Rodgers, *Contested Truths*, (1987), 159

¹⁵⁵ Anthony Taylor, 'Richard Cobden, J. E. Thorold Rodgers and Henry George', in Cragoe and Readman, (eds.), *The Land Question*, (2010), 146

¹⁵⁶ Saxton, *The Rise and Fall of the White Republic*, (1990), 206

¹⁵⁷ Ross, 'Socialism and American Liberalism', (1978), 27, 42, 74; Henry George to John Swinton, 6 May, 1879, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 2, NYPL); Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, (1998), 98; 101

¹⁵⁸ Ely, *Recent American Socialism*, (1885), 72

and towards expediency left some revealing linguistic traces. Carl C. Plehn, Professor of Political Economy at Berkeley, referring to the heavy burden of property tax on Californian farmers, called it an ‘injustice, or, better, [an] inexpedient method of taxation’.¹⁵⁹ Plehn, who rejected any reliance on Natural Rights to confer ownership when he insisted that ‘private property in land, as in any other form of wealth, rests on the same basis of expediency’, still tripped, before correcting himself, into language of moral assertion, and was immediately aware it had little bearing on his argument.¹⁶⁰ As his Georgist interlocutor correctly observed, in ‘denying Natural Rights, although using the words “just” and “unjust,” you [can only] rest your arguments on expediency’, before adding, in a turn of phrase that recalled the speeches of George and Davitt, that ‘we single taxers hold that expediency and justice always correspond’.¹⁶¹ It was also evident in Arnold Toynbee’s lectures on George. Rejecting the idea of confiscating rent or landed property, the social liberal told his audience that ‘you have no right – well, it is superfluous to talk about right – I say that it is highly inexpedient in the interests of this community’ to take someone’s property.¹⁶² In the same tone, Liberal M.P. Robert Wallace wrote that ‘it is no part of liberalism to make a blind tilt against inequality, but only against unjust or *inexpedient* inequality’.¹⁶³ Yet such equivocation was invariably thrown aside when the social consequences of such inequality were presented as evidence of the failure of established economic models. Alfred Marshall, tiring of George’s criticism, quickly turned from disinterested economist into haughty moralist in demanding to know why George had not advised the working poor to be more thrifty. Like fellow economist George Dixwell asserted, it was ‘vice, crime, ignorance, and brutality’ that were the causes of poverty.¹⁶⁴

Because of this, and informed by a rigorous faith in the power of statistical analysis, the damaging effects of industrial capitalism were to be mitigated through state intervention, a position in direct antithesis to that of George.¹⁶⁵ The fluidity of the term socialism and its proximity to liberal statism in the 1880s has already been noted, and it was because of this that the economist Henry Adams was able to write in his diary ‘I am a

¹⁵⁹ Professor Carl Plehn, in Benton De Witt, (ed.), *A Correspondence between an amateur and a professor*, (1898), 10

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*, 9

¹⁶¹ James Love, in Benton De Witt, (ed.), *A Correspondence between an amateur and a professor*, (1898), 11

¹⁶² Toynbee, “*Progress and Poverty*,” *A Criticism of Mr. Henry George*, (1883), 40

¹⁶³ Robert Wallace, ‘The Philosophy of Liberalism’, *The Nineteenth Century: a monthly review*, 9:48, (1881): 322

¹⁶⁴ George Basil Dixwell, “*Progress and Poverty*,” *A Review of the Doctrines of Henry George*, Cambridge, (John Wilson and Son), 1882; Alfred Marshall, ‘Three Lectures on *Progress and Poverty*’ (1883), (1969): 217-226

¹⁶⁵ Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, (1998), 98

socialist, to tell the truth'.¹⁶⁶ The hopeful, emancipatory vision of George's Natural Rights republicanism was naïve, solving the 'social question' in all its complexity, meant acting, in Daniel T. Rodgers words, as 'the ambulance wagon of industrial capitalism'.¹⁶⁷ In Britain, too, it was evident in the embrace of progressive liberalism by democratic socialists like the Fabians, who espoused the belief that 'rule by bureaucratic expertise and the intellectual class generally was both inevitable and preferable'.¹⁶⁸ In T. H. Green's words, 'the era of administration has come'.¹⁶⁹ Led by men like David George Ritchie, a philosopher at St. Andrews and member of the Fabian Society who had studied under Green and Arnold Toynbee at Oxford, it accepted the positivist logic of progress and utilitarianism. Ritchie sought to blend reformulate social Darwinism as a progressive hope, and cast political intervention and technocratic control by intellectual elites as the key to the resolution of social ills.¹⁷⁰

It is in this ideological context that the rise and fall of the Knights of Labor should be interpreted. Founded in 1869, the Knights were headed by Terence V. Powderly, a second-generation Irish-American machinist, and, from a base of around 10,000 in 1878 developed, by the middle of the 1880s, a membership of around 750,000.¹⁷¹ Beginning in the 1880s, concurrent with the rise of Land League activity in the U.S., the Knights experienced a surge in support. Proportionally their primary support came from smaller industrial cities rather than the major metropolises, and their heartland was the anthracite mining regions of Pennsylvania, where Irish-Americans dominated the membership. The monthly report of Assembly 426 of Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, for February 1878 revealed, out of a membership of 122, 89 miners, 2 carpenters, 20 labourers and one engineer. The officers of this particular branch were named: McDonnell, Callaghan, McOwen, Logan, Kelly, and McMullen.¹⁷² Similarly, in Massachusetts, the leadership was drawn from the industrial towns of Lynn, Worcester and Cambridge rather than Boston.¹⁷³ Employing popular 'moral economy' forms of protest, their mediaeval ritualism and clandestine organisation being forms of 'Old World communal

¹⁶⁶ Ross, 'Socialism and American Liberalism', (1978), 14-15; 19; Wolfe, *From Radicalism to Socialism*, (1975), 70-71; Claeys, 'Non-Marxian Socialism', (2011), 527

¹⁶⁷ Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, (1998), 12

¹⁶⁸ Claeys, 'Non-Marxian Socialism', (2011), 551

¹⁶⁹ Green, *Liberal Legislation*, (1881), 23

¹⁷⁰ Sandra den Otter, *British Idealism and Social Explanation: A Study in late Victorian Thought*, (Oxford: Oxford University Press, (1996), 108

¹⁷¹ Arnesen, 'American Workers and the Labor Movement', (1996), 47; O'Donnell, 'Henry George and the "New Political Forces"', (1995), 189

¹⁷² The monthly report of Assembly 426 of Luzerne County, Pennsylvania, D.A. 16 for the month ending Feb. 28, 1878, (PP, Series 1: Box 2, CUA)

