Believing in God and the Youthful Manhood of Our Time: Gender, Race, Empire and the Making of Irish Nationalism 1860-1882

Patrick M. Bethel

Marquette University

Follow this and additional works at: https://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations_mu

Recommended Citation
https://epublications.marquette.edu/dissertations_mu/1204
“BELIEVING IN GOD AND THE YOUTHFUL MANHOOD OF OUR TIME:”
GENDER, RACE, EMPIRE AND THE MAKING OF
IRISH NATIONALISM 1860-1882

By
Patrick M Bethel, B.A., M.A.

A Dissertation submitted to
the Faculty of the Graduate School, Marquette University, in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

Milwaukee, Wisconsin
May 2022
This study examines the creation and development of Irish Nationalisms in the post-Famine period, focusing on the period 1860-1882 in the Irish counties of Mayo, Sligo, and Roscommon. In this study I argue that that Irish nationalists and British imperialists held remarkably similar views about the ambiguous racial status of the Irish, and in an effort to ameliorate those concerns, nationalists sought to impose standards of behavior derived from the colonial metropole, furthering the efforts of that same metropole to destroy indigenous ways of life.

While Ireland was in this period a part of the United Kingdom, the Irish population occupied an ambivalent space in British thinking about race, fitting only imperfectly into emerging ideas of British identity. During the century, the Irish became the focus narratives which presented them as a “Celtic” race, prone to excessive violence and fundamentally inferior to the “Germanic” populations of the remainder of the United Kingdom. In response, a variety of Irish nationalists presented Irish poverty and agrarian crime as the result of an unjust socio-political system rather than Irish racial inferiority. This process reached its height during the Irish Land War of 1879-1882, when nationalists from all political traditions offered the same argument, that Irish *men* needed to peacefully agitate for reform of the land system and the prevention of evictions in order to prove the fitness of the Irish people as a whole for self-government.

However, the popular response during those years did not confine itself to the methods proposed by nationalist leaders. Women played a particularly active role in all stages of the agitation and agrarian violence, often undertaken in a communal fashion played a central role in popular resistance to eviction and the use of land previously held by evicted tenants. In response to these developments, nationalist leaders worked to control the narrative of the period through the nationalist press and later retrospectives of the period. In so doing they presented the Land War as a period of disciplined, masculine action which could support Irish claims to whiteness and self-rule rather than as it actually was, a period of indigenous resistance to colonial rule.
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Patrick M Bethel

This project would not have been possible without the love and support of my family. It is from my family that I gained my interest in Ireland and its history, my intellectual curiosity, and the courage to move halfway across the country to follow my dreams.

-Nan and Pop, although you didn’t make it to see me graduate, I know that you are happy that my dream has been fulfilled.

-Mom and Dad, you nurtured my passions and helped me grow into the man I am today. From our Wolfe Tones concert to driving over the Bridge of Toombe, the stories which fascinated me as a child and which I have studied as a man came from you. Your constant urging to follow my dreams and your constant support over the many years of study have all led to this. Thank you.

-Samantha, I couldn’t have done this without your love and help- this is our accomplishment. Your constant encouragement kept me going through the darkest of days, as did your acquisition of Finley, the best research assistant anyone could ask for. Thank you for your kindness, your love, and your willingness to listen to me describe what I was working on for the thousandth time.

This project also couldn’t have been completed without the support of the graduate community at Marquette, both my fellow graduate students and professors. My fellow graduate students supported me academically and personally, inspiring me to work to my utmost and giving me much needed advice, criticism, and friendship. My professors, most notably Drs. McMahon and Hay, have developed my skills as a historian for the past eight years, constantly pushing me to produce the best work possible. Continued financial support from the department allowed me to visit a variety of archives in Ireland and the United States, travel to attend conferences across the US and British Isles, and most importantly to support myself in Milwaukee, my adopted home.
TABLE OF CONTENTS

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS........................................................................................................1

CHAPTERS

I. Introduction.....................................................................................................................1

II. Chapter 1..................................................................................................................... 61

III. Chapter 2 .................................................................................................................. 114

IV. Chapter 3................................................................................................................... 169

V. Chapter 4.................................................................................................................... 230

VI. Chapter 5................................................................................................................... 286

VII. Conclusion................................................................................................................ 341

VIII. Bibliography............................................................................................................. 358

IX. Appendix................................................................................................................... 369
Introduction

This dissertation examines the creation of Irish national identities in the period following the Famine of 1845-1852, using the Irish Land War of 1879-1882 as its primary lens. This project grew out of my initial interest in the Irish land question, the issue of land reform in Ireland which was perhaps the most important political issue in the latter half of the nineteenth century on the island. During the Land War this ongoing issue was permanently fused with the national question, that is, the question of Ireland’s status within the United Kingdom, which would have far-reaching consequences for both Irish and British politics moving forward.

The Land War, or Cogadh na Talún in Irish, was a period of widespread agrarian agitation lasting in its initial phase from 1879-1882. The period was characterized by a near collapse in the ability of the British government to administer the western and southern regions of Ireland and resulted in fundamental shifts to the Irish economic and political landscapes. The agitation began in 1879 when low crop prices and poor harvests caused by bad weather combined to prompt an economic crisis in the Irish agricultural sector. This sector was by far the largest of the Irish economy and was dominated by tenant farmers, most of whom were Roman Catholics, who rented land from large landlords, who were generally of Anglican or Presbyterian backgrounds. Antipathy between landlord and tenant had long been a feature of Irish life and had been increased by the experience of the Famine of 1845-52, which had resulted in large-scale evictions of tenant farmers.1

The Famine resulted in several important developments which shaped the Land War period. Firstly, the population declines of the Famine period continued in its aftermath, with emigration becoming a vital part of Irish life. This was coupled with fundamental shifts in the inheritance of land, with the peasant population moving away from partible inheritance and toward a system where the land would be inherited by one heir, with oldest sons having a right of first refusal. These shifts also resulted in later ages of marriage for the post-Famine generation, with important impacts on the ability of these unmarried heirs to fully reach adult status in their communities. Other social and economic changes included a shift from subsistence farming to the commercial raising of cattle for export, a corresponding decrease in the number of landless laborers in rural areas, and an overall improvement in living conditions in rural areas.²

One of the most important developments of the post-Famine period was what Emmet Larkin called the “Devotional Revolution.” Larkin argued that in the third quarter of the nineteenth century the Irish population transformed into practicing Catholics, with

profound social and political ramifications. He noted that prior to the Famine weekly mass attendance was largely confined to urban spaces and some areas of south-eastern Ireland, due largely to an inadequate number of clergy elsewhere on the island and in some cases to a lack of clerical discipline. Following the Famine, he contended that the reduction of the population, the psychological dislocation of that event, and the increasing role of the Catholic church in the creation of Irish national identity combined to promote increased weekly mass attendance and increased compliance with both official church doctrine and with the political guidance of Roman Catholic clergy.

The Land War was also shaped by developments in Irish nationalist politics. The Irish Revolutionary Brotherhood, or IRB, had been dedicated to undertaking an armed rebellion to effect Irish independence from the United Kingdom and the establishment of an Irish Republic. The IRB, also often called the Fenian movement after the organization’s American counterpart the Fenian Brotherhood, was a secret society, but something of an open secret. As R.V. Comerford noted in his 1985 work The Fenians in Context: Irish Politics and Society 1848-82, adherents in rural areas in particular flaunted

---


their membership, often by ostentatiously buying and reading copies of the IRB newspaper *The Irish People*. Following a failed attempt at rebellion sparked by a government crackdown in 1867, Fenian leaders in Ireland concluded that a strict adherence to a program of armed conflict and the rejection of constitutional politics, which had been central to the group’s ideology, would have to be, at least temporarily, abandoned. This shift proved immediately effective, as Fenian support was central to the election of John O’Connor Power, himself a member of the IRB, to Parliament from Co. Mayo in May of 1874. This prompted Fenian leaders, including John Devoy and Michael Davitt, to declare their support in 1878 for a more general alliance between the Fenian movement and the Irish party in Parliament.\(^5\)

The Land War itself began in Co. Mayo in 1879, growing out of a series of local protests demanding remittances of rent and developing into a large-scale political movement demanding a fundamental reassessment of the land system in Ireland. At its height in the winter of 1880-81, the Irish National Land League, the political organization set up to manage the agitation, comprised hundreds of branches and over 200,000 members. While the leadership of the movement advocated publicly for non-violent methods of protest, notably the practice of boycotting, instances of agrarian violence rose

---

\(^5\) Davitt proved to be one of the most influential nationalist leaders of the late-nineteenth century. Born in 1846 to an Irish-speaking tenant farmer family in Straide, Co. Mayo, Davitt and his family emigrated to East Lancashire in England in 1850 after their eviction. When only eleven years of age, Davitt suffered an industrial accident that so injured his right arm that doctors amputated it. These two events would inspire a lifelong radicalism in his personal politics. He eventually joined the Irish Republican Brotherhood and was convicted of treason felony for arms trafficking in 1870. Following his release from prison in 1877 Davitt pioneered the New Departure strategy and co-founded the Irish National Land League in 1879. Davitt was notable within the land movement for his support for land nationalization, while most of his contemporaries favored establishing a peasant proprietorship. See T.W. Moody, *Davitt and the Irish Revolution 1846-1882* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Patrick Maume, *The Long Gestation: Irish Nationalist Life 1891-1918* (New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1999); Carla King, *Michael Davitt* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2009).
drastically during the period. Such instances of violence generally targeted landlords and their agents, although violence aimed at tenant farmers who violated communal agreements by paying their rent or by taking land which neighbors believed belonged to evicted tenants (a practice denounced as “land grabbing”) was also commonplace.

The land agitation also prompted a fundamental reform of Irish politics. The Irish Parliamentary Party, which had existed since 1874, had been a largely ineffectual group in Parliament. The pressure of the Land War coincided with the death of its first leader, the indecisive Isaac Butt, and prompted a fundamental change in direction for the party with C.S. Parnell taking over leadership. Parnell, who held more radical positions both politically and tactically than most members of the party, was able to use his twin position as leader of the Land League and of the Irish Party to prod the Liberal government of William Gladstone to present a series of reforms in the Land Act of 1881.

---

6 The term boycott took its name from an ostracism campaign aimed at the land agent Captain Charles Boycott near Lough Mask, Co. Mayo, in 1880. As Samuel Clark noted, the number of agrarian crimes in 1880 was more than double the number reported in 1849. Moreover, in both 1849 and 1861-4, there were as many evictions as during the Land War without a corresponding increase in violence. Samuel Clark, *Social origins of the Irish land war* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1979), 320.

7 Parnell was perhaps an unlikely choice to rise to prominence within an Irish nationalist movement devoted to land reform, as he was born into an Anglo-Irish landowning family in County Wicklow in 1846. First elected in 1875 as MP for County Meath, he became associated with the more radical wing of the Home Rule Party, eventually taking a leading role in their policy of obstructionism in the House of Commons in order to force the House to grant Irish issues due weight. As leader of the Irish Party, Parnell subsequently held the balance of power in Parliament following the 1885 election. This, coupled with William Gladstone’s belief in the righteousness of the Home Rule claim, prompted the Liberal Party to promote a Home Rule Bill, although the debate over the bill prompted a fracturing of the Liberal Party over the issue, and the bill was defeated in the Commons. Parnell’s political career was effectively ended in 1890 when his decade-long relationship with Katherine O’Shea, the wife of Captain John O’Shea, an MP in the Irish Party, became known publicly. These revelations caused the Irish Party to split along Pro- and Anti-Parnell lines until his death in 1891, and the party was not truly reunified until 1900. Parnell has been a widely studied figure, with most scholars agreeing that “Parnell saw land reform as a way to bring landlords to the nationalist cause.” See Paul Bew, *Land and the national question in Ireland, 1858-82* (London: Humanities Press, 1979). Other works on Parnell include Michael Hurst, *Parnell and Irish Nationalism* (London: University of Toronto Press, 1968); F.S.L. Lyons, *Charles Stewart Parnell* (London, William Collins, 1977); Donald Jordan, “John O’Connor Power, Charles Stewart Parnell and the Centralization of Popular Politics in Ireland,” *Irish Historical Studies*, 25 (1986):46-66; George Boyce and Alan O’Day (eds.), *Parnell in Perspective* (New York: Routledge, 1991).
While the Act would not abolish the landlord system, it did fundamentally limit the power of landlords, establishing land courts to arbitrate rent disputes while also laying the foundations for the transfer of land ownership from landlords to their tenant farmers. However, the Act did have several major weaknesses, most notably the fact that tenants who owed back rent, who comprised a majority of all tenant farmers, were ineligible to benefit from most of the reforms.

Following the passage of the Act, Parnell and League leaders resolved to push for further reform, fearing that the wealthier tenant farmer population would take advantage of the limited reforms issued and withdraw from the movement. Parnell and several of his leading lieutenants publicly criticized the Act in October 1881, and the government arrested them under the Protection of Persons and Property Act of 1881, which allowed for imprisonment without trial of those suspected of encouraging boycotts or engaging in any sort of extra-legal activity. Two days later the administration declared the Land League an illegal organization. In response to the arrests, the Land League leadership issued the No Rent Manifesto on 18 October 1881 from Kilmainham Gaol, calling for tenant farmers to withhold rents until those interned were released.

While a genuine national rent strike was impossible to organize, the arrests did result in an increase in the number of agrarian crimes committed. As F.S.L. Lyons noted in his biography of one of Parnell’s lieutenants, John Dillon, in the ten months before passage of the Land Act in August 1881 2,379 “outrages” were committed in Ireland, and in ten months after—the bulk of which came after League leaders were in prison—that number increased to 3,821.8 Importantly, while the Land League had been proscribed, its

---

female auxiliary the Ladies’ Land League continued to operate, focusing particularly on providing evicted tenants with housing.9

In the face of rising agrarian crime Gladstone moved to make a deal with Parnell. The settlement, known as the Kilmainham Treaty after the Dublin jail holding League leaders, committed Parnell to withdraw the no-rent manifesto and work to limit agrarian crime, while the government committed to pay the rents in arrears of over 130,000 tenant farmers, thus making them eligible to benefit from the 1881 Land Act. This agreement, and the subsequent although largely unrelated murder of Chief Secretary for Ireland Lord Frederick Cavendish and his secretary Thomas Burke in May 1882, effectively put an end to the Land War. Parnell and the Irish Party he controlled turned their attention more fully to the issue of Home Rule, the establishment of a Parliament in Dublin to manage Irish affairs.

The interlinked historiographies of the Land War, Ireland’s post-Famine modernization, and the IRB/Fenian movement have both conceptual and practical gaps. Accordingly, this introduction will outline what those gaps are and propose ways to fill those holes with a new approach based on a close reading of the Land War in relation to

---

9 The Ladies’ Land League was originally founded as the Ladies Auxiliary to the Land League. Following the banning of the Land League, the Ladies’ League took over most of its functions, generally concentrating on building huts for evicted tenants and providing aid to the families of evicted and imprisoned tenants. Led by C.S. Parnell’s sister Anna, the Ladies’ League came under government scrutiny, and several members were arrested either under the 1881 Coercion Act or through application of an older act from the reign of Edward III, which provided for the imprisonment of individuals “not of good fame,” who could not post bail, although this prompted popular disapproval as most members of the League were mid-class women. Following his release from prison, C.S. Parnell leveraged the indebtedness of the Ladies’ League to pressure its leaders to dissolve the organization in August of 1882. For more on the Ladies’ Land League see footnote 57 and all of Chapter 5. For more on Anna Parnell see Jane Cote, *Fanny and Anna Parnell: Ireland’s patriot sisters* (Dublin: Gill and MacMillan, 1991); Patricia Groves, *Petticoat Rebellion – The Anna Parnell Story* (Cork: Mercier Press, 2009); and Dana Hearne (ed.), *The Tale of a Great Sham* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press: 2021).
prior agitations and attention to the gendered ideas and imperial notions that shaped the movement’s ideals.

The historiography of the Land War in many ways began with a debate between Barbra Solow and James S. Donnelly Jr., regarding the nature of the pre-crisis Irish economy. Solow’s *The Land Question and the Irish Economy 1870-1903*, published in 1971, pushed back against the prevailing narrative that rents were unjustly high, evictions of tenants common, and that these factors reduced tenant incentive to invest in their holdings and produced an underdeveloped economy. She argued instead that the system that existed in nineteenth-century Ireland was one “of tenure customs in which eviction was rare, rents were moderate, and tenant investment incentives were established.” Specifically, she argued that the economic problems of the late 1870s which triggered the Land War were due largely to political miscalculations, rather than economic factors.¹⁰

Donnelly responded in his 1975 *The Land and People of Nineteenth Century Cork: The Rural Economy and the Land Question*. The book covered the entirety of the nineteenth century, and Donnelly in the opening section tackled many of the same myths that Solow had contended with. Donnelly noted that the nature of the rural economy was changing even before the events of the Great Famine, with consolidation of holdings and the removal of middlemen being key points in this transformation. Donnelly argued that the Famine served to accelerate several key changes to the rural social structure, with

---

¹⁰ She argued further that the Land Act of 1881 was similarly not based on economic principles, but rather on the political requirement to prevent land agitation caused by the organization of the tenantry by Davitt and Parnell to fulfill their political aims, and as such “The 1881 act was an income maintenance program at the expense of the landlords” and “the failure of that act made land purchase inevitable. (198)” Barbra Solow, *The Land Question and the Irish Economy 1870-1903* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971), 13. Solow also addressed the question in her “A New Look at the Irish Land Question,” *The Economic and Social Review* 12 (1981): 301-314.
commercial farming coming to preeminence in the place of the much-diminished subsistence sector, landless laborers and farm servants emigrating in large numbers, and inheritance practices shifting to primogeniture.

The greatest contribution of this work to the field, however, was in Donnelly’s explanation for the outbreak of the Land War in the late 1870s and, by extension, why such agitation did not occur during an earlier economic downturn of comparable severity in the 1860s. Donnelly viewed the period following the Famine as one of nearly uninterrupted progress in the rural standard of living and argued that such “material progress can help to undermine the established order of things, especially if it is threatened with temporary check or reversal, as it was in the late 1870s.”

This increase in prosperity, coupled with contact with relatives in the United States who were in even better economic circumstances, created a situation where the increase in living conditions seen since the Famine became expected to continue indefinitely, what Donnelly termed “a revolution of rising expectations.” When the economic downturn of the 1870s occurred, not only was the improvement of conditions halted, but the gains made since the end of the Famine came under threat, which Donnelly argued prompted rural residents to bridge class divides and organize.

Three years later Paul Bew articulated a limited critique of Donnelly’s thesis in his book *Land and the national question in Ireland, 1858-82*. Bew focused his study on the west of Ireland and argued that, in contrast to Cork, most farmers in that region saw no increase in their quality of life after the Famine. At most he was willing to concede

---


12 Donnelly Jr., *The Land and People of Nineteenth Century Cork*, 250.
that “there may have been a limited sense that at the end of the 1870s gains had been made, and the bad end to the 1870s may have raised tensions,” but he held that “only in this limited sense is the thesis applicable.”

He also argued that the issues articulated by tenants were drawn from a more broad range than just economic improvement, including opposition to grazing, their insecurity of tenure, and the issue of absentee landlords along with more strictly economic issues.

Bew claimed that the genesis of the Land War lay in the efforts of Neo-Fenians and Home Rulers to nationalize local unrest in order to create a movement that they could ride to the fulfillment of their respective goals. The former, he argued, created the Land League in order to issue demands they knew would be rejected by Parliament, in the hope that failure would radicalize the population. The latter, in contrast, sought to expand the movement outside of the West, to include larger farmers within the League, and moderated the demands of the League in order to build a larger coalition for Home Rule, ideally one that could include landlords following the resolution of the land question.

Bew offered a Marxist interpretation of the strategic shifts of the League, arguing that the shifts in tone and strategy reflected the internal politics of a mass movement with deep class divides held together solely by anti-landlordism. The growing moderation of the movement he attributed to the inability of the League “to impose its aims on the rural

---

bourgeoisie.” with the result that they imposed their own, more moderate, “views on the League.”

Samuel Clark also offered a nation-wide analysis of the Land War in his 1979 monograph, *Social Origins of the Irish Land War*. In contrast to Bew’s Marxist approach and his focus on the class divisions within the movement, Clark argued that the Land War was caused largely by the emergence of a new “challenging collectivity.” The collectivity was comprised primarily of priests, large tenant farmers, and the bourgeoisie of rural townlands, many of whom were undertaking farming activity to complement their commercial income. He argued that this collectivity came into being as a result of the social changes after the Famine, which reduced the cleavages between different classes of tenant farmers and sharpened their isolation from the landlord class.

Clark held that this collectivity was fundamentally different from any that had come before, partly because of its scope but also because of the nature of its political movement, which he held had become more national and less local. He argued further that this collective was more proactive in articulating its demands than earlier, reactive

---

14 Bew, *Land and the National Question*, 136. Bew further extended treatment of land agitation to later periods in his *Conflict and conciliation in Ireland, 1898-1910: Parnellites and radical agrarians* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1987.) The work initially focused on the maneuvering of John Redmond as he attempted to reconstruct the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP) following the fall of Parnell and Redmond’s struggles to hold his own wing of the party, which was generally conciliatory toward landlords and hoped to incorporate them into the nationalist movement, together with the more intransigent, radical wing. Bew also examined of the Ranch War of 1906-1909, arguing that the agitation targeting large graziers of that period resulted in intercommunal conflict to a degree that the earlier movement had not, with its focus on the landlord class, as most graziers were themselves Catholic tenant farmers. Laurence M. Geary similarly highlighted agitations in the latter 1880s when Parnell exerted less direct control and when clerical authority was less clear. See Laurence M. Geary, *The Plan of Campaign, 1886-1891* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1986).

collectivities, and was of an associational rather than communal character, meaning that its members saw themselves as part of a community that transcended their local kin groups and settlements. Still, he did note that “the nation it comprised was not coterminous with the state that ruled over the nation”; rather, that nation was confined largely to the Catholic Irish.\textsuperscript{16}

In contrast to Bew, Clark argued that there was little class conflict in the movement, due to it being primarily a movement of tenant farmers, and that this essential unity was crucial to the success of the Land War. Finally, Clark argued that the goals of the collectivity differed from previous agitations, seeking not to change specific policies of the state but “to transform the existing political system” and take what they saw as their rightful place atop the new order.\textsuperscript{17}

In 1996 Phillip Bull advanced an argument that the origins of the Land War lay in the culture of rural Ireland and he re-periodized the conflict to incorporate further land agitation up through 1903, in his \textit{Land, Politics, and Nationalism: A Study of the Irish Land Question}. Bull offered his own version of Donnelly’s thesis, marrying cultural and religious aspects to Donnelly’s socioeconomic argument, and argued that “part of the explanation of the mobilization of Irish farmers in 1879 was a determination not to allow the landlords to use the recession as an opportunity to cut back the social pretensions of a class beginning to challenge the landlords’ own ascendancy in Irish society,” and that “the creation of an identity as Catholic elite must have intensified determination to hold onto their gains.”\textsuperscript{18} More broadly, Bull argued that capitalism became discredited among

\textsuperscript{16} Clark, \textit{Social origins of the Irish land war}, 305.
\textsuperscript{17} Clark, \textit{Social origins of the Irish land war}, 370.
the Irish peasantry in the second half of the nineteenth century. In the wake of the
Famine, he contended, it became linked with English-style property rights, clearances of
land, and attendant pressures on landlords to transition to more economically rational
practices which inhibited the development of a partnership between landlord and tenant.

The mid-1990s produced a series of monographs that examined specific Irish
counties in an attempt to gain a more nuanced understanding of the Land War at the local
level, building on the work of the scholars noted above. The first of these works was
Donald Jordan’s 1994 *Land and Popular Politics in Ireland: County Mayo from the
Plantation to the Land War*, which employed a core/periphery analysis in order to
understand the local distribution of economic and social phenomena. Jordan argued that
the central region of the county, the most fertile region, was the core of development in
the region where the post-famine social and economic changes were most prevalent. He
argued much of the rise in standards of living were confined to this core region, with
peripheral regions seeing much smaller gains, if any. Further, he held that much of the
rise in prosperity was illusory, built on the back of deep indebtedness, rather than on rises
in income.¹⁹

In Jordan’s analysis, the Land War was able to occur in Mayo in the late 1870s
because of the coming together of Clark’s challenging collectivity, and its ability, for a
time, to prompt small farmers to join them by focusing on toppling landlords and
relieving the immediate economic distress caused by the deep recession of the late-1870s.
However, most of the League meetings took place in the more developed core, and most
of the League leadership was drawn from the elite that inhabited that area, with the lack

of political and structural development in the peripheral areas seeming to inhibit individuals from those areas from exerting influence in the movement. He contended that as the Land League in the region came to prioritize the demands of larger farmers and “opted for an offensive war against landlordism …, the small western farmers were doomed to become the victims, not the victors, of the ‘Land League revolution’.” He further argued that in consequence of those developments, the small farming population self-consciously withdrew from the agitation and indeed from Ireland, emigrating in numbers to Britain and to the United States, explaining the early collapse of the League in Mayo.

That same year J.W.H. Carter examined the social composition of League leadership in a Leinster County, in _The Land War and its Leaders in Queen’s County, 1879-82_. Carter pushed back against Donnelly’s thesis and argued that “conditions were not so extreme as to impel its tenant farmers into a widespread” collective action, but rather that the emergence of the League in what is now Co. Laois was the result of the leadership of Parnell and Davitt inspiring local elites to take up a political role. He asserted that this leadership cadre was similar to that of an independent farmer’s club, but with increased shopkeeper presence both in numbers and in activity. He argued that the

---


22 J.W.H. Carter, _The Land War and its Leaders in Queen’s County, 1879-82_ (Dublin: Leinster Express Newspapers, 1994), 26. A secondary theme advanced by Carter is the weakness of judicial authority in the county during the land war. He noted that the number of police in the county from 1877-82 remained unchanged, even as the national number increased by nearly fifteen per cent, as the majority of those gains were distributed to counties deemed more disturbed, such as Galway, Mayo, Cork, and Kerry. As a result, he argues that the recorded number of agrarian crimes may be underreported, as police were not available to produce such records.
League’s activity and the level of distress in the county did not mirror one another. Moreover, the motivation of farmers to take part had as much to do with the level of their indebtedness as it did with the threat of famine. Meanwhile inspired by the example of the League’s national leadership, local leaders sought the opportunity to claim political prominence going forward.

A final county-level study of the Land War was Donnacha Sean Lucey’s *Land, Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence in Ireland: The Case of County Kerry, 1872-86*. Lucey offered a deft blending of high political analysis and local, bottom-up history. He argued that the driving factor in the initial round of Land League branch formation in Co. Kerry was the Parliamentary election of 1880 and the unpopularity of the local Conservative candidate. He further argued, following in Bull’s footsteps, that the state’s coercive response to the passive and non-violent nature of League actions helped drive popular acceptance of the League, particularly by the clergy and the middle classes.

However, another side of Lucey’s argument was that violence did play a major role in both the success of the Land League and the later United Irish League. He noted that aggressive agitation increased after League branches had been established in various parts of the county. Indeed, by the time of the UIL in the late 1890s, a new agrarian combination which he termed the Moonlighters had come into being, acting often against both the wishes of the movement’s leadership and of local clergy. Importantly, Lucey argued that despite this elite disapproval, their actions had widespread popular support. He noted that most Moonlighters were the younger sons of farmers and of laborers, that they “appeared to have been rooted in local communities and networks based on personal relationships such as families and co-workers,” and lastly, that their activities
corresponded to folk festivals such as Halloween. These points seem to illustrate the conscious performance of folk culture in defiance of both the Church and the State on the part of the disadvantaged of Kerry, which would be worthy of further study.

In addition to these monographs examining the period, several scholars articulated important points in edited collections of essays, beginning with P.J. Drudy’s 1982 *Ireland: land, politics, and people* where both Bew and Clark expanded upon the ideas articulated in their earlier works. Clark in his essay “The Importance of agrarian classes: agrarian class structure and collective action in nineteenth-century Ireland” qualified his argument regarding the role of class in the Land League and his challenging collectivity. He argued that in the pre-Famine period, most violence was the result of class conflict between smaller farmers, cottiers, and landless laborers against larger tenant farmers who served as landlords or employers to all three classes. With the Famine effectively removing most cottiers and laborers from the land, the tenant farmers who remained came to see themselves as one class, “and at the same time tenant farmers became numerically the largest social group in the rural society, laying the base for a collective action by them and on their behalf.” He argued that initially smaller tenant farmers took up the same political demands as their large tenant neighbors, and it was not until the rise of the United Irish League some twenty years later that the class conflicts within the group would emerge.

---


Bew, in his essay “The Land League Ideal: Achievements and Contradictions,” highlighted a key contradiction within the Land League movement regarding the specific class conflict between graziers and the masses of League members. He argued that one element of the League program was a moral vision for rural Ireland, one based upon “the special sanctity of the family farm and family labor” that saw such holdings as superior to the more economic practice of cattle grazing. This critique, however, faltered when confronted with the fact that many leading members of the League were in some way involved with grazing, which Bew identified as the central contradiction of the League ideal. Their leadership, in turn, meant that branches downplayed the anti-grazing aspect of the early League as the agitation progressed, which Bew presented as an example of how the ideals of Irish revolutionary movements were weakened and ultimately disintegrated under the pressures of capitalism. In a later essay in the volume, “Shopkeeper-graziers and land agitation in Ireland, 1895-1900,” Michael D Higgins and John P Gibbons argued that part of the reason that the shopkeeper-grazier class was able to maintain influence within the League was that “the structure of indebtedness insulated the shopkeeper-graziers from potential opposition from smallholders who might want to combine to press their claim for land.” The debt held by shopkeepers, and the inability of the farmers to pay that debt if shopkeepers moved to collect it, granted the shopkeepers a powerful hold over the movement.

---


26 Higgins, a trained sociologist who worked as a Statutory Lecturer in the Department of Political Science and Sociology at University College, Galway, and as a visiting professor at Southern Illinois University, eventually curtailed his academic career to focus his efforts on Irish politics. Following an extended political career, Higgins was elected as President of Ireland in 2011, the position he holds today.

Finally, David Fitzpatrick in his essay “Class, family and Rural Unrest in nineteenth-century Ireland,” argued that “whether we consider economic functions, aspirations or social mobility, the concept of class divisions within agrarian society seems artificial and implausible when applied to nineteenth century Ireland”; instead, he contended that what scholars were categorizing as class conflict was often inter- or intra-familial conflict, often over land. He further stated that, despite the tendencies of altered inheritance practices to compress and lessen interfamilial conflict, “any contraction of emigration, or any raising of expectations of life among would-be emigrants, tended to disturb the smooth transition of household headship” and therefore that those periods would be prone to disturbances.28 He closed the essay by noting that the period preceding both the Land War and the Irish War of Independence were both periods where such contractions occurred.29

Carla King’s 2000 edited volume *Famine, Land, and Culture in Ireland* contained two essays which examined the makeup of the Land League. Padraig Laine examined the post-Famine experience of laborers arguing that rural crime committed both before and after the Famine was generally committed by the laboring class against the farmers. “It would be a mistake,” he argued, “to suppose that any bond of tenants and laborers after the Famine was anything more than a well-crafted fiction created by the rural bourgeoisie.”30 He noted that resentment from laborers of farmers can be seen not only in actions but in folklore, ballads, and fiction, and he argued that the increased

mechanization of farm labor, as well as rising expectations for quality of life for laborers, were the primary drivers of such resentment. In the same volume Donal McCartney argued for a vision of the Land League as a fundamentally working-class organization, maintaining that “in the days of the Land League, working class leadership came for the first time in Irish history into full public view,” and that the strength of the League lay in its democratic nature. The difference between the two illustrates the difficulty of applying class distinctions to rural Irish society, where such distinctions were less clear: McCartney’s working class was conceived of as a broader group than Laine’s laboring class, allowing for the two to offer conflicting arguments from similar source material.

A final collection of essays, *Land Questions in Modern Ireland*, edited by Fergus Campbell and Tony Varley in 2013, addressed many questions left unanswered in the historiography outlined above and advanced new topics for future scholarship. Several of the scholars who previously authored integral works to the field re-appear to offer further insights or to illustrate new methods or questions that would have informed their past scholarship had it been written at the time.

For instance, in his essay “Strange bedfellows? The Land League alliances” Clark offered his opinion about the tendency in the historiography of the Land War to portray his and Bew’s thesis as oppositional He argued, rather bluntly, that he “was quite surprised that some Irish historians regarded” his and Bew’s theses as opposed, and held that he “fully recognized the sharp differences in interests within the tenant population” and that Bew “fully recognized that the Land War was an alliance based on those

---

interests they had in common.” In the same vein, he attacked what he saw as a wrongheaded tendency to view evidence of conflict within an organization as signaling the weakness of that organization, asserting instead that such conflict was evidence of strength. It meant that the organization was bringing together people with different views and forcing them into continued contact with one another. A weak organization, he contended, would be one without conflict, as it would mean that there was no such process of expansion and interaction.

Heather Laird sought to integrate the experience of women more fully into the narrative of the Land War in her essay “Decentering the Irish Land War: Women, politics and the private sphere.” She argued that “relocating the front of the Land War from the public sphere to the civil domain of everyday life reveals the centrality of women to this episode in Irish history,” a centrality that had gone largely unheeded. She emphasized that much scholarship on the female experience of the Land War had focused on the Ladies’ Land League, which she felt overlooked the experience of ordinary women who were involved in the day-to-day activities of the agitation. She argued that due to their roles in rural Irish society women were central to the success of the agitation through their manipulation of the legal system to inconvenience government officials and their presence at communal meetings and demonstrations. Further, since married women did most of the purchasing of household goods, they were essential to punishing shopkeepers

33 Heather Laird, Decentering the Irish Land War: Women, Politics, and the Private Sphere, in Land Questions in Modern Ireland, eds. Fergus Campbell and Tony Varley (Manchester: Manchester University Press), 187.
who violated League dictates. Similarly, she argued that single women leveraged their sexual power by refusing to allow boycotted men to court them.

In sum, the historiography on the topic has been marked by a remarkable level of consistency and agreement, as seen in Clark’s dismissal of any debate between his and Bew’s views. There is general consensus that the Land War resulted partly from a rise in the living conditions of the rural population and from the expectations that such a rise would continue, partially from tensions between landlords and tenants regarding the legitimacy of landlord claims to their property, partially because of the emergence of a strong farmer/shopkeeper class that harbored political aspirations, and partially because of the influence of both the Fenians and Parnell, who for separate reasons sought to elevate local agitation into a national movement. Further, the arguments of Campbell, Lucey, and Laird seem particularly useful going forward, arguing for an approach that considers the particularities of the Irish experience. All three expand on existing narratives to account for conflicts that cannot be easily fitted into a class framework, the endurance of pre-modern rituals and rhythms well into the post-Famine period, and the need to better incorporate the lived complexities of gender dynamics in these narratives.

The process of modernization of post-Famine Irish society was a vital aspect of the context in which the Land War occurred. This process was examined at some length by Joseph Lee, in his extended 1973 essay, *The Modernization of Irish Society 1848-1918*. Lee argued that the six decades after the Famine witnessed several major changes across Ireland, including shifts from partible inheritance to variations on primogeniture, an increase in political awareness by the population, and the erosion of traditional deference to both priests and landlords. He contended that it was this last change that was
the most revolutionary and placed it as emerging fully in the context of the Land War, arguing that that change paved the way for the eventual growth and success of the nationalist movement in Ireland, noting particularly that in Co. Mayo half of the agrarian outrages targeted landlords and their agents. Lee also argued that priests were able to maintain their customary position as leaders of political movements only so long as they responded to popular feelings. Accordingly, the erosion of traditional patterns of deference illustrated a corresponding erosion of the mental patterns that had sustained such traditions and illustrated the extent to which the modernization of Ireland was not only experienced physically, but also mentally. He stated that the idea that emerged in the aftermath of the Famine, i.e., that the British government was in some way culpable for the level of devastation, was itself evidence of a shift in mentality. Before this period, individuals attributed major events to the supernatural, while following it, they began granting agency to the political realm. To Lee, this was a major shift because “governments, unlike God, were amenable to pressures other than prayer,” and as a result, this shift allowed the Irish people to agitate for their political demands to be carried out.34

Lee’s assertion that the Land War marked the end of deference in Ireland came under attack in later years, as scholars argued that one could not quantify deference or its inverse. Nonetheless, Geary defended Lee’s argument in his 2005 essay “Anticipating memory: landlordism, agrarianism and deference in late-nineteenth-century Ireland,” in the collection History and the public sphere: essays in honour of John A. Murphy. Geary argued that beyond the physical markers of the end of deference—such as the mass

---

meetings of the Land League, the anti-landlord rhetoric of those meetings, and attacks on landlords—we can find evidence of the end of deference in contemporary writing and trace its decline to the years before the Land War. For example, Geary noted that Davitt often complained of tenant deference in the years before the Land War and noted with pride the lack of such deference in the years following the Land War, while landlords articulated the same observations, with the opposite reactions. Nevertheless, Geary contended that the appearance of deference was illusory and that the speed with which tenants seemingly discarded deference after the Land War suggests that it was little more than a façade. In this scenario, the mass meetings and charged atmosphere of the period allowed tenants to express long-held opinions.35

The process of state modernization was a central theme in W. E. Vaughan’s *Landlords and tenants in mid-Victorian Ireland.* Vaughan argued that, despite their wealth and seeming authority, landlords in nineteenth century Ireland were far less powerful than their counterparts in England but played an important role in maintaining harmonious social relationships in rural Ireland for much of the century.

Vaughn argued further that the weakness of the landlord’s position also stemmed from several crucial areas where the state maintained control rather than landlords. For example, unlike their English counterparts, Irish landlords did not control the local constabulary, did not appoint the ministers of the local parishes of the Church of Ireland, and, as the century progressed, increasingly saw their role as magistrates supplanted by professionals appointed by and loyal to the Dublin Castle regime. As a result of this

situation, and the failure of the landlords to invest fully in their holdings, when the Land War began “landlords were bound by the law—and had been supplanted as enforcers of the law. They had failed to build up reservoirs of informal power that would have been completely under their control; they did not possess sanctions that could be applied gradually and flexibly,” and as a result their ability to respond to the crisis was limited.36

Not coincidentally, the Land War also coincided with the political modernization of Ireland, notably through the expansion of the franchise and burgeoning political consciousness to different sectors of society. In 1984 William Feingold’s *The Revolt of the Tenantry: The Transformation of Local Government in Ireland, 1872-1886* examined the manifestations of these changes in elections to Poor Law Union boards, the only form of local government popularly elected in Ireland for most of the 1800s. He noted that these bodies were deliberately designed to favor the landlord class, with 1/3 of the guardians being appointed *ex officio* from the justices of the peace of the union, and with property holders being granted additional votes. However, he demonstrated that by the mid-1870s these protections were not as powerful as they had once been, as *ex officio*

36 W.E. Vaughn, *Landlords and Tenants in Mid-Victorian Ireland*, (Oxford: Clarendon Pres, 1994), 216. See also Tim P. O’Neill’s essay “Famine Evictions,” in *Famine, Land, and Culture in Ireland*, ed. Carla King (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2000). O’Neill argued that the eviction rate during the Famine increased greatly and that “by breaking the social compact in the Famine, Irish landlordism signed its own death warrant and created a new politics of land which was to dominate Irish society for a century or more.” (57) See also Terrance Dooly’s *The Decline of the Big House in Ireland: a Study of Irish Landed families 1860-1960* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 2001). The central theme of the work is that the continued and conscious isolation of the landed classes from the majority of Irish society and their failure to adapt to a politically modernizing society contributed heavily to their downfall. Dooly asserted that “outside of Parnell and a few others, landlords outside of the six counties increasingly isolated themselves politically—dooming future hopes of political roles” and ensuring that when mass political movements did emerge in Ireland that they would be formed in opposition to the landlords. (212) He crucially placed the failure of the landlords to adapt to changing circumstances in the context of the massive nature of the changes caused by the process of modernization, stating that “over half a century the whole fabric of Irish landed society was transformed. This was outside the control of landlords, thus there was very little they could do to prevent it.” (272).
members were often unable to attend meetings, and those landlords with holdings in multiple Poor Law districts were unable personally to stand for election in each holding. Further, they often struggled to dictate electoral policy to their tenants, rendering them vulnerable should a determined opposition arise.

In Feingold’s reading the most important developments of the period were the creation of an explicitly nationalist movement that resolved to challenge landlord control of the Poor Law Boards and the creation of a non-landlord bourgeoisie. Feingold noted that, beginning in the early 1870s, the IRB resolved that all electoral offices in Ireland should at the least be contested. Initially the majority of boards remained firmly pro-landlord in their electoral results, evidence in Feingold’s analysis both of the political clout of landlords and the relatively apolitical nature of most Irish farmers at the time. However, at the same time that the IRB had made its tactical plan, there had emerged “both a town and a country bourgeoisie,” the first comprised of shopkeepers and publicans, the second of cattle graziers, who shared not only social and economic links but also a desire to transform their emerging social status into political power.37 These impulses first manifested in the creation of farmers’ clubs in the 1850s and ’60s, but by the late 1870s both elements of the bourgeoisie were attempting to politicize the smaller farmers, with their efforts running parallel to those of the IRB. Initially both sets of efforts were hampered by the lack of political awareness of the majority of the tenant farmer population. However, Feingold argued that the economic crisis of the late 1870s and the personal magnetism of the Land League leadership worked to politicize that

population, with the result that from 1882 onward tenant farmers united behind the bourgeoisie, creating enduring nationalist majorities on most Poor Law boards.

One agent of this transformation was the provincial press, which Mary Louise Legg analyzed in *Newspapers and Nationalism: The Irish Provincial Press, 1850-1892*. Legg highlighted how newspapers shaped and responded to popular political understandings and placed the growth of that segment of the media in the context of general economic growth in the post-Famine era. She argued that the “the local press was itself supported both politically and financially by the development of towns, with markets, shops, roads and railway stations, and the publication of articles and advertisements in support of Parliamentary and local elections.” In short, without the re-shaping of the Irish countryside as the result of economic modernization, the provincial press would have withered.38

Legg placed importance on the decrease and ultimate elimination of the various government duties on newspapers, which made founding a paper a more economically viable proposition for a wider segment of society. Individuals from more modest backgrounds could establish papers for the expressed purpose of using them to gain a career in politics. Concurrently, the number of potential readers for those presses had been increased as compulsory education and reading rooms set up by various political organization had increased the literacy rate and made newspaper reading a part of everyday life. As a result, political ideas moved more quickly through society, and different segments of society gained additional knowledge of each other, with both

developments enabling the mass mobilization that made the tactics of the Land League effective.

In 2011 Carla King edited a collection of essays from scholars who examined the impact of modernization on political life in nineteenth-century Ireland from a variety of angles, entitled *The West of Ireland: New Perspectives on the Nineteenth Century*. In the volume, Padraig Lane contended that laborers were becoming increasingly isolated from the rest of rural society by the 1850s, and that this damaged their ability to assert themselves politically. He argued that in part their isolation was due to the elitist nature of farmers’ clubs, but also the laborers themselves had been reluctant to join into associational collectives. Andrew Shields held that the Tenant Right movement was unable to make headway in the West of Ireland because that region’s social structure changed more slowly than did the structure elsewhere on the island, which meant that the large farmers who were the core of the movement were both less numerous and less able to expand the movement to their poorer neighbors. Lastly, Gerard Moran studied the Ballinasloe Tenants’ Defense Association, which became prominent and successful in that area because it was able to assemble a Land League-style coalition before the League itself emerged. Moran attributed this achievement to its lay leaders, who were more willing to articulate radical challenges to the status quo. Unlike Shields’s sample, in other words, he found that the Ballinasloe association benefitted from changes that had occurred during the process of modernization, emphasizing that the increased network of

provincial newspapers allowed it to advertise its activities more fully, and that the physical location of the town at the conjunction of three counties allowed the one organization to interact with a great number of local and national electoral campaigners, increasing its political clout.41

Alongside the modernization of Ireland in the nineteenth century, which in its earliest iterations from Lee and Donnelly presupposed almost linear development, one must account for the persistence of non-official or “subversive” concepts of law and justice which enhanced the Land League’s popular legitimacy. While these concepts have been examined by some authors writing directly on the Land War, notably Lucey, several scholars have examined these topics, and their pre-League antecedents in some detail.

For instance, Michael Beames’s *Peasants and power: the Whiteboy movements and their control in pre-Famine Ireland*, published in 1983, asserted that oath-bound, secret societies (known collectively as the Whiteboys42) defended “peasant interests by seeking to regulate the traditional socio-economic demands on their surplus product in a just manner in the face of the disruptive market pressures which were distorting and changing those relationships,” referring to the process of economic modernization and the shift from tillage farming to grassland grazing.43 He emphasized that the Whiteboys and

---


42 A catchall term for agrarian activists in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, derived from the name of one of the earliest identified secret societies.

similar localized agrarian agitations were part of a pre-modern society, and drew their strength from pre-modern concepts of legitimacy and justice fundamentally similar to those examined by E.P. Thompson in his “The Moral Economy of the English Crowd in the Eighteenth Century.” The primary targets of their agitation were, therefore, those individuals who transgressed pre-modern codes of morality, that is, those who were operating according to and attempting to implement modernizing economic principles onto rural society, such as modernizing landlords and those who purchased land held by evicted tenants.

The other key thread of Beames’s analysis is the role that the modernization of the state, and to a lesser extent the Catholic Church, played in combatting the Whiteboys. Beames argued that for much of the pre-Famine period the apparatus of the state was too isolated and too vulnerable to physical intimidation or bribery to truly be effective in suppressing dissident legal codes or their adherents. During the first half of the nineteenth century, however, the Church and the Crown state reorganized and extended their reach into rural Ireland. As a result, by 1850 the Whiteboys were confronted with a professional, armed, and disciplined police force, as well as professional magistrates with supervision from the state, which increased the odds of prosecution for criminal acts. Agrarian secret societies also had to contend with a hostile priesthood, and a national system of education for their children which weakened, but did not destroy, the social legitimacy that had allowed the Whiteboys to operate. The final straw, in his analysis, was the impact of the Famine, which both eroded the collective identity central to

---

Whiteboy legitimacy, but also destroyed the ability of the Whiteboys to organize even on a local level.

Tom Garvin discussed later emerging agrarian networks in his “Defenders, Ribbonmen and Others: Underground Political Networks in Pre-Famine Ireland” published in Past & Present in 1982. He argued that the Ribbonmen and Defenders, which appeared later than the Whiteboys and in more northern and religiously mixed areas, “appear[s] to have been in part an attempt by part of a nascent Catholic lower-middle class and its working-class allies to put itself at the head of” agrarian networks, and that it aspired to be more national in scope and centralized organizationally than earlier associations.\textsuperscript{45} He asserted that the Ribbonmen in particular possessed a sophisticated system of lodges and were in contact with radicals in England, evidence of a clear, if still emerging political consciousness. In the end, Garvin argued, that like many later mass movements, Ribbonism “had an in-built tendency to be dominated by local groups rather than by any central leadership with more general and long-term goals. As the centre was incapable of bending the local groups to its purposes, the organization was liable to fail to evolve into anything more than a federation of local cliques,” which reduced its political efficacy.\textsuperscript{46} Despite this, he emphasized that it served as an important revolutionary link between earlier, purely agrarian groups like the Whiteboys and later, more centralized political groups such as the Land League.\textsuperscript{47}

\textsuperscript{46} Garvin, “Defenders, Ribbonmen, and Others,” 152.
\textsuperscript{47} The linkages between groups like the Whiteboys and the Land League were also examined by James S. Donnelly Jr. He first examined these in a collection co-edited with Samuel Clark Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest, 1780–1914 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press 1983) and returned to the topic in his 2009 Captain Rock: The Irish Agrarian Rebellion of 1821—1824 (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2009).
Charles Townshend’s 1983 *Political violence in Ireland: government and resistance since 1848* focused on the difficulty of the British government in imposing its judicial system on Ireland. Townshend’s theoretically rich contention was that the British government failed on two counts: It neither enacted its policies with sufficient force to induce the native population to comply nor did it take steps to persuade that population to fully accept its legitimacy. The result, he argued, was that there developed an “Irish tendency to treat the law not as a manifestation of abstract ‘justice’ but as a manipulable vehicle of group interest.”  

As a result of that, he stated that existing concepts of justice and morality, including their backing by clandestine violence, remained acceptable to the community because they preserved existing customs and were based on popularly held and accepted bases.

Townshend held that while the Land League was different from previous manifestations of agrarian violence, being more national in character, more organized, and receiving more support from the clergy, previous explanations for its emergence were insufficient. He argued that the “deep bedrock of agrarian violence” during the Land War “can probably not be attributed either to conspiracy or to immediate economic crisis” but to this existing popular acceptance of non-modern concepts of justice and of the use of force to enforce local unity. He further argued that the reaction of the state to the unofficial use of force further exacerbated this problem, stating “from the viewpoint of the state, political violence is by definition the illicit use of force for political ends…

---

its illegitimacy justifies, and in fact requires, the use of counter-force by the state.” But for large swathes of the population, this counter-force was in turn seen as illegitimate.50

Donald Jordan further examined this concept of ‘unwritten law’ in his article “The Irish National League and the 'Unwritten Law': Rural Protest and Nation-Building in Ireland 1882-1890,” published in Past and Present in 1998. He held that agrarian outrages, even at the late date that he examined were “rooted in a culture that saw access to land and the opportunity for subsistence as fundamental human rights that could not be violated by man-made laws, the policies of landlords or the dictates of political economy.”51

Jordan argued that those who acted on behalf of the ‘unwritten law’ sought to portray it as the true law, and the laws of the state as those propagated by a distant and corrupt entity that lacked moral legitimacy. He asserted that a combination of communal acceptance of this argument and the efficacy of clandestine actors in enforcing their will led to the low rates of violence and death present in agrarian outrages of the period by reducing the need to employ more serious and riskier methods. Jordan’s observation that “the code became a dynamic one of both retrenchment and redefinition, balancing resilient notions of entitlement to the land and communal obligations with the desire for personal economic advantage, power and position” seems particularly important, as it grants agency and dynamism to the rural population.52 Individuals could articulate their demands, drawn from their interpretation of a dynamic code, through either formal channels, informal channels or through boycotting and outrage, or through both as

50 Townshend, Political violence in Ireland, 408.
52 Jordan, “Unwritten law,”149.
circumstances demanded. The evolutionary nature, as discerned by Jordan, illustrated that rural Ireland was not static, but rather dynamic and responding to development in ways unforeseen by the authorities.

Heather Laird’s *Subversive law in Ireland 1879-1920: From 'unwritten law' to the Dáil courts*, incorporated a self-consciously colonial angle to her examination of agrarian violence. Laird argued that the relationship between the Irish peasant population and the institutions of the British state, particularly the legal system, were antagonistic. She argued that this antagonism stemmed from the vacillation of the official legal system between acting as an impartial system devoted to implementing the law and a coercive system dedicated to the maintenance and expansion of British state power in Ireland. Much as in Townshend’s account, that tension resulted in official law becoming seen as fundamentally illegitimate by the indigenous population. But, according to Laird, that illegitimacy then “created a space for the establishment of alternative legal concepts and structures that monitored and regulated the behavior of rural communities,” with this so-called subversive law serving as “a fundamental component of anti-colonial resistance, with the concept of an alternative system of control functioning as one of the most sustained threats to successive colonial administrations.”