¹⁷³ *Irish World* 8 Feb., 1879; Frank K. Foster to Henry George, 27 Apr., 1884, (HGP, Series I: C, Box 11, NYPL)

practices' that cemented loyalties through ritual and secrecy, the Knights offered a 'distinctly pre-Marxist critique' of capitalism in the republican natural law tradition.¹⁷⁴ The Knights' constitution declared that: 'Republican institutions are not safe under such conditions [wage labour]. We declare an inevitable and irresistible conflict between the wage-system of labor and republican system of government'.¹⁷⁵ One of its members similarly wrote to Powderly expressing his hope that the Knights would defend 'the liberty that was bequeathed to us by Jeferson [sic] and the fathers of the republic'.¹⁷⁶ Not a class-based organisation, the Knights sought membership from 'skilled industry and unskilled industry, from the agricultural labourer to the scientist in his laboratory, from the chimney sweep to the skilled engineer'.¹⁷⁷ It was not a movement of the dispossessed, but rather, a hopeful vision of a harmonious republic of producers searching for 'a source of order in a disorderly age'.¹⁷⁸

The organisation endured a complex relationship with the Catholic Church in the U.S., finding sympathy in some quarters, such as with Cardinal Gibbons, but also distrusted by others.¹⁷⁹ Like George and McGlynn, the Knights faced the authoritarianism of the conservative hierarchy in America, particularly Archbishop Corrigan, and Bishops McQuaid and Chatard. One Knight from Indiana was dismayed at the hostility towards the organisation displayed by Bishop Chatard of Vincennes, who had 'lived in Roma a long time as president of a college and now comes here with all those strict notions of discipline'.¹⁸⁰ Prior to their abandonment of rites, rituals and secrecy in 1882, the Knights worked hard to 'secure the permission or toleration of the Catholic Clergy [...] for all good Catholics that may desire to join the order'.¹⁸¹ Powderly's public standing in the Catholic lay community meant that his voice was frequently sought to calm the concerns of local priests and more senior prelates.¹⁸² The Knights saw the tacit approval or toleration of the Church, especially at a local level, as critical because of the influence of priests on their large Irish Catholic membership.¹⁸³ Cooperation between Knights and priests varied. Writing from Cannelburgh, Indiana, one Knight lamented that 'We are about to lose

¹⁷⁴ Gordon, 'Studies in Irish and Irish American Thought', (1977), 505; 512-3; Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy*, (1983), 6

¹⁷⁵ Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy*, (1983), 4; Knights of Labor declaration, in Arnesen, 'American Workers and the Labor Movement', (1996), 50

¹⁷⁶ J. P. Conway to Terence V. Powderly, 7 Apr., 1880, (PP, Series I: Box 2, CUA)

¹⁷⁷ Henry Pelling, 'The Knights of Labor in Britain, 1880-1901', *The Economic History Review*, 9:2, (1956): 322

¹⁷⁸ Fink, *Workingmen's Democracy*, (1983), 13

¹⁷⁹ Cardinal Gibbons to Archbishop Corrigan, 25th Sept., 1888, (ACP, C-15, AANY)

¹⁸⁰ Daniel O'Leary to Terence V. Powderly, 24 Dec., 1879, (PP, Series I: Box 2, CUA)

¹⁸¹ Dr. R. Rees to Terence V. Powderly, 7 Jan., 1878, (PP, Series I: Box 2, CUA)

¹⁸² Daniel O'Leary to Terence V. Powderly, 24 Dec., 1879, (PP, Series I: Box 2, CUA)

¹⁸³ Patrick Cullen to Terence V. Powderly, 15 Dec., 1878; Michael S. Murray to Terence V. Powderly, 27 Dec., 1880, (PP, Series I: Box 2, CUA)

some of our members through the stubbornness of our priest Father Peers'.¹⁸⁴ In Dubois, Pennsylvania, although 'the clergy has completely denounced the society of K. of L.', their prelate Bishop Mullins was trying to help by suggesting alternatives to the oath, such as a 'pledge of Knightly Honor', in order to circumvent the Church's ban on oath bound societies.¹⁸⁵

The Knights enjoyed some limited popularity in Britain and Ireland during the 1880s, mostly emanating from the Irish community. Davitt and Richard McGhee were briefly figureheads and spokesmen for the Knights in Britain and Ireland, but the organisation failed to gain much traction.¹⁸⁶ Two Knights assemblies opened in Ireland, both in Ulster, and although neither lasted very long, it can be difficult to quantify the diffusive impact of the Knights in Britain and Ireland.¹⁸⁷ In the U.S., there can be no doubt about the interconnection between the Knights and the Land League. At the League's first convention Powderly made clear his opinion that the American labour movement and the Irish land movement were 'almost identical'.¹⁸⁸ Aware that he was 'engaged extensively in organizing L L branches', many Knights contacted him to help them do the same.¹⁸⁹ Given Irish-American preponderance in abstinence groups and labour organisations, particularly the Knights, it is not surprising to see that Land League branches tended to emerge, semi-formed, out of these pre-existing local groups. Letters to Powderly reveal a common pattern of (Irish) Knights forming grassroots groups and then requesting official sanction as a League branch.¹⁹⁰ Nevertheless, the proximity between the Land League and the Knights is hard to overstate. For some, the Knights were considered alongside the League and the A.O.H. as another Irish organisation, and not only Powderly, but Thomas Flatley, Robert Blissert, P. J. McGuire and a number of others also held leadership roles in both organisations.¹⁹¹

¹⁸⁴ John Hart to Terence V. Powderly, 19 Apr., 1880, (PP, Series 1: Box 2, CUA)

¹⁸⁵ John Hessian to Terence V. Powderly, Dec., 1879; H. J. Hudson to Terence V. Powderly, 13 May, 1881; Dr. R. Rees to Terence V. Powderly, 7 Jan., 1878, (PP, Series 1: Box 2, CUA)

¹⁸⁶ Pelling, 'The Knights of Labor in Britain', (1956): 321

¹⁸⁷ John W. Boyle, *The Irish Labour Movement in the Nineteenth Century*, (Washington, D.C.: Catholic University of America Press, 1988), 106-7; Fintan Lane, 'Benjamin Pelin, the Knights of the Plough and Social Radicalism, 1852-1934', in Casey, (ed.), *Defying the Law of the Land*, (2013), 182

¹⁸⁸ 'Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of the Irish National Land League, held at Buffalo, New York, 12 and 13 Jan., 1881', 22, (GDGP, Series III, Box 5, BC)

¹⁸⁹ M. H. McNiff to Terence V. Powderly, 12 March, 1881; James White to Terence V. Powderly, 3 Feb., 1881; P. Mulherin, Secretary of the Catholic Total Abstinence Union of the Diocese of Scranton to Terence V. Powderly, 5 Feb., 1881; J. D. Harris to Terence V. Powderly, 22 Feb., 1881, (PP, Series 1: Box 2, CUA); Terence V. Powderly, *The Path I Trod*, (1940), 179

¹⁹⁰ Martin J. Lavan to Terence V. Powderly, 21 Sept., 1880; P. Mulherin to Terence V. Powderly, 5 Feb., 1881, (PP, Series 1: Box 2, CUA); 'In the Land League in this town there is not a single yankee and my joining would be too plain at present. At the first opening I shall improve the chance', Charles H. Litchman to Terence V. Powderly, 24 Jan., 1881, (PP, Series 1: Box 2, CUA)

¹⁹¹ Thomas Dolan to George D. Cahill, 22 June, 1887, (GDGP, Series I, Box 4, BC)

Liberty and the Republic

The nature, consistency, and persistence of a discourse of Natural Rights based civic republicanism in American political life has been a particularly contentious one, the debates between advocates and critics of the republican thesis peppered with contemporary political intonations. Joyce Appleby, for example, has been critical of the 'ideological historians', whom she suggests have reconstructed a totalising and constraining political philosophy, projecting an anachronistic anti-capitalism on to the early American republic because of their own political preconceptions.¹⁹² Appleby is correct that political discourses should not become constraints, forcing all political action to be interpreted within narrow bounds. More recently the fragmentary and malleable properties, as well as the multiplicity, of political languages has been emphasised; partly by grounding them in cultures and social practices.¹⁹³ In this context, James P. Young's suggestion that historiographical consensus affirms liberalism to be the 'official ideology' of the United States is misleading, or at best tautological.¹⁹⁴ Broadly defined as a political inclination towards the maximisation of personal liberty, Liberalism is indisputably a central tenet of American political history, but within this broad conceptualisation, a diverse assortment of meanings lurk, and such an interpretation inevitably flattens 'versions of liberalism oriented more towards ideals of virtue than toward simple acquisitiveness'.¹⁹⁵ Dorothy Ross interprets this as an 'uneasy synthesis' between the liberal tradition and a selection of utopian, millennial, Christian, agrarian, and classical anti-modernisms that distrusted 'economic progress with its threat of moral decay'.¹⁹⁶ Daniel T. Rodgers also endorses this multiplicity, and is critical of attempts 'to claim the whole contested terrain' for either Lockean liberalism or Jeffersonian republicanism, emphasising that they were not mutually exclusive.¹⁹⁷

Young's assumption that the successes of liberalism explain the frequently imagined failure of nineteenth-century American socialism fails to account for the persistence of distinctly republican reference points as rhetorical loci for economic frustrations. 'The antithesis between radical socialism and bourgeois liberalism', too often a reductive framework, is not an appropriate dichotomy for explaining the 'absence' of

¹⁹² Joyce Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism in the Historical Imagination*, (Cambridge: Harvard University Press, 1992), 332, 338

¹⁹³ Mark Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 312

¹⁹⁴ James P. Young, 'American political thought from Jeffersonian republicanism to progressivism', in Stedman Jones and Claeys, (eds.), *Nineteenth-Century Political Thought*, (2011), 377

¹⁹⁵ Kloppenborg, 'The Virtues of Liberalism', (1987): 19; Raymond Williams, *Keywords: A Vocabulary of Culture and Society*, (London: Fontana, 1976), 178

¹⁹⁶ Ross, 'Socialism and American Liberalism', (1978), 10

¹⁹⁷ Rodgers, *Contested Truths*, (1987), 129

socialism because it conceals layers of variation and connection within ‘socialism’ or ‘liberalism’.¹⁹⁸ These differentiations are better understood by looking at the moral preconceptions and cosmologies that underpin their political utterances. Taking a comparatively sterile focus on political issues over economic ones, Young finds it easier to reinforce the centrality of the liberal tradition, for republicanism clearly endorsed maximising personal liberty too. But classical and radical republicans did not accept this distinction between the political and the economic as particularly meaningful, taking a holistic approach to political economy.

What becomes evident from this is the challenge of providing accurate and appropriate labels. This is especially pertinent in the Irish context, where there was a strong diasporic engagement with more than one host political culture. Eugenio Biagini has successfully reconstructed the close ideological proximity between British and Irish radicals, situating Davitt as ‘a social radical in the Tom Paine tradition’ and demonstrating the influence of Irish demands on British liberalism.¹⁹⁹ Terence McBride has similarly noted how the ‘grievances of the Catholic Irish’ coalesced with the ‘wider agenda of British popular radicalism’.²⁰⁰ In extending this framework to encompass American and Irish-American political cultures, however, the importance of recognising the republican character of this broad liberal tendency becomes more pressing. Mark Bevir has suggested that attempts to draw the parallels between republican, and sometimes subversively anti-capitalist, perspectives within a liberal teleology are ‘replication[s] of the Victorian Liberal attempt to embrace radicalism’.²⁰¹ But this posits an unnecessary tension that can be clarified by taking a broader diasporic perspective. For in the British context, where the dominance of its metropolitan centre mitigated against the survival of agrarian republican persuasions that were sustained more successfully elsewhere, the political framework of radical liberalism was the closest discourse. As Biagini observes, ‘if in Ireland the 1880s saw the “birth of popular liberalism”, it was an *Irish* movement – not the ‘western’ branch of a British one. In other words, the rise of Irish “popular liberalism” cannot be assessed by simple reference to any British model’.²⁰²

There were certainly tensions between the Irish conception of ‘liberalism’ and the Westminster’s. Ireland’s political discourse during the Land War more closely resembled the political timbre of American politics. This was no doubt the opinion of the

¹⁹⁸ Ellis, ‘Radical Lockeanism’, (1992): 825; Young, ‘American political thought’, (2011), 376-377; 407

¹⁹⁹ Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, (2007), 109

²⁰⁰ Terence McBride, ‘The Secular and the Radical in Irish Associational Culture of Mid-Victorian Glasgow’, *Immigrants & Minorities*, 28:1, (2010): 32