These insights are key to Laird’s overall argument, that various Irish nationalist movements have sought to displace British rule and, at least to an extent, set up institutions of rule, particularly court systems which she called “subversive law,” that is, the unofficial law of the Irish peasantry. Laird posited that Irish peasant rejection of British law was not imposed on the peasant population by nationalist elites, but rather

---

was a bottom-up phenomenon, shaped by elements of Irish folk culture, particularly the “widespread refusal by tenant farmers to recognize the absolute property rights of the landlord class,” and the concept of co-operative resistance to threats to property and land,” which “were already deeply ingrained in Irish life” and fundamentally shaped the tactics used during periods of land agitation in Ireland.54

Laird highlighted two tactics used during the Land War, which were shaped by this rejection of landlord ownership and this concept of co-operative resistance: the practice of boycotting and so-called “people’s hunts.” Boycotting, she argued, was largely seen as legitimate by the rural community despite efforts of British officials to brand these actions as having been created by the intimidation of the peasant population by a relatively a small group of agitators. Laird also noted that boycotting was a difficult tactic for the British legal system to counter, as “English law could not ban boycotting without preventing free enterprise,” illustrating how “while nonmodern enough to prove difficult to punish under English law, boycotting was modern enough to pose a substantial threat to the state.”55 She noted that the practice and justification of boycotting was complex, and that modern scholars see it as either premodern, using moral force and kin ties to work, or as fundamentally modern and designed specifically to frustrate the British legal system. Laird articulated a synthesis of the two positions, with the design of the boycotting system, perhaps, being a function of the nationalist elite while the justification drew upon pre-modern conceptions of justice and legality

Similarly, people’s hunts were events which, through the twin acts of disrupting aristocratic foxhunting and poaching, worked to actualize a variety of grievances by the

54 Laird, Subversive Law, 103, 70.
55 Laird, Subversive Law, 34-35.
Irish population, including both seeking “to make public…disapproval of coercive legislation” and a “desire to assert control over the land they occupied.” She took particular interest on the date of many of these hunts, St. Stephens Day (26 December), “a major hunting date for the ascendency, but…also the date of the wren hunt. This agitation borrowed aspects from both the official hunts it threatened to displace and the rural rituals from which it perhaps gained much of its legitimacy.”

The preceding discussions about popular agrarian movements and the causes of the Land War have also intersected with an extensive literature on Fenianism, most especially since Bew’s *Land and the National Question.* Because of this, and the role of republican groups in the Irish Revolution, War of Independence, Civil War, and the various iterations of conflict in Northern Ireland, late-nineteenth and early-twentieth century republicans have received much scholarly attention. This attention sheds light not only on the individuals and organizations that played key parts in land conflicts, but on what shaped their lives and how they worked to shape rural society in Ireland.

R.V. Comerford, for instance, focused exclusively on the Fenian movement and its interactions with wider political trends in *Fenians in Context: Irish Politics and Society 1848-82,* published in 1985. He argued primarily that the Fenians arose as the result of fundamental changes in Irish political, economic, and social life, where “the constabulary, the clergy and landlords had combined to achieve a rigid form of social control.” In response to this, “many young men in towns and villages found in Fenianism a mechanism for autonomous self-assertion and the defiance of social restraints.” Many of them also saw the IRB as a mechanism to create a more significant position for

---

56 Laird, *Subversive Law,* 90
57 Laird, *Subversive Law,* 100
themselves in society than they otherwise could have gained. He argued that, as a result of this, many Fenians joined the movement for social rather than political reasons, and that the performance of Fenian identity was as important an aspect of the organization as its political ideology.\(^5\)

As the title of his book implied, Comerford also examined the wider context of mid-century Ireland, arguing that the period under examination was one of increasing Catholic solidarity and assertiveness, but not necessarily of nationalist feeling. He argued that as the century progressed, there developed a feeling that the desires of Catholic Ireland would be considered by the British government. Comerford argued that Parliament’s decision under William Gladstone’s leadership to disestablish the Church of Ireland in 1869 was a key turning point in this process, after which many believed that majority opinion in Ireland would be the key determinant on Irish questions. The following year, for instance, Catholics in Ireland believed that Gladstone’s Land Act of 1870 undermined the concept of sole ownership of land by the landlords, opening the door for increased agitation. These movements, he argued, were in many regions led by ambitious Fenians who sought to ride the land issue to political prominence. Like most scholars, Comerford saw a clear regional divide in his analysis of the Land War, with western farmers joining out of need rather than ideological affinity, and more prosperous farmers in the southwest joining out of the hope of material gain.

Tom Garvin in his 1987 *Nationalist Revolutionaries in Ireland* extended his focus beyond the IRB to the Sinn Fein membership of the early twentieth century and into the revolutionary 1910s, and he put much weight on the social repercussions of uneven

modernization. For example, he noted that education opened the door to positions that carried some social status, but not high pay, and that these positions were not transferrable to heirs, leading to discontent. He also argued that Irish society, and rural society in particular was “highly authoritarian and parochial,” which meant that it “had a less than fully institutionalized notion of free speech.” Garvin argued that priests in particular were placed in positions of authority by both their parishioners and the state. He also gave a great deal of weight to the cultural role of history and folklore in creating the adherents to nationalist revolutionary ideology, and asserted that “Irish historical consciousness was in great part folklore, in many cases derived from the collective memories of communities or extended families rooted in particular country areas,” and that the late age of marriage of the post-famine generation did much to keep folklore fresh, despite the geographic and cultural dislocations that the Famine produced.60

Finally, he argued that economic development, although praised by nationalists, was actually damaging to the uniquely Catholic and petty-bourgeois ideology that emerged in the late-nineteenth century and united revolutionaries of the left and the right against the British government. Garvin identified the fallout of this unifying spirit as the key reason why post-independence Irish politics split so rapidly, because without the unifying presence of the British Other, the political incoherence of the Republican/nationalist movement became more evident.

In 2007 Owen McGee published The IRB: the Irish Republican Brotherhood, from the Land League to Sinn Féin, which focused on the decades from formation of the Land League in the late 1870s to the foundation of the Sinn Fein party in 1905. Like 

60 Garvin, Nationalist Revolutionaries, 110.
Comerford, McGee sought to place the IRB in its historic context, emphasizing the fact that in the context of nineteenth-century Europe, everyone from advocates of democratic egalitarianism to proponents of armed revolution would be equally seen as revolutionary by the state. He argued that the IRB was “committed to bringing about a new Irish society through propagating republican principles of political liberty by whatever means were possible,” be those means violent or non-violent.\(^6\)

He further asserted that both the state and upper-class Catholic society reacted to the perceived threat of the IRB by “increasing the capacity of various lay Catholic elites to create political uniformity within the Irish Catholic community as a whole, according to an aristocratic social ideal,” in the hope that by improving the status of Catholics in Ireland, the appetite for radical change would be dampened. McGee attributed the divisions that permeated Irish politics after independence to this initiative, and held that the advocates for a republican, egalitarian society were defeated in their attempt to overthrow the advocates of a distinctively Catholic social ideal who had held sway since the late nineteenth century.\(^7\)

Fearghal McGarry and James McConnell continued in McGee’s vein, focusing on the ideological roots of Fenianism, in their 2009 edited volume *The Black Hand of Republicanism: Fenianism in Modern Ireland*. The volume pushed back against Comerford’s assertion that ideology was of secondary importance to socialization in prompting membership within the Fenian movement, asserting that the ideology of Fenianism, and the propagation of that ideology to the masses, was in fact central to the


\(^7\) McGee, *The IRB*, 335.
IRB’s efforts. They argued that Fenianism spread partially by operating its political
campaigns in a more grassroots manner than did other political groups, such as the
Farmer’s Associations of the 1850s, and by drawing its recruits from lower down the
socio-economic hierarchy and including elements of social egalitarianism in their
ideology. The associational nature of the movement which Comerford had identified, was
presented as part of those efforts. The efforts of Fenians to offer reading rooms,
newspapers, and other social spaces for members and potential recruits to come into
contact with Fenian ideology was a constant theme of the work.

Comerford himself contributed to the volume, blending the associational nature of
the movement with its ideological program. He reasserted his belief that “the main role of
the Fenian movement in Ireland may have been as an intellectual and strategic resource
for those seeking refuge from a clerically dominated milieu,” thus establishing Fenian
networks was a response to clerically controlled institutions yet still part of the
associational culture of late nineteenth-century Ireland. Comerford specifically warned
against what he saw as a tendency toward exceptionalism in Irish historiography, which
portrayed the Fenians as the generational emanation of a specifically Irish national spirit
of rebellion. Comerford noted that he had emphasized the non-ideological component of
Fenianism to underscore that, for most Fenians, revolution was not the end goal, and that
even with a more prominent role granted to Fenian ideology, the social aspect cannot be
discounted.

63 R.V. Comerford “Fenianism: The Scope and Limitations of a Concept” in The Black Hand of
Republicanism: Fenianism in Modern Ireland, ed. Fearghal McGarry and James McConnell (Dublin: Irish
In spite of the breadth of the preceding approaches, there remain several structural gaps, as well as two major conceptual gaps, in the historiography of the Land War that this dissertation seeks to fill. There were two main trends in works which examined the Land War. Geographically, most works either took a nation-wide approach or focused attention on one county, while chronologically most works either focused solely on the period 1879-1882 or took a long durée examination, as with Donnelly’s century-long examination of Cork. Accordingly, I decided to focus my dissertation on three neighboring counties, Mayo, Sligo, and Roscommon over a roughly twenty-year period in order to fill these gaps.

Specifically, I seek to go into a similar level of depth about local politics and developments as the single-county studies while simultaneously allowing for the sort of regional comparison that multi-county studies were able to produce. Mayo, which saw the initial emergence and collapse of the movement, has been studied in detail, while Sligo and Roscommon have not received the same level of examination. Thus the present project intends to make new interventions into the historiography. Finally, in focusing on a twenty-year period, I intend to capture the political evolution of the region from the years leading up to the 1867 Fenian Rising through the end of the Land War, while still remaining focused on the events of those latter years.

Further, this dissertation seeks to address two conceptual gaps in the existing historiography. The first was the lack of examination of the role that women played in the Land War. This gap covered both the day-to-day roles that women played during the period, as well as the activities of the Ladies’ Land League. As Laird noted, the day-to-day role of women was central to the experience of the Land War, while the Ladies’ Land
League was as late as 1982 described as existing within an oblivion in the historical record. Accordingly, I intend to incorporate the activities of women during the Land War into this narrative in order to fill the gaps that Laird highlighted. I also decided to dedicate the final chapter of the dissertation to the activities—and afterlife—of the Ladies’ Land League in counties Mayo, Sligo, and Roscommon, so that their work would be properly incorporated into a narrative of nationalist politics rather than split off into their own study.

The other yawning gap in the historiography was its failure to probe how the colonial nature of nineteenth-century Ireland impacted the political developments of this period. Much of the scholarship discussed above, and particularly the scholarship on the Land War itself, focused on class tensions from an economic perspective and paid little attention to cultural issues. Additionally, most appeared before the colonial turn in Irish studies, meaning that there was ample scope to re-visit the topic of the Land War using new approaches.

---

Scholars have debated whether it is accurate to characterize Ireland as part of the colonized world despite its legal status as a constituent part of the United Kingdom from 1800 until independence in 1921. Those viewing Ireland as a colony generally ground their analysis in issues such as the racial discourses surrounding the Irish within the British Empire, and the inequalities that persisted in the relationship between Ireland and the rest of the United Kingdom, which, they argue, illustrate that Ireland was never fully incorporated into the United Kingdom.65 However, other scholars have argued that the Irish experience cannot be accurately compared to that of the colonized world, and that the Irish were, at best, a uniquely formed colonial possession.66 Such authors place great emphasis on Irish participation in the governance of the United Kingdom, which they hold undermines any assertion of colonial status for Ireland.67 It seems that this debate has been largely resolved in recent years in favor of acceptance of the argument that Ireland was a colonized part of the British Empire. However, there remains some dispute about the precise nature of that colonial status, stemming from Ireland’s partial integration into the United Kingdom state and the role of Irish individuals in the workings of the Empire.

67 Notably, see Liam Kennedy, Colonialism, Religion, and Nationalism in Ireland, (Belfast, The Institute of Irish Studies, 1996).
One of the first scholars to argue that Ireland in the modern period should be seen through a colonial lens was Joseph Ruane, who argued that “colonial themes have been paramount in the writings of historians for the late medieval period,” as well as in “the literature for the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries,” but that scholars of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries at the time of writing generally had not yet employed such a framework. Ruane noted that what complicated the analysis of modern Ireland through a colonial lens was the question of “whether Irish-British relations were ever colonial… and whether there is a colonial dimension to contemporary Northern Ireland,” which, at the time of his writing, remained “the subject of violent conflict” which was “not conducive to a dispassionate consideration of the arguments” by scholars. He argued that as a result “Irish historical research has been at best uneven in its treatment of the theoretical, ideological and methodological issues that colonialism raises,” going so far as to call the field “distinguished by its indifference to theoretical issues.”

An early example of a work which rejected the idea that Ireland should be considered a colonial space in the modern period was Liam Kennedy’s 1996 *Colonialism, Religion, and Nationalism in Ireland*, in which he took particular issue with the idea that Irish society after independence could be analyzed through a post-colonial lens. Kennedy opposed the narrative, which had originated with and formed a vital part of Irish nationalist discourse, “that the Irish have been at the receiving end of a traumatic collective experience that has few, if any parallels elsewhere.” He contended that scholars

---

70 Ruane, “Colonialism,” 25.
should instead employ “a European comparative perspective” in their analysis, viewing Ireland in relation to other peripheral zones, such as Sicily and Brittany. In his view, these areas dealt with similar disadvantages as Ireland and suffered as a result of their incorporation into culturally and economically distinct core regions, but they were not colonized regions.

Kennedy further asserted that there was a discontinuity between the Irish context and that of official British colonial possessions, most markedly in the fact that the Irish agricultural sector was roughly one-half the size of its counterparts in British holdings in Africa and Asia. He noted that the Irish in the early twentieth century enjoyed the same average living standards as countries like Spain, Norway, Finland, and Italy, leading him to assert that “Ireland was situated in the mainstream of the European experience.”

Kennedy did concede that “the mode of [Irish] incorporation” into the United Kingdom “was coercive rather than co-operative,” making “cultural assimilation less likely.” Nevertheless, he argued that “state structures gained a degree of legitimacy over time,” with the Irish accepting elements of Britishness, such as the monarchy, schooling, and policing. He was particularly swayed by the high level of Irish participation in elections, and by the fact that Irish representatives sat in the British Parliament in large numbers, evidence of Irish acceptance of and participation in their own governance. Ultimately, Kennedy held that “ambivalence there was aplenty. But acceptance also.”

---

71 Kennedy, Colonialism, Religion, and Nationalism in Ireland, XV.
72 Kennedy, Colonialism, Religion, and Nationalism 169.
73 Kennedy, Colonialism, Religion, and Nationalism xi. Kennedy elaborated on his argument in his 2008 article “Questioning the (bad) question: ‘Was Ireland a colony?,” Irish Historical Studies 36: 142 (November 2008): 138–52. Kennedy argued: “The oversimplified, stark ’either/or‘ nature of the question is also problematic, when it would be more productive, and perhaps more precise, to think in terms of colonial features in combination with others, if not, indeed, of graduations and degrees of coloniality.”
Stephen Howe similarly argued that utilizing a colonial framework was unhelpful in examining Ireland. Howe in his 2002 *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* wrote that Ireland’s similarities to Europe, the complicities of Irish persons with the British Imperial Project, and the involvement of Ireland in philosophical and political trends within northern Europe, all meant that Ireland cannot meaningfully be viewed as a colony following the 1800 Act of Union. Unlike Kennedy, however, Howe offered significant ambivalence in his recognizing “that incorporation has been, in many of its phases, extremely violent and” undertaken through coercion. Nonetheless, he said, “it also involved ever-varying, but always significant elements of consent and cooperation.”  

Howe admitted that at least part of Irish history—from the twelfth to the seventeenth centuries—was clearly a period of colonization. He, nevertheless, insisted that upon the incorporation of Ireland into the United Kingdom its colonial status ceased.

The objections of scholars such as Howe and Kennedy notwithstanding, the validity of the Ireland-as-colony argument seems to have been generally adopted by modern Irish scholars. The appearance in the mid-2000s of the edited volume *Was Ireland a Colony?: Economy, Politics, Ideology and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* was a key marker in this debate.

In the present context, Christine Kinealy’s essay “Was Ireland a Colony? The Evidence of the Great Famine” offered a searing look at the question of Ireland’s status in

---


the mid-nineteenth century. Kinealy explored “how the British government’s responses to successive harvest failures after 1845 reflected and reinforced Ireland’s inferior status within the United Kingdom.”76 Her analysis placed great emphasis on the markers of Irish, and particularly Irish Catholic, inferiority within the ostensibly equitable United Kingdom. She particularly pushed back against the argument asserted by Kennedy and other scholars who used Ireland’s political participation in the workings of the United Kingdom state as evidence against colonial status. She noted, for example, that while “following the Union Ireland sent 100 MPs to Westminster… a number of colonial trappings remained,” such as the Lord Lieutenant, the Chief Secretary for Ireland, and a continuing Irish administrative system based out of Dublin Castle.77 Kinealy further argued that the Irish were viewed “as a burden and a threat,” with the result that “policy formation was designed to protect Britain’s economic interests rather than alleviate Irish distress.”78 Because of the continuation of visible symbols of colonialism, the perpetuation of discourses which placed the Irish outside of the British community, and because of the impact that these discourses had on government policy, Kinealy concluded bluntly “that the Act of Union was colonialism under another guise.”79

A final work published in the mid-2000s which claimed that Ireland should be seen as a colony was Ireland and the British Empire, edited by Kevin Kenny, part of the companion series to the Oxford History of the British Empire. Kenny’s introduction reinforced many of the observations offered in Was Ireland A colony. He noted, for

---

77 Kinealy, “Was Ireland a Colony?” 53.
78 Kinealy, “Was Ireland a Colony?” 62.
79 Kinealy, “Was Ireland a Colony?” 63.
example, that “English politicians nonetheless dismissed [Ireland] as variously a depending kingdom, a foreign country or a child colony: in no case was equality, much less joint sovereignty, on offer.” He continued by noting “when William Gladstone came out in favour of Home Rule for Ireland in 1885, his opponents protested that the Empire itself was under threat,” and that Gladstone’s critics generally used the terms United Kingdom and Empire interchangeably.”

In his contribution, Alvin Jackson articulated a similar view, holding that the “strategies of British government in Ireland resembled their colonial counterparts in many ways. In particular, the British dependence upon, and exploitation of, local allies in Ireland bears comparison with similar strategies in India and elsewhere.”

He concluded that viewing Ireland as a fully colonized space is erroneous, but that the semi-colonial nature of British administration in Ireland, “underpinned not only Irish participation in Empire, but also, in some senses, Irish nationalism and the revolt against Imperial rule.”

This idea was taken up by Joe Cleary in his essay “Postcolonial Ireland,” which argued that the use of a post-colonial lens to view post-independence Ireland is not based upon the argument “that Ireland’s historical profile corresponded exactly to that found in other colonies,” a characterization dismissed by revisionists such as Howe and Kennedy. Instead, it recognized “that twentieth-century Ireland has wrestled with a complex of colonial structures, legacies, and dilemmas” that are fundamentally similar to those seen in other post-colonial contexts. This, then, seems to be the clearest articulation of a...

---

82 Jackson in Kenny, 136.
justification for viewing Ireland as a colonized space, that despite the clear differences between Irish life and that seen in more obviously colonized spaces, such as the Indian subcontinent or in Africa, there remained fundamental and clear continuities of experience.\textsuperscript{84}

A final work which has viewed Ireland through a colonial lens, and which has also used the peculiarities of that status to ground its analysis, is \textit{Ireland in an Imperial World: Citizenship, Opportunism, and Subversion}, edited by Timothy McMahon, Michael de Nie, and Paul Townend. The work takes as its point of departure the assertion that “Irish men and women helped to build and manage colonies around the globe. But… Irish participants in that enterprise developed their own distinctive institutions through direct personal and collective interactions with that wider British world,” institutions which reflected the ambiguous status of the Irish as both colonized and as central participants in colonialism elsewhere.\textsuperscript{85} For example, the authors noted that the “country houses” of the Anglo-Irish elites simultaneously served as “manifestations of Ireland’s status as a quasi-colonial state within the United Kingdom, for they were not indigenous productions as they were in England, but rather the homes and power bases of an elite whose ethnic and cultural roots often lay elsewhere” and “as venues for the display of imperial goods and horticulture… [that] reflected the specific history of Irish elite participation in the British Empire.”\textsuperscript{86}

\textsuperscript{84} Examinations of the ramifications of colonialism on post-independence Irish society have been perhaps the primary focus of the Ireland-as-colony framework. This has been particularly pronounced in the analysis of Irish literature. Key examples of this include Declan Kiberd, \textit{Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation} (London, Cape, 1995); Enda Duffy’s \textit{The Subaltern Ulysses} (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1994); and Patrick Bixby’s \textit{Samuel Beckett and the Postcolonial Novel} (New York, Cambridge University Press, 2009).


\textsuperscript{86} McMahon et al, \textit{Ireland in an Imperial World}, 6.
A key element of the volume’s overall argument is that while Ireland and the Irish were colonized, they nevertheless found room within imperial institutions to attempt to improve their lives, and that in significant ways Irish identity was created as a result of the dual colonized/colonizer nature of Irish life. Michael Silvestri’s examination of the Royal Irish Constabulary best exemplified this liminal position. Silvestri contended “that Irish involvement in policing the Empire sheds light not only on the workings of the British Empire overseas, but on Ireland at home,” where “governmental structures shaped by Ireland’s earlier colonial history, notably the Lord Lieutenancy and the administrative apparatus of Dublin Castle, remained prominent.” Indeed, these structures can even be seen to have gained power in the nineteenth century, as “the Anglicization of Ireland and its assimilation into the Union became from the perspective of British politicians and administrators an increasingly unlikely prospect.” Instead, Silvestri contended, “Ireland was seen as requiring special legislation and modes of governance.”

He argued that the RIC was “a police force which was military in its orientation, pro-landlord and more concerned with political surveillance and potential sedition than ‘ordinary’ crime,” and that as a result of this form of development was seen by colonial administrators as a model for colonial policing. In setting up and maintaining these colonial police forces, administrators imported “not simply Irish models and organizational resources but Irish personnel,” allowing Catholic Irish the opportunity to rise through the ranks, improve their financial situation and that of their families, and to set up interpersonal networks to

---

88 Silvestri, “Paddy Does Not Mind,” 192-193. This was particularly the case as most of the rank-and-file RIC officers were Roman Catholic, but the overall ethos of the organization was set by the “largely Protestant and Unionist officer corps (192).”
allow for the advancement of other Irish.\textsuperscript{89} Thus, much of the material life of significant numbers of Irish families in Ireland relied upon the role of their kin in the maintenance of British colonialism, at the same time that a series of colonial structures held power at home.

Therefore, despite the level of debate over the accuracy of locating Ireland within the colonized world, the overall opinion of scholars since the mid-2000s holds that Ireland should be viewed in that manner, albeit with qualifications stemming from the criticisms that Kennedy and Howe, among others, have raised. Ireland, in this reading, was both a colonial possession and an integrated part of the United Kingdom, the Irish both a colonized people and the foot-soldiers of Empire abroad, resulting in a, perhaps unique, form of colonial status. Recognition of this status as both colonized and colonizers and untangling the variety of racial and religious hierarchies that Irish people navigated within a variety of European empires is at the forefront of current discussions within Irish studies as a discipline.\textsuperscript{90} Current scholarship seeks to move beyond the straightforward colonized/colonizer or subject/agent binaries that have thus far characterized the study of Ireland’s colonial past, noting, for example, that “a great many people in late nineteenth-century Ireland could be described as implicated subjects,

\textsuperscript{89} Silvestri, “Paddy Does Not Mind,” 192.
\textsuperscript{90} Caoimhe Nic Dháibhéid, Shahmima Akhtar, Dónal Hassett, Kevin Kenny, Laura McAtackney, Ian McBride, Timothy G. McMahon, and Jane Ohlmeyer, “Round table: Decolonising Irish history? Possibilities, challenges, practices.” \textit{Irish Historical Studies} 45: 168 (November 2021): 303–332, 309. One point made in the round table is that the Northern Irish Troubles, the armed conflict in that region from the late 1960s through 1998, affected the unpacking of Ireland’s colonial status by making the issue of Ireland’s coloniality a political one. Jane Ohlmeyer, for example, noted that Horning had discussed “how the Troubles influenced her research, how ‘memories of the plantation are routinely invoked by partisans of both traditions’ and how the unionist community finds the word ‘colony’ ‘challenging’ and argued in response that “the subordination of the evidence to produce history which promotes inter-sectarian reconciliation must inevitably suffer from the same shortcomings as history designed to promote divisions and animosity.” (319).
benefiting from the economic powerhouse of the empire even as they faced the structural violence of the British state in Ireland.”91

Situating Ireland within the colonized world enables scholars have begun to articulate new theoretical frameworks and to unpack the messy lived experience of the Irish within the British Empire. One such framework, that of ‘muscular nationalism’ is central to this dissertation. This concept was first articulated in Sikata Banerjee’s 2012 *Muscular Nationalism: Gender, Violence, and Empire in India and Ireland, 1914-2004.* Banerjee argued that “Ireland disturbs the neatly defined binary of oppressive colonizer and oppressed colonized on which many studies of imperialism rest… Ireland lies on the border between ‘this’ and ‘the Other’ occupying the borderlands of imperial power.” Banerjee then asserted that Irish nationalism was fundamentally shaped by the colonial context of its emergence, as was that of its Indian counterpart which formed the other half of her study.92

She argued that both Irish and Indian nationalisms were created in response to British racial discourses, which feminized colonized peoples in two ways. The first set of discourses held that colonized peoples had been “conquered because they were effeminate,” and they were “effeminate because they were conquered. Their conquered status constructed them as not muscular, not aggressive, and not skilled in militarism, all

---

91 Nic Dháibhéid et all, “Round Table,” 331.
attributes associated with femininity.” The second of these discourses attached to peoples who were important to the British army, the Irish included, and condemned these groups as unmanly “because of a lack of patriotic fervor or honesty.” She did highlight the liminality of the Irish case, however, noting that “the ‘fighting Irish’ who fought in imperial armies were contrasted with the feckless, contradictory Pat and the violent and unstable Paddy.” Both Irish and Indian nationalists had to contend with discourses that imagined them as unmanly and as a result, Banerjee argued, they consciously constructed narratives of their movements to specifically answer these charges.

In both cases, nationalists placed “emphasis on indigenous virility and martial prowess. Like the idea of Christian manliness,” which was a dominant discourse within the metropole, “these responses were infused with muted religious overtones that drew on the tenets of Catholicism and Hinduism.” In drawing on these religious themes, both groups created an ideology which asserted “the primacy of indigenous martial prowess and physical strength, with an emphasis on ideas of armed manhood, the need for a physical culture and man-making education, and a dedication to blood sacrifice.”


94 Banerjee, Muscular Nationalism, 29.


96 Banerjee, Muscular Nationalism, 73.
groups created and disseminated an idealized image of the Irish or Hindu male as a virile body poised to both sacrifice and kill for the nation. This masculine ideal was then juxtaposed with a chaste female body that both served to symbolize national honor and illustrate an idealized moral code women in the nation, which centered on sexual purity and a willingness to offer up the lives of sons in the service of the struggle for national liberation. Finally, both groups “circulated their image of [a] warrior monk through alternative, indigenous models of education informed by a precolonial tradition of teacher-disciple fosterage,” self-consciously designed to rebut the discourses and methods advanced in state-run education.97

In this framework, the role of women in both post-colonial systems was restricted by the strong, and commonly held, understanding of “female sexuality as a cause for social anxiety.”98 If the ability of men to ensure female chastity was one of the key differences between virile, muscular nationalists and the effeminate, colonized peoples in imperial discourses, then in the post-colonial period steps needed to be taken to control female sexuality in keeping with the religious values that had helped shape both nationalist movements.99


99 In the Irish context, this took the form of laws forbidding married women from holding government jobs, and can most clearly be seen in the 1937 Irish constitution, which held that “the State recognizes that by her life within the home, woman gives to the State a support without which the common good cannot be achieved,” and pledged that “The State shall, therefore, endeavour to ensure that mothers shall not be obliged by economic necessity to engage in labour to the neglect of their duties in the home.”
had a determining impact on Irish nationalists. Irish nationalism was a concerted effort to
disprove such stereotypes and create a more prideful self-image of a ‘white’ nation.
Crafting an image of strong and racially redeemed Irish men was a key part of this.”
Zionism, similarly, emerged as the result of narratives portraying physically weak Jewish
men, and sought rhetorically and physically to construct the image of strong Jewish men
as part of the creation of a national homeland. Beatty highlighted the imagery common to
both forms of nationalism, a physically strong, redeemed manhood, coming to the aid of
a nation rendered as a woman, and supported by a chaste national womanhood which
took little part in the national revitalization, but rather served to channel national ideals
and identity to future generations.

A key point in Beatty’s analysis was how the narratives which legitimated British
imperialism, as well as the power structures which ruled that Empire, were in large part
reproduced by the Irish nationalist movement. As Beatty noted, “that the Irish were
incapable of self-rule, or were a child-like people in need of British parental supervision,
had, of course, long been a claim of anti-Irish racism. But it was also a theme prevalent
within Irish nationalism itself and was clearly underpinned by an anxiety about the Irish
nation’s racial status.” A major theme of Irish nationalism, therefore, was to
demonstrate the ability of the Irish to improve their own status, to disprove through their

deeds the claims of imperial narratives. Attempts by the Gaelic League to prompt use of the Irish language, of the Gaelic Athletic Association to promote the playing of ‘Gaelic’ games, and of Na Fianna Eireann to offer an Irish nationalist alternative to the Boy Scouts were all designed to provide Irish men a space in which to improve their physical fitness, and to re-claim markers of their ethnic separateness. In his analysis “Irish revivalists implicitly accepted the various accusations that lay behind anti-Irish biases, that the Irish were a racially weak people, lazy and incapable of self-rule and self-control… [t]hey inverted these stereotypes, however, into accusations against the British rule they now claimed had caused this situation.” They claimed that their status as a colonized people had resulted in the degradation of a formerly proud, self-sufficient, and above all masculine people.102

Another book which offered a useful theoretical framework based on issues of race and masculinity was Joseph Valente’s 2011 *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture, 1880-1922*. In it, Valente examined what he termed the “metrocolonial double bind” of Irish, and indeed colonial, masculinity. According to this schema, in order for colonized peoples to ‘prove’ their capacity for self-rule, they had to regulate their conduct to conform to the colonizer’s conceptions of proper conduct, an act which would be construed as “acquiescing in the feminine stereotype of passivity, pliancy, and submissiveness to others that British opinion regularly invoked as proof of the…desire to

---

be ruled” among colonized peoples. At the same time efforts to more actively, or violently, overthrow the colonial system would be construed by colonizers as evidence that the colonized people in question were incapable of individual self-rule, and thus unworthy of group self-governance. Valente argued that C.S. Parnell in particular sought to find a way out of this double bind by advancing a restrained, but still subtly threatening, form of masculinity, described as a velveted fist knocking.

Taken together the works authored by Banarjee, Beatty, and Valente all offer a new framework for the analysis of nineteenth-century Ireland. The common argument advanced by all three that Irish nationalists in the late-nineteenth and twentieth centuries were fundamentally reacting to imperial narratives of Irish inferiority allows for the re-examination of the Land War period from a fundamentally different angle than has been taken by prior scholars. With the exception of Valente’s work, which only directly engaged with the Land War period in a single chapter on C.S. Parnell, no one has applied these frameworks to the nineteenth century. Finally, all three works on masculinity cited above, particularly Valente’s, tend to focus on textual representations of masculinity


104 Valente, Myth of Manliness, 24.

and high culture, such as the works of James Joyce. There has been relatively little done to examine how such topics were lived out in day-to-day life.

This dissertation seeks to fill the gaps in the existing historiography with a regional look at land agitations in counties Mayo, Sligo, and Roscommon, while simultaneously approaching these agitations utilizing colonial and gender frameworks. Chapter one examines the ideology of the IRB and the emerging constitutional nationalist movement, arguing that the masculinist anxieties described above were applicable to the 1860s. Those anxieties took different forms based on other aspects of an organization’s ideology. Chapter 2 examines the nationalist political movement as it gathered steam, interrogating the movement’s handling of the issue of agrarian crime which threatened to confirm colonial narratives of Irish inferiority, and arguing that nationalists sought to downplay such acts and to portray them as the result of the unjust land system rather than as innate Irish racial failings. Chapter 3 focuses on the ideology of the Irish National Land League as expressed in local, national, and international publications and speeches, arguing that League leaders expressed a view of their campaign crafted to refute narratives of Irish inferiority and that they stressed the need for an active but restrained Irish masculinity. Chapter 4 tests the popular reception of that narrative, arguing that in reality women and communal ideas of justice continued to play central roles in the day-to-day experience of the Land War, to some extent undermining portrayals of League actions as restrained and masculine. Chapter 5 examines the activities and ideology of the Ladies’ Land League, arguing that the group grew organically out of the Land War’s ideological milieu—but with League members rejecting in practice and in speech the male nationalists’ arguments surrounding female passivity. I assert that this rejection
made the League a difficult issue for male nationalist leaders to reconcile with their narrative of the Land War as a period of masculine regeneration, leading nationalist authors after the Land War to downplay the role of the Ladies’ Land League and ultimately to write them out of history.

Ultimately, I argue that both variants of nationalism seen in the post-Famine period, the republicanism of the IRB and the constitutional nationalism which would culminate in the creation of the IPP and Land League, can and must be examined through a gendered lens. Both variants were clearly shaped by the types of masculinist and racial anxieties Banarjee and Beatty describe. The ideology of the IRB in the years leading up to the 1867 Fenian rising was suffused with anxieties about what colonial rule would do to the Irish, with the organization’s newspaper the *Irish People* warning that colonial rule would mean the degradation of Irishmen into either non-manly or non-white status and would leave Irishwomen vulnerable to sexual exploitation.\(^{106}\) Similarly, the ideology of constitutional nationalists in the years leading up to the Land War is shot through with anxieties regarding emigration and the degrading impact of the socio-political system extant in Ireland at the time. While constitutional nationalism argued that violence of any sort was ultimately self-defeating, the calls from constitutional nationalists for Irishmen to risk harm by voting for nationalist candidates and to subordinate their impulses toward violence for the good of the nation mirrored those of more straightforward muscular nationalism, and thus illustrate that such narratives were also constructed to answer

---

\(^{106}\) Patrick Bethel, “Shrovetide will be a merry time in Ireland yet: Fenian visions of Ireland’s future,” in *Dreams of the Future in Nineteenth Century Ireland*, ed. Richard Butler (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2021), 37-54. The IRB attacked constitutional nationalists and Roman Catholic clergy for being insufficiently dedicated to the linked tasks of national revival and the protection of Irishwomen’s virtue, and thus for failing in their assigned role as Irishmen.
British charges. Finally, both branches of Irish nationalism presented women as fundamentally passive, lacking the agency to materially alter their circumstances but also as the moral center of the nation.

Nationalists in the period sought to impose their definitions of masculinity and femininity, and ultimately of Irishness, on the indigenous population of Ireland. Nationalists argued that adherence to their images of idealized masculine and feminine behavior not only corresponded to moral correctness but to one’s national duty. This can be most clearly seen during the Land War, when activists hailing from both nationalist traditions presented traditional forms of resistance, which centered on the use of violence and pre-modern understandings of land rights, as fundamentally problematic and specifically highlighted how such actions played into British tropes of Irish inferiority.

Finally, focusing on this period allows for the better examination of how nationalist leaders failed in imposing their standards of behavior of the rank-and-file Irish population, and how these leaders reacted to those failures. This examination serves to disrupt the neat colonized/colonizer dichotomy and positions nationalist leaders as themselves engaging in a sort of internal colonialism, seeking to replace indigenous methods of resistance with methods derived from the metropole, albeit with mixed results. While nationalists during the Land War presented a three-part argument that the participation in the land agitation was the duty of Irishmen specifically, that the agitation was undertaken to protect Irish homes and thus Irishwomen, and that the agitation was to be conducted along strictly non-violent lines, the on-the-ground reality was far different. Women played central roles in all aspects of anti-colonial resistance, most notably in resistance to eviction proceedings, but also in instances of agrarian violence which
fundamentally disrupted nationalist narratives of female passivity. Similarly, heightened levels of agrarian crime during the Land War illustrate the continued acceptance of traditional ideas about justice and community, which to British, or indeed Irish nationalist, eyes generally looked like anti-modernity or barbarism which justified continued colonial rule. Finally, the activities of the Ladies’ Land League during the closing stages of the agitation fundamentally challenged ideas about proper female conduct, not only by their providing shelter to evicted tenants but by their taking an active part in filling the political role that the Land League had played and by directly confronting agents of the British Crown. In response to these challenges, I argue, nationalist authors and speakers sought to control the narrative of the Land War both during and after the agitation and were much more successful in promoting their understanding of the period after the fact than they had been in promoting their proposed conduct at the time of the conflict. The Land War itself was recast as a period of masculine action leading to national regeneration, with the role of women being initially downplayed, and eventually entirely written out of the historical narrative, a void which until recently has largely remained a part of the historical record on the period.\footnote{For more on the nationalists’ three-part argument and its editing of the historical narrative, see Patrick Bethel, “Hold Manfully onto your Farms: Gender and Resistance in the Irish Land War,” in \textit{Dwellings in Nineteenth-Century Ireland}, edited by Heather Laird (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, Forthcoming 2022).}
Chapter One

The 1860s dawned with profound divisions between differing variants of Irish nationalism. Constitutional nationalist politics were at something of a nadir, following the collapse of the Repeal Association of Daniel O’Connell due to the Famine of 1845-52 and O’Connell’s death. Thus, while at the beginning of the 1860s there was a lively nationalist movement in Ireland there was no pan-island nationalist political organization. In contrast, the Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB) was, along with its sister organization the Fenian Brotherhood, emerging as a vocal and visible trans-Atlantic political movement articulating republican ideals and becoming an increasingly notable threat to the British establishment.

Importantly both variants of Irish nationalism recognized Ireland’s liminal status as simultaneously part of the United Kingdom and a part of the colonized world. Both groups also noted how this status resulted in Ireland being made the focus of powerful discourses which portrayed the Irish as fundamentally inferior to and separate from a British identity that itself was in the process of being constructed. Contestation of these discourses was a major, though as yet understudied, element of the ideology, political positions, and tactics of both variants of Irish nationalism in the 1860s and beyond.

---

108 Legg, in collecting a list of all papers published in nineteenth-century Ireland, noted that where were at least forty-eight liberal papers published in 1860, many of which espoused increasingly nationalist views. See Legg Newspapers and Nationalism, 177-222.
109 For an earlier era of British identity construction see Linda Colley Britons, Martin Alter-Nations, De Nie, the Eternal Paddy and Curtis, Apes and Angels. Martin similarly noted how from the immediate aftermath of the 1800 Act of Union the Irish were placed “in a liminal and contradictory position” as simultaneously “national subjects” and “a colonized and alien population” (3). See also De Nie The Eternal Paddy, passim, and Curtis Apes and Angels, passim.
At the beginning of the nineteenth century, both Irish liminality within the British Empire and narratives of Irish inferiority centered around the Roman Catholic faith of the majority of the Irish population. However, following Catholic Emancipation in 1829 racial and cultural factors came to be emphasized in narratives which articulated the difference between Ireland and Britain and the Irish and British populations. These narratives generally argued that the Irish failed to live up to an emerging idea of Britishness, where the normative figure was a middle-class, prosperous, and industrious individual. This figure was perceived as possessing a series of qualities, such as self-restraint, self-reliance, and a certain stoicism, which taken together comprised the category of manliness.

Manliness itself was a continually shifting category which nevertheless remained, as Valente argued, a fundamentally restricted prerogative. This prerogative was restricted because the ethical traits that were held as components of it (self-restraint, self-reliance etc) could only be possessed by the population that was encoded as possessing it, the metropolitan, bourgeois male. Those who did not answer to that description were held to be inherently incapable of possessing manliness, and were thus encoded as, paradoxically, both inherently feminine and as overly masculine, incapable and unworthy of self-rule for both reasons. The Irish, therefore, could be portrayed as feminized figures in need of imperial rule in times of relative quiescence, and as brutes who

---

110 Colley emphasized the centrality of Protestantism to British identity, especially when contrasted against Catholic France. See Colley, Britons, 8, 53-55, 361, 367-68. In spite of the gradual emergence of race as a key marker by mid-century, both discourses remained as markers of difference. See Martin, Alter-Nations, 5-6.


112 See Valente, Myth of Manliness, 2-5, 9-10, 23, 43, 151.

113 Valente, Myth of Manliness, 9-10.

114 Valente, Myth of Manliness, 10-11.
necessitated a forceful response in times of unrest, but in either case as inherently in need of proper, manly British rule.\textsuperscript{115}

As the nineteenth century progressed the Irish were increasingly held up as the Other against which Britishness could be defined. This process also justified the denial of equal status with the other peoples of the United Kingdom on the grounds of their supposed Otherness. For example, British narratives portrayed the Irish as indolent, which both performed important conceptual work in justifying special governance for Ireland and also, particularly during the Famine of 1845-52, served to explain Irish poverty as the result of particularly Irish failings rather than as the result of government policy.\textsuperscript{116} British commentators similarly repurposed Irish Catholicism in this way to portray the Irish, and particularly Irish peasants, as overly reliant on Catholic clergy, and thus lacking in the attribute of self-reliance central to conceptions of British manliness.\textsuperscript{117} Officials similarly portrayed agrarian violence as indicative of supposed Irish traits, namely a lack of restraint, a supposed tendency to resort to violence, and cowardice as agrarian crime was portrayed as an unmanly assault on a defenseless victim. This portrayal was commonly used to justify the abrogation of what were in the remainder of the United Kingdom fundamental civil rights.\textsuperscript{118}

The changing state of British politics during this period made more explicit the separation between the colonial metropole and Ireland. This forced adherents of both camps of Irish nationalism to react to these narratives and explicitly tailor elements of

\begin{footnotes}
\footnotetext[115]{Valente, \textit{Myth of Manliness}, 17.}
\footnotetext[116]{This point is a major focus of de Nie’s \textit{The Eternal Paddy}, particularly 82–143.}
\footnotetext[117]{Whelehan, “Revolting Peasants,” 2, 17, 27.}
\footnotetext[118]{Whelehan, “Revolting Peasants,” 2, 19, 22–24, 27, 30.}
\end{footnotes}
their own ideology to their refutation.\textsuperscript{119} As such, both varieties of nationalism, republicanism and constitutionalism, had at their core the goal of articulating new, modern, definitions of Irishness that could serve as refutations of Irish inferiority which justified special forms of governance for Ireland, although the details of these definitions differed greatly.

In the 1860s the adherents of Irish republicanism were particularly engaged in efforts to craft such definitions. These efforts were central in the attempt by the IRB to widely disseminate its ideology through the \textit{Irish People} newspaper, published in Dublin between 1863 and 1865.\textsuperscript{120} The proprietors, Charles Kickham, Thomas Clarke Luby, and John O’Leary, were all notable members of the IRB and sought to use the paper as both a means to judge the level of popular support for republicanism and win adherents to the IRB’s political program. Each issue of the \textit{Irish People} was intently focused on the promotion of IRB ideology even, as prior scholarship has noted, to the point of tedium, making it a valuable window into the thinking of the highest levels of the IRB.\textsuperscript{121}

Leading Fenian writers used the \textit{Irish People} to articulate specific and gendered archetypes of masculine violence and female chastity, which, they argued, needed to be adhered to in order to affect the liberation and redemption of Ireland. These efforts fit into the broader conceptual framework of muscular nationalism, a concept which argues that certain nationalisms lie at “the intersection of a specific vision of masculinity with

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{enumerate}
\item Valente argued that during this period “the stereotypical feminization of the metro- or semi colonial other began to operate as a vehicle of imperialist apologia- which is to say it operated under the pressure of a felt inconsistency.” Valente, \textit{Myth of Manliness}, 12.
\item Comerford, \textit{Fenians in Context}, 98.
\end{enumerate}
\end{footnotesize}
the political doctrine of nationalism” which “center[s] an adult male body poised to sacrifice and kill for the nation… juxtaposed with a chaste female body that both symbolized national honor and provides a moral code for the lives of women in the nation.”

In the Irish case the leaders of the IRB, among others, reacted to the processes of effeminization and racialization undertaken as part of the imperial project by self-consciously creating political archetypes according to the lines described above, which emphasized indigenous virility and martial prowess.

The need for the Irish to conform to these proposed archetypes also shaped the group’s ideology and proposed plan of action for Irish liberation. While the IRB’s rejection of constitutional politics was grounded partially in the belief that those who engaged in such politics were mere “aspirationists,” who preferred to engage in ‘tall talk’ rather than action, the authors also argued that Irish difference from and inferiority to the remainder of the United Kingdom would prevent successful constitutional agitation.

The authors argued that “the Irish nation, which is poor, can never enjoy an equality with

122 Banerjee, Muscular Nationalism, 2. Aidan Beatty elaborated on this framework, arguing that such efforts reflected both colonial anxieties and pan-European processes which linked masculinity and nationalism. See Beatty, Masculinity and Power, 5. This framework, therefore, does much to illustrate Ireland’s liminal status in the nineteenth century, simultaneously part of the European, British, and Imperial worlds, and subject to influences from all three.

123 Banerjee, Muscular Nationalism, 45.

124 All quotations from the Irish People are drawn from the digitized copies found on Villanova University’s Digital Library. As the columns were published anonymously attribution of specific columns to specific authors is impossible. Accordingly, this dissertation will refer to the ideology of the Irish People as a whole. “Aspirationists,” Irish People, 2 April, 1864.; “Tall Talk,” Irish People 28 November, 1863.
England, which is rich,” which they claimed lent an air of “unspeakable futility” to constitutional efforts toward national liberation.\(^{125}\)

More troubling to the IRB’s leadership was the fear that Ireland’s colonized status exposed the Irish to the sorts of colonial narrative that the *Irish People* sought to refute. It argued that “we have been represented as a nation of savages, groveling from time immemorial in ignorance and barbarism”; that “we are told we are mere children who take pleasure in toys” as part of a program by which “the English affirmed that the Irish were not human beings” and that we are “denied our claims to humanity the better to reduce us to the condition of beasts.”\(^{126}\) The authors feared that not all Irish were able to resist the internal logic of such narratives, and thus “had their minds poisoned by foul libels on the land of their birth. These are incurable; except” in the case of men whose “extraordinary strength of intellect may enable them to see the truth through the mist of prejudice in which they are enveloped,” or in the case of women when “a true man’s love lifts them above it into the sunlight.”\(^{127}\) We see here an example of the strict divisions between the *Irish People’s* ideas of masculine activity and female passivity, which I will return to in greater detail below.

\(^{125}\) “Uselessness of Begging,” *Irish People*, 24 June, 1865. The paper further argued that “The constitution in Ireland is from bottom to top a mockery, a delusion, and a snare. It just gives Irishmen rope to hang themselves” as “the moment the agitators take a practical step towards Ireland’s deliverance, they are laid by the heels.” (“The Right of Public Meeting in Ireland,” *Irish People* 26 March, 1864.) These tactical disputes were also grounded in an assertion that adherence to constitutional politics would render Irishmen less attached to the national cause. The authors feared that the corruption they felt inherent to constitutional politics would prove disastrous to the national cause, that the people would realize “that the result of the sacrifices they had made in former election struggles was to afford scoundrels an opportunity of selling their country and vain fools the privilege of writing “M.P.” after their names” and would resultantly grow less interested in the national question. “Electioneering,” *Irish People* 4 February, 1865.


The *Irish People* was also deeply concerned that the efforts of the British state to render Ireland a permanently subservient province were being inadvertently mirrored by constitutional nationalists. Editorials claimed that there was danger from the constitutionalists’ constant refrain about the law. In February 1864 the article “The Use of Arms” stated: “The man who commits a crime gives strength to the enemy…dinned into the people from platform and pulpit,” would do nothing but make the Irish people voluntarily submit to British rule. Nine months later “The Sins of the Irish People” claimed that such statements would cause “English law…to assume a sort of infernal sacredness in their eyes” with a particularly pronounced impact on “weak and credulous women and effeminate men.” This, in their view, was particularly problematic regarding British laws governing the carrying of arms, viewed as the ultimate expression of Ireland’s subservient status. The continued calls to obey the law, they argued, would result in an Ireland where the people viewed “the possession of arms, not only as an offense against the ‘law,’ but as something in itself morally bad,” heightening the challenge for those attempting to convince the Irish people that their only path to national liberation lay in the use of arms.

Eviction was another issue through which the paper laid bare the unjust nature of the law. A central line of argument from the *Irish People* was that attempts to build a broad-based political coalition to challenge landlord supremacy was not only doomed to

---

129 “The Use of Arms.”
130 In discussions about eviction the paper also voiced concerns about the impact of subsequent emigration and called for the Irish to stay in Ireland rather than emigrate for fiscal reasons. For examples see, “The Irish Priests and the People,” *Irish People*, 14 May, 1864; “Agricultural and Emigration Statistics,” *Irish People*, 8 October, 1864; “Emigration,” *Irish People*, 11 February, 1865.
failure because of Ireland’s colonized status, but dangerous for the individuals taking part since the secret ballot had not been introduced in Irish elections. As a result, the votes of tenants were public knowledge. In reflection of the very real danger that political opposition to one’s landlord could have for tenants at will, articles lamented tenant farmers being told “not to be the least afraid of voting against their landlords,” which was referred to as “very amusing if it were not so utterly heartless.”\textsuperscript{131} Articles argued that to tell tenant farmers they ran no risk in opposing their landlord, when they in fact ran a very great risk, was “adding dishonesty to cruelty,” and that “there is something absolutely diabolical in thus deliberately trying to degrade and demoralize thousands of honest men for nothing.”\textsuperscript{132} These fears formed part of a broader argument that contemporary evictions were not being carried out simply for fiscal reasons “to make room for the beast that perisheth,” but as part of a government-sanctioned program “to see the Irish race altogether rooted out from their own soil.”\textsuperscript{133}

Apart from these practical concerns, another focus of articles published in the \textit{Irish People} was the fear that adherence to constitutional politics would not only turn the Irish people away from the cause of national liberation but lead to a fundamental degradation of Irishmen from their present state. Parliamentary politics, it was claimed, did nothing but teach “falsehood and bluster, lip-loyalty and heart-treason; makes the people neither manly rebels nor good subjects… it teaches them to look on politics as a huge job and game of thimble-rig; to believe that all needful good can be won without self-sacrifice.”\textsuperscript{134} In June 1864, the \textit{Irish People} argued that the Irish race, and Irishmen

\textsuperscript{131} “The Mullacrew Meeting,” \textit{Irish People}, 24 June, 1865.
\textsuperscript{132} “The Mullacrew Meeting”
\textsuperscript{134} “No more agitation humbug,” \textit{Irish People}, 30 January, 1864.
specifically, were not effeminate, but rather “strong of arm, lithe of limb, and hardy of frame. Physically…able to do and to endure as much as any race of men on the face of the earth,” and it asserted that “that there is more real manhood, intelligence, and self-reliance, at the present moment in Ireland, than ever there was.”\textsuperscript{135} Because of those traits, the \textit{Irish People} claimed from its first issue that “never have the youth of this country been moved and pervaded by a nobler spirit of patriotism—never been more compact of the stuff of martyrs and heroes.”\textsuperscript{136} Later, the authors claimed “a finer generation of young men and women than the present, Ireland never saw…these young men and women are moral and virtuous, industrious, affectionate and obedient… they are intelligent and high-minded, and, we need not add, patriotic.”\textsuperscript{137} The growth of such a generation was the main hopeful note in the \textit{Irish People’s} coverage, with the paper’s initial editorial “Isle, Race, and Doom” ending by saying “believing in God and the youthful manhood of our time, we know that the “Doom,”” of Ireland’s permanent colonial rule “shall not be consummated.”\textsuperscript{138}

The \textit{Irish People} often challenged the role of priests in Irish society and was deemed “anti-clerical.” Accordingly, articles in the paper claimed that Irish clergy engaged in “active exertions to crush the spirit of manhood out of the hearts of Irishmen,” with particular fear that this process had already begun with those who joined in

\textsuperscript{135} “Hope,” \textit{Irish People}, 4 June, 1864. This insistence on the masculine strength of Irishmen seems directly designed to counter contemporary discourses regarding the feminine nature of Celtic peoples. See Banerjee, \textit{Muscular Nationalism}, 16, 32, 166.

\textsuperscript{136} “Isle, Race, and Doom,” \textit{Irish People}, 28 November, 1863.

\textsuperscript{137} “Shrovetide.”

\textsuperscript{138} “Isle, Race, and Doom.”
constitutional politics. Such individuals were portrayed as “weakly trust[ing] in PROVIDENCE to save you, without any effort on your own part” Such men, it was argued, had given up their manhood willingly by giving up their willingness to fight and die for the national cause. The editorial then equated this dereliction of their duty with the loss of their masculinity, illustrated by the claim that the chosen weapon of such men, political rhetoric, “is not the language of strong men, but of weak women.” This idea that talk proceeded from weak women was also stated in another leading article, “Doubters and Shams,” which denounced “tea-table revolutionists, who join a cause while danger is remote, who love at once to frighten and fascinate weak girls by ‘tall-talk,’ but who sing small when danger pops on them.”

Importantly, the editorialists claimed that such a degradation had not yet been visited upon the Irish race en masse, that “Our people are not the degraded beings which open enemies and false friends have laboured hard to make them. The people are sound at heart.” The authors took particular pride in “the stead-fastness with which the young men of Ireland have clung to the truth under trying circumstances,” which the writers claimed “convinces us that the right stuff is in them.” For the moment, they concluded, “the manhood of Ireland was instinct with the spirit of true patriotism—with courage and self-sacrifice.”

139 “Going Against the Priests,” *Irish People*, 17 December, 1864. Whelehan notes in “Revolting Peasants” that a central component of the image of the pre- or anti-modern peasant was an overreliance on Catholic clergy for leadership. Thus, such exhortations to remove clerical influence from politics served both a tactical purpose and worked to create the image of a modern Irishman.


142 “Doubters and Shams,” *Irish People* 1 October, 1864.


However, a central motivation in the constant denunciations of constitutional nationalism was the concern that this process of degradation was already under way. This drove denunciations of the O’Connellite mantra that “liberty is not worth the shedding of a single drop of blood,” which was termed “the basest, cowardliest lie ever uttered by human lips,” and which had “well-nigh converted a nation of men into a nation of helots.” Thus, the true harm of acquiescing to British laws that forbade the carrying of firearms was not the difficulty this imposed upon efforts to liberate Ireland by force, but rather “the moral degradation which the disarming of a people is calculated to beget.”

The editorial rejoiced that the Irish at the time of writing had “escaped utter emasculation in this way” and asserted that “so long as men feel the denial of the right to have arms to be a wrong, they are men still.” However, they cautioned their readers that when “they cease to look upon that denial as a grievance and an insult, they are no longer men” and claimed, “to this latter pitiable plight, ‘moral force’ well-nigh reduced the Irish people.”

Degradation, the paper argued, would ultimately render the Irish unworthy of self-government. As such, the editorialists rejected the idea of using constitutional politics as a stalking-horse to conceal an armed movement: “If you mystify the people, by inducing them to give their adhesion to what you know to be a false method of action, you will fail, at the crisis, to make them seize with faith and manly energy the true means. When

146 “The Use of Arms” 20 February, 1864. This was part of a broader argument that residing in British-controlled Ireland was at some level inherently problematic for Irish masculinity. This often came up in discussions of Irish who had emigrated to America who “had learned to do their own work with their own hands, independent of aristocratic leadership.” “A Retrospect,” *Irish People*, 13 February, 1864.”
147 “The Use of Arms.”
the day of action comes, they will be sure to prove waverers.”\textsuperscript{148} Such an effect might erode the proud history of Irish manhood as illustrated in the IRB’s narrative of Irish history as a series of struggles against English rule. The authors argued that “no matter how many battle fields we can point to as soaked with Irish blood and sanctified by Irish valour…so long as we have rags for our ensign and the begging-box for our introduction, so long shall we be despised by the world” and cease to gain foreign aid in the project of Irish liberation.\textsuperscript{149}

Ultimately, the authors concluded that armed rebellion was the only acceptable way to work for Irish liberation, as only the use of force would overcome the practical and racial barriers to constitutional agitation. Further, the act of preparing for an armed struggle would reverse the emasculating impact of constitutional politics and colonial rule, restoring the Irish man to a state worthy of self-government.\textsuperscript{150} Preparation for the use of force simultaneously refuted colonial conceptions of the Irish as undisciplined and promoted a new modern definition of Irish masculinity.\textsuperscript{151} The authors argued:

\begin{quote}
The sort of preparation we contemplate would, in the first instance, act beneficially upon the morals of the people. It would tend to raise our young men above all low habits and degrading vices. It would make them respect themselves, and fire them with the ennobling ambition of the soldier of liberty. The consciousness of having run some risk, and of being ready to run all risks for poor old Ireland, would fill them with an honest pride, and make them sober, manly,
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{148} “No more Agitation Humbug,” \textit{Irish People}, 30 January, 1864.
\textsuperscript{149} “Which would be the Greater Sin,” \textit{Irish People}, 5 August, 1865.
\textsuperscript{150} In discussions of this type, the idea of discipline, noted by Kelly as central to the Fenian ideal, are clearly highlighted. Editorials argued that only through training and discipline could any potential rebellion hope to succeed as “an oppressed people, without unity of direction and action, will be no more than a mob... Patriotism, not militarily organized, is worth nothing.” “Conciliation and Toleration,” \textit{Irish People}, 6 February, 1864.
\textsuperscript{151} The linkage of modernity with muscular nationalism draws from the work of George Mosse, who argued in his \textit{The Image of Man: The Creation of Modern Masculinity} (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1998) that modern definitions of masculinity centered ideas of discipline, order and restraint. See Mosse 3-39; and Beatty, 5.
industrious, and tolerant. In a word, organization would make the young men of Ireland morally and physically, better men.152

The article “Shrovetide” took this a step further and articulated a future of post-independence Ireland, one where the entirety of the Fenian program could be enacted. It argued that young men in contemporary Ireland were victims of an unjust system where the Irish were the “worst fed, worst clothed, and worst housed people in Europe,” and where young men in love “must try to forget her—for too well he knows that however hard he may toil they could not live in Ireland.”153 All the wrongs the Fenian program sought to right, from the poverty and injustice of the land system to the inability of young men to achieve traditional markers of adulthood, were thus portrayed as the work of a malevolent British government.154 The editorial then asked its readers if they would “tamely allow this fell design of your enemy to be consummated,” or if they were instead “resolved to save your race from ruin, your name from the scorn of mankind.” If the latter course were chosen, it promised, “the young man will bring the girl of his heart to the home which his sword will have won for her, where no tyrant’s frown can disturb her, and where want and poverty will never darken the door.” In short, the Irish People directly linked male violence to the fulfillment of the Fenian program, the regeneration of the Irish nation, and crucially, the restoration of the Irish nuclear family.155

152 “Preparation,” Irish People, 28 May, 1864. This idea that moral force would improve Irish masculinity was by no means confined to the period of the Irish People’s publication. It would be prominent in the work of Padraig Pearse both in his establishment of St. Enda’s and in his thought surrounding the Easter Rising. See Banerjee, Muscular Nationalism, 49-52.
153 “Shrovetide.”
154 “Shrovetide.”
155 “Shrovetide.”
Irish life was portrayed in the *Irish People* as properly divided into two spheres, the masculine sphere of armed conflict and the female domestic sphere, which inculcated nationalist values and preserved female morality and chastity. Such ideas became central to connections between nationalism and ideas of respectability across Europe during the nineteenth century. At the same time the perceived lack of such proper behavior was central to the emerging racialized gender order, which posited that a lack of division between the sexes was indicative of “lower” racial status. Due to Ireland’s liminal status as both part of Europe and of the wider British Empire, and subject to both sets of discourses, the valorization of “proper” female roles seems to have been designed to further the argument for Irish whiteness. Importantly, this construction also worked to position “women’s pure bodies… as border guards separating Ireland from England,” meaning that any violation of Irish female chastity, either willingly or through force, posed an existential threat to the Irish political community.

Accordingly, the editorials within the *Irish People* offer an image of Irish women as naturally virtuous due to the circumstances of their upbringing. Irish women were held to be “the loveliest flower that blooms amid our country’s ruins” because of their rearing in “her God-fearing home.” The sexual purity of Irish women was a particular point of pride, with Irish women described as “famed for their purity the world over,” and

---


157 Banerjee discussed the concept of the virtuous woman as a necessary complement to male warrior-martyr at various points in her work, while Mosse saw the image of a chaste woman as symbolizing the virtue of a nation’s political aims. See Banerjee, *Muscular Nationalism*, 7, 11, 40-43, 53, 76, and 85; Mosse, *Nationalism and Sexuality*, 9.

“stainless as the snow upon the mountain peaks.”

Women were granted a role to play in the project of national liberation, but a decidedly secondary one. The Irish People charged women with working “to awaken the apathetic to a sense of duty; to shame the wavering into action; and to lighten the toil of the true and brave.” This was defined as “their proper sphere.” In the Fenian narrative of Irish history, women were granted a place, but a subordinate one. In the place of the male martyrs and heroes who populated Fenian history, women were seen as “a golden thread in the chequered web- a pure stream shining and singing through a battle-field,” but crucially not taking part in armed conflict themselves.

Beyond these limited roles, however, women were portrayed as lacking the agency to fundamentally alter their circumstances, and thus in need of masculine protection.

Just as the authors argued that contemporary Ireland was positioned at a critical moment which threatened the inherent masculinity of Irishmen, they similarly asserted that the natural chastity and national feeling of Irishwomen were in danger of destruction. The authors feared that the negative impacts of constitutional nationalism, the fear of eviction, and the role of the clergy all endangered Irish womanhood.

The gravest threat to women, according to the Irish People, was the danger of sexual exploitation, portrayed as an ever-present threat to women forced into emigration. A series of articles presented a narrative of the emigrant experience for women, arguing

---

161 “The Women of Ireland.” For a later period, see Banerjee, 53.
162 The question of female agency and the difficulty of drawing a line between “acceptable” and “unacceptable” female political activism is one of the central concerns of Banerjee’s work. She concluded: “the female body will always maintain a contentious relationship with the gender binary of martial man versus chaste woman in muscular nationalism.” See especially Banerjee, Muscular Nationalism, 100-65 passim, quotation at 165.
that English rule was innately injurious to the morality of Irishwomen. One such editorial, “The Special Dispensation,” described the process in the most vivid terms, saying Irishwomen were forced to emigrate to crowded cities, and—removed from the influences of home, houseless and penniless—they fall an easy prey to the tempter. And the first false step taken, and self-respect lost, they abandon themselves recklessly to the foul sea of pollution, making night hideous with their shrieks and blasphemies—for they try to drown remorse in drunkenness—till they are prostrated by unnamed diseases, and—there is reason to fear—their wretched souls are hurled from the hell in which they breathed, into the hell of the damned.  

Another article, “Self-Judgement” warned that Irishwomen in the process of emigration were liable to be “flung all at once, unwarned and unprotected, into the presence and power of those men who hold their orgies in the steerage of almost every emigrant ship, and to whom the most vulgar and unbridled licentiousness is a law of life,” and subjected to sexual corruption. The authors drew special attention to the liminality of emigration, arguing that Irishwomen “at home would be stainless as the snow upon the mountain peaks,” but “in these foreign cities” they transformed into “the shame of the land that bore them.”

The Irish People used the argument about female corruption to attack members of the clergy, with articles arguing that their counselling restraint and adherence to the law meant that they were failing in their masculine duty to protect Irishwomen. Editorials claimed that the material result of clerical denunciations of advanced nationalists, such as loss of employment and income, “meant the streets of foreign cities, the brothel, and the jail, for the sisters and daughters of the men who dared to love their country.” Thus, the

---

163 “The Special Dispensation,” Irish People, 12 November, 1864.
Irish clergy were engaged in “aiding and abetting what the Bishop of Toronto called ‘a social persecution that ruins souls.’”\textsuperscript{165} In a particularly direct attack on moderate Irish nationalists the authors argued it was those individuals, and particularly members of the clergy, who were in fact responsible for the degradation of the Irish people. The columnist asked:

Did ‘the principles of Fenianism’ ever convert an Irish youth into a ‘Plug Ugly’ or a ‘Blood Tub’ or a rowdy? Did those principles crowd the jails and the brothels with Irish girls? No, my lords and gentlemen it is your principles have done all this. Reconcile it to your conscience if you can but, as the Lord liveth, you, the spiritual guides of the Irish people, have been, and are one of the chief props of a system the most fruitful of crime and misery that the world has ever seen.\textsuperscript{166}

Central to this narrative of ruin was the lack of female agency in the Irish People’s gender politics. Articles argued that Irishwomen lacked the agency to materially alter their circumstances. As such, Irishwomen were presented as being forced into migration rather than actively choosing it, and the paper similarly portrayed them as not choosing to lose their virtue but as passive victims of violation. In this reading, it was only after these archetypal women had lost their virtue, and thus their place in the Irish political community, that they had any agency—and even then, only in the dubious portrayal of the fallen women’s progress to alcoholism, prostitution, and death.

Finally, articles warned that just as the counsel of constitutional nationalists rendered Irishmen impotent and unwilling to risk harm for the sake of the nation,

\textsuperscript{165} “Tralee and Skibbereen,” \textit{Irish People}, December 24, 1864; “Defenders of the Faith.”
\textsuperscript{166} “The Bishop of Toronto on Emigration.” This link between female emigration and sexual corruption was often deployed in the latter half of the \textit{Irish People}’s time in print to argue for the immediate necessity of adherence to the IRB’s program. The authors claimed that it was only through their policies that “thousands of the virtuous daughters of Erin might be saved from ruin,” and that the horrors of eviction and emigration which made fathers “childless, children fatherless, wives widows... daughters...tempted to sin,” in short which destroyed the family as a whole, could be ended. (“Defenders of the Faith,” \textit{Irish People}, 29 October, 1864; “War and Famine,” \textit{Irish People}, 11 June, 1864.”)
Irishwomen were beginning to be affected in similar ways, so that even the domestic purity of Irishwomen was under threat. Building on descriptions of women abroad, articles argued that “the public virtue of Irishwomen, even more than that of Irishmen, [had] withered under the sordid influence of the selfish teachings that came from the school of agitation,” and that Irishwomen thus corrupted came to fear the economic impact of association with advanced nationalism more than the deleterious effects of British rule. Articles argued that Irishwomen corrupted by constitutional nationalism and economic uncertainty remained chaste in their marriages, though not because of the virtue supposedly inherent in Irishwomen, but solely because “common sense… may sometimes keep a woman from doing what would endanger her worldly position.”

In response to this narrative of masculine inaction causing female degradation, the Irish People articulated in its strongest terms the link between masculinity, violence, and national redemption. The editorial “Emigration,” after lamenting the corruption of Irishwomen abroad, called for “every true man [to] do his duty now, and the day may not be distant when the hills of old Ireland will once again re-echo the roar of battle. One hour of that day were reward sufficient for a life of toil and suffering.” Another leading article, “Self-Judgement” asked if it was not the “first duty of every man, whose heart beats true to the race and country to which he belongs, to devise and do, and suffer

167 “Bad Irishwomen,” Irish People, 19 November, 1864.
168 “Bad Irishwomen.” In the previously cited “Shrovetide,” the paper argued that the youth of Ireland, who were central to undertaking armed struggle, were being destroyed by both the unjust economic system and the corruption of the agitation school, and would either be forced to conduct such loveless marriages at home or, worse, to “fly from the land and the homes they love.”
169 “Emigration.”
anything and everything necessary.” In a final example “The Special Dispensation” asked:

Is Ireland to be the prostitute as well as the mendicant of nations? Is the Island of Saints henceforth to be known as the island of harlots?.. If we listen to the teaching of these cold-hearted ecclesiastics better that our island were sunk into the ocean. But we will not listen to them. This damning shame shall be wiped out... we have faith in the holiness of our cause, and in our own right arms. And come what may, the manhood of Ireland shall be vindicated.

These explicit linkages of female chastity and male violence illustrated further why the fears about masculine degeneration were such a pronounced aspect of the Irish People’s ideology. The extraordinarily vivid descriptions of female seduction, prostitution, and death, and the resulting impassioned denunciations of contemporary constitutional nationalists, appeared as implicitly connected to a lack of men willing to suffer and die for the nation. Fenians presented the forced unchastity of Irishwomen as a damning shame to Irishmen, which could only be wiped out through bloodshed, while they portrayed the breakdown of the idealized link between male violence and female chastity as simultaneously the fault of an unjust British system of government and the failings of Irishmen unwilling to accept their prescribed role. This position added urgency to the paper’s calls for immediate preparation for an impending armed revolution.

The paper’s proprietors hoped to make use of the Irish People to win new adherents to their movement, as well as to spread the IRB’s particular definitions of Irish masculinity and femininity to new audiences. Although the paper was never a financial success, due at least partially to the ineffective management of its leadership, it did ultimately create and sustain a sizable audience. Subscriber lists seized from the Irish

170 “Self-Judgement.”
People’s offices on the occasion of the November 1865 police raid which ended the paper’s publication showed sizable networks of subscribers from locations as varied as California, Wisconsin, Tennessee, Liverpool, and Bolton. Indeed, the popularity of the paper in the United Kingdom was such that it surpassed the circulation of the more mainstream nationalist newspaper, the Nation, in most of northern England.

In Ireland itself the paper’s popularity was decidedly more concentrated regionally, with most of its subscribers residing in Dublin, but with large clusters in Cork and its environs and in Belfast. This seems in keeping with the opinion of the paper’s proprietors, as John O’Leary noted in his 1896 retrospective Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism, where O’Leary asserted that “up to the starting of the paper… the organization was comparatively limited in numbers, and… it might be said to be mainly situated in Leinster and Munster.” Following the publication of the Irish People, however, O’Leary argued that “there was a vast change for the better,” and that the publication of the paper and the work of Edward Duffy “opened up Ulster and Connaught to the organization.” Prior scholarship, particularly the work of R.V. Comerford, has noted the importance of performance to the Fenian movement, and the ability of would-be Fenians to collect a physical copy of the Irish People also likely played a role in the growth of the organization in these regions.

---

172 National Archives of Ireland (NAI), Fenian Briefs, Carton 5, Envelope 18.
174 NAI, Fenian Briefs, Carton 5, Envelope 18.
176 Comerford, Fenians in Context, 111-115.
Judging from the records in the *Irish People’s* offices at the time of the paper’s forced closure these successes were carried out through a small core of subscribers. Mayo was apparently the center of the movement’s efforts at outreach, with newsagents in Ballaghadereen and Ballina taking delivery. Roscommon had one subscriber, in Castlerea, although there was a subscriber noted in Athlone, a townland directly straddling the border between Roscommon and the neighboring county of Westmeath. Sligo, notably, had no recorded subscribers.\(^{177}\) Besides these subscribers, would-be readers could also have conceivably acquired the paper through newsagents in Tuam, Ballinasloe, and Roscrea in nearby Co. Galway, as prior scholarship has noted clear connections between members of the IRB in Galway and Mayo in particular.\(^{178}\)

While the proprietors of the *Irish People* and others in their orbit clearly saw their efforts in the West of Ireland as effective, and from folk memory in the region there is some reason to believe that they were at least partially correct, the Rising of 1867 had little impact on the region under examination.\(^{179}\) It seemed that, despite the exhortations of the *Irish People* for members of the IRB to actively prepare for armed rebellion, the organization was wholly unprepared to undertake such an effort. In contrast, the effort of

---

\(^{177}\) NAI, Fenian Briefs, Carton 5, Envelope 18

\(^{178}\) NAI, Fenian Briefs, Carton 5, Envelope 18; Donald Jordan *Land and Popular Politics in Ireland: County Mayo from the Plantation to the Land War*, (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 186.

\(^{179}\) The only incident of note in the region during the 1867 Rising was the attempt by several Irish expatriates living in the United States to reinforce the Rising with a shipload of arms. The ship, originally named the Jacknell and re-titled Erin’s Hope, landed at Sligo Bay on the 10th of May 1867. The individuals involved were quickly arrested and transported to Dublin where, despite their argument that American citizenship inoculated them from charges of treason and that the charges were motivated by their lack of deference toward British authorities, the ringleaders were convicted and sentenced to period of penal servitude in Australia. For more on this incident, see NAI, Police and Crime Reports, Fenian Papers R series files 7042, 11,118/16 11,118/19, and 11,118/26.
the Crown authorities to disrupt the IRB by means of mass arrests of suspected members was quite successful.\footnote{The success of such arrests can be attested to by their persistence in folk memory, as in Sligo where the Irish Folklore Commission collected material about an informant who claimed to have been “present at Fenian meetings” and who spoke of his role in the thwarting of the 1867 Rising (Folklore Commission Volume 463, page 175). The records of the Irish Folklore Commission contain several mentions of the Fenian movement in the region, although given the nature of the medium it is difficult to determine when precisely the events recounted took place. Nevertheless, it seems that folk memory of the Fenian movement was strongest in County Mayo, where accounts mention Fenian “secret meetings,” and songs purportedly written by men who joined “the Fenian Brotherhood, Bad landlords to destroy.” (The Schools’ Collection, Volume 0128, Page 270; The Schools’ Collection, Volume 0148, Page 221-223). The Commission’s records also hold evidence of folk memory of the movement in Roscommon. There the Rising of 1867 was referred to as “a failure in as much as it failed to achieve its ends but it aroused the people and made them begin to consider their position” See The Schools’ Collection, Volume 0240, Page 420., Meanwhile, in Sligo, informants discussed the arrest and corporal punishment of suspected Fenians. See Folklore Commission Volume 463, page 208.}

These arrests provide further evidence of which populations in the region had been drawn into the movement, or at least of what persons in the region had fallen under the suspicion of the state.\footnote{Government records also illustrate the extent to which the emerging idea of the Fenians in the British imagination, and thus in the imagination of the British colonial apparatus in Ireland, was linked to the improper performance of masculine behavior. Records from the RIC reveal that individuals were often singled out for arrest because they “did not follow any occupation” (NAI, Police and Crime Reports, Index of Names, Stephen Farrell) or had “no employment... Spends his time on the sea shore...[and] Lives at an extravagant rate.” (NAI, Fenianism: Index of Names, Patrick Hart.) In response interned suspects often argued that they fulfilled masculine roles as providers for their families, as in the case of John Fullard whose mother wrote on his behalf that “the prisoner [was] the sole support of his large family” (NAI, Police and Crime Reports, Fenian Papers, Index of Names, John Fullard) or John Hughes, whose mother wrote that he was “chief support of” a “very large family of young girls.” (NAI, Police and Crime Reports, Fenian Papers, Index of Names, John Hughes).} Jordan, in his prior study of Mayo, identified forty-seven Fenian suspects arrested by early 1868. His examination found that the overwhelming majority of suspected and arrested Fenians were drawn from the commercial and industrial sector, with members of the agricultural and professional sectors comprising only eighteen percent of arrested individuals. To this number we can add thirty-five arrested suspects from Roscommon and twelve from Sligo, again confirming that Mayo was at the center of the Fenian movement in the counties under examination.\footnote{These numbers are drawn from NAI, Police and Crime Reports, Fenian Papers, Abstract of Persons Arrested Under Habeas Corpus Suspension Act, 1866-8.}

The success of such arrests can be attested to by their persistence in folk memory, as in Sligo where the Irish Folklore Commission collected material about an informant who claimed to have been “present at Fenian meetings” and who spoke of his role in the thwarting of the 1867 Rising (Folklore Commission Volume 463, page 175). The records of the Irish Folklore Commission contain several mentions of the Fenian movement in the region, although given the nature of the medium it is difficult to determine when precisely the events recounted took place. Nevertheless, it seems that folk memory of the Fenian movement was strongest in County Mayo, where accounts mention Fenian “secret meetings,” and songs purportedly written by men who joined “the Fenian Brotherhood, Bad landlords to destroy.” (The Schools’ Collection, Volume 0128, Page 270; The Schools’ Collection, Volume 0148, Page 221-223). The Commission’s records also hold evidence of folk memory of the movement in Roscommon. There the Rising of 1867 was referred to as “a failure in as much as it failed to achieve its ends but it aroused the people and made them begin to consider their position” See The Schools’ Collection, Volume 0240, Page 420., Meanwhile, in Sligo, informants discussed the arrest and corporal punishment of suspected Fenians. See Folklore Commission Volume 463, page 208.
social composition of the arrested in these two counties seems broadly similar to the patterns of social class seen by Jordan in Mayo. Fully half of the arrested suspects in Sligo kept public or lodging houses, with only one suspect, a herd, who could be described as working-class or involved in the agrarian sector.\textsuperscript{183} Of those arrested in Roscommon who had a listed occupation fifty-six percent were engaged in urban, middle-class pursuits, while only one suspect was noted to have been engaged in agrarian pursuits.\textsuperscript{184} These figures may also offer a suggestive correlation for the importance of the \textit{Irish People} as an indicator of support for the Fenian movement. Mayo, the county with the most access to the paper had by far the most advanced movement as measured by both the recollection of those involved and the suspicion of the state, while Sligo, which had no overt access to the paper, had by far the smallest number of suspected Fenians by 1867.

While the 1867 Rising was, from the Fenian perspective, an abject failure, it did not mark the end of the movement in the region. The Rising had another important impact in motivating much of the Irish population—who viewed the arrest, trial, and punishment of leading Fenians as both overly harsh and as a violation of the rights of the Irish population to re-engage with mass nationalist politics and to transform the Fenians into more sympathetic figures.\textsuperscript{185}

\textsuperscript{183} NAI, Police and Crime Reports, Fenian Papers, Abstract of Persons Arrested Under Habeas Corpus Suspension Act, 1866-8. Herds were hired herdsmen who generally received the right to live on another's land and graze their own livestock alongside those of their employer.

\textsuperscript{184} NAI, Police and Crime Reports, Fenian Papers, Abstract of Persons Arrested Under Habeas Corpus Suspension Act, 1866-8. Calculating the precise composition of the Roscommon arrested is complicated by the unfortunate habit of the local resident magistrate, who in roughly a third of cases failed to note the occupation of those arrested.

\textsuperscript{185} For instance, Comerford argued that the execution of three men who had been arrested outside Manchester while trying to rescue other Fenians from a prison transport angered public opinion, transforming these “Manchester Martyrs” into popular heroes. The result: “From top to bottom Catholic opinion was outraged.” See Comerford, \textit{Fenians in Context}, 148.
Additionally, the failure of armed rebellion forced elements of the IRB to re-think their traditional, and deeply ideological, opposition to constitutional politics. The subsequent election of George Henry Moore to Parliament from Mayo in 1868, his continued correspondence with high-ranking members of the movement until his death in 1870, and, above all, the election of John O’Connor Power in 1874 presaged a New Departure in Irish republican politics. The willingness to engage, at least in a limited fashion, with Parliamentary politics and, as Jordan noted, to expand their base of support beyond its urban core and to focus more fully on agrarian issues, became staple elements of this effort.\(^\text{186}\) This transformation seems to have greatly increased the size and strength of the movement in the West of Ireland generally, as noted by John Devoy in 1871, who argued that of all the provinces of Ireland “Connaught [was] the best organized,” a clear change from the status of the organization in the early 1860s.\(^\text{187}\) This shift would position the movement to react to agrarian crisis when it erupted in the late 1870s, giving the IRB and its members the opportunity to act out their ideology of armed, masculine confrontation with the British state. This strategy, known as the New Departure, did not take place in a vacuum, however, and republican ideologues and actors would interact with other strains of Irish nationalism that had been developing in the 1860s and that articulated similar, though more muted, anxieties as those expressed through the *Irish People*.

Prior to the eventful year of 1867, politics in the region under examination had fallen into something of a stasis. Mayo, as Jordan pointed out, had set up a *de facto*
electoral system which reserved one seat for the Conservative Party, supported primarily by the landlords of the county, and one seat for the Liberal Party. Each party nominated one candidate, with the Conservative candidate chosen by the landlords and his Liberal counterpart by the Roman Catholic clergy of the county. This system had been in place since the contentious 1857 general election, which pitted George Henry Moore of the Independent Irish Party, R.W. Palmer of the Conservative Party, and Ouseley Higgins of the Liberal Party against one another, after which the system of nomination came into effect.\textsuperscript{188} Roscommon had a similarly stable Parliamentary representation, albeit with more change in the title of the parties represented. The county had elected Fitzstephen French to Parliament since 1832 for the Whig, Independent Irish, and Liberal Parties. He was joined, with the exception of the period following the 1840 and 1859 elections, by another member of his party.\textsuperscript{189} Since the by-election held in 1860, Charles Owen O'Conor had been French’s counterpart at Westminster, following in the path of his father Denis O'Conor, who had filled that role from 1831-47. Finally, County Sligo had, with the exception of one seat following the 1852 general election, been represented solely by Tory/Conservative candidates, with Sir Robert Gore-Booth as the senior MP at the opening of the 1860s with a decade’s service in that office.

Despite the relative placidity of high political contest in the region, there was a lively newspaper scene, as more middle-class proprietors sought to make their own political voices heard and influence felt. These liberal/national papers shared many anxieties with their competitors publishing the \textit{Irish People}, although their political goals

\textsuperscript{188} Jordan, \textit{Land and Popular Politics}, 175-77.

\textsuperscript{189} In 1840 French, standing as a Whig, was elected alongside Denis O'Conor, who stood as an Irish Repeal candidate. In 1859 French, standing as a Liberal, was elected with Thomas William Goff who stood as a Conservative but who was unseated following a petition in 1860.
and ends differed greatly. While the IRB had articulated clearly defined parameters of Irish masculinity and femininity in response to imperial narratives of inferiority, their moderate counterparts in this period were initially engaged primarily in the refutation of specific tropes of Irish inferiority and a general assertion of the Irish possession of manliness rather than a more advanced construction of new definitions of Irish identity.\textsuperscript{190}

The complaints of these nationalist entrepreneurs centered in the 1860s around the twin issues of disestablishing the Church of Ireland and attacking the system of land tenure, which were jointly held up as indicative of the “continued misgovernment of the country—paralyzed as it was by an unjust Land Code and by the oppression of an Alien Church.”\textsuperscript{191} Editorials claimed that an established Church was indicative of the most degraded “despotism that ever a people suffered from… which calls the very blood to our cheeks for shame” and described the Church [of Ireland] as “an iron fetter round the ankle of the Catholic, it is a golden collar round the neck of the Protestant.” The papers lamented that “the majority of a people are obliged from the force of coercion, rather of

\textsuperscript{190}This task was complicated in the latter half of the decade by the growth of the Fenian movement and also by what Valente termed the “metrocolonial double bind” of Irish, and indeed colonial, masculinity. According to this schema in order for colonized peoples to “prove” their capacity for self-rule they had to regulate their conduct to conform to the colonizer’s conceptions of proper conduct, an act which would be construed as “acquiescing in the feminine stereotype of passivity, pliancy, and submissiveness to others that British opinion regular invoked as proof of the...desire to be ruled” among colonized peoples. At the same time efforts to more actively, or violently, overthrow the colonial system would be construed as evidence that the colonized people in question were incapable of individual self-rule, and thus unworthy of group self-governance. This double-bind meant that constitutional nationalists in the mid-nineteenth century needed to tread a fine line, clearly arguing for the opposition of the Irish to British rule while simultaneously promoting “proper” behavior that would demonstrate the capacity of the Irish for their own self-government, in contrast to the centering of masculine violence seen in the ideology of the IRB. Valente, \textit{Myth of Manliness}, 21-24.

conviction, to subsidize the church of the minority as by law established, a church alien to their country and hostile to their own faith.”

The system of land tenure in Ireland remained the central political issue in the 1860s for the constitutional nationalist press in the region. Editorials held that system was responsible for the impoverished economic condition of the Irish peasant, thus challenging British explanations of Irish poverty as caused by Irish indolence. Editors called for the poverty of Ireland to instead be seen “as a disgrace and stigma to those who ruled us so long—who make laws for the worst fed, worst clad, and most backward portions of her majesty’s wide dominions,” and called for those conditions to be laid at the feet of “the arbitrary old feudal system of land tenures, and the relations arising therefrom… at one inequitable, antagonistic, and discouraging to the improvement of any country, but to this especially.”

Nationalist editorials further argued that the landlord system as reinforced through legislation in 1867, rather than any tendency among the Irish toward irrational violence, was responsible for the “continuous emigration, agrarian outrage, and chronic disaffection” seen in Ireland. It was further argued that “the law has been so managed in this country that the poor suffer as much from it as the rich gain by it.”

Four years later, the Connaught Telegraph claimed that only reform of the Irish land system could transform the Irish peasantry into its natural state as comfortable and prosperous proprietors, with “comfortable cottages, well-provided with rustic furniture

---

192 “Representation of Mayo: Great Demonstration at Cong in Favor of George Henry Moore,” Mayo Telegraph, 12 August 1868; Roscommon Messenger, 9 February, 1867. This seems to have been a particularly fraught issue in Sligo, as the presence of the Orange Order in the county made sectarian concerns more prominent in the nationalist political imagination.
193 Roscommon Messenger, 9 February 1867.
and rural utensils” in a “rich and happy” Ireland, thus linking the transformation of the political economy of Ireland to a redemption of the Irish population.\footnote{195}{“Landlords, farmers, and labourers,” \textit{Connaught Telegraph}, 9 January 1867.}

The success of emigrated Irish was at times used by nationalist authors to advance their claims to “natural” Irish behavior, as when the \textit{Freeman’s Journal} praised the “twenty-four millions sterling sent within a quarter of a century… by the Irish girl... universally respected for their fidelity, their honesty, their piety, and their inflexible chastity,” and proudly claiming that while some “few have fallen in the horrors of the middle voyage… the mass passed through the ordeal, and the unblemished purity of their lives is the admiration of America.”\footnote{196}{“The Irish In America: Second Notice,” \textit{Freemans Journal}, 26 December, 1867.} Irishmen who had emigrated were often held up as examples of what the Irish “race” could accomplish if left to their own devices and liberated from the “state of worse than serfdom” which supposedly existed in Ireland.\footnote{197}{“The Land Question: The Marquis of Abercorn as a Land Lord- Irish Loyalty,” Sligo Champion, 27 July, 1867.} Irishmen abroad, it was argued, “whose farms seem to be so neglected at home, showed such superhuman energy in mowing down the forests and developing the natural wealth of their adopted country, because their minds were filled with a perfect certainty that it is themselves and themselves alone, that shall reap the fruits of their labour and their own toil.” This evidence was used to argue that should reforms to the land system be
implemented at home, then the Irish peasant would be “as self-reliant, as energetic, as industrious at home as they proved themselves to be in other countries.”

These criticisms of contemporary Irish governance formed the core of a self-conscious refutation of how the Irish were presented in British media. Editors sought to complicate images of the Irish as separate from and inferior to the inhabitants of the colonial metropole, and they began in the 1860s to work toward the creation of a new, modern, and largely Victorian, conception of Irishness. The nationalist entrepreneurs of the region acknowledged the narratives they worked to refute, in a similar fashion to their peers in the Irish People. The Roscommon Messenger, for example, noted that Conservative commentators in the county “taunt us with want of self-reliance. They rely on themselves, they say, and [ask] why not we do so also,” and that the same authors argued that Irish poverty “is our own fault—we could be rich and comfortable if we but willed it.” The editor refuted these charges strongly, noting that “we rather fancy the Irishman’s repugnance to prosperity is not a whit greater than the bigotry that would leave no stone unturned to insult him.”

Similarly, the Sligo Champion noted how the phrase “The State of the Country” “was long the favourite heading of the Tory journals, when endeavoring to blacken the character of the Irish people,” and commented on how their Conservative counterparts wrote often about crimes against landlords, but “not one

---

198 “To the editor of the Sligo Champion,” Sligo Champion, 14 September 1867. This argument, that Irish indolence at home, if it could be proved to exist, was the fault of the land system rather than innate Irish racial inferiority seems directly aimed at contemporary conservative arguments for the relatively impoverished state of Irish agriculture, as when the Conservative Sligo Journal argued that agrarian crime in Ireland was caused by “careless, idly-disposed tenant[s] whom no encouragement will induce to become a good and useful member of society” who then took advantage of the lack of “moral courage” among the remainder of the tenant-farmer population “to resist the coercion and intimidation of these associations, and denounce their agents to the authorities.” “Evictions,” Sligo Journal, 3 May 1861.

199 Roscommon Messenger, 12 January 1867; 25 May 1867.
word in condemnation of the Landlord code which is driving our people out of the land, and bringing ruin on the entire country.”  

In order to refute claims of Irish inferiority, nationalist authors used their pages to comment directly on the “natural” moral state of the Irish. Authors argued that the Irishman was the moral equal if not superior to his British counterpart, such that “there is not on earth a more affectionate, grateful, sensitive people than the Irish,” but that the unjust system of government resulted in a degradation of this natural state. As the Connaught Telegraph asked, “when smarting under intolerable wrong and oppression, what will not men be driven to?” Following the Quarter Assizes authors often wrote editorials praising the low rates of crime in Ireland, which were often contrasted with the high rates of crime in England, and particularly in London. Editorials attributed this discrepancy to “the bloom of an inherent moral rectitude cultivated and developed by the chaste hand of religion alone” and argued that “the moral character of the people…is in itself an assertion of their fitness for freedom.” Other editorials attempted to re-fashion the crimes committed into evidence of the centrality of family life to the Irish peasant. This was especially the case for agrarian crimes. The supposedly innate desire of Irishmen to fulfill their assigned roles as patriarchal providers for their families was emphasized in order to argue that while “the Irish peasant is rude, and, if you please, uncultivated…he feels the deep sentiment of a husband’s love, and his heart expands with

200 “State of the Country.” Sligo Champion, 10 October 1863.
201 “The Land Question- Agrarian crisis. Reprinted from the Tipperary Advocate,” Connaught Telegraph, 4 August 1869. We see here interesting parallels to the fear of degradation caused by British rule in the Irish People, see footnotes 27, 32, 34.
202 Mayo Examiner, 2 November 1868.
tenderest fondness to his children. When he sees these dear ones flung from the hearth of their affections... he cares little for the law.”

This point, that the Irish peasant in a “natural” state prized and upheld the nuclear family, and thus strove to fulfill the emerging Victorian ideals of family life, also led to some of the only direct mentions of women by the nationalist press during the decade. Editors claimed that “it is a matter of legitimate National boast that Ireland soars far above the neighbouring nations in the pure and practical morality of her people” and that this was particularly evidenced by the fact that “the maiden daughters of the poor peasantry of Ireland are, as a class, models of Christian virtue, and pre-eminently so of female chastity.”

This supposed innate tendency toward female chastity was often linked to the preservation of the Catholic faith, as when the Freemans Journal noted that “the Irish Catholic is most jealous of the spiritual independence of his priesthood” and “the Irish maiden prizes female chastity beyond the apple of her eye,” and accused the authorities maintaining workhouses of not being “sufficiently jealous to guard the virtue of the innocent from moral contamination.”

Editorials further boasted that even the poor conditions in which many Irish peasants lived, attributable to British governance, could not tarnish this attachment to female chastity. Editorialists lauded how Irishwomen “in every parish throughout the province, and through all Ireland, endure poverty and privations of all kinds rather than suffer the slightest stain to tarnish the... virginal purity of which they are the proud possessors.” They often contrasted this state to “the manner of living followed by girls of the same social position in England, Germany, and in

204 “Crime in England,” Connaught Telegraph, 22 August 1860; “Catherine Caffery 'Condemned to Jail for Virtue’s Sake.' To the Editor of the News” Connaught Telegraph, 7 December 1864.
America”; indeed, according to one such writer, the women of England and Scotland were “below any other country in Europe in point of chastity.” We see here a clear parallel to the idealization of female chastity in the *Irish People*, with the important difference that the constitutional press argued that the Catholic Church needed to be listened to, while in the *Irish People*, the lesson seemed to be that by endorsing the system that existed, the Church and constitutionalists were damming Irish women to becoming as fallen women.

A further parallel can be seen in the characterization of female chastity as fundamentally fragile, as “that lily, which sickens in a corrupt atmosphere, and which only blooms in the desert or in the virtuous village, so guarded there that the poor helpless female is not exposed to danger from moral condemnation.” As such, peasant women were under threat from the destruction of Irish homesteads by an immoral land system. Similarly, the land system was held to be a corrupting influence on Irishmen, so that “trained to be tenants at will, the people have almost become unfit for independence.” Editorials claimed that “it is positively disgraceful to the human race to see the abject servility with which strong men approach” land agents, and that “it is

---

206 “Catherine Caffery,” *Connaught Telegraph*, 7 December, 1864; “Crime in England,” *Connaught Telegraph*, 22 August, 1860. Comparing “virtuous” Ireland to a supposedly immoral England was a common tactic of Nationalist editors. For other examples also see “Lord Palmerston on Ireland,” *Sligo Champion* 7 June, 1862; “The Working Classes and Religious Institutions,” *Roscommon Messenger* 2 February 1867. For a condemnation of this tactic by the *Irish People* see “Tall Talk,” which argued “it is easy for persons of this kind to pitch into “pig-headed Saxons” (on paper) for their wife-beating and other wicked propensities; and to prate of Celtic bravery and Celtic virtue; and there are, of course, many people who are happy to learn that they are so superior to their masters. But the “pig-headed Saxons” are still our masters, newspapers notwithstanding.”

207 “Distress in the West: Great Meeting in Tuam,” *Freemans Journal*, 24 April, 1862. Again, we see a clear parallel to the ideas of the *Irish People*, particularly as expressed in “The Special Dispensation” and “The Bishop of Toronto on Emigration.”
strange that men who fear not a violent death, in any shape, cower before a landlord and his bailiff with the “Notice to Quit.”

This tendency was again contextualized through the centering of the family unit in the idealized image of Irish masculinity, with authors arguing that “the affection of Irishmen for their families is very strong, and it is that affection that forces them to bear indignities that their manly nature should otherwise revolt against.” Irishmen and Irishwomen were therefore both presented as increasingly unable to fulfill the basic attributes of their gender in Victorian thinking because of the failings of British rule rather than because of innate Irish weakness.

Authors also made use of Victorians ideals of masculinity and race to further their arguments for Irish self-government by contending that the treatment of Ireland and the Irish directly violated core concepts of the Victorian idea of manhood. Not only, the argument ran, did the existing socio-political system harm the ability of Irishmen to live up to their assigned gender role, but the subservient position of Ireland and the Irish in the United Kingdom emasculated and infantilized otherwise fully realized Irish masculinity. Authors argued that “the principle of Self-rule in a nation admits of the same logic as the self-supporting and self-sustaining exertions of an individual. An individual in health and strength is supposed to have sufficient manhood and capacity to keep him from being dependent on others.” The editorial concluded that Ireland at the time of

---

208 *Mayo Examiner* 18 January, 1869; 8 March. A Notice to Quit was an eviction notice.
209 *Mayo Examiner* 21 June, 1869. In another example the *Connaught Telegraph* of 20 January, 1869, lamented how “The fell Notice to Quit spares neither the trembling mother nor the aged female” and “drives their sons and husbands to the commission of crimes or forces them to emigrate to foreign shores” (“The Agrarian War in Ireland.”)
writing did in fact possess sufficient health and strength to not be dependent on the remainder of the United Kingdom.\(^{210}\)

Other columns claimed that a supposed re-awakening of national feeling made the Irish worthy of self-government. In language clearly reminiscent of British attitudes toward other colonized peoples, and designed to set the Irish apart as a race capable of living up to Victorian racial and gendered norms, the *Connaught Telegraph* argued that “in the bosom of society—from the wild Arab, the stately Pole, and the effeminate Indian to the now sternly calm, thoughtful Irishman—the labourings to upheave the nightmare of oppression are manifest,” and that as a result “we say the nature of the Irish people has undergone a complete change, and their surroundings must consequently change too.”\(^{211}\)

The calm, thoughtful Irishman is clearly delineated as capable of entering into the twin categories of manhood and whiteness and contrasted with the “wild” Arab and the ‘effeminate’ Indian, both groups who were positioned outside of the prescribed norms of masculine behavior in imperial discourses.\(^{212}\)

These same efforts to refute the increasingly race-based categorization of the Irish as inferior governed the initial reaction to and subsequent coverage of the 1867 Fenian Rising. The growth of the Fenian movement had been observed with some temerity by the growing constitutional nationalist press, which viewed the movement as misguided and lamented that Ireland was “now a heap of ruins, and our divisions have helped

\(^{210}\) “The Creed of Manhood- Self-Government (From the Universal News),” *Connaught Telegraph*, 3 April, 1867.

\(^{211}\) “The Year 1867,” *Connaught Telegraph*, 2 January, 1867.

\(^{212}\) Banerjee discusses at length the discourses of effeminization which surrounded Indian, and particularly Bengali, peoples, while a discussion of the concept of “Martial Races” and the positioning of Muslim peoples outside the bounds of British masculinity can be found in Phillipa Levine’s *Gender and Empire* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).
largely to make her so.” The Fenian movement, the *Connaught Telegraph* claimed, was “a permanent war party that will suffer no party to speak of Constitutional measures,” who “prefer[red] taking the field, at the worse season of the year, and worse still, when the British Empire is at peace with all the world.”

Nationalist authors nevertheless granted that “the war party are active, energetic, and daring,” that their American compatriots had not only materially prospered but became acquainted with discipline and warfare, and that among large number of the young men of the middle and lower classes there is a recurrence of the feeling which preceded 1848.

The lack of activity in the region during the 1867 Rising was generally applauded, with commentators noting that “up to the present the west has continued perfectly tranquil.” Such authors sought to position the Fenian movement in general, and the Rising in particular, in a similar light as Irish poverty, emigration, and agrarian crime, as the result of “the clearance system, rack renting, and absolute disregard of the rights of labor.” These ills, they held, had “nurtured Fenianism into the dimensions it has lately assumed” and claimed that “had but a modicum of justice been extended to the tenant farmers of Ireland, peace, law, and order would be the order of the day.”

Nationalist opinion, and public opinion in Ireland more broadly, was outraged by the measures implemented by the British government following the Rising, particularly the suspension of Habeus Corpus and the internment of suspected Fenians. Nationalist

---


214 “The National Cause.” Similar sentiments were expressed in other articles, such as Emigration from Ireland- The Fenians (from the Army and Navy Gazette), *Sligo Champion*, 30 March 1867; “Fenianism in the South of Ireland,” *Roscommon Messenger*, 3 June, 1865.


216 “The Ireland of 1867,” *Connaught Telegraph*, 3 April, 1867.
editors argued that existing dissatisfaction with the state of Irish governance would only be exacerbated by these new measures, lamenting both that “that every Catholic Irishman is liable to be imprisoned without being guilty of any offence, but merely upon ‘suspicion’; that having any description of firearms, a sword, or even a percussion cap, in his possession, is sufficient proof of criminality to warrant his incarceration.”

Other editorials complained that Irish loyalty during the Rising was not being repaid through the enactment of reform of Irish governance, that “because the peasantry were loyal… on this account Lord Derby finds he has nothing to fear and gives his children a stone when they ask him for bread.” Articles also complained that “Irishmen who loved the green are pining away to death in British prisons,” and that “men who committed no crime, but merely on ‘suspicion,’ have been dragged from their families and committed to gaol.”

These internments were presented as particularly odious, because of the commitment of the national movement to loyally working within the system, with some authors going so far as to ask, in language remarkably close to that of the Irish People, “What has been the curse of the Catholic people of this unfortunate country but their loyalty?”

These denunciations at times also directly noted the double bind in which Irish nationalists found themselves: “when the country is quiet we are told that the people do not require

---

218 “Lord Nass’s Land-Bill,” Roscommon Messenger, 23 February, 1867. Naas was the leading Conservative election agent in Ireland. He was a landlord from Co. Kildare and the heir to the Earldom of Mayo. The following year he would be named Viceroy of India by Disraeli, in part because of his firmness against the Fenians. The Sligo Champion also complained in “The Derby Government-Ireland,” (8 June, 1867), the Government had “placed it beyond doubt that… they will maintain the ‘original policy’ of the Orange faction to the full extent of their power.” For more on Lord Nass see Timothy G. McMahon “The Assassination and Apotheosis of the Earl of Mayo,” in Timothy G. McMahon, Michael de Nie, and Paul Townend (eds.), Ireland in an Imperial World : Citizenship, Opportunism, and Subversion, (London: Palgrave Macmillan Limited, 2017, 91-110.
any change; and if agitation exists, the refusal to legislate for the people is accompanied by the plea that ‘the peace of the country must be secured’.”

The trials of suspected Fenians further heightened popular dissatisfaction with the Derby government. Nationalist authors alleged that the efforts of the government to suppress and punish Fenianism were borne out of racialized anti-Irish feeling at the highest levels of government, that “the people, they [in Parliament] affirm, are naturally troublesome, clamorous, riotous, and ever disposed to rebel without any rational cause, and, therefore, the more severely they are crushed, the better for themselves and the public in the end.” Such an approach led to government policies which made “rebels of honest patriots, and strangers of a whole people on their own soil.” The work of the chief counsel for the leaders of the rising, Isaac Butt, was singled out for special praise, again in terms which linked the outbreak of the Rising to the long-term misgovernment of Ireland. Editors praised Butt for his efforts “in defending men on trial for their lives against perjured informers, and a net-work of indictments so framed as to render escape all but impossible,” which saw him “engaged now, in the loathsome duty of compeliing [sic] a vile informer to acknowledge his perfidy before the world; then, pouring forth a scathing denunciation of the misgovernment of their unfortunate country.” Such efforts

---

221 “Wanted, A Constitutional National Leader,” Connaught Telegraph, 20 March, 1867; and “Keeping the Celts in Order” Connaught Telegraph, 26 June, 1867. Other authors argued that “the widespread use of informants to root out suspected Fenians merely enriched those willing to “make Fenians by the score, in order to convert their blood and marrow into hard cash... called in our ill-fated country the administration of justice,” which would serve to do nothing save transform the newly-titled Royal Irish Constabulary into “instruments of tyranny, seeking for every opportunity of aggrandizing themselves at the expense of their fellow-creatures” in the popular imagination. See “The Divide and Conquer Doctrine,” Connaught Telegraph, 12 June, 1867.
led the editors to hope that “the day… is certainly on the dawn, when reason and justice will have due weight.”

The arrest and execution of William Philip Allen, Michael Larkin, and Michael O’Brien in Manchester further heightened popular disaffection with the British government and its policies. Their ill-fated effort to free suspected Fenians from captivity was praised in the nationalist press as a “daring and successful attempt” undertaken by men “bound by what they look on as a sense of wrong and love of country.” Their subsequent executions in Manchester prompted new levels of condemnation in the nationalist press. The Sligo Champion denounced this result as “a great day for the Tory faction in England and the Maroons in Ireland,” while the Roscommon Messenger portrayed it as another in a long line of “judicial strangling of those who loved their country not wisely but too well,” with the executed men held up as “forming a connecting link between the past and the present.”

The correspondent of the regional paper the Connaught Telegraph presented the executions as a conversion moment, stating that prior to the executions he had “always looked upon Fenianism as only one manifestation of Irish discontent, and upon Fenians as units amongst the great whole who believe that Ireland can expect neither peace, prosperity, nor happiness so long as she remains under the rule of an alien Parliament.” He claimed that he had been “no advocate, nor have I ever been an advocate, for total separation of the two countries,”

---

222 “Counsel for the Prisoners,” Sligo Champion, 18 May 1867; “The Land Question,” Roscommon Messenger, 6 July, 1867. This episode played a central role in Butt’s growth into the central political figure of the early 1870s.
223 Comerford, Fenians in Context, 145.
224 “Rescue of Fenian Leaders at Manchester,” Roscommon Messenger 21 September, 1867.
but that “to-night [sic] I feel differently” because of what he termed a “foul judicial murder which almost places the feud between the two countries beyond the reach of peaceful compromise.”  

The executed men were immediately transformed into nationalist symbols. The press paid particular attention to the religion and religiosity of the condemned, who were described variously as “the three latest martyrs of Ireland,” who “went before their God, appealing against the foulest judicial murder which has ever disgraced the history of England,” and as having “been done to death…with fervent prayers upon their lips, blended with the pious aspiration of ‘God save Ireland’.” The condemned were also held up as exemplars of proper masculine behavior, with spectators nothing that “they behaved firmly to the last,” and “prepared to meet with Christian fortitude any fate which might be reserved for them.” This portrayal of the executed men as inherently religious, disciplined figures placed them in sharp opposition to the emerging image of the anarchic, blasphemous, and brutish Fenian in the British press and public sphere, which positioned the archetypical Fenian as the inversion of the normative British man.