²⁰¹ Bevir and Trentmann, ‘Critique within Capitalism’, (2002), 15; 24

²⁰² Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, (2007), 124

conservative press, who feared the destabilising influence of American radicals.²⁰³ As the *Dublin Review* revealingly complained, ‘Mr. Davitt is the dupe of his American friends, [...] making that unhappy country a *corpus vile* on which to try the experiment of American communism’.²⁰⁴ Biagini quotes the *Freeman’s Journal* in its opinion that the essence of liberalism was, ‘the abolition of class privileges’, a stance that prompted the question as to whether ‘there existed real “liberals” outside the National ranks in Ireland’.²⁰⁵ This mirrored George’s opinion. The American radical complained in Birmingham that ‘a great many of your so-called Liberals are, in my opinion, a very conservative sort to do with and are rather Tories in disguise (applause and laughter)’, going on to distinguish them from ‘real liberals’.²⁰⁶ During Irish coercion, he was equally acerbic, suggesting ‘it might hurt the feelings of such “Liberal” statesmen as Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Bright, and Mr. Forster to be charged with *suppressing* a newspaper’, George referred to the ‘so-called “Liberal government” of a constitutional country’, and demanded that ‘if Ireland is to be governed despotically let it be by men who deeply avow despotic principles, not by those who have the cant of liberalism on their lips’.²⁰⁷ George’s general opinion of British liberalism was as ‘paternal rather than democratic or even constitutional’, and although there existed liberal tendencies, he deemed them to be ‘anything but democratic’ and of ‘a very paternal and patronizing kind’.²⁰⁸ Irish-Americans also attacked the British establishment for the hypocrisy attendant in their espousal of political ideals seemingly so much at odds with the realpolitik of imperial management, observing ‘that there was a very slight difference between English Liberals and English Tories’.²⁰⁹ High minded talk of self-determination and freedom was rebuked by withering criticism from those, such as James Clancy, who observed that ‘when she starts out to pillage some weaker power, her pet theory is very conveniently shelved away’.²¹⁰ Irish nationalists were liberals, but they remained committed, like many Americans, to an idealised eighteenth-century vision. It was evident in Matthew Harris’ description of liberty as dependent not on a narrow, contractual freedom, but on justice. He wrote in the *Irishman*:

Before condemning the Land Movement, sincere Irishmen should, at least, ask themselves whether the cause of the Irish tenant farmer is, or is

²⁰³ Michael de Nie, ‘A Medley Mob of Irish-American Plotters and Irish Dupes’: the British Press and Transatlantic Fenianism’, *Journal of British Studies*, 40:2, (2001): 213-240

²⁰⁴ ‘Art. VIII – Ireland’, *Dublin Review*, III, 8, (July 1882): 198

²⁰⁵ Biagini, *British Democracy and Irish Nationalism*, (2007), 138

²⁰⁶ Henry George, ‘Lecture at Midland Institute, Birmingham’, 23 Jan., 1884, (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL)

²⁰⁷ Henry George, *Irish World*, 14 Jan., 1882; 28 Jan., 1882; 25 March, 1882

²⁰⁸ Henry George, *Irish World*, 1 Apr., 1882; 21 Jan., 1882

²⁰⁹ Col. John W. Forney, quoted in MacSwynie, (ed.), *America’s Sympathies with Ireland*, (1881), 24

²¹⁰ Clancy, *Ireland As She Is*, (1877), 29

not, the cause of justice and humanity. If it be, then, it must be the cause of liberty, for these are the virtues upon which she erects her throne.²¹¹

This liberalism was one of 'liberty, equality and fraternity'.²¹² It was a liberalism of the late eighteenth century, rather than of the nineteenth that moved Irish reformers. Joyce Appleby has suggested that modern day proponents of the republican thesis have retroactively applied the liberalism of William Graham Sumner to the late eighteenth-century, reinterpreting Jeffersonianism in the light of subsequent iterations of acquisitive and individualistic liberalism.²¹³ But for the purposes of the late nineteenth century, that is exactly what Henry George, like many Irish radicals, really were doing.²¹⁴ Jefferson's reality in the late-nineteenth-century was that of antagonist and historical nemesis for Sumnerian liberalism. David N. Doyle subtly noted this tendency in his observation that, 'for those who follow the traditions of De Ruggiero and Pocock and prefer to keep liberalism and democracy separate, one might hazard that in America Irish ambition tended to greater inclusivity, representation and equality and thus pressed liberalism toward democracy'.²¹⁵ This was unsurprisingly a view shared, and indeed frequently repeated, by Irish-American nationalists keen to see in the mists of the distant Irish past the origins of a republican democratic ethos, an alternative fiction to the Anglo-Saxon 'seed of liberty'.²¹⁶

This disjuncture was evident when it came to the sanctity of contracts, a cornerstone of late-nineteenth-century liberalism (and, of course, of Protestant theology too). As William Graham Sumner argued, 'there is no time when a man is more supremely sovereign and independent than when he is making a contract'.²¹⁷ The moral sanctity of the contract relied on conceiving actors outwith society, and so equating 'contractual relationships with freedom' by imagining a world 'in which power and compulsion are absent'.²¹⁸ Not only had natural law and commonsense traditions rejected this assumption, but Irish experiences has also put lie to the idea.²¹⁹ T. M. Healy scoffed that the Irish had 'been accused of dishonesty and breach of contract' when all they had done was keep themselves alive in the teeth of landlords who 'do not look to what is just, but to what the

²¹¹ Matthew Harris, letter to the *Irishman*, Ballinasloe, 19 June, 1880, Pamphlet, (HP, MS 21,910, NLI)

²¹² *Freeman's Journal*, 16 Jan., 1883

²¹³ Appleby, *Liberalism and Republicanism*, (1992), 338

²¹⁴ *Irish World*, 12 Oct., 1872; Henry George, 'Wanted: A Democratic Party', 12 March, 1883, (HGP, Series II, Box 13, NYPL)

²¹⁵ Doyle, 'Irish Elites in North America', (2002): 41

²¹⁶ Clancy, *Ireland As She Is*, (1877), 30; Alfred O'Rahilly, 'The Sovereignty of the People', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review*, 10:37, (1921): 39

²¹⁷ William Graham Sumner, 'Do We Want Industrial Peace', (1889), *War and other essays*, (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1911), 233-4

²¹⁸ Polanyi, *The Great Transformation*, (1957), 257

²¹⁹ As in the idea of a 'just price', Stabile, 'Adam Smith and the Natural wage', (1997): 293, or that servitude by 'contract is plainly unequal and unjust', Francis Hutcheson, *A System of Moral Philosophy*, vol. II, (Glasgow: R & A. Foulis, 1755), 200

law will permit'.²²⁰ When the Land League noted the 'Particulars of pressure brought to bear on Tenant to accept Lease' in their records, the absurdity of freedom of contract under unequal economic conditions was made evident.²²¹ It was also recognised at the first convention of the American Land League, where a speaker noted that, 'while we honor the sanctity of contracts, we cannot hold a contract to be sacred which leaves to the industrious son of toil no alternative between a rack rent and the road-side, work-house, or emigrant ship'.²²²

The ownership and meaning of the idea of constitutionalism was similarly a battleground in the wider conflict over the nature of (republican) liberalism. In the Irish construction, British constitutionalism came to represent contractual villainy, and Irish constitutionalism, moral force nationalism. Collective unity of action 'over individualism was posited within a symbolic code containing a refurbished concept of constitutionalism', and this was made possible by the curious 'unwritten' nature of the British constitution itself which drew interesting parallels with the assertion of a peculiarly Irish set of uncodified laws.²²³ There was undoubtedly such a significant gulf in the understanding of the terms between Irish nationalists and the British political classes that made the two concepts almost incommensurable. For many Irish nationalists, the British Constitution was a cloak of respectability to obscure more nefarious intents. While attacks on constitutionalism were unremittingly hostile to that 'vague, impalpable agglomeration of customs, usages, precedents, legal decisions' that passes for the British Constitution, they showed a reverend respect for the successes of the American construction.²²⁴ In 1877, James Clancy proclaimed 'that the people of Ireland would have more to rejoice at than regret, were the most rigid despotism of the Orient substituted tomorrow for the monstrous mockery of "Constitutionalism" under which they are now strangled'.²²⁵ For Alexander Sullivan, 'Anglo-Saxonism' was, in its ideal form, 'anything and everything unconstitutional with a ruffian pretence of constitutionality'.²²⁶ In the *Irish World*, transatlantic Fenian Thomas J. Mooney mocked 'supreme triumph of [England's] constitution. Ah yes! Her 'constitution,' and the Land Thieves it has generated and upheld

²²⁰ Healy, *Why There is an Irish Land Question*, (1881), 84; Michael O'Sullivan at Irishtown, *Connaught Telegraph*, 26 Apr., 1879

²²¹ Accounts of rents in arrears, Waterford Co., (LLP, MS 8291, NLI)

²²² 'Proceedings of the First Annual Convention of the Irish National Land League, held at Buffalo, New York, 12 and 13 Jan., 1881', 16, (GDCP, Series III, Box. 5, BC)

²²³ Kane, 'Theorizing Meaning Construction', (1997): 270; Jordan, 'The Irish National League and the 'Unwritten Law'', (1998): 146-171

²²⁴ Clancy, *Ireland As She Is*, (1877), 56

²²⁵ *Ibid.*, 7

²²⁶ Alexander Sullivan, 'The American Republic and the Irish National League of America', *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 9, (1884): 36

[...] *have* indeed triumphed over every moral law'.²²⁷

The oddity of this schizophrenic approach to the idea of a constitution was well explained by a small pamphlet on Irish politics, which began: 'It seems curious that it should be necessary to define here the term "constitutionalism" or "constitutional freedom". But in dealing with the Irish question it is necessary to have an absolutely clear understanding on this point, for the term has been used in Ireland in very strange connections'. The author explained that the authority of Dublin Castle rested on its claim to constitutionality, and thus the word itself had 'come to have in Ireland, not only a different meaning from what it has in the dictionary, but the exactly opposition meaning. It means what in America would be called despotic. The more constitutional a man's views are held to be, the more despotic they are'.²²⁸ Both Davitt and Parnell made frequent appeals to 'constitutionalism' and attacked the British government for 'trampling upon almost every vestige of constitutional liberty', but resonating from these moral condemnations is the image of a more just constitution.²²⁹ The image of the U.S. constitution is perhaps most evident in Thomas Flatley's understanding of the Land League's 'peaceful, constitutional agitation', which did not deny 'the perfect right of the Irish people, to make the rifle ring and the bayonet flash [...] to rid their country of injustice and foreign tyranny'.²³⁰ The invocations of the American Revolution were striking.

²²⁷ 'Transatlantic', *Irish World*, 20 Dec., 1879

²²⁸ 'Irish National League of America', *What is "Castle Government?" A Question Answered, for Americans Interested in the Irish Question*, (Chicago: Irish National League of America, 1884), 4-5, (103, Box 40, ACO129, PAHRC)

²²⁹ Michael Davitt and Charles Stewart Parnell, quoted in MacSwynie, (ed.), *America's Sympathies with Ireland*, (1881), 27-8

²³⁰ 'Second Quarterly Report of the Irish National Land League of the United States for Quarter ending July 10, 1881', (Devoy Papers, MS 18,048, NLI)

Conclusion

‘When the philosophic minds of the world can no longer believe its religion’, wrote John Stuart Mill prophetically in 1873, ‘a transitional period commences, of weak convictions, paralysed intellects, and growing laxity of principle’.¹ The decade spanning c.1877-87 was just such a transitional period. The building blocks of political discourse were being rearranged as theorists vied to ascribe technical and moral attributes to terms such as ‘socialism’ and ‘capitalism’. It was during the 1880s that the term ‘liberalism’ asserted its dominance over ‘republicanism’ within Anglo-American politics, a transition borne of the recognition of new dangers posed by that older article of political faith. It marked, broadly speaking, the passing of that tradition as an emancipatory force and the crystallization of industrial capitalism as an ‘immovable horizon’.² In this narrative, George was one of the last significant political actors. Political or cultural isolation from these forces was not a viable form of resistance either as globalisation became an identifiable feature of the Atlantic world. This ‘character of universality’, as one contemporary described it, certainly exposed new vistas and ideas. At the same time, however, these ideas threatened to ‘acquire by expansion a terrible force’.³

But cultural forms persist, and the themes and ideas raised in this work remained evident, if modified, in subsequent decades. Later developments only reinforced the significance of George’s 1880s and of the Land League. The ever closer relationship between economic liberalism, centralisation, reform and imperialism in elite Anglo-American culture may have peaked in the last decade of the nineteenth, but continued beyond the turn of that century into the next, developing into a new form of progressive interventionism and economic dominance. The activities of men like Cecil Rhodes provoked understandable fears among Irish-Americans that ‘the actual physical reunion of Britain and America may be consummated’.⁴ The increasing sentiment and sympathy among urbane New Englanders for what even George described as America’s ‘mother country’, had been carefully documented by the *Irish World* in the 1880s, when it had sneered that ‘the Republic bequeathed to us by the Revolutionary War and republican

¹ Mill, *Autobiography*, (1873), 154

² Stedman Jones, *Languages of Class*, (1983), 237; O’Donnell, ‘Henry George and the “New Political Forces”’, (1995), 641

³ Elizabeth Bryant, *Types of Mankind, as Affecting the Financial History of the World: Delivered before the Greenback Labor Club of the District of Columbia, October 7, 1879*, (Washington, D.C.: Rufus H. Darby, 1879), 7

⁴ Edward F. McSweeney, ‘De-Americanizing Young America: Poisoning the Source of our National History and Traditions’, 1920, (AIA.047, NYU); ‘Mr. Rhodes’s Ideal of Anglo-Saxon Greatness’, *New York Times*, 9 Apr., 1902

statesmen is not to the liking of our snobs'.⁵ Many Irish Americans remained proudly aware that, as the elegantly named English émigré Goldwin Smith lamented, 'to the existence of perfect amity, and a union as entire as the severing Atlantic will permit, almost the sole impediment [to a British-American union] is now the anti-British feeling of the Irish in the United States'.⁶