The fervent popular response to the executions was rapidly noted, with editors commenting that “if the Government were anxious to increase the vitality of the Fenian

226 “The Political Executions in Manchester [From our Correspondent],” Connaught Telegraph 27 November, 1867.
227 “The Political Executions in Manchester” Connaught Telegraph 27 November, 1867; “The Manchester Tragedy,” Sligo Champion 30 November, 1867. This article made further note of how “Three Irish Catholics” were “hanged in response to the Tory and Orange cry for blood.”
228 “The Manchester Tragedy,”; “The Political Executions in Manchester [From our Correspondent].” The Roscommon Messenger further noted that at the conviction of the three men “they spoke, some of them passionately, and some deliberately but all from the bottom of their hearts,” but it noted that “Larkin made the frankest and most manly speech of all.” “The Fenian Trials at Manchester,” Roscommon Messenger, 9 November, 1867.
229 For more on this emerging image see Martin, Alter-Nations, 108, 144-45, 147-50.
movement, they could not have adopted a course more certain of realizing that object than the hanging of Allen, O’Brien, and Larkin.” The executions had served to draw “still wider the line of demarkation [sic] which has unfortunately ever existed between us and the ‘sister’ country.”230 The movement opposing the executions was again portrayed as fitting the normative image of British masculinity rather than the character of the Fenian, with authors arguing that “purity, youth, and devotion abound in the ranks of the disaffected. It is a grievous mistake to set all down as abandoned, conscienceless wretches.”231

Due to the popular support for the executed men, there were large-scale public funeral processions for the deceased in Dublin and in Cork, which drew interested comment in the West.232 The conduct of these crowds was a matter of great interest to the national press, with restrained and orderly conduct seeming to illustrate the ability and willingness of the Irish population to conform to “modern” Victorian behavioral norms. Such accounts implicitly contrasted the orderly displays in Ireland with large crowds at the executions in Manchester, which had been described as engaging in brawling, obscenity, and blasphemous.233 In discussing the funeral procession at Middletown, Co. Cork, for example, articles noted that as part of the demonstration “the Very Rev. Mr. Fitzpatrick and his counterpart The Rev. Mr. Pope had each “delivered a long address in which [they] exhorted the people to demean themselves steadily and respectably—not

---

230 “Important letters from Manchester and London,” Sligo Champion, 7 December, 1867; Roscommon Messenger 7 December, 1867.
231 “Concession versus disaffection,” Connaught Telegraph 13 November, 1867.
232 See Roscommon Messenger 7 December, 1867 and “Important letters from Manchester and London,” Sligo Champion, 7 December, 1867.
233 “The Political Executions in Manchester [From our Correspondent].”
giving their enemies any opportunity to insult or revile them.” Critically, the authors noted that attendees had adhered to the advice.²³⁴

Acts of public mourning for the deceased were not confined solely to the south and east of the country. There was a large-scale funeral procession and requiem mass performed by “the great archbishop of the West [Archbishop John Mac Hale] and the Patriot priests of Mayo,” evidence, it seems, of the continued strengths of the Fenian movement in the county even following the failure of the Rising.²³⁵ The local Connaught Telegraph commented on the occasion, saying “we pray today, as we have been praying this week in Cong, in Clifden, in Tuam, in Castlebar, in many a chapel and many an humble household in Ireland, in England, in America” for the repose of the souls of the dead. The paper referred to the ceremony as an “honour to the memory of the three young martyrs who one brief month ago, expiated on an English gallows the ‘crime’ of having loved Ireland ‘not wisely,’ perhaps, ‘but too well’.”²³⁶ Articles proudly highlighted the conformity of the attendees with the idea of masculinity: “The young men, especially were remarkably serious and stern-looking, and walked proudly and defiantly. They were faultlessly peaceful, orderly, and respectful”; “there was a marked absence of that subdued and shrinking look so often visible in the demeanor of their class some years

²³⁵ “The Manchester Martyrs!-Solemn Requiems Offered Up for the eternal repose of their souls by the great archbishop of the West and the Patriot priests of Mayo-Grand and solemn demonstration at Cong and great funeral oration by Father Lavelle,” Connaught Telegraph, 25 December, 1867. Archbishop Mac Hale was one of the most important clerics of the period. He had served as Archbishop of Tuam since 1835 and had been a constant opponent of the British state during that period, agitating for repeal of the Act of Union in the 1830s for example. Mac Hale became notable for his willingness to take more advanced political positions even than Archbishop of Dublin (and later Cardinal) Paul Cullen, who was perhaps the most important political figure in Ireland between Daniel O’Connell and C.S. Parnell.
ago.” This final comment echoed the argument of the Irish People that concrete steps in the service of the national cause would work to restore dignity to Irish masculinity.\(^\text{237}\)

The Cong service was evidently stage-managed to place the “Manchester Martyrs” into a broader narrative of Irish nationalist history, as the service was noted to have taken place “standing almost on the tomb of the last Irish king… over the bones of the brave Roderick O’Connor, the last to yield to an inexorable necessity.”\(^\text{238}\)

The address at the service was given by Fr. Patrick Lavelle, a noted clerical supporter of Fenianism, who praised the manner in which the executed men met their deaths. In his address, he claimed that “so edifying, so resigned, so sublimely Christian was the death and the preparation of these brave men” that it elevated them to levels of “Martyrs to the cause of Fatherland.” He referred to them hyperbolically as “these heroic young men made a holocaust to the rage, the vengeance, the pride, the ambition, and the lust of domination of that power whose misrule has banished or butchered millions of our race.”\(^\text{239}\)

Lavelle argued that the continued survival of the Irish people was due solely to the “wonderful resiliency of the Irish character,” but that the continued survival of that character was under threat by British rule, echoing earlier nationalist ideals.\(^\text{240}\)


\(^{238}\) Roderick O’Connor was high king of Ireland from 1166-1198. His invasion of the province of Leinster and deposition of its king Dermot MacMurrough prompted the Norman Invasion of Ireland, as Dermot sought Norman aid in restoring himself to his throne. O’Connor fought against the Norman forces which had established themselves around Dublin, but his 1171 siege of Dublin ended in defeat. O’Connor was forced to conduct the 1175 Treaty of Winsor with King Henry II of England which established English overlordship over Ireland. “The Manchester Martyrs!” Connaught Telegraph, 25 December, 1867. This effort to venerate the executed men and to place them into a broader scope of Irish history was not undertaken without opposition from within the Nationalist press, as the Telegraph noted in Ballinrobe the local newspaper, the Chronicle “which is PROFESSEDLY Catholic- denounced the solemn Sacrifice of the Church as an “act of sympathy” with Fenianism; and told the people that their participation in it “would be suicidal, not alone to themselves individually, but to the cause of Ireland” a claim which the Telegraph emphatically rejected.

\(^{239}\) “The Manchester Martyrs!”

\(^{240}\) “The Manchester Martyrs!”
address Lavelle clearly articulated a definition of Irish national identity which was at its core gendered, referring to the national cause as the cause of “peace, of order, of law, of Gospel, of Christian charity, of immutable justice, of man’s right to live… of the peasant’s fire-side… of the parents affection, and, finally of that gem in the diadem of Irish national virtue, female chastity.” These virtues were to be protected by the domain of masculine action, defined as “the firm and manly attitude of a united people,” which alone could prevent the destruction of all the enumerated virtues.

This concern for “proper” behavior during political rallies, and the continued renewal of nationalist feeling amongst the peoples of the region under examination, continued to form a central aspect of nationalist press coverage in the months between the executions and the start of the general election of 1868. This election resulted in major changes to the representation of the three counties at the heart of this study, changes which would presage even more drastic realignment in the 1870s.

Roscommon was the county least affected by the rise in post-Manchester nationalist sentiment. As noted above, the county had a long history of sending liberal/national representatives to Westminster. The central political figure in the county was Charles Owen O’Conor, styled “The O’Conor Don” signifying his titular headship of the broader O’Conor family and his descent from the Roderick O’Connor named in

241 “The Manchester Martyrs!”
242 “The Manchester Martyrs!”
Lavelle’s address. He had been serving as MP for Roscommon since 1860 and was
generally viewed in a positive light by his constituents.243

The election itself was a foregone conclusion, as the Conservative Party did not
field candidates in the constituency, a fact celebrated by the local nationalist press, which
stated “it is truly fortunate for us here that we have no struggle to engage in,” with the
Roscommon Messenger particularly contrasting the local situation to that in the
neighboring county of Sligo.244 Nevertheless the Messenger argued that the election was
of remarkable importance and that “the next Session will be a stirring one… the future
welfare of our country depends on the measures to be taken” and that the current
Government’s policy of “laboring to keep up the ascendency of the creed of the few over
that of an immense community” and the Irish “Land Question must…be settled this
session.”245

The Roscommon papers closely followed the election campaign in Sligo, a county
that had elected two Conservative members for nearly its entire existence as a
constituency. But in the 1868 election, a formidable Liberal challenger was put forward:
Denis M. O’Conor, the younger brother of Charles. The Messenger praised their own MP
for his efforts in this race, saying “a deep debt of gratitude is also due to The O’Conor
Don for that his brother, with a chivalry befitting the occasion, has flung himself into the

243 This is evidenced particularly clearly by the local Roscommon Messenger’s coverage of O’Conor’s
return to his landed estate outside of Castlerea to a rapturous reception. The Messenger claimed his
popularity stemmed from his conduct toward his tenants, that “ejectments are legal documents never
used or enforced on his extensive properties.” This leniency was contrasted with the supposed willingness
of other landlords to evict their tenantry and connected to the recent Rising, as the Messenger argued
that “Had such been the case in all quarters, Tipperary would not have been lately the scene of the sad
occurrence.” (“Reception of the O’Conor Don M.P.” Roscommon Messenger 22 August, 1868.)
244 Roscommon Messenger 14 November, 1868.
gap in Sligo, and bids fair to strangle in its very lair the faction of ascendency.”\textsuperscript{246} The nationalist press in Sligo was equally happy that the younger O’Conor had entered the race, referring to him as “a fit and proper representative for the County of Sligo,” who would “be elected by the independent voters, who have felt the indignity of past misrepresentation.”\textsuperscript{247}

The nationalist press in the county argued that the lack of support for the Rising did not mean a lack of support for its goals. Authors argued that “the selfish policy of arrogant ascendancy, the hideousness of proselytizing bigotry, and illegal assumption of irresponsible power to withhold from… Irish subjects their lawful and constitutional rights, together with the impunity with which crime is committed by the higher classes, have brought the country to the brink of Revolution.” Further, they argued that only “the God-like interposition of the Catholic clergy, who, speaking with a voice of authority have cemented anew the holy ties that through centuries linked indissolubly religion and patriotism” had prevented the large-scale support of the Rising in the county. The younger O’Conor echoed these calls in his election address, arguing that “a battle… must be fought for Religious Equality, on every hustings” and that “any settlement short of utter abolition” of the Church of Ireland “would be treason to the principle of Religious Equality, without which it is vain to expect the Irish to become a contented people, or feel assured of obtaining redress of their… grievances, of a just administration of the law.”

After also calling for the resolution of the Land Question in favor of the tenant, the \textit{Sligo Champion} called for the people of the county to “unite, therefore, in the resolute exercise

\textsuperscript{246} Roscommon Messenger 14 November, 1868.
\textsuperscript{247} Representation of the County of Sligo: Important Demonstration at Skreen,” \textit{Sligo Champion}, 3 October, 1868.
of every lawful and constitutional means… Regulate action, and by taking your own case in hand, secure unity and strength.”

As O’Conor campaigned in the county the nationalist press took pains to argue that his base of support represented the vast majority of the population of Sligo, and that his supporters comported themselves in a manner fully compatible with middle-class norms of polite behavior. Editors noted that, prior to popular meetings held by O’Conor, all aspects of rural society “the young and old, the married and the single, ‘matron and maid’” could be seen “wending their way to be present at the meeting to welcome the ‘scion’ of that noble dynasty of kings, The O’Conor.” These references to women in the audience is particularly interesting as it illustrates the efforts of women, who still lacked the franchise, to affect an election by participating in public events.

Nationalist articles also emphasized the peaceful nature of such meetings, claiming that “you could not select, in any part of the province, a more orderly or more respectable concourse of people.” While “there was sufficient physical force present to give a good account of double the number of Orange Maroons,” the paper wrote, “there was not the slightest evidence of disorder in the vast assemblage.” In public speeches

248 “General Election-To the Electors and Inhabitants of the County of Sligo,” Sligo Champion 25 July, 1868. The incumbent Conservative MPs, Robert Gore Booth and Edward H. Cooper, found it unnecessary to actively campaign for the renewal of their positions, publishing only the following notice in local newspapers “we trust we may solicit a renewal of that confidence which you so generously bestowed upon us for years past. Our Political opinions are so familiar to you that we deem it unnecessary to make them the subject of an Electioneering Address.” “To the Electors of the County of Sligo,” Sligo Champion 14 November, 1868.

249 “Representation of the County of Sligo- Glorious Demonstration at Ballymote- Enthusiastic Reception of Mr. O’Conor- Most Successful Canvass,” Sligo Champion, 24 October, 1868.

250 “Representation of the County of Sligo- Glorious Demonstration at Ballymote” On several occasions it was noted “in as short a time as it takes to write the transaction, the horses were taken from Mr. O’Conor’s carriage, which was dragged along with great rapidity to the place of meeting” underscoring that while on some level O’Conor’s candidacy was indicative of a more popular politics in the wake of the 1867 Reform Act, a sizable portion of his public support was connected to his ancestry and his own reputation as a landlord fulfilling his assigned social role.
O’Conor sought to further this message, arguing that his candidacy was not intended “to create dissension or disorder, to disturb the country or provoke ill-will” but to “exhort and encourage” the public “to act legally, to look for constitutional means” and “to avert… the dangerous prevalence of the idea, that nothing can be done for this country except in spite of, and against the constitution.”

Another key idea in O’Conor’s candidacy was that in voting for him tenant farmers worked to reclaim their masculinity. Editorials and speeches both complained of the “unconstitutional threats of Tory landlords, through the ignoble herd of agents, bailiffs, and under-bailiffs,” who, it was claimed, told tenant farmers that “you have got your instructions, and you must vote as you are commanded, or else leave the land.” Tenants were urged to “manfully” answer “For my part I will vote as I have promised,” “to do their duty” in resisting, and to “to achieve your independence by the free and unfettered use of the franchise.”

O’Conor won the election with ease, topping the poll with what was referred to as a “Glorious Majority of Four Hundred and Sixty-three over [Sir Robert Gore] Booth and

---

251 “Representation of the County of Sligo- Glorious Demonstration at Ballymote.”
252 “Representation of the County of Sligo: Important Demonstration at Skreen.”
253 “Representation of the County of Sligo: Important Demonstration at Skreen.”; “General Election-To the Electors and Inhabitants of the County of Sligo,” Sligo Champion, 25 July, 1868. The Conservative press in the region saw the popular support for O’Conor in a less positive light, arguing that “O’Conor had “had his cause well backed up latterly by altar denunciations, platform haranguing, and mob violence,” that his rallies were attended by “none but the priests and a few of the great unwashed.” The Sligo Chronicle further alleged that “Some tenants on Captain Armstrong’s property, near Tubbercurry... were visited at night by an armed mob, who put books in their hands, and made them swear that they would vote for Mr. O’Conor,” and that “our two country members, when passing through a village called Geevagh, were attacked by a mob, who pelted them with stones.” “Sligo Election- Mob Violence,” Sligo Champion, 7 November, 1868. In response to these latter allegations the Sligo Champion published a rebuttal, arguing that while there had been a rally in favor of O’Conor on the day in question, “nothing could exceed the good order in which the meeting separated,” and pointing out several seeming factual inconstancies with the account of their conservative counterparts. “Sligo Election- Mob Violence,” Sligo Champion, 7 November, 1868.
of Five Hundred and Forty-two over [Edward Henry] Cooper.” The *Champion* took care to note for a final time the conduct of O’Conor’s supporters on election day, stating that “Mr. O’Conor’s voters left the tally room in the most orderly and creditable manner, and after recording their votes, returned again in the same peaceable way. Not a hand was raised during the entire day; not an angry word was heard; the people were determined on one object alone, as was evidenced by their demeanor- to do their duty.”

Mayo, the county with the greatest concentration of Fenian support in the West both before and after the Rising, saw a limited shift in the political landscape. The county saw less of a seismic change in party representation than did Sligo, but the political developments of 1868 far outstripped the stasis seen in Roscommon and presaged what would be a watershed election in 1874. As Jordan noted, there had been no contested general elections in Mayo between 1857 and 1874, however the 1868 election saw the return to office of George Henry Moore, who had previously served in that role from 1852-1857. A large-scale landlord, Moore also moved in Fenian circles, although his personal politics remained committed to a broadly Catholic-Whig political agenda. Despite the fact that Moore’s election was a *fait accompli* once he received the support of the local clergy, the electoral campaign was spirited, partly because the support of the

---

254 “County Sligo Election- Return of the O’Conor- Glorious Majority of For Hundred and Sixty Three over Booth and of Five Hundred and Forty-two over Cooper- The “Conservative Proprietors,” The “Worthy Representatives” “Guarded our Interests” - “The Candidature of Mr. O’Conor is only calculated to disturb the peace of the country.” “Without a shadow of hope towards his election.” - “Our Knowledge of the County,” *Sligo Champion* 5 December, 1868.”

255 “The Election for the County of Sligo- The Triumphant Return of Mr. O’Conor- The Polling,” *Sligo Champion*, 5 December, 1868.
clergy for Moore was only accomplished through the energetic lobbying of Fr. Lavelle.\footnote{Gerard Moran, \textit{A Radical Priest in Mayo: Fr. Patrick Lavelle : the Rise and Fall of an Irish Nationalist}, 1825-86 (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 1994), 98. Another candidate, Valentine Blake, was offered as the Liberal/ Clerical candidate, but, partially due to Lavelle’s maneuvering and partly due to his own status as a landlord less well-regarded than Moore, the nationalist press in the county denounced Blake as “the accomplice and the tool of the hereditary oppressors of the people and the despoilers of the sanctuary...doing his very worst to rivet still closer the territorial chain on the neck of the agrarian serf.” See “The Westport Demonstration,” \textit{Mayo Examiner} 28 September, 1868.}

These efforts were bolstered by Moore’s reputation as a caring landlord, dating back to his relief efforts during the Famine. The \textit{Mayo Examin\*er} praised Moore for avoiding “eviction or the consolidation of farms,” attributing this to his supposed respect for “the poor man’s cabin as his castle.”\footnote{“The Meeting in Favour of Mr. Moore,” \textit{Mayo Examiner}, 7 September, 1868.} His conduct was held up an example of the ideal for his class, with the local \textit{Mayo Examiner} arguing that “If all the landlords of Ireland had acted towards their tenants in the same manner for the last three hundred years, you would not hear of all the agrarian crime that has been committed through-out the land, and there would be a friendly feeling between landlords and tenants to-day.”\footnote{“Grand Demonstration for Mr. Moore: Ballinrobe and Kilmain to the Rescue- Important meeting on Tuesday,” \textit{Mayo Examiner} 31 August, 1868.}

These points were central to the case for Moore’s candidacy. Speeches at rallies in favor of his election lamented the impact of the land system which had placed “nothing but horned cattle where once were the homes of men.” His supporters asked: “What is it that cause that melancholy prospect? The want of a law that would protect the tenant against the rapacity of the landlord.”\footnote{“The Coming Election,” \textit{Mayo Examiner} 17 August, 1868.} Others claimed that the landlords in their conduct toward the people “teach the people that their boasted liberties are all a sham—that all legal rights are in the hands of foreign masters—and that the people have no redress except in revolution,” referring to them as “dangerous propagators of Fenian doctrine” likely to force the people of Mayo “whom they have forcibly deprived of all legal
expressions of opinion, [to] seek redress through other courses.”

The language used by Moore and Fr. Lavelle in advocating for the former’s election melded language and concepts reminiscent of the *Irish People* with more mainstream constitutional language. Fr. Lavelle offered similar arguments in speeches advocating Moore’s election. He argued that a failure to elect Moore would show that “that so little manhood remains in us—that in 1868, eighteen hundred years after man’s redemption, a few paltry, contemptible tyrants can lord it over thousands of the people.” But he claimed that successfully electing Moore would show that the people of Mayo would “bear no longer the position of slaves— you will show yourselves men, and instead of those tyrants being your masters, they will become slaves themselves.”

Moore similarly attributed his popular support to “the spirit of manhood that is within you. It is the divine fire of race that burns in your hearts. It is the resolve to be free that is sustained in your souls by the prayer of St. Patrick, that the land of his labours and his love should not remain in bondage for ever [sic],” seeming to meld Fenian ideas regarding the regaining of masculinity through political action with religious rhetoric. He further argued that the existing land and political system in Mayo was working to degrade his audience and remove that spirit of manhood from them, continuing both arguments advanced in the *Irish People* and, as we have seen, in more moderate nationalist presses across the decade. Referring to those tenant farmers who did not support his candidacy, for example, Moore argued that that those individuals were failing to fulfill their

---

261 “Grand Demonstration for Mr. Moore: Ballinrobe and Kilmain to the Rescue- Important meeting on Tuesday,” *Mayo Examiner*, 31 August, 1868.
262 “Grand Demonstration for Mr. Moore: Ballinrobe and Kilmain to the Rescue- Important meeting on Tuesday.”
masculine duty to stand up to British/landlord oppression, but that they were motivated to do so because of their desire to protect their families. He addressed an electoral rally in this vein by saying:

There is no iron on their limbs; no hempen cords round their necks. They are no longer menaced like their fathers of old, with the dungeon and the scaffold. And yet there is a fear in their hearts deeper than the dread of the jailer and the hangman. A fear for their homes— a fear for the food of their children— a secret sense of helplessness and hopelessness, more deadly and degrading than those more open dangers that spur the souls of men to resistance… It is no longer their bodies that are in bondage; it is their souls that are in irons.\textsuperscript{263}

The election of Moore was met with elation in the Mayo nationalist press, which saw his election as “a victory achieved by the manhood of the people against those who, for ages, have held them down…. It is a victory which has stirred the blood, exercised the minds, disciplined the energies, fortified the faith, and given life to the hopes of the people.”\textsuperscript{264}

In the response to the executions in Manchester and in the election campaign of 1868, particularly in Moore’s campaign for election, one sees the fullest development of efforts by constitutional nationalists to articulate new ideas of “proper” conduct which taken together made up new Irish identities. Prior to this period nationalist writers clearly sought to disprove contemporary Imperial narratives of Irish inferiority and began to construct an alternative definition of Irishness as centered in the self-sufficient nuclear family, in keeping with contemporary Victorian norms. To these existing definitions,
authors articulated a narrow path of proper behavior, seeking to avoid either accusations that Irish placidity equated to Irish acquiescence or arguments that the Irish were unable to govern themselves personally and, thus, politically.265

To properly perform Irish masculine behavior, then, was to clearly demonstrate for and “manfully… do their duty” in voting for a nationalist candidate, and to endure whatever consequences would result, while taking care to avoid any impression of disorder, indiscipline, or physical force.266 Proper Irish feminine behavior was defined in more passive terms, to support men in exercising their political function through attendance at political rallies, abstaining from articulating any over-zealous participation in the political process.267

Throughout the 1860s, and especially after the 1867 Rising, constitutional nationalists responded to similar anxieties as those that IRB-affiliated writers had articulated in the Irish People. They employed similar tactics to create archetypes of proper behavior capable of refuting the imperial narratives producing those anxieties, the valorization of patriarchal behavior and strength for men, and the valorization of chastity

265 We see the former idea stated most clearly in “State of England: The Ministry-Fenianism-Ireland,” Sligo Champion, 12 October, 1867. The description of crowds at political rallies in late 1867 and during the 1868 campaign clearly defines this, as in “Representation of the County of Sligo- Glorious Demonstration at Skreen- Enthusiastic Reception of Mr. O’Conor- Most successful canvass,” Sligo Champion, 3 October, 1868.
266 Representation of the County of Sligo: Important Demonstration at Skreen."
267 For example, the Roscommon Messenger noted that one Rev. Mr. Maude, of Tralee was “waited upon ... by a deputation of women” who offered him five pounds “to say masses for the souls of Allen and his confederates.” When Rev. Maude declined, the paper described his “Amazonian visitors” as becoming “clamorous, and at length threatened vengeance if he persisted,” arguing that their engagement in direct political activity eroded their attachment to the Irish race. This episode seems to evidence unease at the violation of the public/private divide by Irishwomen in a similar manner as described by Banerjee. For more see footnote 49. This concern for “proper” behavior during political assemblies was also evident during the meetings of the Amnesty Association in subsequent years, with editors noting with pride that “there was a remarkably orderly assemblage... the military were kept in readiness, and large numbers of police were on duty, but a riotous spirit was nowhere manifested. “The “Peaceful” Fenians,” Roscommon Messenger 16 October, 1869.
and passivity for women. The central difference between the muscular nationalism advocated for in the *Irish People* and the restrained masculinity found in more mainstream nationalist thought was in the contours of proper masculine behavior and the issue of violence. For the IRB, the willingness to use force and the disciplined preparation for its use was central to the performance of masculinity. To moderate nationalists, the use of force in a political process was presented as misguided and self-mastery and the ability to restrain impulses toward violence, even when potentially warranted, were increasingly valorized.

Importantly, both groups viewed the most common form of anti-imperialist action, agrarian violence backed by an enduring ‘subversive law’ which fundamentally challenged modern and capitalist understandings of land tenure, as fundamentally problematic. ¹²⁶ For the IRB such action was simply the work of a “mob,” at best an emanation of “patriotism, not militarily organized” and thus “worth nothing.”¹²⁶ For constitutional nationalists, such action was the “wild justice of revenge,” simultaneously a reaction to an unjust land system and, potentially, evidence of Irish indiscipline and resistance to modernity. ¹²⁷ The persistence of such agrarian violence, and the response of Irish nationalists to it would be a central concern in the early years of the next decade.

---

¹²⁶ See Laird, *Subversive Law in Ireland*. The ongoing functioning of Laird’s “subversive law” in the region under examination and the response to its workings by Irish nationalists will be a central focus of the next chapter.
Chapter Two

The decade following the 1868 election saw the growth of the Irish nationalist movement into a political force in its own right with several long-standing demands of the movement enacted into law, such as the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland and the implementation of the secret ballot. Nationalist candidates grew increasingly influential in poor law boards, ran openly under their own party affiliation in the 1874 general election, and in both counties Mayo and Sligo replaced conservative MPs, in the former case without a conservative candidate even being nominated.

The central political development of the decade was the passage of the 1870 Land Act, which was prompted largely by the growth of the nationalist political movement. The Act was part of a series of reforms introduced by Liberal Prime Minister William Gladstone in an effort to placate Irish opinion. The Act made several major changes to the Irish land system. These included giving the Ulster Custom—the right of an outgoing tenant to sell his “goodwill” to an incoming tenant and receive compensation for improvements made during his tenure—the force of law where it existed; the Act also provided compensation for disturbance to tenants if they were evicted for any reason other than non-payment of rent, as well as compensation for improvements made to a holding if the tenant chose to quit. Additionally, as a compromise to the more Radical wing of the Liberal party, the Act introduced the “Bright clauses,” which allowed for holdings to be bought by tenants through the Landed Estates Court with funds advanced from the Commissioners of Public Works.\(^\text{271}\) However, the Act itself was quite

\(^{271}\) See Bull, *Land, Politics & Nationalism*, 195.
complicated, at various points excluding certain categories of tenants from claiming compensation and at other points giving general right to claims. Moreover, as W.E. Vaughn noted, it did not prevent evictions or the service of notices to quit to tenant farmers, and it allowed only about one-third of evicted tenants to gain some form of compensation and, even then, generally at rates less than what tenants had claimed.\textsuperscript{272}

Overall the act seems to have satisfied few populations fully, neither tenants, who gained neither fixity of tenure nor the full compensation they expected, nor landlords who, as Vaughn observed, now needed to think quite carefully about the costs involved in attempting to raise rents.\textsuperscript{273}

As we will see, the limitations of the 1870 Act were not the only aspects of the decade which illustrated that the control of nationalist elites was not total over their constituents, as illustrated by the different political and popular responses surrounding the decision of Justice William Keogh in the 1872 Galway election petition case and the election of John O’Conor Power to Parliament from Mayo. Critically, the issue of agrarian outrage, one of the key areas which undergirded British claims about Irish inferiority, continued to pose challenges to nationalist elites, particularly during and immediately following a sizable increase in agrarian crimes in 1869 and 1870. In response to this increase, nationalists built on prior depictions of the Irish as capable of living up to the ideals of Victorian society, centering the image of the patriarchal, self-reliant nuclear family under threat from British rule. This image, and its threatened destruction, were also used by nationalist elites to argue for masculine action, not taking

\textsuperscript{272} W.E. Vaughn \textit{Landlords and Tenants}, 100-101. He discussed the act, its provisions, and its impact in detail from 93-102.
\textsuperscript{273} Vaughn, \textit{Landlords and Tenants}, 102.
the form of armed rebellion as the *Irish People* had called for, but rather supporting nationalist candidates and organizations and, more often, restraining understandable, if problematic, impulses toward violence. Thus, in the years between the Fenian Rising and the economic recession of the late 1870s we see the further creation of nationalist archetypes of masculine and feminine behavior, with the former not taking the form of a traditional “muscular” nationalist intent of killing and dying for the nation, but rather a unique variant produced by the peculiarities of Ireland in the late 1860s and early 1870s, a masculine figure poised to suffer and restrain himself so that the nation could prosper.

Agrarian crime in the eighteenth and early-nineteenth century was, as discussed in the introduction, dominated by the Whiteboy movement, a blanket term for a series of loose-knit secret societies that operated in rural Ireland, with Whiteboyism generally describing agrarian violence carried out by secret societies. Whiteboy action was largely driven by issues concerning the distribution and use of land, although as the nineteenth century continued, other political concerns, as exemplified by the Rockite disturbances of 1821-4 and the Tithe War of 1830-36, also prompted Whiteboy activities.\(^{274}\) The operation of these and other related groups has been viewed by Heather Laird as part of what she termed subversive law, where popular “resistance to an official legal system created a space for the establishment of alternative legal concepts and structures that monitored and regulated the behavior of rural communities.”\(^{275}\) According to Laird the

---


colonial nature of the official legal system in Ireland worked to create a “a space outside official law,” where popular conceptions of legality and justice could operate,” and it was within this space that Whiteboys and other agrarian combinations acted. As part of this system of subversive law Whiteboy activities were generally driven by an understanding of justice and proper behavior derived from a moral economy of the type first described by E.P. Thompson, which viewed land not as a solely economic commodity, but rather as “the resource around which peasant social relationships were based and thus something over which the peasantry had a right to control.” This led to agrarian violence becoming an increasingly intra-communal issue, with Whiteboys often defending the rights of the poorest peasants against their more prosperous counterparts.

The first half of the nineteenth century also saw the development of Ribbonism, a series of loosely connected secret societies, although seemingly more hierarchal than Whiteboy groups, which expressed more clearly articulated political and sectarian grievances. Ribbon societies were particularly prevalent across the region under review, with Jordan noting their activities in Mayo, Kelly in Sligo, and Huggins in Roscommon. Huggins’s attitude toward Ribbonism, seeing it as an extension of and largely motivated by the same set of issues as the earlier Whiteboy movement, seems to be the most useful method of viewing the group, although, as Garvin asserted, Ribbon movements did much to link local revolutionary and agrarian societies in the eighteenth

---

276 Laird, Subversive Law in Ireland, 23.
278 Beames, Peasants and Power, 140, 197.
and early-nineteenth centuries to the later large-scale political agitation of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries.  

While agrarian societies were prevalent and powerful in the first half of the nineteenth century, the increasing power of both the Catholic Church, which opposed oath-bound secret societies, and the British state following the Act of Union worked to erode the ability of such combinations to work effectively. The Famine also worked to reduce the instances of agrarian violence, as it largely eliminated the population of the poorest tenant farmers, laborers, and cottiers whose grievances had motivated much if not most of the Whiteboy activity of the first half of the century. As noted in the introduction, post-Famine Ireland saw the decrease in the numbers and power of smaller farmers and laborers and the increasing economic and social power of the strong farming class of larger tenant farmers. Recently Breandán Mac Suibhne has also argued that the Famine caused the end “or at least an ebbing, of outrage—in the everyday sense of moral indignation—at the fate of the rural poor,” and its replacement by a “cold individualism” through the centering of individual tenant farming as the central feature of the agrarian economy and society. This shift combined with the expanding power of the state and church establishments to erode the old sense of community which had sustained agrarian combinations.

---

281 Huggins, Social Conflict in pre-Famine Ireland; Garvin, “Defenders, Ribbonmen, and Others,” 154. Huggins argued that both legal activities, such as nationalist meetings and parades, and extra-legal violence both formed part of a repertoire of protest. The variety of this repertoire allowed individuals on the ground to tailor their activities for maximum effectiveness and to minimize risks to themselves.


Due to these changes agrarian outrages fell swiftly following the end of the Famine, from 1,362 in 1850 to only 232 by 1860.\textsuperscript{284} However, over the same period the ratio of agrarian outrages to evictions rose, illustrating a continued, and perhaps heightened, connection between agrarian crime and eviction as an inciting incident.\textsuperscript{285} There were some efforts to organize agrarian crime in a more systemic manner, with widespread Ribbon conspiracies in 1850 and a large-scale outbreak of agrarian crime in County Westmeath in 1871.\textsuperscript{286} However, in the West, and particularly in the counties of Mayo, Sligo, and Roscommon, it seems that tenant farmers were relatively quiet, and records indicate that there were relatively low rates of agrarian crime.\textsuperscript{287} In post-Famine Mayo, for example, the rate of agrarian crime was below the average rate for both Ireland and Connacht in the 1850s and 1860s, attributed by contemporaries to improving conditions in the region.\textsuperscript{288}

The number of outrages continued to decline for most of the 1860s, reaching a low of eighty-seven reported offenses in 1866.\textsuperscript{289} However, this trend came to a rapid end in the late 1860s and early 1870s, with 767 agrarian offenses recorded across Ireland in 1869, and 1,329 in 1870.\textsuperscript{290} The region under examination saw similar increases in reported offenses during those years, with the Royal Irish Constabulary attributing 251

\begin{footnotesize}
\begin{itemize}
\item\textsuperscript{284} Bew, \textit{Land and the National Question in Ireland}, 35.
\item\textsuperscript{285} Bew, \textit{Land and the National Question in Ireland}, 25.
\item\textsuperscript{286} A.C. Murray disputed the claim that the outbreak of outrage in Westmeath was due to Ribbonism, and argued that British authorities attributed agrarian crime to Ribbon societies in order to explain crimes they could not solve, criminals they could not catch, and gangs they could not break up,” which he referred to as an “example of the irrationality of Ireland’s masters.” A.C. Murray, “Agrarian Violence and Nationalism in Nineteenth-century Ireland: The Myth of Ribbonism,” \textit{Irish Economic and Social History} 13 (1986):56-73.
\item\textsuperscript{287} Jordan, \textit{Land and Popular Politics}, 146.
\item\textsuperscript{288} Jordan, \textit{Land and Popular Politics}, 183.
\item\textsuperscript{289} Return of outrages reported to Constabulary Office in Ireland, 1870-71, 23. \url{https://www.dippam.ac.uk/eppi/documents/15590}. Last date accessed: 1 March 2022.
\item\textsuperscript{290} Return of outrages reported to Constabulary Office in Ireland, 1870-71, 23.
\end{itemize}
\end{footnotesize}
total offenses to the three counties in 1860, with seventy of those being committed in Mayo, 169 in Sligo, and nineteen in Roscommon.\textsuperscript{291} The totals rose sharply in 1870, with the authorities reporting 718 total agrarian offenses in the three counties.\textsuperscript{292} In contrast to the totals in 1869, in 1870 agrarian crime was reported as being far higher in Mayo than in either of the other two counties examined, with 665 of the total offenses reported in that county, compared to twenty-six in Roscommon and twenty-seven in Sligo.\textsuperscript{293}

Politics likely played at least some role in the increase of agrarian crimes in the region. Jordan, for example, argued that “a significant degree of responsibility for this surge of violence” in Mayo “rests with members of the Irish Republican Brotherhood” and their activities following the failed 1867 Rising, which does seem to provide an explanation for why rates of agrarian crime were higher in Mayo than in Sligo or Roscommon where the IRB was less organized or active.\textsuperscript{294} Similarly, the 1869 total for Sligo seems to be inflated by 127 reported cases of rioting, likely tied to the contested election for Sligo borough in late 1868, which ultimately led to the dissolution of that electoral district.\textsuperscript{295} Government records also provide evidence for a connection between politics and agrarian crime. For instance, Constabulary returns described the swearing of unlawful oaths as events where “large parties of men, generally armed, visited the houses of different farmers at night, and swore them not to pay higher rent than the Government

\textsuperscript{291} Return of outrages reported to Constabulary Office in Ireland, 1869, 23. https://www.dippam.ac.uk/eppi/documents/15488. Last date accessed: 1 March 2022.
\textsuperscript{292} Return of outrages reported to Constabulary Office in Ireland, 1870, 71, 21.
\textsuperscript{293} Return of outrages reported to Constabulary Office in Ireland, 1870-71, 21.
\textsuperscript{294} Jordan, \textit{Land and Popular Politics}, 183.
\textsuperscript{295} Return of outrages reported to Constabulary Office in Ireland, 1869, 23. For reports on the rioting surrounding the Sligo Borough election see \textit{Sligo Champion} 23 January 1869.
Valuation,” illustrating a potential link between the heightened passions of the debate over the 1870 Land Act and increases in agrarian crime.²⁹⁶

Importantly, despite the high raw number of outrages reported in the three counties, it appears that most of the crimes involved neither direct violence to persons nor property. In 1870, for example, nearly one half of the total offenses reported in Mayo were either for the administering of unlawful oaths or for the sending of intimidating letters, with only one case of firing at the person and five cases of assault reported for the same period.²⁹⁷ Similarly, sixteen of County Roscommon’s twenty-six reported agrarian outrages involved intimidation, either through notices or other means, as did fifteen of county Sligo’s twenty-seven reported agrarian outrages.²⁹⁸

Unless they conveyed statements from individuals on the ground, government documents cannot illuminate the attitude or motivations of individuals. While reading government records against the grain does allow for some headway to be made in this examination, the relative lack of detail in government returns and the lack of arrests for the most common agrarian crimes, such as the posting of threatening notices, hampers these efforts. It also illustrates that, despite the very real growth of the Crown state both before and after the Famine, ample space remained for subversive or alternative laws to function. However, the examination of oral histories about the period and their comparison with local reporting on the issue of agrarian outrage allows for some insight into the mentality of the communities examined herein.

²⁹⁶ Return of outrages reported to Constabulary Office in Ireland, 1870-71, 18.
²⁹⁷ Return of outrages reported to Constabulary Office in Ireland, 1870-71, 21.
²⁹⁸ Return of outrages reported to Constabulary Office in Ireland, 1870-71, 17.
In the collected folklore from the region regarding landlords, the central question seems to have been whether the landlord in question was a “good” landlord or a “bad” landlord, with the distinction being based on the willingness of a landlord not to raise rents and to forgive arrears. Good landlords were defined in popular memory as those who “would not press poor people for rent,” or who undertook acts of charity for their tenants. Bad landlords were generally seen as those who evicted tenants, as when “Sir Robert Gore Booth of Lissadell” was described in local oral histories as the “descendant of a Cromwellian settler,” who “brought odium on his name by a wholesale eviction which he caused to have carried out” during the Famine. Alternatively, landlords could earn the title of “bad” if they charged too high a rent for the quality of land being let. At other points, land agents or bailiffs were centered in folk narratives of the period, often with landlords being depicted as benevolent, with narratives claiming “some of his agents were bad and wicked,” evicting people without notifying the landlord, presumably because he would intercede on behalf of the peasants.

Evictions were a major theme in local folklore, which portrayed the events as inherently unjust and exploitative. Bailiffs are generally portrayed as either overly harsh, evicting tenants who could “not pay the week’s rent,” often widows or the ill. Other

299 UCD, National Folklore Collection (Hereafter cited as UCD NFC) The Schools’ Collection, Volume 0262, Page 039. The Irish Folklore Commission was set up in 1935 to study and collect information on the folklore and traditions of Ireland, building on earlier private efforts. One of the Commission’s central collections is the School’s Collection, comprising information recorded by over 50,000 school children from all primary schools in the South of Ireland. While these records were collected well after the events they describe, they are the best method of doing history from below in the region under examination. For more see Guy Beiner, Remembering the Year of the French: Irish Folk History and Social Memory (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2007), particularly chapter two.

300 UCD NFC the Schools’ Collection, Volume 0157, 398-9
301 UCD NFC the Schools’ Collection, Volume 0233, 551
302 UCD NFC the Schools’ Collection, Volume 0109, 431
303 UCD NFC the Schools’ Collection, Volume 0235, 194-6
examples showed bailiffs evicting tenants for personal reasons, often to advance their own personal standing, or as part of inter-communal feuds.\textsuperscript{304} Narratives focused on the destruction of the home in the process of eviction, often highlighting that individuals enforcing eviction orders “dumped everything out of the house even the cat.”\textsuperscript{305} In other narratives the quenching of the hearth-fire took on a particular significance, with Famine evictions in such narratives depicted as gratuitously cruel. One such narrative from Mayo portrayed the local land agent as having thrown “a bucket of water into the fire, and quenched it, and he told them to clear out, and he locked the door.”\textsuperscript{306} One particularly striking narrative from Sligo has a widow in the process of being evicted from her home asking the bailiff for time to cook a last meal for her children, and the bailiff responding by adding soot to the pot and commenting that “it’s boiled now for ye.”\textsuperscript{307}

Interestingly, local memory also illustrated resistance to eviction. Interviewees portrayed some as incapable of resisting eviction alone and requiring either supernatural or communal aid in order to prevent or, more often, to take revenge for evictions. Priests often entered into these narratives as intercessors on behalf of tenants, as in one narrative from Geevagh, Co. Roscommon, where the parish priest was stated to have arrived at an eviction in progress, at which the sheriff fell “on his knees before the priest and begged his pardon. The priest told him get up and thank God he got home safe,” with the narrative concluding that “there was no eviction on the tenants after that.”\textsuperscript{308} In other stories individuals used the power of the supernatural to curse those involved in their eviction.

\textsuperscript{304} For an example of the former see UCD NFC the Schools’ Collection, Volume 0245, 156-8. For an example of the latter, see UCD NFC the Schools’ Collection, Volume 0235, 194-6.
\textsuperscript{305} UCD NFC the Schools’ Collection, Volume 0233, 551.
\textsuperscript{306} UCD NFC the Schools’ Collection, Volume 0102, 227.
\textsuperscript{307} UCD NFC Manuscript Collection, volume 485, 189-190.
\textsuperscript{308} UCD NFC the Schools’ Collection, Volume 0233, 067-9.
evictions. One example from Roscommon centered on a woman who, after her family’s eviction, the death of her husband, and the auctioning of her furniture “called the seven curses of a widow, she being one, on the agent” who had evicted her family and the sheriff who had carried out the eviction. According to the story, her curse caused the death of the former and the madness of the latter. The Sligo narrative regarding a widow mentioned above ends with the narrator noting that the bailiff was not able to escape “the misfortune that often occurs after… doin’ a bad turn like that even in this life,” with the hand that he had used to throw soot in the woman’s pot being “crippled up.”

Other examples, although rarer, claimed that communal action had been used to prevent or redress evictions. In one example from Roscommon, the eviction of a tenant prompted communal action, as “the people of the district gathered to see if they would be able to put Brett out of O'Beirne's land, and put O'Beirne in on the land again,” before being thwarted by the police. A similar example from Sligo has the neighbors of an evicted man chaining him to a heavy stone and refusing to help the police break the chains, thus thwarting the eviction. A final example from Mayo described one physical confrontation between the men of the village and the local sheriff on the occasion of an eviction. The story also described a woman stabbing several men to prevent the eviction

309 UCD NFC the Schools’ Collection, Volume 0235, 194-6.
310 UCD NFC Manuscript Collection, volume 485, 189-90.
311 UCD NFC the Schools’ Collection, Volume 0236, 167-171. This popular resistance to eviction would be a common tactic used during the Land War, particularly in its last eighteen months when resistance was largely organized by the Ladies’ Land League.
312 UCD NFC the Schools’ Collection, Volume 0180, 273-4.
of her family and the men of the village guarding her home to prevent both the
completion of the eviction and her arrest.  

In examining the details of the outbreak of agrarian violence in the late 1860s and
early 1870s, we can see that the central theme of folk memory of the period, that
evictions were bitterly resented and at times forcefully resisted by the inhabitants of the
region, holds true. Both newspaper accounts of the period and the personal papers of
individuals who found themselves involved in the events at the time illustrate a sharp
uptick of agrarian violence, nearly always tied to the dispossession of tenant farmers and
the subsequent redistribution of farmland in ways incompatible with local feeling.

Newspaper accounts illustrated that the most common method of popular
resistance to eviction was the posting of threatening letters, with a popular committee in
Roscommon going so far as to say “that threatening letters formed the burden of the
calendar” for a recently-convened grand jury in 1870. Similarly in Mayo a land agent
by the name of Joynt produced “an anonymous threatening epistle” to bolster his claim
that a subsequent fire on his property had been set maliciously. In another example
from Mayo a land agent renovated a cabin from which he had evicted a tenant by the
name of Jennings, which was subsequently vandalized. In an expression of apparent
communal disapproval of the eviction, the homestead itself remained untenanted, with
the local Mayo Examiner hoping that it would “be some consolation to the plundered
family to know that there cannot be found one so heartless and mean as to intrude on

313 UCD NFC the Schools’ Collection, Volume 0180, Page 273-4.
314 “The Coercion Resolution,” Roscommon Messenger, 19 March, 1870. The Committee had been
everned to protest against a resolution voted by that grand jury that the district required the application
of coercive legislation.
315 “Mr. Joynt’s case for malicious burning,” Mayo Examiner, 22 March, 1869.
their dear beloved house.”

When the agent posted a notice offering a reward for the name of the vandals, “on the following day a counter placard was posted … offering a similar reward to any person who would take Mr. Jennings’s place, and in addition to the twenty pounds he was offered the enticing reward of receiving the same treatment,” that the cabin had received.

A similar example occurred in Sligo where a Mr. James Donohoe was threatened that “if he became receiver over the estate of Doe Castle… the writer, who had not finished his business in England, would leave it unfinished and go to Ireland and murder him.” In Roscommon the judge presiding over a case in the Landed Estates Court claimed that “the persistent opposition which had been offered to the repeated attempts to sell the property” had included “a threatening letter… sent to a most respectable gentleman, on the supposition that he would be a bidder for the property.”

While sending threatening letters was, both in Constabulary records and in newspaper accounts, statistically the most common type of agrarian offense, such disputes often escalated to the point of violence. In a case from Sligo, for instance, a new tenant on a farm received a letter “saying his life would be taken unless he would give up the land.” When he did not withdraw from the property, someone posted notices “throughout the parish that such-and-such a thing would be done,” resulting in the roof of the house being thrown down and destroyed.

319 Roscommon Messenger, 12 February, 1870.
320 Sligo Champion, 3 July, 1869.
Indeed, at times such offenses formed the bulk of assize dockets, as when the Roscommon Summer Assizes docket in 1870 was comprised of the malicious burning of a house in Athlone, the killing of two calves in the barony of Roscommon, the burning of a stack of flax in Kilglass, and the burning of a barn near Ballintubber.321 Burnings of this type seem to have been a particularly common tactic. In Sligo between 1869 and 1874, objects burned included, to name a few examples “a pig-stye, containing four pigs,” two ricks of turf, and “an outhouse and a quantity of household furniture therein deposited.”322 In the latter case the victim noted that following her husband’s death several persons had offered “to purchase the good-will of the farm, to one of whom she sold it, but afterwards changed her mind,” and that “she had to put away a herd” in the weeks prior to the burning “and they did not part on the very best terms.”323

In Mayo during the same period a particularly notable case occurred when disputes with the above-mentioned land agent Henry Joynt resulted in the burning of “his dwelling-house at Strade, containing several articles of property and household furniture, and also a quantity of hay, straw, oats, and two carts.”324 Joynt sued for compensation at the next assizes, but by a majority of five to four the grand jury found that the burning was not in fact malicious, a decision which is difficult to square with the material admitted into evidence.325 The county’s defense pointed to the larger implications of agrarian crime, telling the grand jury that they were being “asked not alone to impose a

322 Sligo Champion, 21 November 1874, 29 May, 1869, 25 May, 1872.
323 Sligo Champion, 25 May, 1872
324 “Saint Patrick’s Day,” Mayo Examiner, 22 March, 1869.
325 “Saint Patrick’s Day,” Mayo Examiner, 22 March, 1869.
tax upon the parish or barony in which the burning took place, but to stamp their native country with the stigma of a crime at which every human heart would revolt.”

Joynt’s case also illustrated the weakness of the criminal justice system in rural Ireland at the turn of the decade and the ample space for subversive law and its remaining adherents to operate. In arguing against Joynt’s claim, the defense attorney pointed out in detail all the ways in which an individual could be vulnerable to agrarian crimes, stating that Joynt “travelled from Ballina to Strade, and from Strade to Ballina, a distance of 12 miles, unhurt and unharmed…had slept in the house that was burned; who slept there alone, and who left it safe and uninjured” and that “he was the owner of flocks and herds of great value; and yet, during the long nights of winter, no beast of his was found drowned, none was found with a broken neck or a broken leg.” This litany of potential agrarian crimes, all held to be plausible during the extended nights of the winter months, illustrated the extent to which the enforcement of law in rural Ireland depended greatly on the willingness of communities to self-police, and that in cases where individuals like Joynt were held to have violated communal standards, the enforcers of popular justice were likely to act more quickly in order to respond to the popular will than official channels were able to effect state-authorized law.

At times, although rarely in the material examined, acts of violence escalated to crimes against individuals. In Roscommon in 1870 a landlord by the name of McCaffery in the townland of Rathmore was assaulted by one of his tenants following “a dispute about [a] bog,” which from the local press coverage appears to have been a crime of

---

326 “Saint Patrick’s Day,” Mayo Examiner, 22 March, 1869.
327 “Saint Patrick’s Day,” Mayo Examiner, 22 March, 1869.
passion. Other landlords found themselves the targets of more premeditated violence. In Mayo a landlord named Hunter was assassinated in 1869, following a long-running legal battle with several tenants on land he had acquired twelve years prior to his death. The tenants claimed the right to cut turf while Hunter, described as “a man having little sympathy or intercourse with the native population at any period of his residence” and as “rigorous and exacting as to his rights” demanded compensation. The case had come to a head shortly before Hunter’s murder, with Hunter winning a lawsuit against one of his tenants, John O’Neil, and having O’Neil’s crop seized as payment for Hunter’s court costs. Local opinion apparently sided with O’Neil, however, as “when the sheriff seized the crop, they failed to find anyone willing to take it in charge pending the sale,” and following Hunter’s death, according to the press, locals were less than cooperative with authorities investigating the crime.

Another notable case of violence against a landlord in the region was the attempted murder of Harriet Gardiner, a large-scale landowner in Mayo, who was in the process of converting significant portions of her lands from tenant farms to cattle-grazing in the last years of the 1860s. On Christmas Eve of 1869, Gardiner was shot through a window in her home, although not fatally, with the local press attributing the assassination attempt to the fact that “immediately before this sad occurrence she had ejectment processes served on some two or three of her tenants, residing on some of the

329 “The Murder of Mr. Hunter,” Mayo Examiner, 6 September, 1869. Similar circumstances surrounded the attempted assassination of a landlord named Crotty who purchased land near Kenury through the landed estates court. In early 1870 he was fired upon by persons unknown, with the local newspaper attributing the attempt to the fact that “the relations between himself and any tenants that now remain on Kenury are and have been since Mr. Crotty’s succession the reverse of amicable.” See “Alleged Attempt to Shoot Mr. Crotty of Kenury, Mayo Examiner, 3 January, 1870.
330 “The Murder of Mr. Hunter,” Mayo Examiner, 6 September, 1869.
331 Freemans Journal, 12 January, 1870.
adjoining townlands; and one of those tenants, it is stated, had his rent paid up to last
November.”

The increase in agrarian crime during the late 1860s and early 1870s and its close
ties to the issue of eviction can also be seen through the examination of the diaries of
John Oram, a land agent in Burrishoole, Co. Mayo. Oram reported relatively little
agrarian crime in the early 1860s, noting in 1860 that he had “heard of Lord Plunkett’s
bailiff being assassinated,” and that Lord Arran’s steward had been shot, although not
fatally, near Ballina. Oram noted no additional agrarian crime until 1865, when he
reported that a neighbor by the name of Hope had had a mare killed and had been
awarded compensation for the loss. But 1869 was described by Oram as a particularly
disturbed year, as he noted his having received a threatening letter, as well as the above-
mentioned attempted murder of Miss Gardiner, and the shooting death of James Hunter.
In each case the target was selected due to their role in disputes over land, with Hunter
and Gardiner involved in court proceedings in the weeks prior to their attacks, while
Oram managed the estate at Burrishoole and often traveled personally to collect rents
even, as he noted, when there was “much distress among the poor people.”

The events of 1869 prompted eighteen Scottish and English farmers holding land
near Ballinrobe and Newport to issue a memorial to the government, which Oram signed

---

332 “Attempt to Assassinate Miss Gardiner,” Mayo Examiner, 3 January, 1870. Gardiner’s case and her reputation in the locality, will be discussed later in this chapter.
ont, noting the “disturbed” state of the county.\textsuperscript{336} This ‘disturbed’ state, according to Oram, lasted into the 1870s, as he noted in 1871 the theft of arms from a neighboring landlord and the attempted murder of the same neighbor whose mare had been killed in 1865.\textsuperscript{337} In 1872 the leniency with which Oram was treated relative to Hunter and Gardiner came to an end when, in October of that year, while Oram was collecting rents and “returning to Mulroney a mile beyond Dughil,” he was fired upon, with the ball passing through his coat.\textsuperscript{338}

The centrality of evictions and land to the popular memory of agrarian outrage in the period, as well as the connections found in government and personal records, seem to argue for the persistence, at least in part, of the type of subversive law described by Laird. Mac Suibhne’s assertion that the post-Famine period saw the end of outrage does seem to hold true, with little evidence of organized agrarian combinations in the period. Nevertheless, Laird’s subversive law still existed, albeit in an attenuated form, aided and illustrated by the inability of the British state to effectively maintain its monopoly on violence in the region in the face of popular distrust for official law. As such, even if large-scale combinations were not operating in defense of or based on the subversive law, it remained available for individuals or smaller groups to take up if they felt that formal legal institutions were ineffective or unjust.


\textsuperscript{338} “Diaries of John and Arthur Oram,” held by UCD Archives. © Public domain. Digital content by University College Dublin, published by UCD Library, University College Dublin https://digital.ucd.ie/view/ucdlib:256151. While Oram remained unharmed that the event soured his opinion of Mayo, leading him to take a position as land agent in England at the close of the year.
The explosion of agrarian violence at the end of the 1860s and into the 1870s demanded explanation by nationalist political figures. Coercive measures were adopted in 1870 in response to the outbreak of violence, providing additional evidence for the special governance of Ireland and of the perceived difference between the Irish and other subjects of the United Kingdom. Nationalist writers had been engaged in the 1860s in arguing against narratives of Irish inferiority and contending that the Irish possessed manliness and were thus worthy of self-government. In responding to the issue of agrarian violence, seen as indicative of their lack of self-mastery, nationalists had to create a narrative of Irish self-restraint, in order to further cement the emerging archetypes of proper masculine and feminine behavior.

Central to nationalist discussions of agrarian violence were depictions of eviction, which nationalists argued was the central grievance prompting outbreaks of agrarian violence. Nationalist accounts of eviction, in an interesting parallel to the emerging folk memory of the period, centered on the destruction of normative, patriarchal, nuclear families, with special attention paid to the attendant suffering of the elderly and of women. Nationalist writers and politicians described Irish homesteads as places “where the humble, thrifty men lived—men happy with the humble fare that God gave them.”\(^{339}\) Such homes were further described as places of moral uplift, as “the happy homes where themselves, their families, and their father, were reared to be strong industrious men, honest, moral and religious, and prosperous in the face of circumstances the reverse of encouraging or satisfactory.”\(^{340}\) Such homesteads allowed Ireland to “nurse and nourish

\(^{339}\) “Eviction at Woodville,” Mayo Examiner, 7 November 1870. Interestingly this echoes later rhetoric by Eamon De Valera. See Beatty, Masculinity and Power in Irish Nationalism, 1.

\(^{340}\) Mayo Examiner, 10 January, 1870.
her own children and rear up her sons and her daughters to be strong virtuous men and women,” rather than being transformed into the “mother of flocks and herds” by a transition to pastoral agriculture. As a result of being reared in such homes, the Irish were held by commentators to be “still pure in the hearts of her womanhood, still brave, still generous in the souls of her gallant sons,” despite the negative impact of British rule. Importantly, central to Irish households thus imagined was the idea that preserving this existence had been a manly duty, passed down from father to son and centered on the particular ideal of a strong farmer, but it applied less well to small farmers or landless laborers.

Evictions, then, were described in the nationalist press of the late 1860s and 1870s as they had been in the Irish People, as events which destroyed the homes which produced Irishmen and women capable of living up to their assigned roles in Victorian society. Evictions destroyed the happy humble home and made it “cold and desolate, whilst the long grass is rotting on the farm without a four-footed beast to fatten on it,” thus leveraging existing opposition to the economic shift toward grazing—which enriched some tenants while impoverishing others—to bolster opposition to any eviction. Evictions were also portrayed as destroying the individuals who lived within the destroyed homestead as “the poor tenantry, from the suckling infant to the feeble old man whose tottering and aged limbs refused to give him support, were cast out of their houses… and the very roofs torn from their once happy homes.”

In one Mayo case, the nationalist press argued that the death of an evicted farmer’s wife was caused by her

341 Mayo Examiner, 9 August, 1869.
342 “Our country claims our services,” Sligo Champion, 4 January, 1873.
343 “Tipperary Tactics in Mayo,” Mayo Examiner, 4 January, 1869.
344 Mayo Examiner, 23 August, 1869.
family’s eviction, claiming that “the shock of eviction from a happy home—that was the home of generations of good old stock; the distraction and disappointment; the care of eight lovely children; the apprehension of ruin and poverty; the whole mortal struggle was too much for the feeble health of this good and respectable woman.” She died, the Mayo Examiner concluded, “of a broken heart, consequent on the heartless eviction of her husband from the home they loved so well.”

Discussions of evictions often spun off into descriptions of emigration, itself portrayed as a kind of living death, “which bears away upon its bosom, to lands far away, the manhood and flower of our country.” Importantly, emigration was portrayed as not only occurring to the poorest or most improvident tenants, but to those who had done all that they could to live up to their assigned roles in Victorian society. In an extended report on emigrants departing from Roscommon by train, the local Roscommon Messenger described one family in the process of departing. The mother of the family appeared as “a respectable-looking woman, whose woeful expression of countenance would sufficiently indicate that she was about severing ties, which were dear to her,” and as “neatly dressed,” indicating that she was from a respectable family. She was shown in her maternal role, with the report noting that she “had seven little children beside her, the eldest not more than ten years, while an eighth was at her breast.” Similarly, the story portrayed her husband as a man who had successfully fulfilled his role as a masculine provider and a prosperous tenant, but to no avail, with the report describing him as “in appearance superior to the ordinary class of peasants, a handsome man of some five and-

346 “Emigration,” Roscommon Messenger, 14 February, 1874.
thirty years he had been a tenant of Captain Coote’s, and bore an excellent character.” The report also alluded to the emotional turmoil of emigration, noting that the emigrating husband “returned to take a last embrace of his friends, and out of sight of his wife, that the poor fellow fairly broke down, and shed some tears on leaving the old land.”

Taken together, the nationalist depiction of evictions portrayed the Irish home as a place which cultivated men who would provide for their families and particularly their aged mothers and in which women could raise children with the proper religious and moral character. The message of the nationalist press in the West was the same as that of the *Irish People*, that the Irish, when unmolested, lived their lives in accordance with Victorian norms of gender.

Another area of the nationalist argument regarding evictions leveraged this depiction of the proper nuclear Irish family to argue that, generally, the party not living up to contemporary notions of gender were in fact Irish landlords. Nationalists argued that “the landlord ought to be the very bond of the social life of his estate, like the father of a family. His duty ought to be that of cultivating the honour, the affection, and the improvement of the people.” Instead of this paternal figure, nationalists argued, landlords were more often concerned primarily with their own political power and wealth. Depictions of landlords not fulfilling this assigned role were often tied into depictions of the destruction of Irish homesteads. Thus, the *Mayo Examiner* lamented that “no feeling of mercy could withhold the landlord from showing his power in having the young and old left by the way-side that they might behold, under the inclemency of

---

the weather, the roof that gave them and theirs shelter, razed to the ground.” In a similar way, Irish piety was contrasted with the impact of landlord-driven eviction, with the nationalist press claiming “if there be a voice which ascends to Heaven, or a tear which the all-seeing Power beholds, it is that of the outcast widow and the orphan,” and referring to eviction as illustrating “how little Christianity is regarded” by the landlord class.

The figure of Gardiner, whose attempted assassination was discussed above, was particularly noted in the nationalist press as an inversion of the proper paternal figure of the landlord—an inversion aided by Gardiner’s gender. Gardiner was denounced by the local press for claiming “from a legal tribunal the authority, the power to eject respectable men and their wives and children.” The press further described her tenants as “solvent, improving tenants, with substantial farms,” again emphasizing that these were men who fulfilled the requirements of Victorian masculinity and so deserved the respect due to that status. Gardiner, in contrast, was portrayed as “an erratic dame, about forty years of age, of masculine turn of mind and appearance, and with every evidence of a severe and arbitrary nature,” with local reports further noting that “she entered court with what appeared to be a pistol or revolver in her hand, accompanied by an old Scotch spinster,” leveraging her failure to preform her proper gendered role according to typical Victorian norms to further portray her management of the estate as aberrational.

If the home was held up as the centerpiece of idealized Irish life and presented as a place where the bourgeois morality of Victorian society was inculcated in Irish

---

349 Mayo Examiner, 30 August, 1869.
350 Mayo Examiner, 28 December, 1868.
351 Mayo Examiner, 11 January, 1869.
352 Mayo Examiner, 11 January, 1869.
children, the destruction of Irish homes was presented as the central cause of agrarian crime and Irish discontent generally. George Henry Moore, MP for Mayo, advanced this argument in Parliament, arguing that while “it was true that great excesses were committed by the peasantry,” such excesses were prompted by landlord excesses which, he argued, went unmentioned in either Parliament or the British press.\textsuperscript{353} Moore went on to argue that while “he protested against the internecine atrocities which he hoped were about to cease in Ireland, he must confess he felt an interest in every spot on the face of the globe—however illustrious and however obscure—from Marathon to Vinegar Hill, on which men had stood up against oppression.” Moore argued that agrarian outrage was not simply the atavistic tactic of Celtic peasants, but rather part of a struggle against oppression which fitted neatly into the western political tradition.\textsuperscript{354}

Nationalist writers in the West argued that Irish tenant farmers resented “with morbid and murderous revenge” being “removed from the soil on which they were born and bred.” Thus, when coupled with the poor governance of Ireland, eviction resulted in agrarian crime.\textsuperscript{355} The destruction of Irish homes and families was held up as the driver of that crime, with authors arguing “no feeling can excite valour and determination like the feeling to protect home and family; no arsenals or fortresses are so dear to man as his own house; to defend it should be his first duty” and arguing that efforts to do so by any

\textsuperscript{353} https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1870/apr/05/committee#S3V0200P0_18700405_HOC_44
\textsuperscript{354} https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1870/apr/05/committee#S3V0200P0_18700405_HOC_44. Vinegar Hill refers to the site of a battle between the United Irishmen of the 1798 Rebellion and the British military— it marked the last attempt by the rebels of that year to take and defend ground in a pitched battle.
\textsuperscript{355} “The Irish Land Question,” \textit{Sligo Champion}, 23 October, 1869.
means “would be rendered more sacred and be the more valorously borne” if “the privileges and security of home were enhanced under the laws.”

Commentators also connected agrarian outrage to the destruction of the archetypal self-sufficient homestead. Such crimes, they argued, were prompted by “the pain one feels at parting with a nice convenient little farm, for many years carefully cultivated with one’s own hand, and from which, naturally enough, the greater part of the sustenance of the family, nurtured to manhood and womanhood, came with never-failing plentiful return.” Further, they expressed the fear that, removed from such a home, “the virtuous offspring they cared and nurtured may become the greatest vagabonds, the most debased creatures that offend their God.” Authors argued that “when a feeble wife and helpless children are before a man’s eyes, he yields to the voice of the tempter” and could commit outrages. This gendering of the victims of eviction, with women presented as passive victims of eviction and men as victims who nevertheless had agency to choose their responses was commonplace. Thus, an article from the Connaught Telegraph summed up the impact of evictions, saying that “the fell Notice to Quit spares neither the trembling mother nor the aged female. It drives their sons and husbands to the commission of crimes or forces them to emigrate to foreign shores.”

The failure of political reform was then held up as the cause of agrarian crime. The Mayo Examiner in an extended editorial argued that the 1870 Land Act failed to fundamentally alter the conditions of the Irish tenant farmer and would result in further agrarian crime. The leader writer asked a series of questions:

356 Mayo Examiner, 26 September, 1870.
357 Mayo Examiner, 20 April, 1874.
358 Mayo Examiner, 1 March, 1869
Are we ever to have the right to live in our own country without the liberty or permission of the landowner? Are we to be told henceforward that desperate necessity must contrive a power for the people, and that powder and shot alone can achieve for them in their homes the rest and the quiet which reason, forbearance, and begging cannot? Are we to have agrarian outrage committed by landlords on the homes and families of the people, provoking those terrible bloodshed shocks that cause alarm to the minds of so many thousands?\(^{360}\)

Particularly in Mayo. nationalist writers argued that, through their excesses, landlords failed to fulfill their prescribed role as surrogate fathers to their tenants, which prompted reprisals from those tenants. One wrote: “It is landlord tyranny, past and present…that has left—and we may assume will leave while it is persisted in—the bloodstains of ‘outrage’ and ‘assassination,’” and prodded Irish landlords to “ask themselves what have they not done…. By the Crowbar and the Notice-to-Quit to invite outrage and assassination.”\(^{361}\) In responding to the 1870 Land Act’s shortcomings, the *Connaught Telegraph* argued that “it is not in human nature to bear patiently the cruel process of landlord law… consequently, Irishmen should be something more than human, or something below the average of rational beings, were they, without murmur, to bear their present affliction.”\(^{362}\) Other editorials referred to relations between landlords and tenants as “war” and “the cause of occasional violence” from the tenant, but argued that the person “who is to blame” was “the landlord who infuriates and drives to madness the oppressed people whom he has in his power.”\(^{363}\) Along these lines, the *Sligo Champion* argued that “it is not so much rack-renting as eviction and consolidation of farms in the landlord’s own hands which provokes the worst kind of agrarian outrage.”\(^{364}\) The *Mayo*
Examiner similarly contended that due to the efforts of landlords to consolidate lands and replace tenant farmers with graziers, “thousands of tenants were banished, or fled from landlordism,” and as a result “landlords were shot in despair and revenge.”

Importantly, while nationalist writers offered limited justifications for outrage, they nevertheless argued that it was immoral: “In these days occur assassinations, sometimes under great provocation, but they are always to be discountenanced.” The Mayo Examiner on the occasion of the murder of Hunter stated that “all deplore the shedding of blood and the unjustifiable taking away of human life” and referred to the news of the murder as “the sad and alarming…intelligence, that a useful life had fallen a victim in this country to the ‘wild justice of revenge’.” However, at the same time the Examiner placed at least some of the blame for Hunter’s death on Hunter himself, stating that “we must deplore, too, the brutal contempt for the position of our countrymen of humble means in their native land, which is so transparent in every unfortunate event.”

Similarly, the attempted assassination of Gardiner was referred to in an article published in the Examiner on 3 January 1870 as “the diabolical attempt upon the life of a lady,” which had “created a feeling of horror and consternation” in the region. Still, an article published the following week wondered why “a power so despotic and so ruinous to the country” as that of eviction “should be permitted to…erratic old women,” before claiming that “strong men will wonder, and shortly too, why in this country it was permitted to man or woman, and why it was borne so long by the people.”

365 Mayo Examiner, 3 May, 1869.
366 Mayo Examiner, 9 August, 1869.
367 Mayo Examiner, 6 September, 1869; “The Murder of Mr. Hunter,” Mayo Examiner, 6 September, 1869.
368 Mayo Examiner, 6 September, 1869
369 “Attempt to Assassinate Miss Gardiner,” Mayo Examiner 3 January, 1870; Mayo Examiner, 10 January, 1870.
This limiting of the acceptability of outrage, and the argument that it remained unacceptable even if it was to some degree understandable, led to the final way in which the nationalist press in the West dealt with the issue of outrage—by arguing either that agrarian crime itself was an aberration from the normally peace-loving Irish nature, or, more often, that individual acts of agrarian violence were instances where the normally powerful restraint of the Irish people failed. For the former argument, nationalist commentators generally focused on the low rates of crime, which as noted in the first chapter had been seized upon by the same commentators to rebut narratives of Irish criminality. Turning to the issue of agrarian crime, nationalist entrepreneurs argued that agrarian crime was a rarity caused by the particular failings of the Irish land system, that “assassination in a country free of every other species of crime is suggestive of the danger of further perseverance in the work of depopulation by whatever process it may be accomplished.”

News from the quarter assizes in 1870 were often seized upon to argue that Irish crime and disorder were not so widespread as the British government and press had claimed, with the Sligo Champion offering its gratitude “at the tranquility and good order which prevailed.” Other editorials remarked on the “conduct of a people, whom comparative poverty has not driven into any mimicry of the loose morality prevailing in parts, where the inhabitants are corrupted by demoralizing influence” in order to argue that the Irish possessed an “innate tendency… to respect the law, and to live in orderly fellowship amongst themselves.” Some commentators went so far as to argue that opponents of political reforms being debated in Parliament had to manufacture “outrages

370 “The Murder of Mr. Hunter,” Mayo Examiner, 6 September, 1869.
371 “Tranquility of Sligo County,” Sligo Champion, 5 March, 1870
372 Sligo Champion, 5 July, 1873.
in order to make an impression in England,” a practice the paper clamed “was an old
game of the ‘Garrison’” to discredit the Irish race.373

Often such articles extended thanks to those people and systems which had
produced such tranquility, with the Roman Catholic Church and its clergy being singled
out for particular thanks. A letter to the Mayo Examiner argued “there is not in the world
a more peaceable, honest, law-abiding people than they [the Irish peasantry]…not from
the fear of Caesar” or “from servile dread of punishment from the laws of the land, but
from obedience to the voice of conscience, enlightened and directed by the spirit and
principles of their religion.”374 Religion, according to a column in the Mayo Examiner,
had become central to the Irish character: “It is to the sacred love of Faith and Fatherland
existing as an inner life amongst them that the Irish people owe everything that made life
bearable in their lovely but unfortunate land,” that Irish morality had made “charity and
hospitality a duty,” and that the such morality “consecrates and directs the strong
affections of the Irish heart.”375 At another occasion the same paper argued that “the
county of Mayo has a population of a quarter of a million of people whose conduct has
been at all times, and never more than at the present, regulated by the supreme influence
of religion,” continuing arguments made by constitutional nationalist leaders in chapter
one.376 The Sligo Champion similarly argued that “the real peace preservers are the
Catholic Clergy, who, in season and out of season, are indoctrinating the people in the
knowledge of the Gospel precept of peace and goodwill,” and that as Sligo was an
“essentially Catholic County, we are entitled to refer to its freedom from crime with

---
373 “The Alien Church- Mr. Gladstone’s Bill,” Sligo Champion, 1 May, 1869.
374 “Outrage at Balla: To the editor of the Mayo Examiner,” Mayo Examiner, 8 February, 1869.
375 Mayo Examiner, 20 December, 1869.
376 Mayo Examiner, 7 November, 1870.
pride, and to give the due heed to the teachers of the people—to their devoted Pastors.”

Other accounts described Irish peasants as “Young, manly, well-dressed, and orderly,” a state of affairs which, it was claimed, made “one rather skeptical of the power even of our recent land code, to deprive our country of its ‘bone and sinew’.”

The Irish clergy, the *Mayo Examiner* argued in 1869, taught the Irish people “forbearance and fortitude,” and that “even if it were possible to have a good purpose in crime, no purpose could, in the slightest degree, atone for unmanly and heartless acts of vengeance.” Nationalist writers argued that the Irish people had heeded these warnings even to their cost, that “to this advice the people bowed. They have patiently acted upon it and submitted to their dependent position—they have submitted to exile and calumny.” Other articles argued that the mass of the Irish peasantry “in time of peril and of suffering, displayed so much valour and endurance” in refraining from agrarian outrage, and claimed that those “so foolish as to think they can serve their country by killing their landlord’s bullocks, or by firing snipe-shot at himself” were “silly boys or sentimental school-girls” only.

This restraint was then held up as central to how the Irish responded to provocation, as when the *Connaught Telegraph* opined, “it is hard… to expect that the people could be tranquil or quiet while such outrages as we are every week obliged to chronicle are committed upon them.” The paper explained the lack of violent response to such outrages, saying “the Celtic race—the Irish peasantry—are virtuous and patient,—

---

378 *Roscommon Herald*, 3 December, 1870.  
379 *Mayo Examiner*, 6 September, 1869.  
380 *Mayo Examiner*, 6 September, 1869.  
381 *Mayo Examiner*, 11 April, 1870.
they are used to suffering.”382 Landlords violating their own proscribed role and the threatened destruction of Irish families were not, at least very often, responded to with violence, but more often with submission and emigration. This self-restraint was lauded by the nationalist press even as it lamented the impact of emigration on Ireland: “There is everything to be looked for in the high religious and education status and natural feeling of the people. …Foreign nations will, at least, respect us when they see that we possess the power of restraint—the power to sustain our national character for morality and virtue.”383

This language of restraint and the associated social control of nationalist elites, were, however, less universally acted upon than nationalist writers may have liked to claim. Beyond the fact that agrarian crime did occur with something close to impunity, particularly during 1869 and 1870, the public reaction to the Galway Election Petition case of 1872 illustrated how political issues could be, and indeed were, addressed through the repertoire of alternative law despite elite efforts at social control. The issue at hand was caused by the losing candidate in an 1872 Galway by-election filing a petition to overturn the election result, alleging widespread clerical intimidation. Justice Keogh, who, although a Roman Catholic, had become a target of nationalist displeasure with his harsh sentences handed down to arrested Fenians in 1865 and 1866, ruled that the local clergy had engaged in undue influence on behalf of the Home Rule candidate, John Philip Nolan. Keogh went further in his ruling and named thirty-six clerics, including John

383 Mayo Examiner, 28 March, 1870
MacHale, the Archbishop of Tuam, as having intimidated voters, which nationalist commentators saw as a bridge too far.

Following Keogh’s ruling nationalist opinion rapidly turned against him, with the nationalist press commenting on the “universality of the feeling of disgust and pain which the language of Mr. Justice Keogh has stirred up,” and how the “temper of the people has been swayed to indignation at the treatment which the priesthood of Ireland has received.” Alongside these written denunciations, the aftermath of Keogh’s ruling saw the convening of a series of mass meetings to express popular outrage in a controllable manner, with the Ballinrobe Chronicle noting that resolutions condemning Keogh had been “adopted at public meetings… held, not alone in the West, but in different other parts of Ireland.” One of the first meetings on the subject in the West was held at Ballinrobe, Co. Mayo, and chaired by Thomas Tighe, a notable local lawyer and future member of Parliament from the county. In his comments Tighe echoed popular complaints “of want of dignity and decency on the part of” Keogh but urged his audience to not “be influenced by the very bad example he has set” and to “avoid all unworthy and objectionably expressions, and approach the subject coolly and temperately.”

A similar meeting was convened in Ballypheasan, Co. Roscommon, to express popular “indignation at the language used by Judge Keogh,” which “passed off quietly till about 10.30 pm when the inhabitants attempted to burn judge Keogh in effigy.” Such expressions of popular anger were widespread, and the Ballinrobe Chronicle noted that

---

387 National Archives of Ireland, Chief Secretaries Office Registered Papers/ 1872/12289.
they took place “even in the city of Dublin… opposite the Kildare-street Club house.”  

Local demonstrations included the burning of effigies of Keogh in Ballinrobe on the same day as the meeting chaired by Tighe; in Castlebar where coverage noted “a long array of country folk” walking in “military procession after the Castlebar band, and in Sligo town, where the local Sligo Champion noted that the “festivity of St. John’s night, was rendered doubly attractive this year, by the burning of the above worthy’s effigy.”

The latter paper attempted to justify the popular action by arguing that Keogh had turned “back to their primal founts the popular passions” and argued that “if effigy burning and other such demonstrations be condemned, as improper, they are scarcely less so than the unnecessary parade of the judge, himself, from chieftown to chieftown” going so far as to compare Keogh to “a Prussian General in Alsace or Lorraine,” a particularly relevant comparison given that the Franco-Prussian war had ended only the previous year.

Nevertheless, the almost immediate transition from peaceful mass political meeting to popularly organized effigy burning, and the language of Tighe attempting to restrain popular passions, illustrate that nationalist political elites recognized that there were limits on the practical social control they possessed or hoped to possess.

While the control of nationalist elites was by no means total, the period from 1869-1877 did see the large-scale growth of the Irish nationalist movement and the implementation of several points of reforming legislation toward Ireland by the Liberal government. Such efforts were intended to remedy Irish disaffection, but the

---

shortcomings of the legislation implemented insured that Irish disaffection remained a potent issue.

The first piece of reform legislation implemented by the Gladstone administration touched on one of the central points of disaffection in Ireland in the 1860s, that the Church of Ireland remained the Established Church, and the resulting forced financial support from the largely Catholic population to a Protestant church. Nationalists claimed this obligation had “been the bane of Ireland, by keeping her sons in a state of antagonism.” 391 One of the key pillars of Gladstone’s manifesto for the 1868 general election was the Disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, which was greeted with satisfaction by nationalists in the West and played a central role in the Liberal party’s success in the region. Denis O’Conor, for example, pledged in his electoral address in Sligo to support “Disestablishment and Disendowment” and offered his “earnest support to any [land] measure which, by encouraging the granting of leases, or in any other satisfactory way, will secure to the tenant the product of his capital and industry.” 392 Similarly, speakers at a rally in favor of George Henry Moore’s election in Mayo referred to disestablishment as “not more important in itself than tenant right,” but nevertheless concluded that “the Disestablishment, disendowment of the Church will cause great service, and, therefore it is the duty of every honest man to strive and assist the party who are for the removal of that great grievance.” 393

Gladstone’s introduction of a Disestablishment measure was, in turn, lauded by the nationalist press across the region, which claimed “the Disestablishment of the

393 “Grand Demonstration for Mr. Moore: Ballinrobe and Kilmain to the Rescue- Important meeting on Tuesday,” Mayo Examiner, 31 August, 1868.
Church is, after the Catholic Emancipation, the greatest act of justice done us by England." 394 The Roscommon Messenger argued that with the bill’s introduction “the Irish people have learned to respect Messers Gladstone and Bright—to look on them as they never looked before on Englishmen—as friends,” and that the “measure is as full as we could perhaps reasonably expect, even though it leaves the establishment for the existing generation in possession of half the revenue it heretofore derived from the state.” 395 The Sligo Champion referred to the passage of the Act as “exorcising the Deamon of Discord, and constructing that ‘One Arch of Peace’ which is to be the symbol of the good-fellowship of Irishmen of all religious denominations.” 396 In a less conciliatory vein, the Connaught Telegraph argued that Gladstone’s proposal was motivated by the impact of the Fenian Rising on British popular opinion, saying that “the Disestablishment and partial Disendowment of the rich man’s Church is the first admitted concession to FEAR we have witnessed since the death of the Great Tribune [Daniel O’Connell],” and the paper attributed the passage of the bill to Gladstone’s belief that “there was risk and danger of an alarming character in any longer upholding by force the alien Church in this old island.” 397

Despite this general applause, there were dissenting voices raised from the nationalist community, particularly in Mayo. The Mayo Examiner ran an extended letter on the occasion of Gladstone’s pledge to disestablish the Church of Ireland which conceded that disestablishment was “a most desirable object without doubt,” but went on to argue that “this motion was only clap-trap, brought forward for electioneering

394 Connaught Telegraph, 19 January, 1870.
396 “Mr. Gladstone’s Bill, The “One Arch of Peace,” Sligo Champion, 6 March, 1869.
purposes and without the slightest hope in the mind of any rational man of its being carried into law.” Following the passage of the Act, the general argument by nationalists shifted, with commentators arguing that it was a necessary but not sufficient element of progress to resolving broader Irish grievances. Editorials argued that “The Irish have never forgotten that the same power took both the Church property and the lands of Ireland from the natives and gave them to strangers. It is not enough now to take the use of the Church property from the strangers and leave the lands behind.” As such, the Connaught Telegraph called for “Tenant right, of a more sweeping character” to be passed “before the end of the present year.” An extended editorial in the Mayo Examiner diminished the importance of disestablishment, arguing that even if England were to “pull down ten score of Church Establishments, were she even to make Irish landlords learn the evident lesson that ‘property has its duties as well as its rights;’ so long as the felon’s jacket sits on these patriot backs, she need expect neither peace nor thanks at the hand of the Irish people.” The Roscommon Messenger, while praising Gladstone for pushing for disestablishment in the pending legislation warned while the “motion of disestablishment has wonderfully predisposed the people of this country to form a favourable idea of his power and his justice,” there were fundamental limits to Gladstone’s popularity, claiming that the peasantry were skeptical “that he intends to better their condition in a material sense.”

398 “Mr. Gladstone,” Mayo Examiner, 24 August, 1868.
399 “The Influence of Fear on Rulers,” Connaught Telegraph, 24 March, 1869. This language, interestingly, mirrors a resolution adopted by a branch of the IRB in New York, which called on Irish-Americans “not to be humbugged by the disestablishment of the Irish Church. (“The Fenians in Council Again,” Roscommon Messenger, 14 August, 1869.)
400 “Our Patrick’s Day,” Mayo Examiner, 15 March, 1869.
401 Roscommon Messenger, 16 January, 1869.
These criticisms revolved around the continued dissatisfaction of the nationalist press, and of most of the Irish people, toward the land system. As noted in chapter one, this system had been blamed for Irish poverty, emigration, and agrarian crime in order to explain those issues in a way which did not disqualify the Irish as a population worthy of self-government. Following the disestablishment of the Church of Ireland, the attention of the Government shifted to the land question. Gladstone introduced the Land Act of 1870 in the hopes of settling the issue once and for all, and it followed a series of post-Famine reform efforts, including a pair of acts passed in 1860, which provided for compensation for improvements made by tenants made with the consent of the landowner so long as the relationship between landlord and tenant rested “on the express or implied Contract of the parties, and not upon Tenure or Service.”

However, in practice these bills changed little, and the cumulative impact of the Fenian Rising, and the election to parliament of the Fenian Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa in Tipperary in 1869 prompted Gladstone to act.

This desire for reform was shared in Irish circles, as the failings of the existing land system had been an often-visited subject for comment by nationalist writers across the 1860s, centering images of prosperous, nuclear, patriarchal Irish families being destroyed by the extant land system. For example, in the year prior to the introduction of the 1870 Act the Mayo Examiner argued that “it is of the most vital importance that Ireland should be peopled by a hardy, comfortable, independent race, and not by cattle; that Ireland should nurse and nourish her own children and rear up her sons and her

---

402 Quoted in Phillip Bull, Land, Politics & Nationalism, 195. Bull discussed the impact of these reforms on 44-45.
403 Bull, Land, Politics, & Nationalism, 46-47.
daughters to be strong virtuous men and women, and not be the ‘mother of flocks and herds,’” while the *Sligo Champion* had argued that “eviction and consolidation of farms in the landlord’s own hands” were the primary drivers of discontent and outrage in the region.\(^{404}\) The *Examiner* was particularly forceful in its denunciations of the existing land system, arguing in an editorial in August 1869 that the poor living conditions of the Irish peasantry “would make one almost fancy the people were white slaves who had been cast by shipwreck on Irish shore.” The paper concluded that “the time will come, if the people keep together, when a handful of tyrants will learn their duty, and when the people will look back with surprise and wonder at the treatment that centuries of bad government degraded them to bear,” possibly indicating the extent to which Fenian involvement in the region’s politics pushed them in a more radical direction.\(^{405}\)

The central demand of the nationalist movement in the West regarding the Land Act was that it should extend “Ulster Custom” to the rest of Ireland, arguing that “the tenant-right of Ulster” had made the region “prosperous, happy, and contented.”\(^{406}\) Nationalists contended that the chief grievance of tenant farmers toward the land system was “the absence of tenant right and of security for their holdings,” an issue exacerbated by the fact that “the Irish tenant farmer has a tenacious fondness for his farm which is unequalled in the world; he wants to live and die on the little estate where his father perhaps lived and died before him.”\(^{407}\) Articles in favor of a land act and tenant-right often outlined the suffering of tenant farmers and generally concluded by arguing that “a people who have suffered such torture as these much be a very patient community,”


\(^{405}\) *Mayo Examiner* 2 August, 1869.

\(^{406}\) *Mayo Examiner*, 21 February, 1870.

\(^{407}\) “Metropolitan gossip,” *Ballinrobe Chronicle*, 4 September, 1869.
simultaneously emphasizing Irish discipline and restraint, while arguing that, perhaps, that restraint was becoming increasingly difficult to maintain.  

Nationalist opinion in favor of land reform centered around tenant right was not only expressed in writing, as public meetings were held in favor of tenant right across the region in the period leading to the passage of the 1870 Act. The population of Swinford, Co. Mayo, in October of 1869, hosted a meeting “on behalf of their brave countrymen in penal prisons, and of their countrymen enslaved in their homes,” with speakers linking the issue of the Fenian prisoners to the issue of land reform. A similar meeting “of landed proprietors and tenant farmers of the county” of Sligo was held on the twenty-seventh of October, with Denis O’Conor, MP, forwarding resolutions adopted at the meeting to Gladstone, while another “very large and influential meeting of landed proprietors, tenant farmers, and others interested in the land question was held” in December 1869 in Roscommon, attended notably by the Denis O’Conor’s brother and fellow MP, the O’Conor Don.  

Another meeting held at Castlebar in November was held despite the refusal of the High Sheriff of the county to give permission, which, rather than dissuading individuals from taking part, instead “acted as a powerful stimulus on the people who flocked in their tens of thousands to proclaim before high Heaven that they were heart and soul with the tenant cause; and that they were determined constitutionally and

---

408 Now for the Land,” Connaught Telegraph, 11 August, 1869.
409 “The Swinford Meeting for Amnesty and Tenant Right,” Mayo Examine, 4 October, 1869. Other meetings were held at Ballinrobe, Co Mayo (Ballinrobe Chronicle 29 January, 1870); Runnamoat, Co Roscommon (Ballinrobe Chronicle 20 November, 1869); and Sligo, Co Sligo, (Sligo Champion, 23 October, 1869) among other locations.
410 “Great Tenant-Right meeting in Sligo.” Sligo Champion, 23 October, 1869, Notably Denis O’Conor’s conservative counterpart, Sir Robert Goore-Booth took no part in the meeting; “The Land Question/ Demonstration at Roscommon,” Ballinrobe Chronicle, 4 December, 1869.
peaceably to give ocular demonstration of the fact.” Coverage of this meeting in particular focused on the good conduct of attendees, in a similar manner as reports of pro-Fenian rallies and election meetings discussed in chapter one, and reported that attendees had marched “in the best order four men deep… with head erect and independent air” to the speaker’s platform, a display which the *Mayo Examiner* argued “reflected eternal credit on their county and their priest, and on themselves.”

While the news that a new land bill was in the offing was initially greeted happily by the nationalist press in the West, the compromises involved in its passage and the resulting limited nature of the Act quickly shifted nationalist sentiment. The *Sligo Champion* responded most positively of the nationalist papers in the region to the news of the bill’s introduction, greeting particularly happily a speech by John Bright on the subject in January 1870. The editor claimed that the bill “leaves no room for doubt that the intention of the Government is to reform the present system at once, and ultimately to put the tenant farmers in a position to be their own masters.” The same paper later claimed that the proposed bill “is far in advance of any measure in relation to the Land Code which has ever been submitted to Parliament,” which would “throw the shield of the law between the long oppressed tenant farmer and their heartless exterminators.”

However, this initial excitement was quickly, and almost uniformly, replaced by disappointment as it became clear that the central demand of nationalist commentators, the universal extension of Ulster Custom, and thus fixity of tenure, across Ireland would not be part of the final bill. The *Mayo Examiner* reacted to rumors of the bill’s details by

---

saying that the question of “whether discontent shall be allayed- whether the Irish race are to live in their own land independent of the will of the descendants of a foreign horde of robbers and pirates, who have ever treated the Irish people at home as a conquered race” depended on the details of the bill.\footnote{Mayo Examiner, 27 December, 1869.} Upon the Act’s passage, the \textit{Examiner} acknowledged that while “we do not say that the Bill is not something in itself, that it does not confer privileges which before we had not, and which, if we had, might have saved hundreds of thousands from expatriation,” the lack of protections for tenants and the lack of expansion of Ulster Custom would result in “the people, no doubt, protest[ing] in a strong manner against these greatest of wrongs” and that “they may not always be within the limits and bounds of law in their mode of protesting against arbitrary and cruel power.”\footnote{Mayo Examiner, 7 February, 1870.} This echoed comments made in some nationalist circles before the bill’s introduction that simply reforming the land system or establishing tenant right was insufficient, claiming “the Irish people distinctly and emphatically demand as their own the Irish soil” and stating that if Gladstone could “contrive a mode of disestablishing Landlordism, well and good; if he cannot, the people will take what he gives them, and bide their time for the remainder.”\footnote{“The Land Bill,” \textit{Connaught Telegraph}, 11 August, 1869.}

The \textit{Roscommon Messenger} similarly argued in February 1870 that the bill’s failures outweighed its successes, claiming that it would “not propose what so large a party in Ireland want, fixity of tenure,” although the paper noted that “few impartial persons could ever have expected any such proposal.” The \textit{Messenger} concluded that “the bill will be a considerable improvement on our recent land laws is admitted, but
whether it is such a measure can just now meet the case and content the people is not so easily answered.”

That paper also noted the practical limitations of the bill on the occasion of its passage, referring to it as “the first blow at emancipating the people from the feudal serfdom under which they laboured,” before mentioning that “it remains still in the power of the owners of the soil to force [tenant farmers] to submission to their will, if so inclined.”

Finally, the Connaught Telegraph argued that the bill did well to “to give the people their rights, to make them independent and intelligent, and to save them from being crushed to the earth by merciless harpies, in the shape of Landlords,” but that “whatever portion of the bill is extra bad the Tories laboured to make it extra worse, and whatever was good they exerted all their ingenuity to make bad.” Thus, nationalists felt “very reasonable disappointment” in the Bill’s final form.

The Sligo Champion was in favor of the bill for longer than its counterparts in Mayo, holding as late as March that the bill was “founded on just grounds,” before concluding in April that “never… did the Imperial Parliament open with such bright promise for Ireland, and never—even in the worst of times, when the Ascendancy was in full vigour—was promise so broken to the hope of the Irish people as at the present time.”

The act continued to receive criticism in the nationalist press following its passage. The Examiner argued in 1873 that “The Land Act is a failure, which is an acknowledged fact,” and that local “landlords…seek by every means to defeat that very partial and defective legislation” before concluding that “these efforts… will arouse the

---

418 Roscommon Messenger, 12 February, 1870; Roscommon Messenger, 7 May, 1870.
419 Roscommon Messenger, 6 August, 1870.
420 Connaught Telegraph 1 June, 1870.
These arguments were not confined to the pages of nationalist newspapers, as evidenced by a demonstration of tenant farmers in Maryborough, Queens County, which referred to the Land Act as “valueless, so far, as being no protection against cruel evictions and arbitrary raising of rents.” “We all must recognize,” the demonstrators said, “the existence and the influence of the tenant farmers of Ireland, as a body socially and morally possessed of weight,” directly demanding the sort of respect for the tenants for which the nationalist press had been calling. The Sligo Champion in its coverage of the rally went on to note, in a callback to the coverage of election rallies in 1868 and the concerns for proper conduct at such meetings, “the admirable manner in which they discussed their own views” and asserted that “dignity marked them throughout.”

Gladstone’s ministry did deliver one further reform measure of importance for Ireland, the Secret Ballot Act of 1872. The influence of landlords and bailiffs on Irish elections was a constant topic of complaint in the nationalist press, as noted in chapter one, being blamed both for granting landlords the power to impose what George Henry Moore termed in an 1870 speech “feudal tyranny” on their tenants and for forcing Irishmen into emasculating positions of subservience to landlords and bailiffs. The defiance of landlord power in the 1868 general election was positioned by the nationalist press as evidence of Irishmen reclaiming their manhood, arguing that the Irish tenantry had “asserted its manhood when the ‘recording angel’ of the Tory landlord, the bailiff or

422 Mayo Examiner 3 March, 1873.
423 “Meeting of Tenant-Farmers in Maryborough,” Mayo Examiner 29 March, 1873.
424 “Meeting of Tenant-Farmers in Maryborough,” Mayo Examiner 29 March, 1873.
agent, stood face to face with the Liberal voter at the booth, and dared him, at his peril, to vote according to his conscience.”

Following Disestablishment, calls for the introduction of the secret ballot became a more common topic in the nationalist press. The Mayo Examiner argued in 1869 that “vote by ballot appears to be the great requirement of the present age,” and that it was “required to uproot the most oppressive despotism that ever destroyed a people.”

The Connaught Telegraph in an article published at the same time highlighted the issue of landlord reprisal, arguing that “surely a greater sham could not be imagined than the giving a poor man a vote, and at the same time subjecting him to the vengeance of his landlord should he exercise it, save as the latter thinks proper to dictate.”

Following the failure, real or perceived, of the 1870 Land Act to address fully the tenants’ concerns, the issue of the ballot took on new life. Nationalists in Roscommon argued that “unless vote by ballot” were introduced “it will be impossible for men, educated up to the times, to remain in Ireland, when the slightest exercise of a constitutional right is stamped out with all the determination of old feudal times.”

Shortly after the passage of the 1870 act the Messenger argued that “now that we can fairly assume the land bill, such as it is…has reached a safe haven… the united exertions of the country should be devoted to expediting ‘vote by ballot’ in order to rectify “the blighting influence that denationalizes our representative bodies.”

The Ballinrobe Chronicle argued that the implementation of the secret ballot would remove the issue of

---

427 Mayo Examiner, 3 May, 1869.
428 Connaught Telegraph, 24 February, 1869.
429 Roscommon Messenger, 7 May, 1870.
430 Roscommon Messenger, 9 July, 1870.
nominating conventions, which the paper argued often devolved into “Brick-bats and broken heads, mobbing and charing, yelling and fruitless attempts on the part of the candidate to speak.”\(^{431}\) The desire for the ballot appears to have become something of a nationalist litmus test, as on the occasion of a by-election in Mayo in 1870, the successful candidate George Browne professed himself in favor of the ballot “which is now the rule through all civilized nations” as part of his statement of general nationalist principles.\(^{432}\)

Following the passage of these various measures the nationalist political movement in the West continued to grow, with Isaac Butt founding the Irish Home Government Association in 1870 and the Home Rule League in 1873. The League saw sixty of its members elected to parliament in the 1874 general election, although most of these members had formerly represented their constituencies under the Liberal banner. The period also saw the possibly the first iteration of Clark’s challenging collectivity in County Mayo, which flexed its political muscles through the election of John O’Conor Power as MP for Mayo in 1874. Power’s election followed the death of George Henry Moore, whose election to Parliament in 1868 had illustrated the continued importance of Fenianism in the county. Moore died in 1870 and was replaced in a by-election by his brother-in-law George Ekins Browne, illustrating the continued importance of family ties among the landed elite to high-level politics. However, in 1874 this continued primacy of the landed elite and their clerical supporters was challenged by O’Connor Power, a central figure in the Fenian Brotherhood’s decision to pursue a “New Departure” and enter into politics. He moved to Mayo in 1873 and rapidly began to build a powerful

\(^{431}\) *Ballinrobe Chronicle*, 8 July, 1871.
\(^{432}\) *Connaught Telegraph*, 27 April, 1870.
political movement behind him.\textsuperscript{433} Power moved to run for Parliament in 1874, and in putting his name forward for election, called for the creation of an Irish Parliament in Dublin, and stated in his election address that “so long as our country is governed by a rule of force, and not of justice, any Irish Nationalist who takes a seat in the Imperial Parliament does so at a sacrifice of personal dignity, which the hard necessities of Ireland’s prostrate conditions can alone justify.”\textsuperscript{434} Interestingly the only candidates for Parliament at the 1874 General Election were O’Connor Power, Browne, and their fellow-nationalist Thomas Tighe, meaning that following the twin reforms of the 1867 Reform Act and the 1872 Secret Ballot Act, local Conservatives apparently felt their cause so hopeless in Mayo that they chose not to nominate candidates to stand for election.

O’Connor Power was initially unsuccessful in winning election to Parliament in the General Election of 1874, as despite the support of important local clerics such as John Mac Hale, Archbishop of Tuam, the general feeling of the rank-and-file clergy in Mayo was firmly against him.\textsuperscript{435} The clerical interest in the county, while having avoided having to directly engage in campaigning since the 1857 election, was nevertheless not entirely without influence. The \textit{Mayo Examiner}, gave its support to clerical opposition to O’Connor Power’s candidacy, and argued that Irish priests had been “always the guides and counsellors of the people, from whom they come, and to whom they belong, by every tie of blood and feeling,” and claimed “to their emphatic utterances and deliberate and

\textsuperscript{433} Jordan, \textit{Land and Popular Politics}, 188.
\textsuperscript{434} “To the Independent Electors of the County of Mayo,” \textit{Mayo Examiner} 2 February, 1874.
\textsuperscript{435} Jordan, \textit{Land and Popular Politics}, 189.
disinterested advice the people have accorded respectful and serious consideration which will always prevail.”

In the face of this initial clerical opposition, O’Connor Power withdrew his candidacy prior to the general election. However, when the Mayo election results were overturned on a petition asserting excessive clerical influence on the election, the same accusation made in the Galway case, he again put forward his candidacy and carried it through to the by-election. Again O’Connor Power was opposed by most of the priests in the region, with the Examiner claiming that “entire Catholic body” had “given their just influence, advice, and counsel against the candidature and election of Mr. Power, and in favour of the re-election of the tried, approved, and excellent local candidates,” in the persons of Browne and Tighe. The Examiner also argued that Power’s statement that he was “not to be restrained or retired from his canvass by any clique of faction” introduced “divisions for the first time between a priesthood and a people ever more banded together in the popular cause” and warned that “when Irish bishops and priests cease to assert their position in such affairs, and where the people, yielding to fascinating delusions forget the past or fail to hold in deferential affection the living repositories of faith and religion when viewing the destiny of Ireland, danger may be apprehended.”

O’Connor Power’s opposition continued to argue that his supposed efforts to divide the Irish priests from their people was problematic following an incident in Castlebar when several individuals “demonstratively left the Church… when the officiating priest, Father Moran, was about to offer his just advice, opinion, and counsel

---

437 Mayo Examiner, 18 May, 1874.
438 Mayo Examiner, 18 May, 1874.
on the election affairs now in progress.” This action, the Examiner claimed, should “be looked upon as an abjuration of the national principles and the holy and reverent aspirations that inspired the hearts of the generations that worshipped there before them. The article then argued that it was to the Irish clergy that the people owed the preservation of their moral status, advancing the arguments made during the period of agrarian outrage in 1869 and 1870 that the Irish were worthy of self-government because of the clergy: “Our people may be hasty or fickle. We have been long degraded or sought to be degraded and demoralized under a despotic sway. But ours is not a morally helpless and prostrate state.”

During the election campaign the local press had noted that O’Connor Power had “met with many followers and admirers” during his canvasses of the district, but had wondered “whether his supporters are or are not of the electoral body.” On the occasion of Power’s nomination the Ballinrobe Chronicle claimed that most of his supporters were from Galway, and claimed that his reception from Mayo residents illustrated that he was “not the people’s candidate on this occasion.” Importantly, on the occasion of this latter article, Power was “proposed and seconded by James Daly and Edward Phillips, both of Castlebar,” illustrating the importance of town-dwellers to O’Connor Power’s coalition, which, as Jordan noted, included both successful townsmen

441 Ballinrobe Chronicle, 9 May, 1874.
442 Ballinrobe Chronicle, 23 May, 1874.
and advanced nationalists who were willing, and apparently able, to challenge and overcome the electoral power of the Mayo clergy.\textsuperscript{443}

Despite the opposition of the clerical political machine in Mayo and the confident predictions of most of the local nationalist press, O’Connor Power was returned as MP in the May 1874 by-election, unseating Tighe and coming just eleven votes from topping the poll over Browne. In the aftermath of his election the local nationalist press took pains to emphasize that “the election, so peculiar and so unusual… and so full of interest was… on the whole peaceable fought” and that “there is little evidence to show that the irritation induced by the special… circumstances of the recent election” had persisted after election night.\textsuperscript{444}

The election of Edward King-Harman as MP for Sligo in 1877, however, illustrated the still limited spread of O’Conor Power’s political coalition and the continued power of landed elites in nationalist politics prior to the recession of 1878 outside of Mayo.\textsuperscript{445} King-Harman had previously sought election under the Home Rule banner in an 1870 by-election in Longford, and following the death of Sir Robert Gore-Booth, the conservative MP for Sligo, King-Harman was selected by the Liberal establishment in Sligo to run for election. Mirroring events in Mayo, King-Harman’s

\textsuperscript{443} Jordan, \textit{Land and Popular Politics}, 189. Daly had first entered politics with the campaign of O’Conor Power in 1874. In 1876 he purchased the \textit{Connaught Telegraph} and used the paper as a venue to call for the establishment of Tenant Defense Associations along the lines of that at Ballinasloe. Daly was central to the early months of the land agitation, organizing the Irishtown and Westport meetings, but by the early summer of 1880 he become critical of the Land League for its lukewarm pursuit of the interests of evicted tenants in Mayo and never supported the Ladies’ League on gendered grounds. For more see Desmond McCabe “Daly, James,” in \textit{Dictionary of Irish Biography} (https://www.dib.ie/biography/daly-james-a2380).

\textsuperscript{444} \textit{Mayo Examiner}, 1 June, 1874.

\textsuperscript{445} The only change in representation for Co. Roscommon during the decade 1868-1877 was the replacement of Fitzstephen French with his nephew Charles French at a by-election in 1873 following the elder French’s death.
nomination went unopposed by the local Conservative establishment, resulting in King-Harman’s elevation without a full campaign.

Despite the lack of election, the coverage of King-Harman’s nomination is instructive both because of how he was portrayed personally and how his nomination illustrated the existence of similar political assumptions to those behind the opposition to O’Connor Power’s election. The local Sligo Champion in endorsing his nomination argued that his position as a property holder in Sligo “as well as in Roscommon and Longford, and his manner of dealing with his tenants is sufficient guarantee that when in Parliament he will advocate the interests of the tenant-farmers.” The article also referred to an earlier election address where King-Harman had criticized the 1870 Land Act as having failed to secure tenure for the poor tenant farmers, claiming that it “was a point which had been missed, and he was not sure that it had not been carefully missed, by the legislature,” which the Champion claimed was “the expression of his sincere and honest convictions.” Importantly, while endorsing his nomination, the Champion noted that King-Harman was in most political issues a Conservative, but argued that “as in general politics there is little to pick and choose from between Whigs and Tories, at least as far as Ireland is concerned, we hardly think that he will be much objected to on that account.”

Another point from the general acceptance of King-Harman’s nomination was the continued moderating role attributed to the clergy of Sligo. The Champion referred to the meeting of Liberal electors which nominated King-Harman as “conducted throughout

446 Sligo Champion, 6 January, 1877.
447 Sligo Champion, 6 January, 1877.
448 Sligo Champion, 6 January, 1877.
with remarkable order and moderation” and attributed that conduct to “to the restraining influence of the venerable prelates present on the occasion as well as to the good sense of the people themselves.” A later article on the occasion of King-Harman’s election cheered the fact that “by the prudent, united, and patriotic action of the priests and people, we have been spared the worrying trouble of a contest, and possibly also the shame and disaster which disunion has recently caused in more than one Irish constituency.”