In the early decades of the twentieth century, Woodrow Wilson's sacralisation of progress as 'almost synonymous with life itself' was still the dominant intellectual current. Just as in the 1880s, it was underwritten by the brutal logic of positivism and the beguiling power of self-confidence.⁷ The rhetorical flourishes of radical republicanism were successfully co-opted into the discourse of progressivism, a mutation that has served to befuddle some later writers into mistaking Wilson for a Jeffersonian (and vice versa).⁸ But this was only a synthetic reproduction of republican discourse, its metaphysical basis excised and replaced with Spencerian organicism, the view that 'society is a living organism and must obey the laws of life, not of mechanics; it must develop'.⁹ Such ideological engines drove the consolidation of 'political capitalism' and electoral triangulation, continuing the transfiguration of the rights and responsibilities of agrarian republicanism from a political platform into a form of utopian nostalgia.¹⁰ Nevertheless, on the cultural and moral terrain popular suspicion toward contemporary socio-scientific analyses persisted, and found notable expression in the Scopes Monkey Trial, in which William Jennings Bryan, although now defunct as a political force, voiced wider philosophical and humanitarian concerns about the social implications of Darwinism for democratic institutions.¹¹ But by the 1920s such events were posthumous paroxysms. Bryan's populism had been defeated a generation earlier, and both radical republican and conservative Irish critics had long been fruitlessly attacking the evolutionary assumptions of the new sciences of state and society.¹² Into the twentieth-century political discourse increasingly focused on questions

⁵ *Irish World*, 7 Dec., 1878; Henry George to Sir George Grey, 26 Sept., 1881, (HGP, Series I: A, Box 3, NYPL)

⁶ Goldwin Smith, 'Great Britain, America, and Ireland', *Princeton Review*, (Jul-Dec., 1882): 283

⁷ Wilson, 'What is Progress?', (1912), *The New Freedom*, (1918), 42

⁸ Patrick M. Garry, *Liberalism and American Identity*, (Kent, OH.: Kent State University Press, 1992); Daniel T. Rodgers, 'Republicanism: the Career of a Concept', *The Journal of American History*, 79:1, (1992): 11-38

⁹ Wilson, 'What is Progress?', (1912), *The New Freedom*, (1918), 48

¹⁰ Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism*, (1963), 281

¹¹ Constance Areson Clark, 'Evolution for John Doe: Picture, the Public, and the Scopes Trial Debate', *Journal of American History*, 87:4, (2001): 1275-1303

¹² Aug. J. Thebaud, 'Socialism at the Present Day', *American Catholic Quarterly Review*, 5, (1880): 45

of rationalisation and efficiency; of 'Progress' – that article of faith in the cultural hegemony of Anglo-America.¹³

Moving forward into the middle decades of the twentieth century, the cultural mores of Irish-America – particularly its Catholicism and its social conservatism – gradually became transposed on to a new political reality. Beginning in the 1960s and reaching a highpoint in the 1980s, the linguistic nodes of popular republicanism were solidly reorientated towards the political right. To the backdrop of the Cold War and, subsequently, the rise of the New Left, a durable alliance formed, with the glue of racial animus, between working class social conservatism and bourgeois economic liberalism. Long established tropes; Natural Rights, direct rewards for labour, anti-bureaucracy, fear of moral decay, suspicion of elites – ideological space vacated by the political left – were successfully co-opted by the right. Barry Goldwater's notoriously pyrrhic defeat in 1964 was on a platform of assertive, if disingenuous, anti-materialism; a reactionary Jeffersonianism that referred pointedly to 'Nature' and 'natural law', as well as the 'fruits of his labor'.¹⁴ Consequently, Irish-Americans, many of whom were by now enjoying a renaissance of ethnic pride, would become central to the Republican Party strategy. Deliberate appeals were made to the 'traditional social values' of the Irish- and Italian-American working class, most profitably through stoking fear of the threats posed by social progressives and African-Americans.¹⁵

This was an ignominious fragmentation for the republican idiom. But the persistence of the aggregation of ideas and assumptions that underpin it has nevertheless proved remarkably durable, even if they remain broadly unallied to radical or emancipatory political programmes. In Gareth Stedman Jones' narrative, the grand and 'exhilarating' potential of Paine's modern republicanism, in which individual liberty was a central part of 'a republican ideal of greater equality, inclusive citizenship, and the public good', had been almost immediately inhibited by the conservative reaction in the Napoleonic period.¹⁶ That powerful reaction, perhaps best embodied by Malthus, did appear to inflict considerable damage on the realistic political scope for these ideas. It is argued here, however, that the 1880s were its historical coda; a final act in the mainstream before the cultural substructure of republicanism was effectively cut adrift, its importance for marrying popular social practices and attitudes to liberal society ignored and finally abandoned. George did not just 'appear[...] like a return to the pre-Malthusian

¹³ Kolko, *The Triumph of Conservatism*, (1963), 284

¹⁴ Barry Goldwater, *The Conscience of a Conservative*, (Shepherdsville, KY.: Victor Publishing, 1960), II; 61

¹⁵ Kim Phillips-Fein, *Invisible Hands: The Making of the Conservative Movement from the New Deal to Reagan*, (New York: W. W. Norton, 2009), 215

¹⁶ Stedman Jones, *An End to Poverty?*, (2004), 235

perspectives of the late Enlightenment reformers', he offered a reanimation of those ideals.¹⁷ As has been the primary argument of this thesis, Ireland and its land were central to this reanimation. The country's geopolitical position provided a national space for the cultivation of republican identities, reinforced by agrarian social practices and Aquinian theological backing. Ireland's distinctive focus on agrarian economic questions and the republican praxis of the Land League both conspired to challenge liberal political economy and pinpointed the instability of Natural Rights justifications for the ownership of land.

That 'classical liberalism ceased to have anything to say' about the social and democratic implications of industrial capitalism from the end of the nineteenth century is indicative of the abandonment of republican commitments from this period.¹⁸ A good number of the political crises of the twentieth and twenty-first centuries, not least the failures of liberalism as an export product and the resurgence of neo-fascist and anti-liberal ideologies, owe something to marginalisation of this element. The result has been a polarisation between a supercharged instrumentalism and an embittered and xenophobic reaction, or between, as Terry Eagleton has suggested, 'those who believe far too little and those who believe far too much'.¹⁹ The division between theory and practice, embodied in the dislocation between politics and economics, has served to obscure the cultural foundations and 'neo-Roman' heredity of western liberal democracies, rendering them susceptible to attack from anti-democratic impulses ranging from religious fundamentalism or racial supremacism to market totalitarianism and libertarian techno-feudalism.

All scholarship is, to a greater or lesser degree, a product of its time and place, and a refraction of contemporary existence through the past. From the vantage of 2016, the crises of the 1880s seem an appropriate laboratory in which to examine the relationship between social practices, moral cosmologies, and political ideologies. A cultural resurgence emanating from both the left and the right, itself a reaction to an increasingly vacant neo-liberalism, has provided much of the fuel for the insurgent political tendencies of recent years. The seismic economic crash of 2008 also reproduced many of the popular frustrations with the detachment of economic science that mirror those of the 1880s.²⁰ So too, fuelled by both the Scottish independence referendum and a wider crisis of affordable housing, has the question of land, and specifically a Land Value Tax, become

¹⁷ *Ibid.*, 208 [my emphasis]

¹⁸ Williams, 'Advertising; the Magic System', in *Culture and Materialism*, (1980), 191

¹⁹ Terry Eagleton, 'Culture, Atheism and the War on Terror', *Field Day Review*, 6, (2010): 172

²⁰ 'Economics: A Discipline Ripe for Destruction', *The Guardian*, 3 Apr., 2014

ever more relevant.²¹ Perhaps most intriguingly, the data-driven techno-utopian visions of Silicon Valley libertarianism have found increasing succour and intellectual support, much like the rationalising and centralising impulses of the late nineteenth century, in contemporary socio-scientific paradigms. As Daniel Dennett has written approvingly, modern Darwinianism sees ‘computer science and evolutionary theory fitting together in excellent harmony; its algorithms all the way down’.²² The omniscience of computational technology, having offered its cognitive frameworks to scientific inquiry, is subsequently invested with a naturalistic power of its own in return. And so, social Darwinism has itself evolved; a process in which ‘all normative standards have lost their credit before the single remaining authority – science’.²³ In 1880, one Catholic writer, fearing the reduction of man into ‘an exquisite automaton’, was comforted that human consciousness, something ‘real and yet immaterial’ where ‘man enters into intercourse with the infinite’, was the point at which scientific materialism would forever be halted.²⁴ And yet today, while many people cling intuitively to the idea of a human soul, perhaps astutely preferring delusion over meaninglessness, developments in ‘computational cognitive science’, argues Steven Pinker, have made it possible for humans ‘to do without dualism’.²⁵ As Hannah Arendt wrote, the problem with such ideas is ‘not that they are wrong but that they could become true’.²⁶

In political terms, the longstanding commonalities between Darwinism, instrumental rationality and liberal-capitalism are mutually reinforcing, sharing between them linguistic formulations that underpin their common assumptions. The insidious attempts to constrict the understanding of political freedom within these intellectual bounds poses real threats to democracy, just as George had warned in the 1880s. Take, for example, the biologist and banker Matt Ridley, whose applied pseudo-evolutionism can comfortably legitimise death and destitution as minor obstacles on the path to progress.²⁷ Faced with cultural or social-democratic attempts to restrict these processes, some are led to reject the utility and efficiency of democracy itself. With searing honesty, the Silicon Valley venture capitalist Peter Thiel admitted that he ‘no longer believe[s] that freedom and democracy are compatible’.²⁸ It should not be a great surprise that, having rejected

²¹ ‘A Case for Taxing Land’, *New Statesman*, 26 June, 2015

²² Dennett, ‘The Selfish Gene as a Philosophical Essay’, in Grafen and Ridley, (eds.), *Richard Dawkins*, (2006), 107

²³ Habermas, *Philosophical Discourses of Modernity*, (1987), 111

²⁴ A. de. G., ‘Position of the Intellectual World as Regards Religion’, (1880): 442; 444

²⁵ Steven Pinker, ‘Deep Commonalities Between Life and Mind’, in Grafen and Ridley, (eds.), *Richard Dawkins*, (2006), 141

²⁶ Hannah Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1958), 322

²⁷ Matt Ridley, ‘It’s a scandal that the NHS is too big to fail’, *The Times*, 2 March, 2015

²⁸ Peter Thiel, ‘The Education of a Libertarian’, *Cato Unbound: A Journal of Debate*, (Apr. 2009)

the impositions of culture, neo-liberalism also seeks ‘to find an escape from politics in all its forms’.²⁹

Wrapped up together in its rejection of politics and suspicion of democracy, its deification of economic Darwinism, its commitment to the erasure of human development and potential through artificial intelligence and its obsession with convenience to the detriment of active participation, techno-capitalism represents the vanguard and apex of such distortions of the nature of human freedom. With eerie prescience, their imagined future appears to represent the fulfilment of Arendt’s prediction that ‘the modern age – which began with such an unprecedented and promising outburst of human activity – may end in the deadliest, most sterile passivity history has ever known’.³⁰ Such warnings were paralleled in George’s own political revolution when he noted that ‘the application of physical science to the satisfaction of human desires is reacting upon social relations in a such a way as to reduce the masses of men to the position of the domesticated animals’.³¹ Conversely, the retention of the inherent and unique value of human existence and development, that ‘all men are the equal children of God’, was ‘half the battle’ in achieving his aims.³² The republicanism of the *Irish World*, or that of George or Arendt, found its nemesis in liberal-capitalism because it valued democracy and its centrality to the condition of personal freedom. Unlike Peter Thiel, it understood that liberty was not the absence of control, but the possession of it.

At its heart this is why a study of the 1880s, and of the role of Irish republicanism in particular, is so revealing and important. The Land War energised an international swansong of democratic Paineite republicanism, with Irish nationalism demonstrating the necessity of collective cultural associations and common identities in resisting the atomising effects of liberalism, before its final sublimation. The collapse of populist democratic republicanism as a political platform was, in the final assessment, the severance of culture from liberalism. A transition that was emblematic of the broader disjuncture of practice from theory. As the philosopher John Dewey explained, ‘the limitations upon freedom [...] are at bottom expressions of one and the same divorce of theory and practice, – which makes theory remote, sterile, and technical, while practice remains narrow, harsh, and also illiberal’.³³ Tracing this development, both in the period

²⁹ *Ibid.*

³⁰ Arendt, *The Human Condition*, (1958), 322

³¹ Henry George, ‘Garfield or Hancock’, 1880, (HGP, Series II: Box 12, NYPL)

³² *Irish World*, 16 Nov., 1878

³³ John Dewey and James H. Tufts, *Ethics*, (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 1908), 449

and as replicated also in the historiography, has been one of the broader themes of this project. The mutually reinforcing and habitual relationship between activity and moral development - between theory and practice - which was central to the Aristotelian concept of virtue, found an expression in the practical rationality of collective agrarian social practices and their urban reformulations. They were buttressed by an Aquinian theology, which asserted that 'along with knowledge of the truth, with the intelligent perception of what is right and good, must be conjoined virtue, the actual doing of what is right and good'.³⁴ Through the transnational effects of the Land War, these fuelled the resurgence of popular republicanism.