A final development in the politics of the region was the establishment of Tenant Defense Associations across Ireland in the 1870s, with the formation of the Tenant Defense Association (TDA) at Ballinasloe, Co. Galway, being particularly important for how the events of 1878-1882 would play out in Mayo. The foundation of the TDA at Ballinasloe was part of a broader effort in the 1870s to politicize the land issue, part of the emergence of the challenging collectivity described by Clarke. The Ballinasloe TDA was important for several reasons. Notably it was the first founded in Connaught, as most similar groups had been founded in Munster. It actively incorporated Fenians in the region into its organization, which illustrates the efforts of Fenians following the 1867 Rising to create a more coherent agrarian ideology, one which incorporated aspects of the subversive law discussed earlier in the chapter. The branch also operated under lay, rather than clerical, leadership, allowing it to take a more radical political tone.

---

449 Sligo Champion, 6 January, 1877.
450 Sligo Champion, 6 January, 1877.
452 Casey, Defying the law of the land, 92
group’s leader, Matthew Harris, was also closely associated with James Daly, the above-mentioned editor of the *Connaught Telegraph*, which covered rallies held by Harris with interest and helped to spread the group’s ideology into Mayo through his editorial work and his support of Power’s electoral campaign.\(^{454}\)

The Ballinasloe TDA sought to advance the same arguments regarding the land system that mainstream Irish nationalists had been developing since the 1860s, that is, that Irish peasants naturally lived up to Victorian ideals of morality and masculinity, that landlords were generally not doing the same, that the workings of the land system explained, if not fully justified violence, and that the general lack of violence in Ireland was indicative of the high levels of morality and restraint among the Irish. The group also sought to center reform of the land system into the nationalist political debate, thus using the promised reform of that system to connect nationalist politicians and the mass of tenant farmers more tightly in the region.

From its first meeting, the Ballinasloe TDA reflected the centrality of the home in nationalist discourse, with a resolution adopted at its first meeting stating that it had been founded “for the protection not alone of your homes, your honest industry, and your legitimate rights in the soil you till, but also for the protection of interests to you still more dear.”\(^{455}\) Similarly a speech by James Kilmartin at a Ballinasloe TDA meeting centered a call for political action on the destruction of the home, arguing that because of the failures of both the British government and local landlords, his audience had seen the happy homes of tens of thousands levelled to the dust… seen the ploughshare passing over the very hearth around which clustered the happy husband of a loving wife, the contented parents of a playful family. You have seen the fertile fields alive with animate and industry… this elysian picture of

\(^{454}\) Moran, “Laying the Seeds for Agrarian Agitation,” 82.

\(^{455}\) *Connaught Telegraph*, May 13, 1878.
happiness and content is blasted and withered up by the fierce and remorseless exterminator.

Kilmartin then acknowledged the passions that this image evoked, that it made him, and presumably his listeners’ “hearts sick” and their “blood boil in their veins,” before leveraging this picture of the destruction of homesteads not in calls for revolution, but for organized political action. Harris argued that “it is only by organization we can succeed in utilizing the strength of the people” and “exhorted the people to join and extend the association,” while the local priest, Father Mylotte, addressed the crowd saying that “they behaved in a truly noble manner” in not giving the local magistrate “any little mishap” to use to discredit the organization.

In the rhetoric employed by the Ballinasloe Tenant Defense Association, and by nationalist writers more broadly from the late 1860s through the mid-1870s, we can see the efforts of nationalists to escape from the metrocolonial double bind described by Valente. By acknowledging the emotional response to evictions and emigration, nationalists clearly argued that the Irish population was not content to be second-class citizens in a colonial state, but by asserting that restraint was the main response of the Irish population to injustice, and by urging the channeling of anger into political action rather than extralegal reprisals, nationalists sought to demonstrate their self-mastery. In this effort nationalists created a unique type of muscular nationalist masculine figure, one who fulfilled all the requirements for Victorian masculinity and was prepared not so much to kill as to suffer for the nation. Importantly, the centrality of priests in this

456 “Monster Tenant-Right Meeting in Moore,” Connaught Telegraph, 1 July, 1876.
457 “Monster Tenant-Right Meeting in Moore,” Connaught Telegraph, 1 July, 1876.
458 “Monster Tenant-Right Meeting in Moore,” Connaught Telegraph, 1 July, 1876.
narrative, as figures of moral uplift who enable the Irish to reach this state of self-mastery, itself played into stereotypes regarding the Irish and particularly the Irish peasantry as pre- or anti-modern figures, tropes which would deeply influence how the British press and political elite viewed the upcoming Land War.  

However, the metrocolonial double bind was not the only issue which faced nationalist entrepreneurs in this period. Such individuals also faced the challenge of the clear persistence of elements of subversive or alternative law, evident in the increase in agrarian crime following pre-Famine methods of protest in 1869 and 1870. Such actions threatened the image of Irish masculinity and self-mastery that nationalists were working to create necessitating the concession by nationalist that agrarian crime was, to an extent, understandable even if it was not fully justifiable. Exhortations to channel anger with the existing system into political reform, particularly those issued by organizations which centered the issue of land reform rather than the repeal of the Act of Union, sought to make limited use of such alternative visions of law, but in a manner broadly acceptable to Victorian norms. Thus, questioning the legitimacy of landlord holdings which underpinned subversive law and taking extralegal action could be taken up by members of the Ballinasloe TDA and used as central parts of their organizing, but threatening letters, the maiming of cattle, and the shooting either at or of landlords could not. This effort to harness and channel popular responses to injustice in a manner more acceptable to nationalist elites would become central to the efforts of those elites to respond to a

---

459 Nial Whelehan discusses the role of priests in imperial narratives regarding both Ireland and the south of Italy post-unification in his "Revolting Peasants: Southern Italy, Ireland, and Cartoons in Comparative Perspective, 1860–1882," *International Review of Social History*, Volume 60, Issue 1, 2015 pp. 1-35, arguing that that a central component of the image of the pre- or anti-modern peasant was an overreliance on Catholic clergy for leadership.
political crisis following the recession of 1878 and to use that crisis to cement the creation of a unified Irish national identity.
Chapter Three

A Mayo tenant farmer named Arthur O’Malley announced at a Land League meeting at Aughagower, Co Mayo, in November 1879 that “if the landlord came to eject him he would stand at the door of his homestead, and the world would ring with the intelligence that he had perished in one last attempt to protect his wife and little ones.” He added that “If he had nothing else to leave his children they might have at least the proud boast that their father died for them.”460 At a League meeting the next summer at Dooleague, Co Mayo, O’Malley spoke again, telling his audience they were called to act “to protect the poor wives and the poor starving children at home,” before outlining the roles that the women attending were called to play. He called on the mothers in the crowd to rear their sons “to be true to their country,” so that “he will always love Ireland; and if it is required he will lose his blood for his parents that reared him.” He then asked the young women in the crowd to “never marry the son of the ruffian who betrays his country.”461 In framing the role of women as essentially passive and domestic, O’Malley was following in a long tradition of nationalist thinking, which framed women as “that lily, which sickens in a corrupt atmosphere, and which only blooms in the desert or in the virtuous village, so guarded there that the poor helpless female is not exposed to danger from moral condemnation.” Thus, the immoral land system threatened the destruction of that guarded Irish homestead and demanded active resistance from Irishmen.462

462 ‘Distress in the West: Great Meeting in Tuam,’ Freemans Journal, 24 April, 1862.
In both of O’Malley’s speeches he seems to have been both reacting to and advancing arguments commonly made by the emerging Land League leadership. C.S. Parnell, for example, at a land meeting held at Westport, Co Mayo, in 1879 called on tenant farmers to “show the landlord that you intend to keep a firm grip on your homesteads and lands” and “not allow yourselves be dispossessed as you were dispossessed in 1847,” while at Listowel, Co Roscommon, in the spring of 1881, Andrew Kettle, one of Parnell’s chief lieutenants, called on the crowd to ‘stand up and meet your tyrants like men, with a passive resistance to wrong…If they come to evict a man, let the whole countryside come… You must stand up and do it like men.’

This linkage of keeping a firm grip on one’s dwelling and actively fulfilling a masculine role in society presented holding ‘manfully’ onto one’s farm as the central act of a masculine life, defending both the honor of Irishwomen and of the Irish race.

In speeches given at land meetings and in nationalist publications aimed at a variety of audiences, nationalist entrepreneurs advanced this argument linking participation in the land agitation with the proper performance of masculinity in three main ways. These entrepreneurs argued first that the Land War was being undertaken by Irish men to save Irish families; second that in engaging in land agitation generally, and resistance to eviction specifically, Irishmen could prove both their own masculinity and the worthiness of the Irish race for self-government; and finally, that the agitation was, and needed to be, intentionally conducted along strictly peaceful lines in order to bolster arguments in favor of Irish self-discipline and whiteness. League leaders at all levels sought to promote, through this tripartite argument, the prescribed behavior which could

463 NAI, Police and crime records 1848-1920, No 5, Carton 2, No 552.
serve as a way out of the double bind outlined by Valente, that is, behavior which was sufficiently rigorous to disprove arguments that the Irish lacked the manhood to prevent their own colonization while being sufficiently restrained to not provide further arguments against Irish self-rule.

The first point which becomes clear from analysis of Land League speeches is the extent to which the speakers presumed themselves to be addressing a male audience. At times this point was made explicitly, as when Matthew Harris, a noted Fenian and general nationalist activist, addressed a land meeting in Roscommon saying, “a double duty devolves on me here to-day… to thank the men of Kiltoom and the surrounding parishes for the manly independent way they have come forward to assist at this meeting.” At other points the presumed male nature of the audience can be seen from the semi-constant references to manly conduct on the part of the audience, as when Michael Davitt addressed a tenant-right meeting at Ballinrobe and referred to “the spirit of manly courage in the men of Mayo and Ireland,” which had prompted the audience to attend that day.

One of the main arguments proceeding from this presumption was that these men were assembled to preserve Irish homes and, by extension, Irish families. As noted in chapter two nationalists frequently asserted that those resident in idealized Irish homes inculcated Victorian virtues to one another, and they deployed this claim both to call for reform of the land system and to criticize and lament the emigration that was becoming endemic in the post-Famine period. Land League speeches continued in this vein, asserting that Irish homes produced men who “always paid [their] rent manfully,” but

---

464 NU, Ms. 11,289, Kiltoom Co. Roscommon, 17 October, 1880.
that, as a result of the system of landlordism generally and in the context of the recent
economic downturn specifically, the “Irish home [was being] broken up, and instead of
the home of industry, you behold the patriot roof-tree, you behold the track of the snail on
the wall, you behold the noble garden in the place where the people ought to be.”

Countering this destruction of Irish homes was also central to the League
asserting its political aims, generally articulated as working to “secure to the tillers of the
soil unfettered homes and the God-given fruits of their industry.” Speakers referred
approvingly to the land system in countries such as France and Prussia, which they
claimed “is grounded upon true principles which encourage industry. It fosters trade and
maintains self-reliant confidence… in this benighted land of ours, it is the very reverse.”
They thus both agitated for reform and argued that the deficiencies in the Irish
agricultural sector were not the result of Irish racial failings, but rather of the system in
which they were forced to operate.

Some of the most emotional speeches of the entire Land War period centered on
this argument, that Irish families were being destroyed by the existing land system and
that the Land League existed to prevent further suffering. O’Malley’s speech, for
example, followed his comments on the duties of each gender by asserting that the
audience of tenant farmers were “rearing your children to send them beyond the water,
ever to see them again.” “If I thought the children which I am rearing would not be
around me to close my eyes in death,” he lamented, “I would bring them out on that hill-
side and kill them.” The theme of the emotional pain of emigration was commonly

466 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Frenchpark Co. Roscommon, 1 August, 1880.
467 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Cooneal Co. Mayo 19 September, 1880.
468 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Keash Co Sligo, 25 July, 1880.
469 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Dooleague Co. Mayo, 18 July, 1880.
referenced, as at a meeting at Frenchpark, Co. Roscommon, where one speaker argued “the despoiler is at work abroad, and the next time the curtain rises you behold the emigrant ship, the wail and the sobs of the father and brother parting from the land of their birth. The wail of Rachel for her children, her down-trodden children.” He then called for the men of the area to “all organise together and unite and become a band of brothers” to prevent such scenes being repeated in the future.470

At times local farmers who had been evicted would speak to illustrate this point, as when Michael Merrick, a tenant farmer in Riverstown, Co. Sligo, described how, when he was shopping on Christmas Eve, “the sheriff and his bailiffs came and put my dear wife and children out on the road side, with no covering but the canopy of heaven.” That act, he said, had prompted him to take “the advice of the Land League,” so that he built a “hut upon the land, and I am here still.”471 Jasper Tully made a similar point at a meeting at Keadue, Co. Roscommon, when he described an eviction scene “where police, the sheriff, and bailiffs were routed from the scene… but the police stole a march on them… and they outnumbered those proud fellows who were prepared to launch themselves on the bayonets of the police rather than allow themselves to be torn from their homes.472

This assertion that it was the duty of Irish tenant farmers to provide for and protect their families was central to the broader League assertion that whatever money farmers had should go toward the purchase of food and paying of local debts rather than the payment of rent to landlords. An examination of publications aimed at international audiences demonstrated that this claim often broadened into an argument that landlords

470 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Frenchpark Co. Roscommon, 1 August, 1880.
471 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Lackagh Co. Sligo, 1 August, 1880
472 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Keadue Co. Roscommon, 8 August, 1880.
were essentially parasitic, draining the fruits of honest Irish farmers to enrich themselves and to live lives of luxury. At a speech at Mahanagh, Co. Sligo, for example, one speaker, Bartholomew Flinn defined the meeting as “firm in the determination to win back our plundered rights, and restore the land of Ireland to its rightful owners, the people of Ireland,” who, he said were resolved “to remain in the soil enriched by the sweat of your brow.” The Irish people, he argued, were the rightful owners of the land because it was their work which made it productive. He then continued in this vein, arguing “if I look around me and ask you who built those houses (about which he stood) who reclaimed this land, who brought it from barrenness and sterility, I will find it has not been done by Mr. William Alexander,” a local landlord, “nor has it been done by the white black-bird of Rickinham,” referring to Col. King-Harman, who had recently been defeated in his effort to win re-election to parliament from Sligo. Flinn closed his comments by saying that “the landlord did nothing and yet he plunders the tenantry of every shilling of their hard won earnings, and he spends it, God knows how.” The same point was made more bluntly by Thomas Cox, a tenant farmer at a meeting held at Doonen, Co Roscommon:

what have the landlords done that they should live in spleandour and luxury, and they, poor people, in misery… You are too fond of putting your hands to your hats for them and pull the pipes out of your mouths when passing them, but do it no more… Stand together and join the Land League, and the day is not far distant

---

473 NAI, Police and crime records 1848-1920, No 5, Protection of Persons & Property Act 1881, Carton 2, 125.
474 NAI, Police and crime records 1848-1920, No 5, Protection of Persons & Property Act 1881, Carton 2, 125. The material in parenthesis is drawn from the description of the recording RIC officer.
475 NAI, Police and crime records 1848-1920, No 5, Protection of Persons & Property Act 1881, Carton 2, 125
when each man can look round on his fields, raise his hands to heaven, and say, “Thank God, this land is mine.”  

The central argument at Land League speeches, was that it was through membership in the Land League, and adherence to its program, that Irishmen could prove themselves, and by extension their race, to be men. One of the speeches which made this argument most clearly was given by Matthew Harris at Kiltoom, Co. Roscommon, in October 1880. Harris opened by thanking “the men of Kiltoom and the surrounding parishes for the manly independent way they have come forward to assist at this meeting” before saying that the meeting was called to appeal to passions of the people to tell them how they were rack rented by landlords, how they were exterminated by landlords, and tell them all the evils that could rouse up the passions and manhood of the country.”

Harris went on to say when we found reason could not avail, we turned to the manhood of the country, and it is to the manhood of the country we appeal to-day… a spirit of manliness, a spirit of independence prevails among the people of Ireland that cannot be cowed down by the threat of months or years of imprisonment… you have come forward like men, as I hope, to assist your fellow-men throughout the rest of Ireland.

Harris closed his speech with a final request to his audience have courage and manliness. If you have not courage, and do not come forward like men, and raise your heads in the manner of free men, and meet the tyrants as they should be met, your uniting together will fail… we shall never have peace and prosperity in Ireland, never have brotherly feeling, and to take the position we desire as intellectual, brave, and generous men among the nations of the earth, and

---

476 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Doonen Co Roscommon, 22 August, 1880. On several occasions this line of argument was taken even further, and local landlords were accused of sexual impropriety towards the daughters of their tenants. Following the assassination of Lord Mountmorris, a landlord in Galway, Jasper Daly claimed at a meeting at Castlebar that “Lord Mountmorris was not worth shooting as a landlord. He was shot because he fined a man at Clonbar P. Sessions 10s for pulling heather, and for being a seducer,” while at a meeting at Frenchpark Co. Roscommon a local tenant farmer claimed that his land agent “came down on the poor tenants in the county Leitrim. He wanted to send their daughters to be concubines.” (NLI, Ms. 11,289, Frenchpark Co. Roscommon, 19 June, 1881.)

477 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Kiltoom, Co. Roscommon, 19 October, 1880.

478 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Kiltoom, Co. Roscommon, 17 October, 1880.
never have the opportunity of assuming a fit position, until we gain the independence of our country.479

This argument, that attendance at Land meetings and by extension adherence to the Land League program illustrated the manhood of the local population, was commonly expressed. At the Irishtown meeting held in April 1879 John O’Connor Power defined the gathering as an “assertion of popular power. I value it all the more on that account, and I am glad to find that you are prepared to struggle manfully against oppression, and wrestling with it, hand to hand, and foot to foot, throughout every part of your noble country.”480 At a meeting held at Cliffoney, Co. Sligo, in November 1880 one of the speakers expressed his pride “to see such a sea of faces here before me to-day to vindicate the honest cause of the tenant farmer, it shows that you are not apathetic in the cause of the Land League when you are assembled in your thousands here with your green banners and green ribbons.” He continued: “Too long you have been trampled upon—too long you have been slaves—it rests with you to-day to say will this continue… this magnificent demonstration proves that the heart of Sligo is with you, proves that the west is on its legs again… Don’t let your enthusiasm die away.” He urged his audience to “come forward and join the Land League… Stand together like men.”481 Similarly, at a tenant-right meeting at Skreen, Co. Sligo, a local parish priest, Fr. Conway, told his audience that “it is on yourselves you must depend, and not on anyone else. Is it upon a system of begging you have to lean? No: you must be men: you must be like your sires prepared to suffer death rather than bend the knee to [sic] much to

479 NU, Ms. 11,289, Kiltoom, Co. Roscommon, 17 October, 1880.
480 “Irishtown Tenants’ Defence Meeting/ Grand Demonstration, Connaught Telegraph, 26 April, 1879.
481 NU, Ms. 11,289, Cliffoney Co. Sligo, 7 November, 1880.
England.”482 He then continued to exhort his audience to act “for yourselves, your children, and your country,” promising “before 1880 is passed away you will be the proudest and happiest people on the face of God’s earth.”483

This argument, that the men of Ireland needed to come together, also carried with it the idea that what was needed was for Irishmen to brave danger to achieve their aims. For example, James Daly at a meeting held at Dooleague, Co. Mayo, in July 1880 asked his audience, “will chains of coercion bind you?” before concluding that “by being determined to carry out this resolution, that is, you will hold together like one man… Let there be a fair rent put upon the soil and you will have the people of Ireland happy and industrious.”484 This message was similar to that expressed at a meeting held at Irishtown in May 1880, where one speaker connected the need for Irishmen to hold together to the above-mentioned fears about emigration, saying “you must have courage; you must not be cowed down, and I regret to say that their wicked conduct is driving out of this parish many and many a young girl who could live at home if you had only the land.”485 J.B. Walsh, at the same Dooleague meeting where O’Malley spoke, placed the current land agitation into a narrative of nationalist history, arguing that at the present time, “the life of Irish nationality is at stake… the test now is between the descendants of the people who occupied the soil of Ireland before the bone of the invader ever tried it and their would be conquerors,” but he expressed his hope that soon Irishmen would be able to “stand independent on his land and say this is mine” because “the manhood of the tenant-

484 NLJ, Ms. 11,289, Dooleague Co. Mayo, 18 July, 1880.
485 NLJ, Ms. 11,289, Irishtown Co. Mayo, 2 May, 1880.
Finally, James O’Kelly, elected in 1880 as M.P. for County Roscommon, told a meeting held at Irishtown, Co. Mayo, that success or failure “will depend on what you [his audience] mean, whether you are simply come here to shout for noble sentiment, or whether you are the kind of men that have learned that you have rights. Now people who have not courage and determination are nothing but slaves.”

The idea discussed both earlier in this chapter and extensively in chapters one and two that the land system had degraded Irish manhood was also touched on extensively to urge Irishmen to engage in the agitation. At a meeting held at Westport, Co. Mayo, in October 1880, John Sweeney, a small farmer and shopkeeper, claimed that:

Whatever little rights we have now have appeared within the last two years since the land agitation commenced in this country. Why there was not a man in the west that was not afraid of the bog man and the dog man. Twelve months ago, before this land agitation commenced, I could not get ten men in the west. They had not the courage, they were so long used to be down trodden… but I have got up the young blood of Louisburg… if you have the spirit of men, if you have the voices of men and the resolution, if ye will keep the good work that’s well commenced, I think ye will have landlordism soon dead.

This same question of whether the men of Ireland had sufficient manhood to succeed in the agitation was a commonly posed one, albeit generally in a rhetorical manner to allow the speaker to elaborate on how that was in fact the case. For example, M.M. O’Sullivan, the Secretary of the Land League, at a July 4th meeting held at Riansboro, Co.

---

486 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Dooleague, Co. Mayo, 18 July, 1880.
487 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Irishtown, Co. Mayo, 2 May, 1880.
488 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Westport, Co. Mayo, 17 October, 1880. The idea that it was through their actions in the agitation that Irishmen were in the process of illustrating their masculinity was a commonly stated one. At the May 1880 Irishtown meeting, for example, Michael Davitt said that the work of the Land League “had shown the tenant farmers their great strength… had convinced them that they had rights to the soil of Ireland… had infused into the people such a spirit that they are resolved to fight for those rights until victory crowned their cause NLI, Ms. 11,289, Irishtown, Co. Mayo, 2 May, 1880.
Sligo, asked: “Who can stand here and tell me that the Irish tenant farmer is not a slave?”

He continued, “Are Irishmen cowards enough that they will not stand up and free
themselves as other nations have done?” He then told his audience that “it rests for you to
say whether you will or not… band together, organise as one man. Organise then,
organise as one man.” O’Sullivan went on to say that he wanted to know if his audience
“are like the men of the west and the men of the south, whether you are determined to
carry out this resolve. I wish to know whether you are the men I take you to be, strong
men, brave men, united men… determined to emancipate your country.”

The other side of these arguments—that by joining the agitation Irishmen proved
their manhood—was that those men who did not join the League either evidenced their
own degraded state or, more troublingly, that of Irish masculinity as a whole. At a
meeting held at Ballintubber, Co. Roscommon, in August 1880 the crowd was asked “Oh
God! How long will our people lie down?” while at Mahanagh, Co. Sligo, the existing
socio-political system was referred to as “the power which has --- your manhood and
destroyed your nationality.” At a meeting held at Athlone, Co. Roscommon, on 7
November 1880, the local MP James O’Kelly said, “it will remain to be seen whether you
are a people worth fighting for… by the action you will take in the present conjuncture.”
“If you want to win,” he told them, “you must win by firmness, by courage, and by

489 NAI, Police and crime records 1848-1920, No 4, Irish Land League and Irish National League papers,
Carton 1, 375.

490 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Ballintubber Co. Roscommon 8 August, 1880. Michael Fitzpatrick; NAI, Police and
crime records 1848-1920, No 5, Protection of Persons & Property Act 1881, Carton 2, 125.
determination… if you show weakness at the present moment… then all hope of saving this Irish nation is at an end.”

Often the argument was made that those who did not take part in the agitation were not worthy of being called men or were not worthy to reference Parnell. At a meeting in Cooneal, Co. Mayo, one of the speakers argued that “as long as Irish tenant farmers are slaves they have no right to use the sacred name of Parnell.” Similarly, at a meeting at Loughlynn, Co. Roscommon, in October 1880, one of the speakers, Joseph Dalbey, told his audience:

Each and every man of you has that vale before you, and if you do not fight for it the way that Charles Stewart Parnell has directed you, you are not worthy of the name of men. I could not apply the name of men to you if you do not stand by your colours and put down once and forever one of the nefarious garrisons of British power.

Finally, speakers often argued that through adherence to the program of the Land League, and specifically through acting “like men” in taking an active part in the agitation, Irishmen could disprove racial narratives of Irish inferiority. Michael Davitt at a tenant-right meeting in Ballinrobe made this argument most clearly when he referred to the meeting as “the answer which the manhood of Mayo returns to the slanders which

---

491 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Althone, Co. Roscommon 7 November, 1880. Those who emigrated were held up for particular scorn, as at the Dooleague meeting where “the man who leaves Ireland now” was referred to as “a low wretch and a coward. There is not an Irishman in America but should spit upon him when he lands.” Later in the same speech Parnell was referenced, with the speaker saying “Now is the time to prove to that pure soul… Charles S. Parnell, prove to him that you are a people worthy of agitating for, and many years will not pass by until every tenant farmer will be owner of his own home.” See NLI, Ms. 11,289, Dooleague, Co. Mayo, 18 July, 1880. Similarly, at a speech at Ballintubber, Co. Roscommon, 8 August 1880, one of the crimes of the British state was defined as working to “destroy your power by the gift of a wooden horse in the shape of assisted emigration,” with the speaker saying that rather than emigrating “we shall continue to struggle manfully to accomplish our freedom.” NLI, Ms. 11,289, Ballintubber Co. Roscommon, 8 August, 1880.
492 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Cooneal Co. Mayo, 19 September, 1880.
493 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Loughlynn Co. Roscommon, 31 October 1880.
have been heaped upon this country.” He went on to argue similarly that narratives of Irish criminality were wrong, saying “the moral sense and religious feeling of the Irish people never, even in the worst and most destitute, prompted them to commit out of mere desire to do it, murder or outrage. It was the infamous system of landlordism which was alone responsible for any agrarian outrage which were committed in Ireland.”

Similarly a Land League representative at a meeting at Keadue argued that other nations “see in you a people ground down by other men—a people who have submitted too long, but who now, seeing their union, their strength, and their determination, have at last determined to be free.” He then went on to link this condition to the issue of eviction, saying that “people have been turned out after spending all their time, and after working as hard as God knows the Irish do, and after giving all the money they could make, they could get, and they could possibly borrow—after giving it all to the landlord” who “sends the sheriff and the police to exterminate the people.” Finally, he argued that to continue this growth “you must stand up erect as men should, and say that no men, who are no better than yourselves, should trample upon your necks … You must be determined, organized, and resolute. You must stick to your homes which are yours.”

In a similar vein, J.R. M’Donnell at a meeting held at Loughlynn in October 1880 said that the British government operated “under the impression that the Irish people of to-day are a nation of children to be frightened,” but he claimed that “our forefathers… never quailed, and it is a convincing proof of the fearless indomitable spirit of the Irish

494 “Great Tenant-Right Meeting in Ballinrobe, Connaught Telegraph, 11 October 1879.
495 “Keadue Demonstration,” Roscommon Herald, 26 June 1880.
496 “Keadue Demonstration,” Roscommon Herald, 26 June 1880.
497 “Keadue Demonstration,” Roscommon Herald, 26 June 1880.
people that we have assembled all over the length and breadth of Ireland to-day.” He went on to note that “the upholders of landlordism … talk of the laziness, as they say, of the Irish people as being the ills from which we suffer,” before arguing that the poor conditions in Ireland were in fact the fault of the land system. At Crossna Co. Roscommon one speaker continued in this line of argument, saying that “the landlords attribute your present, miserable condition to your extravagance, to your unthriftiness and to your drinking habits.” He went on to argue that that condition was in part due to the failure of his audience, saying that “an instant for the manhood of any other country but ours would bound to its feet, and would abolish the accursed system which would be the parent of these acts.” He then contrasted their current indolent state to the “glorious prospect” which “opens before you… who are now steeped in misery and serfdom, will be able to stand erect on your native soil as freemen.”

Finally, speakers at League meetings referred to agrarian crime in order to denounce it and portrayed the resistance to the temptation to turn to violence as the ultimate expression of masculinity. A typical mention of agrarian violence from a Land League meeting can be seen from the report of the meeting held at Althone, Co. Roscommon, on 7 November 1880. Speakers at the meeting expressed their confidence that “order will be preserved to-day…because the people know their power, their weight, and their influence, and they know that they want no adventitious aid, and they know that it would injure their cause if they tried to disturb order in the slightest way.” They concluded their remarks, telling the crowd that “you have only now to carry on this

---

498 NU, Ms. 11,289, Loughlynn, Co. Roscommon, 31 October, 1880.
499 NU, Ms. 11,289, Loughlynn, Co. Roscommon, 31 October, 1880.
500 “Monster Meeting to be held August 22 at Boyle,” Roscommon Herald, 22 August. 1880.
agitation as you have commenced it in a quiet constitutional manner until you gain your
rights.”

Another example can be seen from the meeting held at Westport, Co. Mayo, on
the 17 October 1880, which closed with the last speaker saying: “You have come here to-
day orderly, soberly, and determinedly. You will go home in a similar manner, and all I
can say is the country has a right to be proud of you.” He then linked this praiseworthy
conduct to the bravery of the crowd to openly attend such a meeting, adding that “you
will then be in a position to tell your children that you, at least” did so “when other parts
of Ireland had not the courage to strike a blow for the people’s emancipation, and the
courage to come to the front and to give voice the wishes of the Irish people.”

In this way denunciations of agrarian violence grew out of the positioning of
League membership, and more broadly of participation in the land agitation as indicative
of personal and national masculinity. At a League meeting held at Kiltoom, Co.
Roscommon, on 17 October 1880, one of the speakers identified himself as “a
Roscommon man of Roscommon, one of the people, hoping with them, fighting with
them, and willing to suffer with them,” and he claimed “the fight that we are fighting” as
“the old fight our fathers fought,” thus tying the land agitation to a nationalist narrative of
ongoing struggles for self-determination. He then added that those past nationalist
figures “did not hesitate to shed their blood upon the battlefield, to give their lives upon
the gallows, and we should be degenerate sons indeed if the fear of a few months’
imprisonment could turn us from our way or cause us to abandon the fight,” further

501 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Althone, Co. Roscommon, 7 November, 1880.
502 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Westport, Co, Mayo, 17 October, 1880.
503 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Westport, Co, Mayo, 17 October, 1880.
504 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Westport, Co, Mayo, 17 October, 1880.
identifying participation in the League with proper masculine conduct. He then contrasted this proper conduct with that of the British state, which he identified as attempting to “suppress by brute force one form of expression,…drive the people from the legal path into the path of violence, and tempt men who are outraged and suffering under the sense of wrong to meet violence with violence.” He closed by calling for his audience to resist that temptation and stick to legal means of protest.

This definition of “proper” conduct as synonymous with masculinity continued into the injunctions to confine protest activities to boycotting, such that the targets of the boycotts were put forward as the inverse of the nationalist, manly individuals being addressed by the speaker. Landgrabbers were denounced as “guilty of the treacherous conduct of betraying…country and the sacred cause” through the claiming of property not rightly theirs. Speakers identified landgrabbers as part of the oppressive system the League stood against. They were “a powerful weapon in the hands of the landlord…a traitor to his country and an enemy of our cause, and” accordingly, “should be denied recognition of every man.”

Furthermore, Land League speakers identified landgrabbers with an illicit, immoral focus on money rather than ideals. Just as landlords were identified as draining Irish families of the funds needed to preserve themselves in order to engage in drinking and debauchery in London, a landgraber was presented as a “ferocious wretch, because he happens to have got more of that valued dross called gold than his poorer neighbours,

505 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Westport, Co, Mayo, 17 October 1880.
506 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Westport, Co, Mayo, 17 October 1880.; Kiltoom, Co. Roscommon 17 October 1880.
507 NAI, Police and crime records 1848-1920, No 5, Carton 1, 26.
508 NAI, Police and crime records 1848-1920, No 4, Irish Land League and Irish National League papers, Carton 1, 351.
is resolved to trample on all principles and which is an example if you tolerate will be visited on your shoulders.”

This idea that greed degraded those who took farms from the evicted was also used to portray such individuals as examples of the debased masculinity to which the Irish had been reduced under the system of landlordism. By this light, the League described how landgrabbers went “behind that man’s back [who had been evicted] to give a douceur to the bailiff, or a fat turkey to the agent, or his hand to his hat for the landlord,” using a mixture of bribery and emasculated, slavish actions to gain profit for themselves.

Finally, speakers at League meetings presented the desire to inflict violence on such individuals, and to commit agrarian crimes generally, as an understandable but unacceptable tendency caused by the system of landholding. Speakers denounced the British government for wanting “to brand the Irish race as a lot of fiends, because some unfortunate peasant has invoked the wild justice of revenge that the English Government in Ireland has no remedy for,” arguing that “if tyrants will evict and roof trees will be levelled, unfortunate men will seek revenge.” Speakers cautioned audiences that landlords hoped to provoke outrages “in order that they might build up a case against the people and their cause. But the people were under no compliment to the landlords that they should oblige them or play into their hands.”

---

509 NAI, Police and crime records 1848-1920, No 4, Irish Land League and Irish National League papers, Carton 1, 359.
510 NAI, Police and crime records 1848-1920, No 4, Irish Land League and Irish National League paper, Carton 1, 373.
511 NAI, Police and crime records 1848-1920, No 4, Irish Land League and Irish National League papers, Carton 1, 361
Boycotting was presented as the proper way to deal with such individuals. Many speeches emphasized that boycotting not only avoided the commission of crime but allowed individuals to draw a contrast between their conduct and that of the landgrabber. P.J. Sheridan, for example, told his audiences at Riverstown, Co. Sligo, to not “commit a breach of the law by going and assaulting him but bring down on him the contempt of his friends…snee at him, scoff at him, ridicule him, heap contumely on him as you would dirt on a filthy spot.” He concluded his speech there by telling his audience “to band yourselves together, be united in purpose as you are in interest, and confront those attempts…with a stern manly front.”513

Similarly, J.W. Malley at a meeting held at Portasella, Co. Mayo, told his audience that “the way to do away with landgrabbing is not by agrarian outrages, gun-cotton, or dynamite, but by boycotting them.” The climax of that meeting was the public confession of a tenant farmer named Patrick O’Connor who had apparently taken over a local farm following an eviction but announced that he was sorry to have done so and that he had given up the farm and all future claim to it.514

What ties all these points together is the common assertion that attendees would illustrate their self-restraint and, accordingly, the validity of claims for Irish self-rule through avoiding violence and boycotting those who violated the rules of the League. At times speakers commented directly on this goal, saying “I advise you to go all home peaceably in a decent manner from this meeting, without giving our enemies a single cause to point a finger of scorn at us,” or “you will be pointed as our example to others

513 NAI, Police and crime records 1848-1920,No 4, Irish Land League and Irish National League papers, Carton 1, 372.
514 NAI, Police and crime records, Irish Land League and Irish NTNL League papers, Carton 1 Reports of Speeches at Irish Land League and Irish national League meetings 1879-88, 80.
how to carry on a peaceful, legal, constitutional, and successful agitation” and referring to the attendees as “a moral and virtuous people.”\textsuperscript{515} In another instance, a speaker told his audience to maintain “that peaceable, albeit, manly earnestness and determined attitude which has been characteristic of your meetings hitherto. Each of you will exercise a certain discipline over himself so as not to be surprised into word or act of illegality.”\textsuperscript{516} John Dillon at Ballaghadereen, Co. Mayo, clearly linked the determination to resist eviction to manhood, telling his audience to let their “policy be a policy of defense, and not aggression… Attack no man, and commit no violence; but, when you are attacked, show the man who attacks you that he has got to deal with men, and not with women.”\textsuperscript{517} One of the clearer examples of this was seen in a speech given at Lisolway Co. Roscommon in May 1881, where A.J. Kettle told his audience to

\begin{quote}
stand up and meet your tyrants like men, with a passive resistance to wrong, for you know you must exercise this open, passive, determined resistance. If they come to evict a man, let the whole countryside come, and let heaven and earth hear what you have to say. You must stand up and do it like men.\textsuperscript{518}
\end{quote}

In examining the coverage of the Land War period in the nationalist press, the same tripartite argument seems to have been advanced, with certain papers emphasizing or de-emphasizing elements of the triptych in accordance with the editorial stance of the paper itself. For example, the \textit{Roscommon Herald}, published by Jasper Tully, a noted Fenian, accordingly focused most of its editorial coverage on the need for its readers to take part in the agitation and reject the proposed Land Act, as well as commenting with a

\textsuperscript{515} NLI, Ms. 11,289, Loughlynn, Co. Roscommon, 31 October 1880; NLI, Ms. 11,289, Kinlough, Co. Mayo, 31 October 1880.
\textsuperscript{517} \textit{A verbatim copy of the Parnell commission report with complete index and notes}, London: Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union: 1890, 61.
\textsuperscript{518} NAI, Police and crime records 1848-1920,No 5, Carton 2, no. 552.
certain level of approval on physical resistance to evictions. In contrast the *Mayo Examiner*, still a nationalist paper but of a more conservative bent, urged its readers to accept and make use of the Land Act as much as possible, and it took a much harder stance against agrarian outrages. Despite these differing emphases and attitudes toward legislation arising from the land agitation, nationalist papers still generally located the justification for the agitation in the destruction of respectable Irish homes and families, linked participation in the land movement with masculinity, and urged their readers to refrain from agrarian outrages which would seem to confirm the negative racial stereotyping of the Irish.

As soon as the economic crisis began to threaten Irish homes, the regional nationalist press argued that the threat to respectable Irish homes and families was what demanded political action. The *Roscommon Herald* in a May 1879 editorial argued that landlords either needed to grant rent abatements or face the destruction of the land system because of the impact that paying high rents had had. “Look through the country and among the class of tenants that are in most danger now,” the paper demanded, “and show us where are their treasures? There can be no treasures, nothing laid aside for the rent is usually pushed as high as it can be,” before asserting that “If landlords insist that they enjoy the complete ownership of the soil…in times like these, they have no right to press hard for profits that are not to be had.”

In a similar editorial published in the previous June, the *Sligo Champion* praised “a noble-minded and conscientious tenantry” who “have more than once defied the merciless wrath of a tyrannical landocracy.” The *Champion* described the current

---

519 *Roscommon Herald*, 3 May, 1879.
condition of Ireland by saying that “happy homes have been wrecked, and their virtuous inmates have been cast houseless and helpless on the world’s charity to place men who have proved themselves utterly unworthy of the exercise of such heroism in their regard, in the position of representatives of the people.” It went on to argue that these conditions proved the need for, first, a regeneration of the nationalist movement to remove faux-nationalists like Colonel King-Harman from positions of influence, and, then, a fundamental alteration in the land system to preserve such homes.\(^5\) A year later the \textit{Champion} linked the existing land system in Ireland to those of foreign nations which had recently undergone reforms. The \textit{Champion} evoked the image of “the children of the impoverished tenantry, now scattered over the face of the earth, seeking in foreign lands that subsistence denied them by man’s heartlessness at home” before asking rhetorically “Who dare question their [the landlord’s] right to order their tenants to vote against their consciences, to banish their children from the shelter of the paternal roof,” again linking the destruction of the Irish home to the excesses of the landlord system. The editorial concluded by arguing that “despotlic Government whether national or local is fast crumbling away before the enlightenment of the age. The despot of Russia so finds it, and such ere long, will be the experience of our local tyrants who ruthlessly trample God’s creatures in the dust,” in effect turning colonial claims of Irish inferiority on their head and casting Irish landlords as foreign despots.\(^6\)

The \textit{Connaught Telegraph} argued in a May 1879 editorial that the existing land system “demoralized the landlords, wasted the tenants, and reduced both to the most

\(^5\) \textit{Sligo Champion, 15 June, 1878.}

\(^6\) “The Rent Reduction Question,” \textit{Sligo Champion, 7 June, 1879.} The reference to Russia seems to refer to the emancipation of most Russian serfs in 1861 and the subsequent emancipation of state-owned serfs in 1866.
pitiable state of wretchedness.” The Telegraph argued that the inability of the Irish tenant farmer to provide for his family the trappings of a respectable livelihood was an intolerable state of affairs, and then asked:

How much rent can this or that tenant pay, and live as a respectable yeoman ought to live—live as a Christian ought to live in a civilized Christian country—providing for the wants of his family in mind and body; supplying them with suitable education; laying up something to fortune his daughters and give trades or professions to his sons, or such of them as are not to be farmers.922

The Mayo Examiner in a June 1882 editorial offered an argument along the same lines, holding that Mayo was “where the bounty of Heaven finds its antithesis in the misery of man; where in the midst of riches there is poverty; in the midst of material beauty there is moral desolation,” before rhetorically asking “would all this be so were Ireland the governor of her own household?” With the assumed answer in the negative, the editorial argued for the continuation of the nationalist movement after the agitation concluded.23

Other editorials complained that respectable families were being destroyed by the land system. The Roscommon Herald, for example, observed in June 1879 that “to those familiar with Poor Law Reports, it is no unusual thing to read now of cases of starvation, where the head of the family is an able-bodied man without employment and without food,” arguing that the blame for his condition lay not with the man in question but with the system at work.24 A similar editorial published in 1880 protested that “when a laboring man applies for outdoor relief, he is told that there is plenty of work for him.” “Some guardian rises to his legs,” the paper opined, “and assures the board that there is

923 Mayo Examiner, 2 July, 1882.
924 Roscommon Herald, 14 June, 1879.
plenty of employment, that it was never so difficult to get men to work, and that laziness has become the prevailing crime,” despite the petitioner’s condition showing “evidences of starvation” or if the petitioner was “the father of a long and helpless family.”

As the land agitation began to grow these same images were used to promote the emerging movement to a mass audience. In an editorial published just before the Westport meeting in June 1879, for example, the Telegraph tied all three parts of the tripartite argument to their promotion of the meeting. The editorial boasted that “Westport will, tomorrow… exhibit a sublime spectacle of the campaign in the beautiful West” before calling “on the people of Ireland to look at the examples of other countries, and be daring, courageous, and confident in their own power,” linking political activity of manliness and urging restraint, telling their readers that “every man should act as if the honour of the day depended on himself alone.” However, the bulk of the editorial was given over to a description of why the meeting was taking place, linking the Land movement to the prior destruction of Irish homes and families, saying:

We ask not the landlords… to give back the victims of oppression whose blood the dry earth refused to drink, that it might cry for ever and for ever to Heaven for vengeance; we ask them not to bring back to fame and honour the many poor

---

525 “Relief of the Poor,” Roscommon Herald, 17 April, 1880.
creatures whom their rack-rents drove from their cottage homes on the mountain side—sent into exile, often into destitution, and then into worse.526

The Telegraph had similarly argued in a January 1879 editorial that “happy homes and altars free” were “within the people’s power,” but that due to the existing land system the Irish, “a people able to grasp and naturally inclined to enjoy prosperity,” were “the passive victim of every kind of debasing outrage, of degrading misfortune” due to a “want of self-reliance, apathy, divisions,” described as “evils that unnerve the hand, destroy the spirit, and renders passive and helpless the giant people.” The Telegraph argued that in the face of the economic crisis that was emerging, the Irish needed to be “active, confident of their strength, and united for one year, and the whole face of the country will be completely changed.”527

Nationalists in other counties advanced similar arguments. The Sligo Champion when commenting on early land meetings argued that they showed “Sligo, our own county…. Seems that it is at length determined to join the rest of Ireland in asserting the right of the people of this county to live in the homes of their fathers.” The article then outlined a hypothetical example of a tenant farmer who, after paying his rent “leaves

---

526 “The Agrarian Campaign - The West Port Meeting,” Connaught Telegraph, 7 June, 1879. The Sligo Champion advanced a similar argument which, interestingly, equated the treatment of the Irish with that of other colonized peoples. In an editorial titled “Abroad and at home” published in January 1879 the Champion claimed “In three of the quarters of the globe, at this present moment, different races of the human family are in arms asserting their right to dwell in those portions of the earth in which their fathers were located by the will of the Almighty. For many years the American Indians have waged war to retain the possession of those hunting grounds of which the greed of the White men would deprive them. In Afghanistan, the natives have struggled, as yet but ineffectually, to hold the land which according to every sense of right and justice is their own, but from which the unholy and selfish policy of England would eject them…. Our fathers were ruthlessly deprived of their patrimony… Those who sprung from the dispossessed and plundered owners of the soil, have received but scant mercy. From year to year, and from decade to decade, their residence on the lands that should be their own, is barely tolerated.” The editorial closed with a call for the creation of Tenant Farmers Associations in the county. “Abroad and at Home, Sligo Champion, 15 February, 1879.

behind him a wife and helpless little ones, sorely needing the sustenance which that
to the cultivator thereof, and that after his wants are decently and properly
money would bring, and not having the remotest idea of how these little ones will be
brought through the coming winter.” The Champion advocated that “the first fruits of the
soil should go to the cultivator thereof, and that after his wants are decently and properly
supplied anything that remains may go in the shape of rent.” Conversely, the man who
willingly paid his rent with “the money which he has earned by his toil and sweat, and
which cannot be spared from the needs of himself and his family, is not, and we
deliberately say it, fit to enjoy the privileges and rights of a freeman.” The Champion
went on to reject the argument that “the land which the Almighty created for the support
of mankind, is the landlord’s own.” claiming instead “the land was not made to supply
the luxuries, and extravagancies, and the debaucheries of any one man.” 528

Discussion of the 1881 Land Act similarly revolved around imagery of the home
and family. Supporters of the bill used such imagery to promote acceptance of the Bill
with opponents arguing that it did not go far enough to prevent the destruction of Irish
homes. The Mayo Examiner, unique among nationalist papers in the region in its
acceptance of the Bill, argued that “the natural security of the native population in the
land of their birth, of their race, of their family—the land to which they look for every
fine and delicate element of happiness this side of the grave, approaches at very least a
stage of advancement.” 529 The Roscommon Herald, in contrast, condemned the Bill as
“practically worthless as a remedy against eviction” before, begrudgingly, admitting that

529 Mayo Examiner, 21 May, 1881.
“it contained an important principle, it affirmed the proprietary rights of the tenants, and it admitted the desperate condition of the people.”

As noted in prior chapters the specter of emigration was often invoked to complete the picture of Irish homes being destroyed, with the fate of emigrant women removed from the protection of the family home being particularly noted. As in prior cases the press presented emigration as an inversion of the natural state of things. Thus, the *Mayo Examiner* argued in an 1881 article that:

Emigration goes on weekly from this county to an exhaustive extent, and the scenes of lamentation and parting realise all the woe and mourning and misery of death—and worse than death. Irish parents rear their children virtuously and well, and ere these children are men and women, a cruel state of circumstance imposed on the country by the stranger, forces a wholesale emigration… Thus we see every day crowds of children forced away from their aged parents never to meet their affectionate gaze or hear their voice again.

In this same vein, one of the most extended meditations on the land crisis and its relation to emigration during this period was published in the *Roscommon Herald* in July 1881. Entitled “Bleeding to Death,” the piece opened by saying that the author had observed “several poor females, vainly endeavouring to obtain a clear view through the fast flowing tears that filled their eyes” as some of the group prepared to depart from Boyle railway station. The author related how, as the aged parents of the girls looked on, “the scene increased its intensity by the shrill shriek that arose from a heart weighted with vengeance and with sorrow. With vengeance we say—for what Irishman could look on and not vow never-ending hostility to that awful system of landlordism that was doing all

---

531 This focus was likely influenced by the fact that women made up over half of Irish emigrants in the latter nineteenth century.
532 *Mayo Examiner*, 28 May, 1881.
this.” The editorial claimed, without foundation, that such scenes and such emotions were “only found in the Irish race,” and that it was the continued insistence of the British government that further emigration was required which prompted Irishmen to resolve “that the power in this foreign Parliament which governs our country, namely landlordism, must be KILLED OUTRIGHT before there can ever be prosperity in Ireland.” The editorial closed:

From this tribulation and woe there is no hope but self-reliance; there is no refuge but the Irish National Land League. Men of Roscommon stick to the Land League. Be UNITED and PERSEVERE, and when the present clouds have passed away… there will be a brighter picture to look upon—for landlordism shall then be a thing of the past.533

The regional nationalist press echoed the statements made at local Land League meetings regarding the issue of agrarian crime, condemning such acts as harmful to the nationalist cause and presenting them as not the consequence of innate Irish failings. They were, rather, the result of British colonialism and its impacts, offering essentially the same argument that the nationalist press had made in the 1860s and ’70s.

The arguments of the nationalist press regarding the “proper” performance of manhood mirrored those offered in League meetings. The Sligo Champion, for example, argued that “so long as the bodies of the people continue to act unitedly and intelligently, not bulging out in any points of their line of attack into individual excesses, so long must their cause repel the shafts of its enemies.” “A little courage, a little firmness, and a little self-reliance,” the Champion claimed, “are all that are now needed to secure for the people of Ireland in the near future Free Lands and Happy Homes.”534 In response to the

533 “Bleeding to Death,” Roscommon Herald, 23 July, 1881.
passage of coercive legislation in 1881 the *Champion* similarly argued that the Irish people had learned from their political leadership how to correctly resist British rule, and how to “right their wrongs, and strike down their oppressors without shedding one drop of blood, or stepping one inch outside the bounds of the Constitution.” It noted proudly that “well and nobly did the people of Ireland act upon the advice of their incomparable leader and his faithful lieutenants,” and that they now possessed “the upright mien which denotes a nation of freemen.”\(^{535}\) The *Champion*’s coverage also took pains to contrast the current state of the Irish stridently but peacefully resisting the land system to their former condition as “the abject and despised slaves of a class of men endowed by the law of the land with power and authority greater far than that possessed by the most despotic rulers whom the world ever saw.” Linking the passivity of the Irish in the past to the violation of Irish homes and Irish women wrought by the land system, the *Herald* concluded that landlords “not only held the property, but the very lives of the serfs, as well as the honour of the virtuous daughters of Ireland in their absolute and undisputed control,” clearly linking the passivity of the Irish in the past to the violation of Irish homes and Irish women.\(^{536}\)

As in League meetings, exhortations to act also often took the form of criticism of those who continued to be passive in the face of the current crisis. The *Herald*, for example, criticized the electorate of Roscommon in 1879 for insufficient opposition to its two MPs who were deemed insufficiently attached to the national cause. “The electors of Roscommon,” the paper declared, “must oust their present members if they mean to show they are worthy to take a part in Ireland’s regeneration.” However, the article concluded

---


by expressing the hope that “when the day of reckoning comes, the electors will act with that sturdy independence that influenced them in the past, when in the days of open voting they broke the spell of Conservative power in this country, in spite of all the terrors landlordism could hang over their heads.” The Herald similarly argued that the root of the agrarian crisis in 1879 could be found in “the apathy of Irish tenants who submitted tamely to such enactments.” “Had the Irish farmers not been so passive, had they been more solicitous for their own welfare, and had they not been so easily influenced to condone slothfulness and recreancy on the part of their representatives,” the paper claimed, “a different order of things would now most assuredly prevail.” The Herald then argued the solution to the current crisis was for the men of Roscommon to perform their assigned role correctly and actively: “If the people of this country were in the habit of approaching their masters cap in hand, the present crisis demands that they should begin to bear themselves erect like men, that their interest should not be trifled with, and that their demands should not be put forward in a halfhearted manner.”

The nationalist press also focused extensively on the pageantry of League meetings as a way to illustrate the forceful but restrained archetype of manhood it was in the process of creating: disciplined and potentially menacing. For example, the Connaught Telegraph writing in anticipation of the Irishtown meeting which began the land agitation expressed the hope the “the people in the neighbourhood and surrounding parishes will not fail to be there in their tens of thousands, and they will evince their power and majesty by a sober, manly, and dignified bearing on this occasion. NO rowdying, or anything savouring of that stupid ‘Paddyism’ of Saxon creation,” clearly

538 “The Proposed County Meeting in Roscommon,” Roscommon Herald, 1 November, 1879.
linking the proper conduct to the ability of the Irish to refute colonial narratives.\textsuperscript{539} The \textit{Telegraph}'s coverage of an early land meeting at Claremorris similarly noted that “each contingent” that attended “marched into the town in military order, with banners,” that “proceedings were carried out peaceably and orderly” and that the “Claremorris and Ballyhaunis brass bands delighted the people with national airs.”\textsuperscript{540} A final example from the \textit{Telegraph} detailing an October 1879 meeting at Castlebar argued that the “magnificent display” of the meeting “tells trumpet-tongued that the people of Castlebar, aided by their priests, are determined to come to the rescue of the tillers of the soil,” making particular note of the “very elaborate preparations” and “triumphal arches” set up before the meeting. The coverage singled out the “Ballyhean contingent” who “carried a banner bearing a representation of a plough” and “the words “the Land is Ours,” as well as the “Belcarra and Ballintubber contingents,” which carried “banners with similar mottoes.”\textsuperscript{541} The \textit{Roscommon Herald} carried word that an October 1880 land meeting was attended by a “Kilmore contingent numbering 800 men [who] marched four deep in admirable military order.”\textsuperscript{542} Meanwhile, the \textit{Sligo Champion} reported that at “a large and influential meeting of the tenant-farmers of Tubbercurry, Escreagh, Swinford, Achnony” held at Benada, “the flags and banners were neat in pattern, striking in workmanship, and expressive in device and motto.”\textsuperscript{543} Finally, the \textit{Mayo Examiner} argued that the pageantry of a land meeting held in January 1882 provided “evidences of advancing intelligence, calmness and earnestness, that give hope to those who devote

\textsuperscript{539} “Tenant Right meeting in Irishtown,” \textit{Connaught Telegraph}, 1 March, 1879.
\textsuperscript{541} “The Land Question/ The Land Meeting at Castlebar,” \textit{Connaught Telegraph}, 4 October, 1881.
\textsuperscript{542} “Land Meeting in Carrick-On- Shannon,” \textit{Roscommon Herald}, 30 October, 1880.
much of their lives to the service of the country.” It praised the “decorum and manly determined aspect about the people.”

Similarly, following the arrest of local Land League leaders, people gathered to demonstrate support for them, including marching to their farms to cut their turf or bring in their harvests. The Sligo Champion, for example, reported approvingly on such a procession to P.J. Sheridan’s farm in Tubbercurry, Co Sligo, saying that “the patriotic men of this country showed a sight to the government that will not be easily forgotten. On all roads leading to Tubbercurry, thousands of men might be seen walking on foot armed with that implements of work, the turf spade, each contingent headed with bands and banners.” The Roscommon Herald reported a similar demonstration on the border between counties Roscommon and Mayo, where “the young men of Brackloon… and neighbouring districts… agreed to assemble at the residence of Mr. Martin Mulleague for the purpose of cultivating some of his lands.” The Herald specifically noted that “when all the contingents arrived on the hill of Brackloon they were formed into a procession; they then marched in military order, four deep, and their spades raised on their shoulders.” The article also reported that the demonstration had been organized by a posted placard reading: “Assemble then in your masses ‘dense, resolute, and strong,’ and show that coercion has not clamped your ardour… Then be certain to be there/ with your steel in good repair/ on the noble work to share/ with manly Irish hearts.”

The coverage of this latter event concluded by drawing attention to the physical circumstances of the region, “the massive bog that lay to the west of them, and on whose

---

borders are many wretchedly struggling poor families” and to “the untenanted farms that lay stretching far and wide on their north, south, and east sides, and that once had been the houses of the brave sons and fair daughters of the “Tipperary of the West.” Was anyone surprised, the Herald asked rhetorically, “that an unextinguishable flame of hatred should burn within their bosoms for the destruction of their race and the oppression of their country.”547 The Sligo Champion reported on a similar demonstration to support a family accused of assaulting a process-server, noting that after the potatoes had been harvested, the laborers “formed into a procession four deep, and with the band at their head, and implements shouldered, marched to Dromore West. Several old people in the neighbourhood who are not used to such scenes were terribly frightened at seeing the body at a distance, thinking, perhaps, that an army was coming to slay all before them,” making the implied violence of such occasions more explicit.548

The central argument regarding agrarian crime in the nationalist press was that such acts were fundamentally destructive to the national cause and that it was restraint from acts of violence, however understandable they might be, which marked individual and national readiness for self-government. The Roscommon Herald, for example, in an 1880 editorial praised the tactic of boycotting, which was described as “a wholesome institution...well suited to let landlord partisans know that all power is not confined to ‘his honour’.” The editorial concluded by expressing the hope that “none will be found so base as to encourage in any way the enemies of the people’s cause” through the use of violence, and saying “we don’t believe there are any such “slaves unworthy to be freed,” again linking the proper performance of political resistance to the full acquisition of

political rights. The *Sligo Champion* in an 1880 editorial, argued that to “maintain the position which they have already gained, to boldly advance that position to the extreme limit which the Constitution allows, but not one inch further, and to act with vigour, courage, determination, and prudence are now for the Irish people the great duties of the hour.” The paper equated “the man who advocates a servile and silent submission to the iniquitous land laws which have well neigh exterminated our people” with “the man who advocates the smallest act which in the words of the illustrious Liberator would ‘give strength to the enemy’,” emphasizing the nonviolent constitutional tradition and grounding it in the efforts and legacy of Daniel O’Connell. The editorial went on to argue explicitly that the emerging crisis on the land was one on which the Irish race as a whole would be judged, and that it needed to prove itself as above the slanders of their oppressors:

> In the coming struggle it is essential that our people so demean themselves before the eyes of the whole world… as to show that they possess qualities which fit them to occupy the position of a free and enlightened people. Their oppressors will utilize every art which a depraved ingenuity can suggest to show them up to the gaze of the nations as a lawless, uncivilized, and disunited race… If our people demean themselves as brave and wise men should, with the consciousness that they fight for a noble and honourable cause which needs neither crime or subterfuge to uphold it, victory will and must be theirs.

---

550 “The Duty of the Hour,” *Sligo Champion*, 21 August, 1880. The argument that agrarian crime would reinforce negative narratives about the Irish was a common theme of the Champion’s coverage. A letter to the editor printed in 1878 argued that “The outrages committed by the Irish peasantry have at all times been the effects of bad laws together with that cruel and tyrannical oppression which the tenantry have experienced from their landlords” and complained that “Whenever crimes of a grave nature- such as the murder of landlords and agents- have been perpetrated amongst us the English journals invariably join in one accord in maligning the Irish people. They say we are fierce unscrupulous and ever ready to avenge the slightest injustice in the most extraordinary way.” See *Sligo Champion*, 10 August 1878.
A secondary argument advanced regarding agrarian crime was that such acts played into the negative portrayal of the Irish in the British media. The *Mayo Examiner*, for example, responded to rumors that coercive legislation was to be passed, and thus certain civil liberties suspended, by saying “no greater stigma can fall upon a nation than the suspension of the Constitution. We must only show ourselves as unworthy of the dishonour by calm and steady conduct.” The same paper responded to the eventual arrest of the national leadership of the League by saying:

> Prudence is not cowardice—rashness is not a great soldierly quality. The present time demands that the wisest counsel should prevail. To set power at defiance and denounce authority, and proceed in defiance of good advice, and the open forces of the law, would be madness… On the attitude [of] the country will depend the release from prison of those whose interest is of the highest concern to the people. There never was a time when the exercise of prudence and of peace was more required.

At times the two arguments were combined, with editorials arguing that restraint was needed to prove national readiness for self-rule and to prevent the reputation of the Irish from being damaged. The *Examiner*, for example, argued in its New Year’s Day 1882 address that due to the land movement “the disgraceful and pernicious state of the land laws is about to be remedied and new legislation, it must be hoped, will restore to the population of Ireland those rights of home and land worthy of a nation.” Thus, even the preliminary set of reforms in the Land Act were not presented as a final solution to the national question. The *Examiner* also stressed that agrarian crimes were in particular

---

551 *Mayo Examiner*, 12 March, 1881. At the time that the *Examiner* was making this argument, rates of agrarian violence were increasingly significantly—illustrating perhaps that the selective blindness of the *Champion*’s editors toward the on-the-ground conduct of the Irish peasantry was not limited to that county. Notably, instances of violence increased following the arrest of League leaders in October 1881, illustrating that the efforts of those leaders to limit the tactics of their audiences were effective and the enforced cessation of their efforts resulted in higher instance of agrarian crime.

552 *Mayo Examiner*, 22 October, 1881.
to be avoided as they damaged American opinions of the Irish, a particularly important concern given the centrality of American funds to the land agitation. The editorial went on to argue that while “tyranny and long years of misrule produce” agrarian crimes,

holy Ireland which claims home security and land rights for her children—the secure home of religion, and piety, and learning at all times, will not give security of tenure to these crimes of blood, to crimes against God and man that alienate friends at home and abroad and that are followed by the cure and the vengeance of God.\textsuperscript{553}

Certain, generally more conservative, papers made the argument that what was needed was for the masses to listen to the guidance of the Roman Catholic clergy and refrain from all acts of violence. In February 1878 the \textit{Sligo Champion} responded to reports of an agrarian outrage in the region by saying “mistaken indeed are the authors of these disgraceful outrages, if they imagine that such lawless proceedings will advance Ireland’s prospects of prosperity,” and directly noting the narratives of Irish inferiority at play, saying that such incidents would “but furnish a strong argument to our enemies.” The editorial added that “if the belligerents in question would but be advised by their ever faithful priesthood, peace and order and consequent prosperity would result.” Building on themes already seen in conservative columns of the 1860s, the paper argued that since “the darkest days of Ireland, the priest was the only friend of the oppressed, he is still the same,” a point perhaps granted added potency by the fact that most of the Catholic clergy of this era were the brothers or cousins of the farming class. The editorial closed by again evoking the specter of the British government, saying “let therefore those who profess to love their native land hearken to his prudent advice, if they do not, they will but become

\textsuperscript{553} \textit{Mayo Examiner}, 1 January, 1881.
the easy prey of the common enemy, that spares not those who permit themselves to be 
ensured by his ever watchful spies and agents.”  

Similarly, the Roscommon Journal noted approvingly in 1881 that “at a time 
when the English ministry are engaged in forging chains to bind us hand and foot—when 
the whole anti-Irish press is filled with the most exaggerated accounts of agrarian 
outrages in Ireland,” the local Roman Catholic Bishop, the Rev. Dr. Gillooly had in a 
recent pastoral letter given “testimony to the orderly and peaceable condition of those 
committed to his charge.” The Journal claimed that “his words are a powerful refutation 
of the calumnies uttered against us so lavishly by our enemies who say we are lawless 
and ready to commit any outrage for even the slightest provocation.” A similar 
editorial published in September of the same year praised Gillooly for using “his warning 
words” to exercise “a constraining influence on his flock” and specifically noting that

554 Sligo Champion, 23 February, 1878. The Champion continued this argument in, among other places, an 
editorial published on the occasion of St. Patrick’s Day 1879, which argued: “Until Irishmen have the 
framing of their own laws, neither peace or prosperity can hold undisputed sway. Irishmen cannot 
cordially respect legislation, carried out by an antagonistic race, neither can men unacquainted with the 
actual necessities of our people, competently legislate, so as to effect a radical amelioration, even were 
they so inclined” and expressed the hope that “the rising generation will act wisely and well, they will 
eschew all connection with ‘organisers’ who for their own vile ends, would bring their dupes within the 
scope of eternal and temporal destruction. If they are guided by the sound advice of their faithful priests 
they will avoid this double danger and arrive by constitutional means at the goal... the priests and people 
united have gained many glorious and important political victories. They are invested with the same 
power to fight again within constitutional limits and to triumph. No one but an enemy of the people 
would counsel or advocate the severance of that golden link.” “St. Patrick’s Day,” Sligo Champion, 22 
March, 1879.

555 Roscommon Journal, 22 January, 1881. The influence of the Roman Catholic clergy in restraining their 
congregations was not limited to the writing of pastoral letters. The Sligo Champion, for example, noted a 
confrontation between a process server and his police escort and the inhabitants of the “district of 
Errismore, upon the estate of the late Mr. Valentine Black, of Tower Castle, Mayo,” which threatened to 
turn violent until “the Rev Mr. Flannery arrived, and standing between the constabulary and the crowd, 
besought the latter to make way, telling them that it was useless attempting to oppose the police, and 
that they should only offer a passive resistance to the service of the notices... should some of them 
afterwards be prosecuted for their attack on the police, it would merely add to the gratification of the 
landlords, while by their peaceful presence there that day they would sufficiently show their opinion of 
Mr. Blakes’ conduct.” ("Process Serving in the West, Sligo Champion, 25 September, 1880.")
while “denouncing crime and outrage, he failed not to denounce also their fruitful cause.”556 Similarly, the Mayo Examiner reporting on the aftermath of a riot caused by the attempt to serve eviction notices in the district of Erris, Co. Mayo, noted that “Father John Melvin, P.P., Aughoos, Erris, accompanied his parishioners from their poor and distant homes to Castlebar Assizes. They were charged with riot… [the] court allowed them to stand out of Father John’s bail” before concluding that “he is deservedly loved among his primitive good people.”557

As was the case both earlier in nationalist history and in the case of land meetings, the nationalist press also tried to downplay the significance of instances of agrarian crime by arguing that they stemmed not from Irish failings but from those of the British state, or from positive impulses in the Irish character which were finding negative outlets due to British misrule. The Mayo Examiner argued that agrarian outrages stemmed from the British-imposed land system in an editorial published in April 1881: “It was English government imposed the present land system, or rather violently displaced the system of the country with the security it gave to the native population, giving one of their own, the prominent feature of which has always been insecurity and eviction,” resulting in widespread emigration. The editorial then argued that neither “flesh nor blood could not stand for ever the awful operation of wholesale native transportation.” Echoing other

556 Roscommon Journal, 10 September, 1881. In a similar vein, the Mayo Examiner noted in a report on the workings of the early Land Courts that observers “were impressed with the respectable appearance, fine physique, intelligence, and cordial, native manners of the large number of tenants present from Ballycroy. To their devoted and prudent Parish Priest... who plainly possesses... a just and useful influence, these words will not, we know, be unwelcome.” Mayo Examiner, 7 January 1882. For more on Gillooly, his relationship with the O’Conor Don and his opposition to the Land League see Patrick Maume “Gillooly, Laurence,” Dictionary of Irish Biography, (https://www.dib.ie/biography/gillooly-laurence-a3482).
557 Mayo Examiner, 19 March, 1882. The Examiner similarly noted in April that following an outrage near Castlebar that the local parish priest had “warned the people to shun the evil-doer and to keep to their duty as men and Christians.” (Mayo Examiner, 1 April, 1882).
papers, the leader concluded that outrages resulted, despite there being “the great and
highest elements of good in the Irish character” and the efforts of “every man possessed
of a shade of manliness,” who had “openly advised the people against outrage, violence,
crime, coercion, or intimidation in any shape.”

The Connaught Telegraph similarly argued that the land system was to blame for
instances of agrarian crime, saying, for example in the aftermath of the murder of Lord
Leitrim in Donegal that “of course men degenerate under this system into a savage
state… when from the regions of black despair ‘the mild justice of revenge’ bursts forth
to remind the Leitrim class of the might that slumbers in the peasant’s arm.” The
Telegraph acknowledged that the threat of such crimes did have a role to play in the
national struggle, saying “history proves that England will concede to Ireland just so
much justice as Ireland is able to extort from her by extreme moral pressure, backed by
the terrors of another and more formidable agency.” In another editorial that same
month the Telegraph argued “it is hard to listen to calumniators denouncing the

558 Mayo Examiner, 2 April, 1881. A letter published in the Sligo Champion in 1878 made a similar
argument regarding the influence of Daniel O’Connell earlier in the century, arguing that “Such was the
magic influence of the Liberator over the hearts of the people that by his counsel and advice disturbances
ceased, agrarian outrages disappeared and the whole nation was peaceable and tranquil. In a word, the
Liberator was the Lawgiver of Ireland,” before arguing that agrarian crimes were generally the result of
tenant desperation, asking “was it any wonder that the poor tenant should commit acts of desperation
who saw himself and his family evicted from their home- torn from the hearth they oved so well, and
around which were centured [sic] many happy and pleasant associations, saw his tottering father and
aged mother dragged from their sick bed and cast without on the winter’s snow, and heard the wild
frantic cries of his little ones?” See “Crime in Ireland: To the Editor of the Sligo Champion,” Sligo
Champion, 10 August, 1878.

559 “The Young Farmer’s Hornbook,” Connaught Telegraph, 7 December, 1878. However, the Telegraph
did generally argue that constitutional, rather than forceful, measures were needed for both the reform
of the land system and more general political reform. An editorial from 28 December, 1881, for example,
asked: “Are we to be forever the object of Englishmen’s ill treatment, derision, and scorn? Are we to be
always mocked at as the emancipated people their rule has made us?... Are we man and can such things
be?” before closing by saying “Are the things passing before our eyes not a broad enough, open, and
legible book on which to swear eternal constitutional opposition to alien rule?” See “Divide It Impera,”
Connaught Telegraph, 28 December, 1878.
demoralization of the Irish people, without saying a word about the demoralizers- the parties who drive the poor from their homesteads.” That column concluded by saying “if tenfold the amount of crime and outrage existed in Ireland we would not be surprised at it.” Similarly, the *Roscommon Herald* in the summer of 1881 argued that a recent uptick in agrarian crime was due to the non-responsive nature of the British political system: “It is but too true that the people possess guides able and willing to steer clear of all our evils, were their hands not tied and their impulses checked by an alien legislature.”

An example of the latter type was published in the *Sligo Champion* in April of 1878, following the aforementioned murder of Lord Leitrim. The editorial opened by complaining that the murder had “supplied the English and Irish press with a fruitful subject for comment.” While it agreed that the fact “such deeds are done must be regretted by all,” it went on to argue that the “cause is given for their commission should be generally depreciated,” which was the main aim of the piece. The author argued that “the whole root of the evil and the dreadful consequences springing therefrom may be traced to the injustice of the land laws and the general proneness of the lords of the soil to seize the opportunity and treat the tenantry in a most unjustifiable manner.” The existing land system meant that “for the occupiers of land in this country there is no more security or peace than was enjoyed by the negro slaves in South America previous to their emancipation”; indeed, specifically the land system was unjust because it treated the Irish as if they were members of a lesser race. In contrast, the editorial portrayed the Irish as hardworking, saying that “the occupier toils from the rising of the sun to the going

561 *Roscommon Herald*, 4 June, 1881.
down thereof. He expends, even to the extent of denying to himself and his family proper
food and raiment, all of his little capital to render his little holding productive.” If his
efforts produced improvements in the holding, the paper continued, “landlord or agent,
vulture like, descend upon their prey… he will be served with notice to quit, and… he
and the wife of his bosom and the children of his heart are at liberty to accept the legal
refuge of the Workhouse or walk abroad as mendicants.” The editorial concluded by
arguing that it was the destruction of such idyllic families that motivated the then-nascent
land agitation, saying: “If our Irish agricultural population was divested of all natural
feelings such treatment might be consistent, but in this world there exists not a race
amongst whom conjugal and parental ties are esteemed so sacredly, and when they and
their wives and children are treated with as little consideration as the vermin that dwell
beneath the earth it cannot be deemed very surprising that the ‘wild justice of revenge’
asumes its deadly sway.”

Another argument repeated from the pre-Land War era was that the actual number
of outrages was much lower than that produced through government statistics. The
Roscommon Herald, for example, claimed in 1881 that “the West of Ireland is swarming
with deceivers in civilian clothes, and when added to this we have gentlemen
manufacturing outrages and crimes out of every fancy that floats across their
imaginations” and complained that “the British Parliament is content to accept as the

---

562 Sligo Champion, 20 April, 1878. The Champion continued to make arguments of this type, for example see “The Tory Government and the Arrests,” Sligo Champion, 22 November, 1879.
grounds for a coercion act the evidence of one hundred landlords and their supporters as to outrages that never occurred.”

Other editorials argued that the landlord class and the British government actively sought to provoke outrages, so that they could characterize the entire national movement as violent. The Connaught Telegraph, for example, reported on a land meeting at Lonamore called in response to Davitt’s arrest in 1881, at which a resolution was passed “that the people of Mayo protest against the recent attempt on the part of the Government to stifle the voice of constitutional agitation and drive the people into acts of violence.”

This claim was particularly pronounced following the arrest of the Land League leadership in the fall of 1881, with the Roscommon Journal, for example, arguing that “not a few think the Government want to exasperate the people and thus have an excuse of letting loose the ‘dogs of war’” before expressing the hope that such plans “will be thwarted by the good sense of the people who will—we feel confident—conduct themselves with firm sense and prudence under circumstances highly calculated to excite them.”

---

563 “Bogus Outrages,” Roscommon Herald, 22 January, 1881. Shortly after this editorial was published the Herald condemned the proclamation of Boyle, Co Roscommon, saying it was “totally unnecessary and unwarranted by circumstances... the district was never in a more peaceful condition, that the people were never so patient or so law-abiding under unexampled sufferings, that crimes of violence either to person or property were almost unknown” and again arguing that “the raison d’etre of one of these ‘outrages’ was to have police again station and brought back... it being evident that the people are preserving a strictly peaceful attitude, that they have refrained from acts of violence.” See “Disturbed Ireland,” Roscommon Herald, 19 February, 1881. The Sligo Champion responding to accusations of violence stemming from an 1878 land meeting similarly argued that state malfeasance was to blame, saying “the only confusion in that vase assemblage arose from two or three drunken individuals, who were, of course, plied with drink and sent in there to create disturbance.” See Sligo Champion, 1 June, 1878.

564 “The Lonamore Meeting-This Day/ the Recent Arrests-The answer of Mayo,” Connaught Telegraph, 22 November, 1881.

The Sligo Champion similarly argued that while “it is true that two or three landlords or agents have fallen victims to the revengeful and most reprehensible feelings of individuals, whom the same landlords or agents most probably exercised tyrannical power over,” the individuals who committed such crimes were driven by their own anger and not a broader political plan. However, the Champion argued, landlords portrayed such assaults as tied to the land movement “as they knew right well that if by any stratagem they could succeed in inducing the people to commit crime or outrages they would then have no difficulty in inducing the Government to introduce coercion, and thereby stamp out the peaceable agitation.” The editorial then argued that in order to combat this strategy further restraint was needed: “From this it follows, and the dullest intellect can discern it, that the man who commits a crime not alone “gives strength to the enemy,” but is one amongst the enemy.”\(^{566}\) The point that many outrages were committed by individuals rather than communities was also one commonly made, with the Roscommon Journal, for example, arguing that “there is one thing only which can best the popular cause, and which has already brought upon it grave disgrace- the outrages and violations of the law which have taken place through the criminality of individuals.”\(^{567}\)

Finally, League leaders advanced this tripartite argument in a series of publications designed for a national, or even international, audience. John O’Connor Power, for example, wrote a pamphlet in 1879 titled The Irish Land Agitation where he directly confronted the racialized depictions of the Irish in British media. O’Connor Power wrote, he claimed, because “the channels through which Englishmen and

---


\(^{567}\) Roscommon Journal, 31 December, 1881.
Scotchmen usually receive their information concerning Irish movements, are too often distorted by national prejudice, and therefore very unreliable,” when telling their readers that “the Irish people whom they have so miserably failed to govern are a turbulent, unmanageable, and unreasonable race.” Power went on to argue that “Ireland wants no alms from the English government or the English nation. She asks only justice, and the freedom to develope [sic] her own resources in her own way, and the power to use them for the maintenance of her own people.” In contrast to British depictions of Irish indolence, he asserted that “what the poorest tenants unaided have accomplished in draining swamps and cultivating bare mountain sides…is truly marvelous, and affords the best proof that the elements of fertility lie hidden in the vast waste tracts of Ireland, and may be called into action by skillful cultivation.”

Power then argued that what was needed was a program of government-backed reclamation of waste lands, to be distributed initially to those without land and then to small farmers. The individuals granted land under this system, he argued, “secure in the possession of their farms and the fruits of their labour, would be industrious and thrifty,” liberated from the effects of a system which “has blasted the hopes, ruined the homes, and destroyed the lives of millions of the Irish race. It has stopped the social, political, and industrial growth of Ireland as effectually as if the country had been in a state of perpetual civil war.”

This proposal led into a longer denunciation of the existing land system which centered the damage that system did to Irish families and to the manhood of the Irish

---

race. Power asked, “What can be more opposed to every principle of well-doing than a system which paralyses industry, which puts a premium on idleness, which fosters improvidence, which generates servility, hypocrisy, and ignorance…which entails perpetual drudgery and social dependence, and even invades the sanctity of the domestic relations.? He then directly invoked nationalist rhetoric surrounding evictions, saying:

The struggling farmer whose imagination is haunted by the alternative prospect of the poor-house of the emigrant ship, has certainly a gloomy existence, bereft of comfort, encouragement, and aspiration. The mortal dread of the agent’s frown or the landlord’s slightest displeasure still characterizes the tenant-at-will, notwithstanding the bracing effects of public agitation, and shows what an atmosphere of servility and hypocrisy combined arises from the present unnatural condition of rural society in that country.\footnote{O’Connor Power, Irish Land Agitation,” 959.}

Power closed his pamphlet by describing other nations where tenant farmers were secure in their holdings. “If we would see the brightest examples of cheerful, uncomplaining toil,” he argued, “we must visit those lands in which the husbandman is to be found, with his sons and daughters, cultivating his patch of land in the security of independent ownership.”\footnote{O’Connor Power, 963.} Power claimed that this would be the status of Ireland should the League’s proposals be enacted.

Davitt in his *The Land League Proposal: A statement for honest and thoughtful men* similarly focused his energies on the explanation and denunciation of agrarian crime. The pamphlet itself published two speeches given by Davitt shortly following his release from prison in 1882, at Manchester on 21 May and at Liverpool on 28 May, respectively. In his Manchester address Davitt stated his goal would be to prove that “to a tardy recognition of principles by English statesmanship, and an indifference towards, or hostility to, the just demands of the people of Ireland on the part of English popular
feeling, are to be attributed the excesses that follow from justice long delayed.” Davitt argued that the land system in Ireland was maintained primarily to preserve British power in the region, and that far from being an expression of the modern principles, it was “notoriously unsuited to the requirements of a progressive age, and have consequently been, in a great measure, swept away in every civilized country outside of Great Britain and Ireland.” This claim turned British arguments regarding Irish anti-modernity on their head.

Davitt further argued that, despite the deleterious impact of British rule in Ireland, that the Irish people had not submitted to that rule, but that neither had they succumbed to barbarism in their efforts to remove it. Davitt argued that Irishmen had never “ceased to look upon the landlord as a social enemy, or by the law by which he was compelled to part with most of his earnings in the shape of rent, but as the detested instrument by which himself and family are impoverished and his country ruined.” However, Davitt argued, it was not that resentment which prompted the outbreak of outrages, but rather the manifest injustice of British rule. Pointing to the arrest of Land League leaders Davitt expressed surprise that “Englishmen marvel why there is disrespect for law and order for Ireland.” He lamented that “the credit which could be gained from a not ungrateful people by a judicious treatment of the social and political wants of our country is lost to England through the vindictive spirit by which her concessions are accompanied to a sensitive and impulsive nation.”

---

It was this injustice, Davitt argued, which created a situation where “vengeance is to be pitted against vengeance, the settlement of the agrarian war is to be left between the Clifford Lloyds… and the wild justice of revenge born of landlord oppression” rather than an inherent affinity for agrarian crime on the part of the Irish. Davitt argued instead that outrages stemmed from an understandable lack of faith in the British justice system on the part of the Irish:

> It is only when a people despair of justice at the hands of their rulers, and see their hereditary enemies unopposed by any protective movement, that occult agencies are looked upon with favor by such people, and that the sympathies of the injured are extended to those who avenge the wrongs that are inflicted in the name of law.

However, Davitt made clear that such acts were not the only, or even the primary, response to such injustice by the Irish, and he praised the self-restraint of the Irish people in the face of British provocation. Davitt linked the “the admirable temper and manly self-control that has distinguished almost the whole country during the past fortnight”

---

577 Davitt, *Land League Proposal*, 13. Lloyd, who served as a magistrate in Ireland before the Land War demonstrates the overlap between the overseas empire and the Irish experience. Lloyd, while born in England, was born into an Anglo-Irish family which had been settled in Ireland since the 1680’s. After graduating from the Royal Military College, Sandhurst, he joined the police force in Burma in 1862, eventually rising to be inspector general of registration. He returned to Ireland and appointed a resident magistrate in 1874. Initially Lloyd was stationed in Belfast but was transferred to Co. Longford in early 1881 to deal with an emerging crisis in that county and was thence dispatched to Co. Limerick in May of that year. He almost immediately arrested en masse the Kilmallock and Kilfinane Land League branch committees, with the Kilmallock chairman Fr. Eugene Sheehy being the first priest imprisoned during the Land War. Lloyd was subsequently appointed a special magistrate for the counties of Limerick, Clare, and Galway where he became noted for his willingness to use military forces to undertake some police duties in order to preserve the RIC for use in protecting ejectments and evictions, which marked him for special dislike from nationalist leaders. Following a shift in the focus of Irish policing away from preserving public order and toward secret societies Lloyd left the Irish magistracy and took up a post in Egypt where he attempted a comprehensive reform of the police and prison systems which ended in failure due to entrenched interests there. After an unsatisfactory return to a RM position in Derry Lloyd was appointed lieutenant-governor and colonial secretary in Mauritius, temporally resigned from the colonial service, and ultimately took up a position as consul for Kurdistan. For more information on Lloyd see Richard Hawkins “Lloyd, Charles Dalton Clifford” in *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (https://www.dib.ie/biography/lloyd-charles-dalton-clifford-a4855)

specifically and during the agitation generally to the growth of the nationalist cause.\textsuperscript{579} Davitt said that despite the repressive measures being employed and the possibility that the agitation might falter he did not despair because “In a period of unexampled trial, the attitude of her people has been steadfast, courageous, and unbroken… Every parish in Ireland will have one or more in its midst that has suffered in the cause of liberty and fatherland,” which in the future would create “a generation before whose might no wrong can stand, and from whose birthland every vestige of social and political servitude must fall.”\textsuperscript{580} He referred to the Land League as “a movement that has aimed at the removal of the one grand incentive to murder and revenge,” and pointed out “over and over again” that “if the leaders of the people were deprived of liberty and eviction allowed to proceed, fierce passions would be evoked, and a spirit of evil unchained, throughout Ireland.”\textsuperscript{581} Finally, Davitt closed his Manchester speech by saying “the stigma which” the commission of agrarian crime “fixes upon our peasantry” was all the more reason for them to be avoided.\textsuperscript{582}

In Liverpool Davitt touched upon similar points. He articulated a definition of what constituted the key attributes of the Irish people, saying that their “enthusiastic devotion to their religious conviction, unflinching loyalty to the principle of nationality, and [a] passionate attachment to the soil of their fatherland” were being married to “a new spirit abroad in Ireland--intelligent, resolute, and practical.”\textsuperscript{583} He again warned that the conditions in Ireland, rather than the nature of the Irish, could lead to outbreaks of

\textsuperscript{579} Davitt, \textit{Land League Proposal}, 14.
\textsuperscript{580} Davitt, \textit{Land League Proposal}, 12.
\textsuperscript{581} Davitt, \textit{Land League Proposal}, 16.
\textsuperscript{582} Davitt, \textit{Land League Proposal}, 17.
\textsuperscript{583} Davitt, \textit{Land League Proposal}, 20, 22.
violence. Davitt referenced the French Revolution, borne of “the squalor of the ragged peasant in contrast with the luxury and effeminate splendour of the privileged class; the pallid faces and wasted forms of the peasantry who prowled hungry and fever-stricken through the land,” and he said that that spirit of anger, although not those deeds, was present in Ireland.584 He closed his Liverpool speech by calling the Land League leadership “the force that can guide that spirit to safe and moral action, that can shape its ends to beneficial work.” “They have given proof of ability, courage, self-devotion, and energy,” he concluded.585

Thomas Sexton, a long-time nationalist journalist and, from 1880 a pro-Parnell Irish Party MP from Sligo, similarly defended the League and the Irish against charges that they were inextricably linked to agrarian crime in his The Land League Vindicated, the printed version of a speech given in the House of Commons in February 1882. Sexton said that he was moved to speak by claims in the House that the Land League hoped “to attain its object… by outrage and intimidation” because such claims had strengthened the prejudices “of a people ignorant of Ireland.”586

Sexton argued that the League was created because of the misdeeds of Irish landlords, either “the rollicking spendthrift landlord” of the old type or “the Ebenezer Scrooge” of the new type, “who went into the business of a landlord with a gaming spirit… and was determined to extort the last penny the soil could afford.”587 Either type of landlord took advantage of the crisis of the late 1870s “when the harvests of Ireland

584 Davitt, Land League Proposal, 22.  
585 Davitt, Land League Proposal, 22.  
587 Sexton, Land League Vindicated, 6-7.
had been bad beyond the memory of man,” such that “notices to quit… fell like snowflakes on the land.”\textsuperscript{588} In response to this, Sexton argued, the Land League was founded “to put down rack-renting, eviction, and landlord oppression” and “to enable every tiller of the soil to become, on fair terms, the owner of his holding.”\textsuperscript{589} Sexton defended the conservatism of those aims, arguing that far from “plunder, rapine, [or] revolution” as the League’s detractors had alleged, these aims had “actually been carried out in practice” in Prussia.\textsuperscript{590}

Sexton went on to defend the men who made up the bulk of the League’s membership, asserting, in essence, that they possessed respectability, whiteness, and masculine status. Sexton stated that the League was generally comprised of “the principal agriculturalists in the home counties, the great body of the Catholic clergy, a great many Irish members of Parliament, the principal professional men and merchants in the various towns of Ireland, and the bulk of the agricultural population.”\textsuperscript{591} These men then formed branches where “the parish priest was generally the president,” and “the managing committees were composed, in the towns, of leading merchants, and in the rural parishes of the most substantial and respectable farmers,” arguing that the status of those men proved their worthiness for self-rule.\textsuperscript{592}

This assertion of respectability carried over into a discussion of boycotting, which Sexton argued “was not specially an article of the Land League,” existing both in Ireland before the League and in other countries.\textsuperscript{593} Moreover, he declared that boycotting was

\textsuperscript{588} Sexton, \textit{Land League Vindicated}, 7.
\textsuperscript{589} Sexton, \textit{Land League Vindicated}, 7.
\textsuperscript{590} Sexton, \textit{Land League Vindicated}, 7.
\textsuperscript{591} Sexton, \textit{Land League Vindicated}, 8.
\textsuperscript{592} Sexton, \textit{Land League Vindicated}, 8.
\textsuperscript{593} Sexton, \textit{Land League Vindicated}, 8.
the reasoned action of tenants acting against the man who “preferred his own selfish ends to the public good” and “had proved himself a public enemy.” ⁵⁹⁴ He argued that this tactic was justified because the people of Ireland lacked “any effective method of expressing their wishes, of preserving and guarding their interests by laws made by themselves,” which made boycotting “thoroughly justified on every ground of expediency and of morals.” ⁵⁹⁵ Sexton also drew a strong distinction between the action of the Land League and agrarian crime, saying “on the authority of the Land League, and by the sanction of its prominent members, boycotting was never advanced an inch beyond the sphere of negative action,” meaning the refraining from commerce or other forms of interaction. Thus, “the Land League had as little to do with any boycotting which included outrage and crime as it had to do with the transit of Venus.” ⁵⁹⁶

Sexton further argued that the League and its aims were further justified by the history of oppression and misery the Irish had faced under British rule, specifically instancing the destruction of Irish families. Sexton argued that past “governments which had in succession… sat upon the Treasury bench had been participators in the criminal and wicked course by which the Irish landlords denied the Irish people a home in their own land.” ⁵⁹⁷ As a result of government inaction and landlord greed, Sexton argued, “for many a year and many a generation the Irish people had seen the roof-tree demolished by the crowbar; had been driven out on the roadside and away in the emigrant ship; had been exiled penniless, wretched and desperate, to find a living at the ends of the earth.” Such experiences, he claimed, had radicalized them to “fierce eternal hate of the Government

⁵⁹⁴ Sexton, Land League Vindicated, 9.
⁵⁹⁵ Sexton, Land League Vindicated, 10.
⁵⁹⁶ Sexton, Land League Vindicated, 10.
⁵⁹⁷ Sexton, Land League Vindicated, 12.
of England,” which caused them to “send their contributions to help the Irish race” during the current time of crisis.598

Despite this misery, Sexton argued, the League itself worked to prevent the commission of crime and to restrain the passions of the people, rather than to inflame them. He referred to a statement by the Rev. Mortimer O’Connor, a parish priest in Co. Kerry, who had established a branch of the League in his parish and become its president. Fr. O’Connor claimed that “the most perfect tranquility prevails and serious crime is altogether unknown. The restraining influence of the League is clearly visible.”599 Sexton further referred to a statement O’Connor had made on 7 June 1881, that “there was a duty now on every man who had any influence with the people—to advise them to self-control,” as well to statements made at League meetings in Glasgow that League speeches “proved that the peaceful methods of the League were sufficient” to enact change.600

These arguments were not only advanced by the leadership of the Land League, however, but also were issued by individuals writing for Irish-American audiences. For example, in 1881 P.J. Flatley authored Ireland and the Land League: Or, A key to the Irish Question, which was published in Boston as part of a series of books aimed at discussing recent Irish events for an Irish American audience. The book presented first an image of industrious Irish peasants as “farmers and laborers, with their wives and families, engaged in the cultivation of the soil,” before arguing that “all this mirth is ended, and replaced by the sadness of despair when the crowbar brigade moves down on

598 Sexton, Land League Vindicated, 12.
599 Sexton, Land League Vindicated, 14.
600 Sexton, Land League Vindicated, 14-15.
the village."^{601} This version further emphasized the centrality of the home to Irish life, arguing that “Rude as was the cabin, it sheltered all who were dear to the peasant; of all places on earth it was the one spot hallowed in his thoughts, smiling with the joy of his wife, lit by the love of his children."^{602} Drawing from this image of idealized families destroyed by eviction, the book went on to argue that the Land League worked to deliver a future where “the tenant should not see his wife perish of hunger, nor see his/children starve by any suicidal act of his, in paying money over to the landlord to which he was not rightfully and equitably entitled.”^{603}

Like Davitt and Sexton earlier, Flatley explained agrarian outrages as related to the issue of homes and eviction, arguing that such crimes, “lamented and deprecated by the leaders of the Land League” were the result of there being few things more calculated to rouse the angry passions of any man than to be cast out, at the point of the bayonet, from the home of his childhood to see his little holding, on which he has spent the labor and earnings of years, confiscated by the greed of a merciless landlord; to see his wife and family shivering on the roadside… In the white heat of passion such a man, be he never so meek, will commit some outrages.^{604}

However, as in the case of the Land League’s leadership itself, efforts to explain outrage did not extend to justifying such crimes. Flatley argued that Ireland had “the moral sympathy of all nations… but her own indomitable courage and self-reliance must be the chief factors in her disenthralment… the character of her sons is moulded by the teaching. Impulse is tempered by prudence, rashness gives way to careful forethought.”

---


He asked, therefore, “Must that [future] generation take up the work left undone by those
gone before them, or have we now the men of intrepid/ daring, consummate prudence,
and unending resolution to put an end forever to the seven-century struggle?” Flatley’s
narrative concluded by arguing that “for the honor of the Irish race, for the vindication of
its manhood and intelligence, the Land League agitation must go on … so soldered
together we shall at last see a redeemed and transfigured Ireland,” clearly linking the
definitions of masculinity offered throughout the book to the national regeneration of
Ireland.

Such depictions of Irish hardship justifying the land agitation similarly were
published in both Irish and Irish-American media. One particularly prominent example
was *Land League songs*, a collection of nationalist songs published in 1880 in New York.
The book collected both traditional nationalist airs like “The Harp which Once through
Tara’s Halls,” with newer compositions like “We’ll make Parnell our President,” which
compared the efforts of the British state in Ireland with “bulldozing the Boors [sic] and
backing up the Turk.” Another new composition collected “Up, Men, and at them!”
was written by Parnell’s sister Fanny, who—as we will see in chapter five—lived in New
York. It urged Irishmen to act boldly, saying “If you your freedom would regain;/ Be
brave and strike- slay and be slain-/ Be men, no longer kneel and sue!/ Oh, prostitute no

Irish ballads celebrating deeds of valor performed by Erin’s sons in the past, and suited to the present
agitation: wit, sentiment and patriotism* (New York: Richard K Fox, 1880 ), 5. These songs work to
contextualize Irish and Irish American opinion as opposed to the aggressive nationalism prevalent during
the First Anglo-Boer war. The reference to “backing up the Turk” seems to refer to the Russo-Turkish War
which had inspired the Music Hall song “By Jingo,” written in opposition to the idea that then Prime
Minister Disraeli might support the Ottoman Empire over the Russian.
more the name/ of sacred liberty, while rusts/ The sword that slaves exalt to fame/ And tyrants’ gyves and fetters bursts.\footnote{608}

Of particular note in the book were a series of images which depicted both pre- and post-Land War life, and which argued that the Irish peasantry lived morally correct, virtuous lives and suffered, while the Irish landlord class lived dissolute, immoral lives but thrived. In short, the moral righteousness of the Land War was a way to right those wrongs. Several of these scenes depicted inversions of idyllic household scenes. Figure one, for example, showed an old peasant woman being handed an eviction notice, with the individual handing her the notice telling her to “pay up to git,” while figure two showed a family “pawn[ing] the furniture to pay the rent,” depicting two respectably dressed adults and their children clad in rags. The most striking of these images was figure three, which depicted two children clinging to each other in the snow—with the caption “made homeless by the English landlord,” clearly apportioning blame for their plight. The final image in this series showed an emigrant woman standing alone, with the caption reading “alone in America,” and seemingly linking this figure to existing nationalist fears about the plight of immigrant women and their vulnerability. These images were then contrasted with one of the last in the book, which showed a young man drinking with a woman. The image was captioned “how the sons of the Irish land owners spend their money in dissipation in London,” while at the top of the picture between the two individuals’ drinks the words “the fat of the land” appeared, directly tying this dissolute, and presumably immoral behavior to the plight of the Irish individuals seen throughout the book.\footnote{609} The messaging was quite clear, that all the suffering so

\footnote{608 M 1668.2 L2 1880, \textit{Land League Songs}, 11.} \footnote{609 See Appendix, pages 357-360, figures 1-4.}
graphically depicted throughout the volume could be tied directly to this man’s—and his compatriots’—drinking and dissipation in London, implying further that if his families’ hold over the land were removed, so too would be the suffering depicted.610

Finally, the Irish National Land League of America made a series of statements emphasizing the peaceful nature of the agitation and linking that nature to the righteousness of the Irish cause. Founded primarily by Irish immigrants to the United States, the INLLA elected Patrick Egan, formerly the treasurer of the Land League as president of its National Executive Committee in 1881. In an address “To the Irish Race in America,” which was co-signed by Davitt as central secretary of the parent organization, the American League argued that the defining characteristic of the agitation was “the orderly determination with which they have asserted their right to a better and more elevated social condition.” The American League asserted that “our appeal is not for charity,” but rather that “we desire that our kindred in the parent land should henceforth be free from the humiliation of a beggar’s position among nations.” 611 A quarterly report for the organization published in July 1881 emphasized that “the movement, from its very inception, has been a peacefully social and educational revolution,” seeking to undo the effects of a system which “ground down and dispirited” the Irish people.612 A similar address published in the aftermath of the Phoenix Park murders in 1882 condemned the killings as “the dark deed of the assassin,” which

610 John J. Burns Library, Boston College M 1668.2 L2 1880, Land League songs : a collection of patriotic Irish ballads celebrating deeds of valor performed by Erin’s sons in the past, and suited to the present agitation : wit, sentiment and patriotism (New York: Richard K Fox, 1880). The images themselves have no page numbers.
611 Council of the Irish National Land and Industrial League, U.S.A. Address ”To the Irish Race in America,” Box 2, Folder 8, Patrick A. Collins papers, MS.1986.038, John J. Burns Library, Boston College.
threatened “to rob Ireland of the benefits of justice and peace that seemed at last to promise.” The address concluded, “Irishmen in the old land, united with those who did not forget their wrongs, though living here in freedom and peace, must boldly and manfully claim the right - not sue for it- to live as freemen- not as serfs- on the soil where God has planted our race.”

The clearest encapsulation of the ideals of the League came from a letter concerning the elections of delegates for the convention at which Egan was elected. The letter claimed, “In all her ages of trial Ireland has never shown among her people so much courage and fortitude, linked with patience and wisdom, as now.” Irishmen were acting out their prescribed roles, the letter continued, and “the time has now come… to show to mankind how a People can fight a Battle without guns and win a Victory without bloodshed. The gravity of the situation in Ireland demands instant, intelligent and sober action.” This positioning of the Land War as a battle without guns and a victory without bloodshed illustrated the extent to which escaping from Valente’s double bind was central to the ideology being created and disseminated. The Land War was, in this reading, a true war, a place where Irishmen could manfully defend their homes and the women in their lives, illustrating their strength, respectability, and fitness for self-government. But crucially it was a peaceful war, one without the violence that could be used to portray the Irish as lacking restraint.

---

614 The Irish National Land League, United States Central Office Open letter concerning the election of delegates for a convention, Box 2, folder 7, Patrick A. Collins papers, MS.1986.038, John J. Burns Library, Boston College.
One example which illustrates the extent to which this image of restrained masculinity had become central to the nationalist movement can be seen in the press coverage of what was termed the “Sligo Affray,” a clash between a process-server named James Broder and his police escort on the one hand, and the inhabitants of Monasteraden, a village in South Sligo, on the other.

The affray took place on 2 April 1881, as Broder, escorted by four members of the RIC led by a Sergeant Armstrong, traveled toward Monasteraden to serve eviction notices. This was Broder’s second attempt to serve notices on the estate of Arthur Ffrench. The prior attempt the previous day had been thwarted so thoroughly that Broder was forced to take refuge in the local RIC barrack. He was met on this occasion by a large crowd of men, women, and children, who attempted to prevent him from serving the notices and, indeed, attempted to seize the notices from him. A scuffle broke out which led Broder to brandish a pistol and his RIC escort to fix bayonets to their rifles and, eventually, to fire into the crowd killing two local men, Joseph Corcoran and Brien Flannery. This then led the crowd to attempt to seize the weapons of the RIC members and to beat two of them, Constable Armstrong and Sub-constable Hayes, to the extent that the two men died shortly thereafter while Broder and the remaining members of his escort retreated to the RIC barrack.615

The facts of this case posed a challenge to the local nationalist press, as this was unquestionably a case where conduct lauded by the Land League, the determined resistance to eviction by the local community, had spilled over into violence resulting in two members of the RIC being beaten to death in a manner which seemed to support all

---

615 Sligo Champion, 9 April, 1881.
the worst stereotypes of the Irish. In order to combat this, the local nationalist paper, the *Sligo Champion*, sought to present this event as something that in fact confirmed the restraint of local Irishmen and illustrated the inherent violence in supporters of the British state.

The first way that the *Champion* downplayed the violence inherent in this incident was to emphasize the non-threatening nature of the crowd. The *Champion*'s coverage of the incident, which melded reporting of the facts of the affray with editorializing on its meaning, noted that “when Broder came to the summit on the other side of the hill were seen about thirty or forty persons, mostly women, boys, and girls, a number of men being in the rere [sic].” This characterization implied a stark contrast between this non-threatening crowd and the “armed party” of Broder and his escort.\(^{616}\) This emphasis was continued in discussing the inciting incident of the affray. According to the *Champion*, “a young woman ran forward to the police and said, ‘All we want are the processes, and that you will leave the roofs of our cabins over us for another year,’” again contrasting the non-threatening locals with the threat of the police and portraying the woman in question as constantly “telling the police that they would not in any way try to harm them.” She met with a disproportionate response, as “the police drew across the road, fixed bayonets, and, it is alleged, fired under instructions.”\(^{617}\) Only after this response, according to the *Champion*, did the people react. The crowd “seized their rifles, threw down the men, and beat the two other members of the constabulary who were protecting Broder” in an act of self defence.\(^{618}\)

\(^{616}\) *Sligo Champion*, 9 April, 1881.

\(^{617}\) *Sligo Champion*, 9 April, 1881.

\(^{618}\) *Sligo Champion*, 9 April, 1881.
The *Champion* then discussed the deaths of the two local men to illustrate the extent to which both men had lived and died performing their duty as Irishmen. The paper emphasized that both men were providers in their lives, as Corcoran left “a widow and six children,” and although “Brien Flannery was unmarried,” he was “the support of an aged mother, father, and sister.”

The *Champion* underlined the damage that their deaths, and particularly that of Corcoran did to those family units. “In the house [of Corcoran and his family],” the *Champion* reported, “a heartrending scene was enacted. His children wept and sobbed loudly, and the wife’s sorrow was most intense… she suddenly fell in a faint and had to be carried out,” further advancing the image of Irishwomen as essentially domestic individuals supported and protected by Irishmen.

The coverage also emphasized the violence that had been inflicted on the two men, and by extension their community, noting that “the appearance of the scene of the struggle, the two dead men…and the number of peasants suffering from wounds… would lead one to believe that a battle had been fought.” “The place where the affray occurred is covered in blood which has turned, from the dryness of the weather, into a sort of red clay,” according to the paper. “The stones around the spot were all besmeared with blood.”

During the funeral service for the two men, the two priests conducting the service, the Rev. Mr. O’Hara and the Rev. C.A. Connington, asked the locals “to pray for the souls of the brave men who fell victim to bayonets and buckshot while defending their home,” further cementing the impression that the two men in question had died doing their duty to protect their homes just as they had provided for them in life. Finally, at a land
meeting held at Mahanagh, Co Sligo, on the 22 May, one of the speakers referred to Corcoran and Flannery as having “died martyrs for their country in the cause of justice and humanity in protecting their homes.” He contrasted their actions to those of the RIC, whom he referred to as “those men who indulge in such innocent amusement as shooting down girls and children… who strike with the butts of their rifles on the backs, sides and chest.” 623

The Champion’s coverage also emphasized the discipline of the local community in its response to the violence. As in the press’s coverage of nationalist land meetings the quasi-military discipline of attendees was noted, with the Champion commenting that “the funerals were the largest ever seen in this part of the country. The coffins were carried by young men. The people all marched in a procession of five deep until they reached the burial ground Kilcolman.” 624 The need for discipline was, along with the virtuous nature of Corcoran’s and Flannery’s deaths, the main theme of the funeral service, with the Rev. O’Hara enjoining the attendees not to offer any violence in response to the deaths. The Champion noted that, despite the news, “just as the funeral was in procession… it was announced that Broder was engaged about nine miles off in serving ejectments. No disturbance whatever took place.” The paper closed its coverage of the event by commenting “everything is perfectly quiet in the district. The people have obeyed the instructions of the Rev. O’Hara.” 625

This event and its coverage illustrated the extent to which a gendered presentation of Irish life, and above all the emphasis on restraint, were central themes of nationalist

623 NAI, Police and crime records No 5, Carton 2, 125.
624 Sligo Champion, 9 April, 1881.
625 Sligo Champion, 9 April, 1881.
writing and thinking during the Land War period. The Champion’s portrayal of the event; that the crowd resisted eviction peacefully and non-threateningly until faced with violence, that the two men killed were presented as dying performing their duty for their families and for Ireland; and the fact that there was no violence or disturbance connected to the funerals for the two men, but rather that the locals obeyed the instructions of their priest to remain calm; all seemed designed to turn a violent event into an example of gendered Irish self-restraint on the personal level which underscored the righteousness of the Irish polity’s case for self-mastery on the political level.
Chapter Four

The problem with the picture of the Sligo affray painted by the Champion is that, in nearly every respect, it distorts or omits facts which would have proved inconvenient to its argument. While the Champion portrayed the affray as an aberrational act of self-defense by the people of Monasteraden which was quickly replaced by disciplined mourning, other descriptions of the event and its aftermath paint a much more violent and lengthy picture of the confrontation.