In rejecting distinction between theory and practice as a false and disabling one, the work makes a bid to reconstitute the history of this particularly transatlantic period in light of an understanding that ostensibly abstract developments in philosophical theory find tangible expression in popular and political activity; that there is an important reflexivity between the realm of 'ideas' and their popular, cultural manifestations. Central to this is the refutation of what Jim Smyth has described as the 'tendency [in Irish historiography] to deploy concepts such as "literary nationalism", "verbal republicanism" and "rhetoric" in ways that imply word-worlds detached from and often deliberately cloaking "reality"'.³⁵ Perhaps the clearest examples of this are Thomas N. Brown's expression that Irish fondness for 'Jeffersonian wrappings' was a result of 'the intoxication of words for a newly literate people', or Vincent Comerford's insistence that economic gain was the primary ambition of farmers, 'whatever was said on the platforms'.³⁶ On the surface, the collapse of the radical ambitions of the League may bear this proposition out, but these failures and contradictions only make sense, and the hypocrisies eliminated, when viewed as part of a wider intellectual battle. It is in this way that it can be seen that there was a tangible and reflexive connection between word and deed.

A number of themes emerge from viewing the Land War as a specific theatre in a transatlantic ideological battle. Firstly, it explains why Ireland was an adopted cause for various U.S. radicals. The focus on a Natural Rights based republicanism reanimated the expansive ideals of freedom and liberty for which they had previously fought, and cast Ireland as the final panel in an emancipatory triptych of Enlightenment universalism. In this role, Ireland's liminal position was important, its European subalternism providing a realm in which it was possible to reconstruct an anti-materialist political discourse in an

³⁴ Wolff, 'Catholicity and Protestantism in Relation to Our Future as a People', (1879): 146

³⁵ Smyth, 'Robert Emmet's Copy of John Locke's', (2003): 26

³⁶ Brown, *Irish-American Nationalism*, (1966), 53-4; Comerford, 'The politics of distress', (1989), 47

increasingly scientific and utilitarian age.³⁷ As Joe Cleary has eloquently explained, the country was able to perform as a 'sublime periphery to the European mainstream'.³⁸ It was its ambiguous relationship to the European Enlightenment that assisted in this role. Irish nationalism remained forever torn between the Enlightenment universalism of the United Irishmen, which formed such an important template for subsequent movements, or an understanding of Irishness as an escape from this modernity, as an 'irreducible state of being impenetrable to all alien Enlightenment rationality'.³⁹ But in its attempts to merge these ideological tensions, the transatlantic Land War produced a more authentic reflection of eighteenth-century republicanism in the nineteenth.

Land, and life on the land, lay at the heart of this tension; its libidinal qualities arrayed against the progressive force of both socialism and capitalism. It engendered forms of 'retrospective radicalism', that, through its focus physical attachment, appeared 'to bear and to embody a human concern'.⁴⁰ It was this that created MacDonagh's 'surface paradox' between collectivism and individualism. As Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh explained in similar terms, 'it may seem paradoxical that the outcome of the most effective sociopolitical movement of collective action in modern Irish history should have been the entrenchment of a decidedly individualist system of farm ownership'.⁴¹ But implicit in both accounts is the absence of any real paradox. Irish land had brought to the fore a foundational inconsistency within liberal-capitalism; the trap that Aquinas had set and that Blackstone had stumbled into. It was an inconsistency that meant, when pushed by the incipient crisis and the demands of Natural Rights republicanism, defenders of property were forced to disavow any recourse to earlier 'commonsense' or natural law traditions, or indeed any *a priori* conceptions of justice, in favour of a positivist utilitarianism. In 1881, the Liberal M.P. Robert Wallace made the same observation as Ó Tuathaigh when he noted that, 'the very wildest schemes of land reform are those which, on the face of them, promise to do most for establishing property as an institution'.⁴² In his view such a position was absurd. There was no 'natural right' to property, it was dependent on the State for its existence, not the state on private property. He continued, 'it [private property] is an arrangement justified by the good of society, and may be infringed when and as far as the good of society demands'.⁴³ From this position, despite

³⁷ Kate Soper, 'The dialectics of progress: Irish 'belatedness' and the politics of prosperity', *ephemera: theory and politics in organization*, 13:2, (2013): 249-267

³⁸ Joe Cleary, 'Ireland and Modernity', in J. Cleary and C. Connolly, (eds.), *Cambridge companion to modern Irish culture*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 9

³⁹ Eagleton, 'Nationalism: Irony and Commitment', *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, (1990), 32

⁴⁰ Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City*, (London: Chatto and Windus, 1973), 37

⁴¹ Ó Tuathaigh, 'Irish land questions in the state of the Union', (2013), 17

⁴² Robert Wallace, 'The Philosophy of Liberalism', (1881): 320

⁴³ *Ibid.*, 318

the fact that the moral assumptions implicit lay at diametrically opposed ends, it is possible to understand how George's ideas were subsumed, in a homeopathic form, into the political platforms of the early twentieth-century British Liberals.

The alignment of national identity and political ideology was buttressed by Irish romantic imagery, and cultural invocations that tended towards an emphasis on the spiritual and moral superiority of the suffering and oppressed against the materialism of the wealthy and powerful. This was not a pre-modern mode of thought, but one that engaged actively with the threats and impositions of modernity. Occupying a central role in the rejection of established and centralised power, but also part of a much wider oppositional culture, from the United Irishmen through to the Land League and beyond, Irishness became 'a creative irritant in the Anglophone North Atlantic world'.⁴⁴ Nationalism demanded loyalties that constrained freedom of action, and were often counterposed to 'rational' or economically self-interested behaviour. Even with the variable geographies of class in the League, the political rhetorical of radical republicanism remained dominant and effective because it was antithetical to 'England' in general and London in particular, the centre of global commerce and imperialism. This was important because it constrained the boundaries of acceptable behaviour and dictated membership of the community. In was in this way that Mathew Harris was able to dismiss graziers as both un-republican and un-Irish 'the typical grazier cares little for his country; he is as remarkable for his want of public spirit as he is for the absence of every quality that fits men for social intercourse or the amenities of civil life'.⁴⁵ It was their lack of national loyalty that also explained their deficiency in public virtue.

'He was Irish and American; intensely both, but more than both. The world was his country and mankind was his kin'.⁴⁶ Patrick A. Collins' eulogy at the funeral of John Boyle O'Reilly was a fitting epitaph for the man, but it might also serve as an accurate illustration of the transatlantic life of the republican tradition. It too was Irish and American, 'intensely both, but more than both'. While Eric Foner's path-breaking essay saw in the Land League as a 'conjunction of Irish-America with the Protestant reform tradition', there was a more fundamental and familial connection between Irish and American republicanism.⁴⁷ From Aristotle and Aquinas, Jefferson and Paine, through to Henry George and Michael Davitt, they were two branches of the same transatlantic root.

⁴⁴ Doyle, 'Irish Elites in North America', (2002): 31

⁴⁵ *Connaught Telegraph*, 24 June, 1876

⁴⁶ Patrick A. Collins, eulogy at the funeral of John Boyle O'Reilly (PACP, Series II: Box 4, BC)

⁴⁷ Foner, 'Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism', (1981), 151

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