Examination of police records illustrates that the violence of 2 April was not an aberration driven by the emotions of Broder’s actions that day, but rather the cumulation of a longstanding, and generally violent, confrontation between Broder and the people of South Sligo. Police records note that as far back as 26 December 1880, Broder was the target of intimidation, as on that date he “received a letter through post, threatening him that if he did not give up serving processes his life would not be long a burden to him.” Similarly, on 31 March 1881, Broder “proceeded to the townlands of Shroove and Townamuckla, in Clogher… to serve Civil Processes” and after serving three processes in the latter townland, “he… was followed by a mob who pelted him with stones,” which forced him to “abandon the service of the processes, and proceed to Clogher Barracks” to find shelter from the crowd.

The sole mention of these events by the Champion is a

\[626\] The police records of this incident, and others used throughout this chapter are, of course, not without their own flaws and biases. While members of the RIC were generally drawn from the tenant farming population the extensive training that recruits when through and the practice of stationing RIC members in regions where they had no personal ties meant that members often had conflicting and at times confrontational relationships with the local populations, particularly during times of elevated political activity as during the Land War Period.

\[627\] NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 4, Carton 10, No.75.

\[628\] NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 4, Carton 10, No.75.
brief reference that “Broder had failed on Thursday in performing his duties” and “sought shelter in the Clogher barracks,” a reference so barebones it could be seen as a code to local readers who would have known the truth of the story while allowing the outward projection to present an image of calm.629

Police accounts of the affray, moreover, argued that the event itself was much more violent than the Champion depicted. Police records claimed that as Broder approached the townland, “a mob of about 80 persons came towards them shouting that the “orange dog” (Broder) would not serve any processes there that day. Stones were thrown… Broder was struck with one under the eye and severely cut; he was also struck on the knee and shin.” The report also portrayed the death of Armstrong as quite violent, saying that after Armstrong “rushed into the crowd, which closed in on him,” other members of the RIC escort saw “Sergeant Armstrong lying on the ground and blood oozing from his head… unable to cope with them (the mob) they retired across the hill… Broder looked back and he saw some of the mob raising their hands and letting them fall as if beating something on the ground.”630

Those same records, as well as other accounts of the events of 2 April 1881, illustrate that the popular reaction to the affray was not “perfectly calm,” as the Champion had argued, but rather one of continued action against Broder and the RIC. What is more, given the time between the affray and the paper’s publication, the Champion’s writers would have known about what happened in time to print a more accurate narrative.631 The Champion’s coverage leaves the reader with the impression

629 Sligo Champion, 9 April, 1881.
630 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 4, Carton 10, No.75.
631 Sligo Champion, 9 April, 1881. The Champion, published on Saturdays routinely included information from Thursday and even at times included dispatches from correspondents written on Friday afternoons.
that following the confrontation there was no further disturbance, but again the police records portrayed the subsequent period differently. Records indicate that on 4 April Broder was boycotted, with his herd Pat Brereby refusing to work for him, the local blacksmith Thomas refusing to shoe his horse, and the community generally refusing to provide Broder with a horse for use in ploughing. Those records also indicate that on 6 April, the night that Sergeant Armstrong died, “the country around was lighted with bonfires and the people shouting for “Watty” - a nickname by which Armstrong was known,” a report corroborated by the *Irish Times*, which stated “from Ballaghaderreen to Frenchpark, from Clogher to Loughglynn, bonfires were last night lighted on the hills in joyful celebration of the event.” Finally, on 7 April, “a mob of about 60 men and women with spades, pitchforks, &c., entered Broder’s lands and violently drove away his cattle and put other cattle in their place.”

Taken together the picture of the period between the affray on 2 April and the report issued by the *Champion* the following week seems less one of solemn mourning, as the paper portrayed it, and more one of communal anger expressed in a variety of ways.

Additionally, the people of Monasteraden continued to engage in acts of violence aimed at Broder and those associated with him, actions which went unreported in the *Champion* and seemed to stem from the sort of unwritten or subversive law discussed in chapter two. Chief among these was an assault on Pat Moran, a servant employed by Broder. On 11 April, nine days after the affray and two days after the *Champion* triumphantly reported that “everything is perfectly quiet in the district,” Moran left

---

632 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 4, Carton 10, No.75.
633 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 4, Carton 10, No.75; *Irish Times*, 8 April 1881.
634 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No 4, Carton 10, No.75.
Broder’s home to travel into Monasteraden to buy supplies. Moran was met by “a party of men numbering about 50” who “kicked and beat him,” with one of the assailants, Thomas Gara of Ballymote “kicking him when [he was] lying on the ground.” During the assault “one of the party at the same time stabbed the horse he was riding inflicting serious injury” to it. The attack was attributed to Moran’s employment by Broder, with the police record for Gara noting that he had previously intimidated Moran on the occasion of the cattle drive from Broder’s land on 7 April.

Efforts toward the intimidation of Broder and his protectors did not end with the assault on Moran. On 1 May “John Cryan of Clogher, who supplied turf to the police of Clogher station, received a letter threatening him if he did not discontinue supplying turf to the police in Clogher Barracks.” He was told “to prepare to go before his God, for that he would be visited before many nights,” and police records indicated that for years after the affray “Broder was hooted and booted whenever he left home, and on several occasions when passing Monasteraden the people rang the chapel bell. Bonfires were lighted opposite his house and the people shouting for Broder the murderer,” to the point where Broder remained under police protection well past the end of the Land War in 1882.

When Broder appeared in court to answer charges stemming from the affray, he was similarly met with an aggressive popular response, as “a large crowd of men, armed with sticks and stones, followed by women and children made their appearance…

635 *Sligo Champion*, 9 April, 1881.
636 NAI, Police and crime records, No. 5, Carton 1, No. 423.
637 NAI, Police and crime records, No. 5, Carton 2, No. 185.
638 NAI Police and crime records, No. 5, carton 1, No. 423.
639 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 4, Carton 10, No.75.
shouted for Broder to go home, called him an informer, shook their sticks and fists at
him, and made use of menaces and threats which could not be mistaken.” These
events, and the extent to which the RIC was willing to continue to expend manpower and
money to protect Broder years after the event, seem to indicate that Broder’s continued
survival could be attributed less to the efforts of the Rev. O’Hara or to the restraint of the
people of the region and more to the coercive power of the Crown state. The assaults
on individuals associated with Broder and the continued harassment and threats of
violence against them seem further to indicate an effort by the local community to ensure
that justice, as defined by their own law and not that of the state, was carried out for the
deaths of Flannery and Corcoran.

The Sligo affray emphaizes every part of the nationalist triptych described in
chapter three. Further examination into how the Land War happened on-the-ground and
the comparison of those experiences with the idealized images examined in the prior
chapter will allow for a fuller understanding not only of what happened but how and why
it was presented in a less-than-accurate manner by the nationalist political movement.
The specifics of this false narrative illustrate the extent to which that emerging movement

641 Additionally, the two men who were arrested for the assault on Broder’s servant, Thomas Gara and Pat
Flinn, were both noted to be in their late twenties or early thirties and the single sons of small farmers,
precisely the sort of people prior scholarship has noted were particularly vulnerable to be trapped in a
liminal state between childhood and full adulthood. Other scholarship has noted that these sorts of men
may have found alternative ways to prove their masculinity and to gain prestige within their age cohorts
through undertaking acts of agrarian outrage. See Lucey, Land, popular politics and agrarian violence; and
Campbell. Land questions in Modern Ireland. The assault, and by extension the other outrages which took
place following the affray, can be seen not only as ways for the local community to seek justice on their
own terms, but also as ways for local men to prove their manhood—albeit in a manner antithetical to the
messaging of Land League leaders. This point seems strengthened when one takes into account that the
two men arrested for the assault on Moran were not from Monasteraden, but rather from Ballymote
roughly twelve miles away. See NAI, Police and crime records, No. 5, carton 1, No. 423; NAI, Police and
crime records, No. 5, Carton 2, No.185.
was as interested in disciplining the rural Irish population to standards of ‘proper’ Victorian and white behavior as was the British state against which that the movement was fighting.

As seen in the Sligo affray case, women were centrally involved in the local activities of the Land War period. The area where women were most clearly involved in anti-state action, and the area of female conduct during the Land War which has received the greatest level of scholarly attention, is in the direct resistance to eviction proceedings. This was first noted by Margaret Ward in *Unmanageable Revolutionaries*, where she highlighted the role of women in physically resisting evictions. Subsequently, Janet TeBrake in her essay “Irish Peasant Women in Revolt: The Land League Years,” argued that the Irish peasantry, joining the agitation for economic reasons, were the “driving force behind the movement, and at this level Irish peasant women made major contributions to the agrarian revolt.” More recently Heather Laird highlighted women’s participation in her essay “Decentering the Irish Land War: Women, politics and the private sphere.” These scholars have noted that women took active roles particularly in resisting evictions, and that women were able to engage more directly in anti-eviction protests because police were less likely to assault or arrest them due to their gender. Laird additionally asserted that women were uniquely positioned to carry out a variety of protest activities,

---

644 Heather Laird “Decentering the Irish Land War: Women, politics and the private sphere” in *Land Questions in Modern Ireland*. 
such as boycotting shopkeepers, due to their role in purchasing food for their families, or increasing the isolation of RIC and British army members by refusing to court them.\textsuperscript{645}

In all three counties examined in this study women were at the center of anti-eviction actions. The \textit{Mayo Examiner} noted in August 1881 that an escort of “over 170 police” were needed for a process server, and that at the village of “Coolfex a number of women attacked the process-server [and]gave him a great beating.”\textsuperscript{646} In February of that year, the Ballinrobe petty sessions had contained a series of charges for assaulting process-servers. Much of the coverage of the case focused on the size and actions of the crowd, noting that on one occasion “one of the young men put his breast against the muzzle of the rifle” held by a member of the RIC “saying he might as well be dead as alive.” Ultimately, on cross-examination, the process-server in question admitted “the crowd was made up of about fifteen children, five women and five men,” again seeming to illustrate a disconnect between how the nationalist press wanted to portray events and their actual substance.\textsuperscript{647}

The \textit{Connaught Telegraph} reported on a similar event in June 1879 when William Burke, Esq, J.P., Land Agent to Arthur Guinness, MP, “while riding through the remnant of what was once called the town of Cong… was rather warmly received by a young girl named Noonan, who… was not content with giving him the contents of a bucket of boiling water until she let the empty vessel fly at his cranium.” The \textit{Telegraph} attributed

\textsuperscript{645} TeBrake, “Irish Peasant Women in Revolt,” 74; Laird, “Decentering the Irish Land War,” 183. While women were less likely to be tried, there were still occasional arrests of women for anti-eviction protests, as when “Mary Connolly, Bridget Doherty and others” were convicted of assaulting “a process server name M’Donnell” who was apparently “severely injured.” See “Mayo Assizes,” \textit{Mayo Examiner} 26 March, 1881.

\textsuperscript{646} “Process-serving troubles in the West” \textit{Mayo Examiner}, 6 August, 1881.

\textsuperscript{647} “Ballinrobe Petty Sessions” \textit{Mayo Examiner}, 12 February, 1881.
her actions to the fact that her father, brother, and uncle had all been served with eviction notices by Guinness. A similar case noted in the *Roscommon Journal* centered on a sub-constable by the name of Walter Hayes testifying that as he was engaged in process-serving outside the village of Mullaghroe a riot broke out during which he “got a stroke which knocked [him] senseless on the road.” When he regained consciousness he encountered four local men who threw stones at him until he fell, at which point “two of them proposed to take [Hayes] down to the road” while another threatened to bash Hayes’s brains out with a stone. At this point a local woman returning from the riot came across the scene and said “not to strike [Hayes] that [he] was after getting more than [he] deserved.” Finally, the *Sligo Champion* noted that a process server in Ballyconnell was met by “a considerable crowd … calculating the men, women, and children, about 150 persons” who attempted to force the server to “to go on his knees and swear that he would not serve a process for any landlord,” and they were thwarted only by the fact that the process-server was armed and threatened to fire his pistol into the crowd.

Women can also be seen participating in a variety of other anti-state activities, not solely the direct resistance to the serving of eviction notices. The *Roscommon Journal* noted that following an attempted sale of tenants’ interest in eight farms near Elphin “a band paraded the town, followed by a very excited crowd,” and “a riot took place, in the course of which a woman and several policemen sustained serious injuries.”

648 “Scalding a Land Agent,” *Connaught Telegraph*, 21 June, 1879. The Telegraph reported on a similar event on the same day in 1879, when an effort “to serve the tenantry of Newton Clogher for rent and arrears due” was met by “the women” of the village “assembled to about one hundred... with tongs, sticks, stones etc,” with the Telegraph noting that the “server had a narrow escape.” Cf. “Serving Processes in Clogher Lynch,” *Connaught Telegraph*, 21 June, 1879.


Champion noted a similar popular resistance to the sale of twenty farms from which tenants had been evicted involved “contingents… from the surrounding districts, Grangemockler, Mullinabone, Carrick-on-Suir, Fethard, Powerstown, &c., accompanied by bands and banners.” At the height of this confrontation the local parish priest, the Rev. Mr. Meagher, had to speak to an “excited crowd, consisting of about two dozen persons, men, women, and children,” asking them “to quit that portion of the town and not to violate the peace.” Apparently the priest’s efforts were not totally successful, as mounted hussars charged into a crowd of men, women, and children later that day, supposedly in response to widespread disorder.

At times such resistance could take on the appearance of a Land meeting, with the Telegraph, for example, noting that when a process server visited the parish of Kilmeena, “he was rather impolitely received by a number of women and children…[and] compelled to beat a hasty retreat.” The Telegraph noted that the local “fife and drum band attended” and that “most of those present wore green sashes” and carried a “large number of banners.” This incident at Kilmeena also illustrates the disconnect between nationalist thought leader’s attempts to interpret events and the facts themselves. The Telegraph framed the confrontation as an event where the “people of the parish of Kilmeena… spoke boldly and manfully,” while Arthur O’Malley, a tenant farmer quoted extensively in chapter three, said the event showed that the “men of Kilmeena always distinguished themselves by their spirit… unlike other districts they had very few

---

crawling wretches amongst them” despite the fact that the main resistance seems to have been carried out by women and children, rather than the men of the locality.653

We also see women involved in a range of political activities which were not directly illegal. For example, as much as the speakers at Land League meetings sought to portray themselves as speaking to a male audience, there are several references from the speaker’s platform to women attending political meetings. This was common before the Land War as well, as noted in Huggins’s examination of pre-Famine Roscommon, and it can also be seen in the politics of the region under examination directly before the outbreak of the Land War. In a May 1879 commemoration of the Manchester Martyrs held at Castlebar, Co. Mayo, for example, the speaker exclaimed that the feeling of nationality he witnessed there had also “roused…Garryowen,” a voice from the crowd asked, “And what about the women of Limerick,” a comment met with cheering from the crowd.654 Coverage of land meetings, and occasionally statements from the speakers

653 “The Land Agitation/ Mr. James C. MacDonnell and his Tenantry,” Connaught Telegraph, 27 December, 1879. On occasion communal harvests could turn violent, as noted in the Roscommon Journal in May 1882. The Journal reported that a man named Patrick Fleming was assaulted in March of that same year by a crowd which included his brother John as the result of a dispute over land with his brothers in law. The inciting incident to the assault was a crowd of “men and women” coming “into the field” in question and beginning “to work with spades and also a horse and harrow,” in a mirror of the communal harvesting of crops discussed in chapter three. When Patrick Fleming produced a receipt from the landlord saying he held the field in question, his brother John replied “he had the law in his pocket, and he defied the law.” Patrick Fleming recalled that earlier disputes regarding the land had also involved female participation, as when he “went first...to plough this land, [his] mother came to prevent” him from doing so. See “Roscommon Quarter Sessions, Assault” Roscommon Journal, 27 May, 1881.

654 “Meeting at Irishtown/ To the Editor of the Connaught Telegraph,” Connaught Telegraphy, 3 May, 1879. The voice from the crowd seems to have been referencing the 1691 siege of Limerick, the closing act of the Williamite War, the Irish theatre of the 1688 Glorious Revolution. The most notable aspect of the siege was that upon the surrender of the Jacobite army in Limerick, they were afforded the opportunity to enter French service. This event, known as the Flight of the Wild Geese, became an important marker in nationalist history. Other provisions of the treaty, which promised fair treatment for Catholics were ignored by the Protestant-dominated Irish Parliament. According to the nationalist narrative, during the siege the Jacobite commander ordered women and children to withdraw to a safer part of town, an order which the women refused, engaging in fighting alongside the male soldiers. For more on the Siege, see John Childs The Williamite Wars in Ireland (London: Bloomsbury Publishing, 2007).
themselves, further demonstrate how women were generally present at land meetings. P.J. Gordon, for example, at a meeting held at Shrule, Co Mayo, “asked the women there that day to act the part of the soldier, to allow no robber to enter their cabin,” while O’Malley, as noted in chapter three, called on the mothers in the crowd at a meeting at Dooleague, Co Mayo to rear their sons “to be true to their country,” so that “he will always love Ireland; and if it is required he will lose his blood for his parents that reared him” and asked that the young women in the crowd “never marry the son of the ruffian who betrays his country.” The Connaught Telegraph similarly noted that a 1879 meeting at Carnacon, Co. Mayo, was attended by “over 1,000 tenant farmers … including men, women, boys.” There were also common references to women attending League meetings from police reports, as at Bohola, Co Mayo, in July 1880, where the reporting RIC official noted that the “seven or eight hundred persons” who attended included “men, women, and children,” or at Keash, Co. Sligo, where the police report claimed that of the “about three thousand persons present…a great number of those were girls and children.”

Other cases illustrate that women were taking more direct political roles within their communities. In a case from Co. Roscommon, a Mrs. Gannon of Ballagh was arrested for assault on a constable and sub-constable, following a previous summons “for having one of the ‘no rent’ manifestoes posted up in the window of her house.” The constable, Mark Reilly, noted in his testimony that Gannon’s house “was the place of meeting for the Land League Committee of Land League Court,” and when the police

---

655 NAI, Police and crime records, Irish Land League and Irish NTNL League papers, Carton 2, No. 385.  
657 NLI, Ms. 11,289, Bohola Co. Mayo 4 July, 1880; NLI, Ms. 11,289, Keash, Co. Sligo 25 July, 1880.  
entered the home on 23 October 1881—as the League was being proclaimed an illegal organization—Gannon “made a stroke of a spade at Constable Reilly” and another at subconstable Rorke. Rorke, in his testimony, noted that “there were a lot of infuriated women there,” and that while “the men left when we entered,” the women remained “scolding and shouting” and “talking about” the mothers of the police, with a Mrs. Mulleady singled out as having said that Rorke’s mother “was the reverse of being a respectable woman, and called as Buckshot.”

The focus from local women on the conduct of the mothers of the RIC offices is particularly interesting, as most RIC men—and these two in question judging from their surnames—were drawn from Roman Catholic backgrounds, meaning that these men, and by extension their mothers, were in a sense being symbolically removed from the Irish nation by those they encountered in the course of their duties.

Another example took place in Mayo, where in March 1881, “Anthony O’Donnell and Mary O’Donnell” were tried “for assaulting the dwelling house of Anthony Keely, and firing into same.” The brother of the homeowner, Patrick Keeley, testified that on 14 February that “at about eleven o’clock at night a party halted at my door; one of them

---

659 “Roscommon Petty Sessions” *Roscommon Journal*, 24 December, 1881. Buckshot seems to be a reference to William Edward Forster who served as Chief Secretary for Ireland from April of 1882 through May of 1882 and whose advocacy for the use of force against the land league earned him the nickname Buckshot.

660 “Roscommon Petty Sessions, Assaulting the police” *Roscommon Journal*, 24 December, 1881. The continued defiance of female suspects was something of a common aspect of such cases. Another Co. Roscommon case from May of 1882 saw Bridget Lynagh replying to a charge of having “broken the windows of the house from which she had been ejected for non-payment of rent” by saying “the windows were her property. She had put them in and she broke them.” “Roscommon Petty Sessions, No Rent” *Roscommon Journal*, 13 May, 1882. This symbolic removal of RIC members from the nation interestingly parallels the removal of the largely Roman Catholic rank-and-file from their home districts, as RIC members were intentionally stationed in areas where they did not have local connections. For more on the RIC, see Elizabeth Malcolm, *The Irish Policeman, 1822-1922: a Life* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2006).
walked round to the back door and posted a threatening notice on it,” after which “they came round to the front and fired a shot at my window” and two others through another window and a door. These tactics were common in the region, but what makes this case somewhat exceptional is the record of the active role that Mary O’Donnell played. On the night in question, she was accused of saying after the first round of shots that she “heard nothing” from inside the house, and, following a fourth shot being fired, having “clapped her hands and said ‘more power, you’ll hear something tomorrow’” before the party withdrew to the O’Donnell’s house.661

The assault on the night of the 14th was not the only confrontation between Mary O’Donnell and the Keely family. Patrick Keely stated in his testimony that the prisoners, Mary O’Donnell included, “often threatened to do this to me during twelve months before,” and that Mary herself had “posted a notice signed by herself saying she would do this to me a few days before; when I asked her why she posted the notice she said I would know the cause of it before many days… and said it was just not I would reap the benefit of the notice.” The notice itself was also presented as evidence and read “My friend Mr. Kealy—I am going to harm you, and if this time does not I will engage the next time will do, if God spares me a hand and an eye to take an aim—Yours truly, ‘Jack in the Road.’ The next time I come this” followed by a sketch of a coffin “will be your case.”662 While the evidence in this case was less overwhelming than in the Roscommon case, it still seems substantial, with an eyewitness clearly identifying his assailants and connecting the

661 “Crown Court Tuesday, Whiteboy Offence” Mayo Examiner, 26 March, 1881.
662 “Crown Court Tuesday, Whiteboy Offence” Mayo Examiner, 26 March, 1881. This letter, and others described in this chapter, bear strong resemblances to those discussed in chapter 2.
attack to a history of harassment. Nevertheless, the O’Donnell were acquitted of all charges.

In many of the examples discussed above we can infer a level of community support for the actions of the women involved, drawn largely from the fact that women were openly participating in the events in question. On some other occasions we can see community support directly expressed for women whose activities brought them into conflict with the British state, with the manner in which that support manifested providing interesting insights into the milieu in which these women operated.

The first such example come from Co. Roscommon, where in July 1881 a woman with the last name Dowd, her first name not being given by the Journal, was indicted for posting a threatening notice in the village of Doon, near Boyle, in May. The notice “cautioned people not to send their cows to a bull belonging to a man who lived between Boyle and Carrigeanroe,” presumably because the man was a collaborator with the RIC or perhaps a land grabber. The notice said that individuals who disregarded the order needed “to bring their coffins with them,” and it was signed “Captain Midnight, the death-knell of flunkeyism.”\textsuperscript{663} The woman was arrested as the note apparently matched her handwriting, and it had been posted on the wall of her home, but interestingly, the efforts of two individuals called as witnesses to aid her defense are quite remarkable for their lack of focus on the facts of the case.

One witness, Pat Sheeran, who had seen the notice posted on the wall near Dowd’s home, testified that he “saw it was a notice about a bull” but argued that he “saw no threat in it.” He first stated that he felt “it was no threat to tell a man to bring his coffin

with him, as I often carried a coffin,” which prompted the sitting magistrate, somewhat sarcastically, to ask if the man was in fact in the habit of carrying his coffin around with him wherever he went. Sheeran later stated in a further effort to argue the statement was non-threatening that he “did not think it was a threat to me as I had no cow to bring to the bull.” The next witness, the local Catholic priest, the Rev. H.F. Gatley, stated that he knew Dowd and testified that “her general character is of the very best, and for modesty, good behaviour and industry, there is not a girl in the town or parish to surpass her.” Later in his testimony he again stated that “her character is exceptionally good, and especially her modesty, and she is a member of the religious order of… the children of Mary.” The nature of this testimony is quite telling, as it in no way relates to whether or not Dowd posted the notice in question or not. To emphasize several times her good character and modesty and her membership in a religious sodality seems designed to present Dowd as a respectable middle-class woman, one who could not have committed the crime in question rather than to deal with the question of whether she had or not. During the trial Dowd fainted and “as it was found the girl was still in a very weak state,” the trial was adjourned for a day, whereupon Dowd was acquitted of all charges.

Another case from Co. Mayo similarly illustrates the extent to which stereotypes of “proper” female behavior were used in an attempt to downplay the severity of female anti-state activity. In June 1881 a series of female defendants—”Ellen Harrigan, Bridget Brenhan, Bridget Loftus, Anne Wallace, Mary M’Donagh, and Kate Byrne”—were indicted at the Kiltimagh petty sessions for having “with divers other evil disposed

---

persons unknown” gathered together and “being so assembled did unlawfully and riotously make assault upon one John Kelly,” a process server who had been engaged in serving processes at Cullilea, Co. Mayo.\textsuperscript{666} At the initial court appearance the condition of one of the defendants, Kate Byrne, was the primary focus, with her lawyer arguing that she was “manifestly unable to bear the excitement of a trial” due to wounds received in the riot, leading to a two-week adjournment of the case. The local \textit{Mayo Examiner} described her firstly as a “girl” and noted that as she had “received a charge of buckshot on the occasion of the affray, was conveyed to town on a car being wholly unable to walk, and carried into court by her friends,” thus emphasizing her youth and injured status to portray her as a non-threatening victim of the state.\textsuperscript{667}

When the case resumed two weeks later Byrne’s defense attorney used similar tactics to downplay the nature of the event. John Kelly, the process server, testified that he had served seven processes at Cullilea, but that he was met by “a large crowd who attempted to obstruct him, and the police had to make way through them with fixed swords.” Kelly went on to note that the crowd said to him and his escort that “if we went on we might have a certain other thing with us… our coffin.” To this Byrne’s attorney asked “did you ever hear a crowd of women that was not noisy,” leveraging the gendered stereotype to argue that the reaction from the crowd was non-threatening. Later he argued that the process-server was a coward, as he had accepted a police escort and had said he was frightened by a crowd comprised largely of women, and that therefore his testimony that the crowd had made him afraid, a key part of the charges against them, should be

\begin{footnotes}
\item[666] “The Case of Kate Byrne,” \textit{Mayo Examiner}, 4 June, 1881.
\item[667] “The Case of Kate Byrne,” \textit{Mayo Examiner}, 4 June, 1881.
\end{footnotes}
The fact that the defense rested on impugning the process-server’s masculinity, arguing that a certain level of noisiness was simply how women acted when gathered in groups, and emphasizing the age and injury status of Byrne illustrate how ideas of proper gendered behavior could be weaponized to defend extralegal conduct.

Indeed, using the argument that women were inherently noisy was not confined to the Byrne case. In February 1881 the attorney for another group of women charged with rioting on a fair day in Co. Mayo centered their defense on that point. He asked the RIC officer testifying if there were “many women” at the fair that day, to which the officer replied “a great many.” The attorney then asked if he “like all other Irish men know that women are noisy wherever they are,” to which the officer agreed to general amusement. The attorney then asked if he was “not surprised to hear the women noisy on that day anymore [sic] than on any other day,” following the point by saying “I put it to you as a man of intelligence wearing the garb of authority, wouldn’t you be surprised if women were not noisy?” The officer was forced to admit that he “would be surprised if women were not noisy.”

These last two cases illustrated the way in which women were able to play active roles in the events of the Land War, either through directly resisting eviction, or through other political methods, either legal or extra-legal. The way in which the press, the community, and the legal defenses of these women all made aggressive use of their status as women to defend them from criminal liability also indicate that the strict gender binary being created and disseminated from platform and press had limited acceptance on the ground, with the existence of differing prescribed roles for men and women being

---

668 “The Late Affray at Cullilea,” Mayo Examiner, 4 June, 1881.
669 “Charge of Intimidation and assault of a civil bill officer,” Mayo Examiner, 12 February, 1881.
accepted, but the active role of women in these efforts making use of their place in society.

Another case reported in the Champion made clear how the nationalist political leadership wanted resistance to eviction to be carried out. The Champion reported in September 1880 on eviction proceedings in the “remote district of Errismore, upon the estate of the late Mr. Valentine Black, of Tower Castle, Mayo.” Upon hearing that the process server was on his way, “all the male inhabitants of the place assembled together, armed with heavy sticks for the purpose of preventing by force the service of notices to quit upon sixteen of the tenantry.” Ultimately the day “passed off without any serious collision between the people and the constabulary engaged in the protection of the process server,” although “for some time fears were entertained that an attack would have been made.” What likely prevented any violent clash between the police and the people was the intervention of Rev Mr. Flannery, who, “standing between the constabulary and the crowd, besought the latter to make way, telling them that it was useless attempting to oppose the police, and that they should only offer a passive resistance to the service of the notices.” Flannery’s argument echoed those seen in chapter three, that “should some of them afterwards be prosecuted for their attack on the police, it would merely add to the gratification of the landlords, while by their peaceful presence there that day they would sufficiently show their opinion of Mr. Blakes [sic] conduct.”

The Herald painted a similar picture of spirited, but nonviolent, resistance in a March 1881 article. The Herald commented that “a day did not elapse this week that an expedition of the process-serving department of the Royal Irish were not of foot,” and it

---

drew particular attention to the Turlough, Co. Mayo, district, where in “the early portion of the week… the tocsin of war was sounded.” The report noted that “the attempts at services proved ineffectual as the doors were taken off their hinges and carried to some distance from the homesteads by the retreating inhabitants” to prevent processes being affixed to them, and specifically noted that “men and women are reported to have carried as Eneas of old did… the aged decrepit, and those of tender years to a respectable distance from the homestead.”

Other events show a similar dispute regarding the conduct of the crowd as seen in the Monasteraden affair. The Examiner, for example, noted in January 1881 that nearly one hundred police and two hundred residents of Clooneen, Co. Mayo, clashed. The paper observed that, regarding the conduct of the crowd, “reports are at variance. The civilians say they were perfectly quiet, and were not offering any resistance, while the police complain of being stoned.” As in the case of Monasteraden, the nationalist press chose to focus on the violence inflicted on the residents of Clooneen, particularly the case of a “tenant farmer named John Quinn” who, it was reported was left “so battered that one could almost place his clenched hand in the hole” left in his skull. The Examiner noted that Quinn was married, and left “a widow and four children who, with his mother and sister, entirely depended upon him for their support,” mirroring the description of the men killed in the Sligo affray.

Resistance to eviction could also turn indisputably violent, as seen in the discussion of female involvement earlier in the chapter. In another example, Thomas Fallon, a resident of Carrowcourant, near Geevagh, Co. Sligo, was accused of “heading a

---

mob & inciting them to attack a process server while under police escort” on 9 May 1881. The police record noted that on that date “a mob harrowed a process server” led by Fallon and that “when subsequently [the process server was] being escorted to his home by the police Fallon was at the head of a mob and two bands urging them to attack the escort.”

The presence of the bands is particularly notable, illustrating a high level of communal support for those activities and drawing interesting parallels between this instance of forceful resistance and the pageantry of land meetings in which, we have seen, bands played a large part.

An example which showed similar parallels took place at Innismagrath, Co. Leitrim, near the border with Sligo. The *Champion* noted that a process server “entered the house of a poor woman, and presented her with one of those Court circulars, whereupon she put the Land League telephone into operation,” with the result that shortly “there were between 800 and 1,000 stalwart men from Sligo and Roscommon on the scene.” The process-server then fled the scene, with the *Champion* recording that he owed his continued good health “not to his armoury nor to his canine body guard, but that he could run tolerably well.” The paper claimed improbably “that his pursuers only meant to frighten him and proclaim the district from such intruders.” Finally, the local “fife and drum band went out to meet the Sligo and Roscommon men, who marched into the town,

---

673 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 5, Carton 2, No. 158.
four men deep, and all in their working costume,” again paralleling the pageantry surrounding a land meeting.674

Another claimant, Thomas Moran, testified to the RIC that he was “attacked by a large crowd when serving processes for shop goods in the townland of Drumboyland,” Co. Roscommon, with the crowd becoming “so violent that one of the constables had to fire on them” after Moran was “hit by several stones.” Moran’s testimony illustrates, in an echo of Monasteraden, that this incident went well beyond the passive resistance to the serving of processes. His account said that, after serving “one process in the townland of Drumrena and several in the townland of Drumboyland,” he was followed by “a great crowd who came after us for about two miles,” forcing him and his escort to take “refuge in a cabin,” while the “crowd remained outside the cabin shouting and cheering.” He also noted, as in the Monasteraden case, that the assault was not his first encounter with individuals opposed to his profession as he had been “threatened a year before the outrage: a strange man threatened me at Ballyfermoyle that I would be shot if I served ejectments.”675 Finally, it seems that in Moran’s case the assault was partly successful in its aims, as Moran stated that the “year before the assault I posted 77 ejectments in Strokestown and Keadue,” but that following it he served only two “ejectments and received 20 writs for rent which I did not serve through fear.”676

674 “A process-Server Scampering,” Sligo Champion, 11 June, 1881. A similar case took place at Geevagh, Co Sligo, where the Champion noted “Although the obnoxious individual was not molested, his courage oozed rapidly at the sudden appearance of large crowds of men and youths, and he beat a hasty retreat to the Ballyfarnon police barrack,” and that on a subsequent attempt “the police and their protégé were followed by a large crowd of men and boys, and by the Highwood and Ballyfarnon bands.” See “Process Serving at Geevagh,” Sligo Champion, 14 May, 1881.
675 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 6, Carton 2, No. 28.
676 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 6, Carton 2, No. 28.
The nationalist press did, at times, attempt to explain or justify the use of force during these instances. For example, following a clash between the police and citizens of Gurteen, Co Galway, which left two locals dead and dozens wounded, the *Herald* argued that “the flesh of landlordism has had more victims sacrificed to it—this time not by the slow, wasting process of starvation, exposure and eviction, but by a fierce wild struggle of men with naked limbs against disciplined force armed and weaponed with all the precision that science can command.” The *Herald* centered the deaths of the local men, saying that “we trust these men have not died in vain, that they have not risked their lives, sacrificed everything that was near and dear to them, and left the wives and families disconsolate over their untimely end without the matter being proved to its deepest depths.” The *Herald* also placed the blame squarely on the British authorities rather than the local crowd, asking “what brought a process server guarded by only four policemen, into the heart of a disturbed district, to initiate the first horrors of extermination of the people by serving processes of ejectment?” The paper then said that “it was criminal negligence to trifle with the passions of the people in such a manner… The tenants stuck manfully in a body in their determination not to pay the increased rent. There were very few weak-kneed among them.” In essence, the paper said, the motivation of the people was noble, that their actions were, at worst, only partly misguided, and that the central lesson of the incident was the willingness of Irishmen to die for their homes and families, rather than the violent conduct of the crowd.677

Resistance to eviction was only one facet of extralegal activities which took place during the Land War. In Co. Roscommon in June 1881, for example, a man named James [677 “Remember Gurteen,” *Roscommon Herald*, 9 April, 1881.]
Bull “and about 100 persons assembled at Mooneurave, intimidated and pursued Stewart Flaherty, process & summons server, and prevented him serving summons’s in that locality” before proceeding “to Drunkeeran, where they held a meeting. Bull addressed them in very inflammatory language, congratulating them on their victory” and “said there was no appearance of the people getting their rights by fair play, and that they were ready and willing to fight for them at any time.”678 Later that month Bull “led a party of some 600 persons, many of them armed with staves [and] pitchforks to the village of Ballyfarnon onto grazing lands of James McLaughlin of Knockramy & Pat Jansey of Church Acres.” Once on the land the crowd drove off the cattle, broke down a bridge, and assaulted a man named Quicken before proceeding “through Keadue village, past police barrack hooting and groaning” as they went, with one family taking refuge in the local police barrack.679 In both cases Bull led large groups of people to resist the land system, in the former case protesting eviction and leading an impromptu land meeting and in the latter resisting the distribution of land and demanding, in effect, that a more expansive definition of ‘the land for the people’ be enacted.

Bull’s actions in June 1881 illustrate a fundamental element confronting both the state and nationalist leadership during the Land War—that many acts carried out in the name of the people were illegal. While men like Rev. Mr. Flannery pushed for resistance to be nonviolent and portrayed acts of violence as aberrational, their calls were, at best, imperfectly implemented. On the local level the control that the nationalist leadership could impose was limited, as can be seen not only in the tactics of resistance to eviction,
but in the details of local speeches and the pageantry of land meetings which advocated for the use of force to achieve the goals of the League.

One reason for this breakdown of message discipline seems to have been the prominence of specific speakers, whose personal nationalisms allowed for, or even demanded, the use of force to achieve the goals of the agitation. For example, on several occasions J.W. Nally, a prominent Fenian from Mayo, made speeches advocating the use of violence. On 4 July 1880 at a meeting at Bohola, Co. Mayo, Nally referenced a recent agrarian outrage by saying “there has been more good done since this day week, than all the speaking.” A voice from the crowd replied, “three cheers for Rory of the hills,” which was itself met with widespread cheering. These sorts of cries from the audience were a not-uncommon feature of League meetings. At one meeting in Roscommon in February 1881, for example, a speaker denounced a landgrabber named O’Hara, with the police report noting that “The mention of O’Hara’s name provoked cries of “We will bury him alive” “Hang Him.”

At a meeting in August of the same year at Clooneal, Nally said that “he had seen some landgrabbers both that day & the day previous at Killalla “and they had the look of Judas Iscariot who slayed Christ.” He then added that “any man can have a rifle and use it; they are very cheap now…There is no close season for shooting vermin.” He ended his speech by connecting his calls for violence against landgrabbers to the broader nationalist movement, saying “the people want something more than speechifying. It was no use unless they went hand in hand under the standard of Wolfe Tone & Emmett, and

---

680 NAI, Police and crime records, Irish Land League and Irish NTNL League papers, Carton 1, No.27.
681 NAI Police and Crime Records, No. 4, Carton 10, Firing into the house of Patrick Flannagan, of Leabeg, on 12th February, 1881.
682 NAI, Police and Crime Records, Irish Land League and Irish NTNL League papers Carton 1, No. 30.
on the same scaffold as Allen, Larkin, and O’Brien.”683 At a land meeting held at Loughlynn, Co. Roscommon on 31 September 1880, Thomas Kelly referred to the ribbons worn by men in the crowd and said “I would like to see them come with something more substantial, something like what was carried by the Volunteers of ’72, and then we might say with confidence’ the land for the people, or this.”684 Finally, at a meeting at Shrule on 31 October Nally said that “He had suggested on one occasion hills, but he found that hills had got mild, they were nothing but sweets” and while he went on to say that “He would not suggest something stronger- dynamite, gun cotton,” he urged his audience to “stick to your homesteads, & any man that evicts you, you know what to do.”685

A similar case was that of P.J. Gordon, who was also a Fenian active in the land movement in Mayo and Roscommon. Gordon similarly valorized the use of force to defend one’s home, as when at a land meeting at Shrule on 20 June 1880, he related a story of an attempt that had been made by a landlord to evict a woman. Gordon said that she “stood up, took from the hearth a tongs, and smashed the head of the robber. She was not guilty of a crime. He asked the women there that day to act the part of the soldier, to allow no robber to enter their cabin.”686 Gordon also connected the efforts of the Land

683 NAI, Police and Crime Records, Irish Land League and Irish National League papers Carton 1, No. 30. In this speech Nally was linking nationalist martyrs from a variety of Risings. Wole Tone had been among the leaders of the 1798 Rebellion which sought to establish a French-inspired Irish Republic. Robert Emmet had attempted a similar Rising in 1803 and his speech at his trial for treason became a central piece of nationalist lore. Finally, Allen, Larkin, and O’Brien all had been executed in 1867 for their efforts to free arrested Fenians in England- the aftermath of their deaths was described in chapter one.


685 NAI, Police and crime records, Irish Land League and Irish NTNL League papers, Carton 1, No. 36. Hills in this context refers to members of the IRB- so it seems that Kelly was opposed to the political turn of that organization.

686 NAI, Police and crime records, Irish Land League and Irish NTNL League papers, Carton 1, No. 368.
League to those of the Boers fighting the first Anglo-Boer war at the time, saying in a Roundfort, Co. Mayo speech in April 1881: “They were bound to resist that law which has deprived their forefathers of the land that was theirs, and who were evicted without mercy… If the blood of one landlord shot cries to heaven for vengeance, how much more the blood of millions of the Irish people murdered by eviction and starvation,” before concluding that “the Boers are the boys can bone the English soldier.”

He went further in a speech at Castlerea, Co. Roscommon, on 13 April 1881, where he asked his audience “Why are ye not shooting down the land-thieves? Ye are doing nothing here. See what the Boers did: they sent the English Government that they would have no land-thieves, and ye might do the same if ye had only the courage.”

The most directly confrontational speeches were those made as the result of the actions of the British state. Gordon, for example, made a series of such speeches after his arrest for sedition following the above-mentioned Castlerea meeting. At the Claremorris Railway station while being conveyed to Galway, Gordon said, “keep your powder dry boys, and blow Bourke,” a local landlord, “to blazes some fine morning.” He concluded by saying, “let no man say a word to a policeman; but there is another basterdly [sic] dog there, Carter, anyone who would look at him would know that he was a bastard.”

At Ballyhaunis the same day, Gordon told a small audience, “I have been arrested under the Coercion Act, and I hope to hear of ye shooting Hubert Davis, the cross-born bastard; blow him to hell, the Shoneen of a landlord.” Meanwhile, Bartholomew Flinn in a

---

687 NAI, Police and crime records, Irish Land League and Irish NTNL League papers, Carton 2, No. 383.
688 NAI, Police and crime records, Irish Land League and Irish NTNL League papers, Carton 2, No. 356.
689 NAI, Police and crime records, Irish Land League and Irish NTNL League papers, Carton 2, No.384.
690 NAI, Police and crime records, Irish Land League and Irish NTNL League papers, Carton 2, No.385.

Shoneen was an Anglicized version of the word Seánín (“Little John”), with the diminutive implying an Irishman who sought to be like John Bull.
speech at Mahanagh, Co. Sligo, in an apparent effort to get himself arrested as a protest against the internment of Land League leaders asked his audience “will you spring to your feet like men and settle this question; the only way it can be settled. The French settled their question, they acted like men, they hanged their landlords to the nearest post, or shot them down like snipe in September.” He went on to say, in a more aggressive version of the message seen in chapter three that action was needed to prove masculine status: “Hereditary bondsman know ye not who would be free themselves must strike the blow… from Howth to Galway the cry of the tenants will respond to the call of Ireland’s manhood and leap to its feet instead of constitutional agitation.”

These more aggressive local statements were, at times, mirrored by banners which depicted at least a willingness to consider, if not an eagerness to use, violence in the furtherance of League aims. The Sligo Champion, for example, noted that at a land demonstration at Benada, on the border with Mayo, that one contingent carried a banner “with the device in painting of a landlord recumbent—or rather, prostrate—with Pat planting a foot on his neck and pressing the cold end of a pike against the breast of the fallen rack-renter. Underneath is the motto ‘paying off old Arrears’.” The Connaught Telegraph similarly noted that while some contingents to a tenant-right meeting at Ballinrobe bore innocuous banners such as “a picture of Erin pointing to ruined homesteads,” or “a representation of the Irish Wolf Dog with the motto ‘Gentle when Stoked, Fierce when Provoked’,” other banners were more inflammatory, such as one

---

691 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 5, Carton 2, No. 125.
which bore “a picture of pike and the motto In hoc signo vinces (in this sign conquer),” mirroring the attire of “Some few hundred people [who] carried mock pikes and guns.”

Police records also occasionally commented on the signs present at land meetings, as when the report on a meeting held at Shrule, Co. Mayo, noted banners reading “‘We’ll rive the chains of thraldom, and strike a final blow, for Ireland’s holy freedom, and landlords overthrow’; ‘‘Down with land-grabbers,’ with pike and gun crossed”; and “Faug a ballagh,” the motto of the Irish Brigade of the Union Army during the American Civil War and the Royal Irish Fusiliers. A final banner read, “‘I’ll cock my musket, says the Shan van vogth,” melding the nationalist figure of the poor old woman representing Ireland with a direct call to armed action. Another meeting at Ballintubber, Co. Roscommon, had a similar mixture of messages in the signs carried by local contingents, with the RIC report commenting that the most notable banner read “Parnell save my people (This banner bore the likeness of a woman representing Erin, and of Mr. Parnell),” while another read “Let Tyrants remember the Grave.” Taken together, these speeches and banners seem to indicate that there was at least less central control of messaging as the mediums were more popularly produced, with local speeches and banners being more willing to offer threats than were newspapers or speeches given by more nationally prominent figures.

693 “Great Tenant-Right Meeting in Ballinrobe,” Connaught Telegraph, 11 October, 1879.
694 NLJ, Ms. 11,289, Shrure, Co. Mayo 31 October, 1880.
695 NLJ, Ms. 11,289, Ballintubber, Co. Roscommon 8 August, 1880.
Importantly, the calls for violence from, some, nationalist platforms and banners were often matched by concrete action.\textsuperscript{696} The case of O’Hara in Roscommon, the mention of whose name had led a crowd to call out “we will bury him alive” and “hang him” illustrates three key points about agrarian crime during this period. First, nationalist efforts at restraint had limited efficacy; second, disputes over land could metastasize and grow to involve others than the initial targets; and third, communal ideas about identity and justice played a central role in justifying at times violent action.

O’Hara was denounced for having taken a farm from an evicted man named Nolan, and the crowd’s evident willingness to countenance violence against him led the speaker at the Roscommon meeting, P. Kelly, to say “that if the people united and set their faces against this villain he must relinquish the farm.” Kelly then “urged that he be boycotted.” Although local activists proclaimed a boycott of O’Hara, his brother-in-law Edward McCormack allowed him to stock turf in his yard and was himself boycotted in turn. Importantly, RIC records indicate that McCormack was not a member of the local Land League branch in Ballymoe, “nor was he on friendly terms with some of the members,” which may have contributed to his decision to defy the ban and the immediacy and depth of the local response. McCormack employed a man named Patrick Mulroy who upon “going to work on the morning of 30\textsuperscript{th} January, 1881…found a grave dug in the field he was working at and a stick placed at the head thereof, on which was a notice” which had a depiction of a rifle. It read:

\textsuperscript{696} Paul Bew discusses this phenomenon in \textit{Land and the National Question}, where he notes a general shift in agrarian violence from the west to the south as the agitation commenced generally linked to resistance to paying rent. He argued that crime following the suppression of the League was focused on revenge for internment, to show that coercion was a failed policy, and to discredit the government’s decision to suppress the Land League (201).
This is I suppose McCormack’s land. NO person found base enough to go undertake turning it but you. Give it up at once, or if not, fear the worst. Pat Mulroy, if it is a fact that you are going to turn and so contrary as to go and do what every other man has objected to do, give it up at once. This is only going to give you a chance of your life, and if this will not what will follow I’m sure will. Signed… Capt. Moonlight

Mulroy was not the only individual threatened for violation of the boycott. Patrick Flannagan, of Leabeg, was a herd on a neighboring farm, and continued to deal with McCormack in his capacity as a shopkeeper and blacksmith. On the “12th February, 1882, two shots were fired into the house of Patrick Flannigan” and “on a Sunday some short time after… date not known… Mrs. Honoria Flanagan, when going to mass, found the following notice… about a mile from her husband’s house: ‘To have Flanagan and Clarke (pimp) beware of McCormack the boycott.’” Following this latter incident McCormack apparently joined the local League branch, which led to the withdrawal of the boycott.

These cases illustrate how methods of protest deemed acceptable by the nationalist leadership and press could, at times, spill over into illegality and violence due in large part to the limited control the League leadership had over local branches and populations and the extent to which the Ribbon-Fenian connections which had been cultivated in the decades prior to the Land War, were progenitors of local League branches, as was the case in Ballinasloe. Other cases illustrate how the central nationalist message, that agrarian crime needed to be avoided to prove Irish manhood, also had limited acceptance on the ground. Indeed, communal norms seemed to accept what

697 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 4, Carton 10, Firing into the house of Patrick Flannagan, of Leabeg, on 12th February 1881.
698 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 4, Carton 10, Firing into the house of Patrick Flannagan, of Leabeg, on 12th February 1881.
League leaders denounced as the “wild justice of revenge,” i.e., when a tenant took understandable if unacceptable vengeance on a landlord or agent. Although such instances were comparatively rare, their acceptance locally ran counter to and challenged the nationalist message.

The clearest evidence that there was a disconnect between the nearly constant injunctions from platform and press to avoid the use of force on the one hand and the popular appetite for it on the other lies in the fact that the number of outrages increased drastically during the Land War years, and particularly during its latter years. As noted in chapter two, in the years following the Famine the number of agrarian outrages declined drastically, with the exception of the years 1869-70. In 1870, 1,329 agrarian outrages were reported across Ireland, with 665 reported in Mayo, 26 in Roscommon, and 27 in Sligo. Following that spike, the number of agrarian crimes again fell, with no year from 1871-1877 having more than 379 reported agrarian offenses across the island. Even the first year of the agitation itself had a relatively muted impact on the instances of agrarian offenses, with only 301 such offenses recorded in 1878. However, as the Land War progressed these numbers increased dramatically, with 863 such crimes reported in 1879, a total of 2,585 in 1880, and a total of 4,439 such offenses in 1881. The final year of the agitation 1882, saw a slightly lower number of offenses, with 3,433 reported,

699 Return of outrages reported to Constabulary Office in Ireland, 1870-71, 21. 
https://www.dippam.ac.uk/eppi/documents/15590

700 Numerical returns of outrages reported to Constabulary Office in Ireland, 1881 

Given that the delineation of crimes as agrarian or non-agrarian could conceivably be prone to error it is important to note that the general trend for crimes followed this pattern. 1869-70 averaged 3,752 crimes reported across the island, while the period 71-77 had no year higher than 1872's 3,338. 1879 saw 3,500 total crimes reported, 1880 5,669, and 1881 7,788.

701 Numerical returns of outrages reported to Constabulary Office in Ireland, 1881 
https://www.dippam.ac.uk/eppi/documents/17136/pages/455242, 9
although this can be explained by the fact that the “Kilmainham Treaty” between Parnell and Gladstone was negotiated in May of that year, largely concluding the agitation.\textsuperscript{702} Again, Connaught was the region most disturbed, with 1,235 offenses reported in 1881, the year for which records are most clear. Mayo again had the highest incidence of agrarian crime with 308 offenses, compared to 174 for Roscommon and 100 for Sligo.\textsuperscript{703} What we can clearly see from these records is that there was a drastic increase in the amount of agrarian crime reported, and presumably a greater amount which went unreported, despite the efforts of the nationalist entrepreneurs discussed in chapter three. Additionally, we can see that the instance of agrarian crime tracks with the progress of the land agitation, with the greatest amount of agrarian crime coming after the suppression of the League. This indicates that some individuals were willing to follow the League program and turned to violence when it became clear that the program was not likely to produce gains for them, either because of increasing League moderation or because of the government crackdown.\textsuperscript{704} As Clark noted the League created a coalition of tenant farmers which bridged the different strata of rural society, but as Jordan noted in his analysis of Mayo the willingness of large tenant farmers to take advantage of the land courts established by the 1881 act did lead to some fracturing of that coalition in the West. It seems likely that the increased violence following the passage of the Act was

\textsuperscript{702} Return of number of agrarian outrages committed in Ireland reported to Inspector General of Royal Irish Constabulary, 1881. 1882 and January 1883, 2. https://www.dippam.ac.uk/eppi/documents/17322/pages/463098.
\textsuperscript{703} Numerical returns of outrages reported to Constabulary Office in Ireland, 1881 https://www.dippam.ac.uk/eppi/documents/17136/pages/455242.
\textsuperscript{704} C.S. Parnell did warn that the arrest of League leaders would likely result in increased violence. For more on the dynamic between the arrests and the increase in violence see Clark, Social Origins of the Land War, 336, 338; Jordan, Land and Popular Politics in Ireland, 303-306.
largely from those groups still excluded from participating, such as leaseholders with
rents in arrears and landless laborers.

When we examine the specifics of these crimes, they bear remarkable similarities
to those discussed in chapter two. Many agrarian crimes seem to have stemmed,
unsurprisingly, from the payment of rent. For example, Thomas Flanagan of Loughlynn,
Co. Roscommon, was assaulted on 12 May 1882 near Ballaghadereen, Co. Mayo, “as he
was leaving the shops of John Flannery by being struck on the head with loded whip or
some other weapon.” The police asserted that the motive of the assault was because
Flanagan had “paid his rent to Lord De Freyne’s agent,” noting that “from the time of his
so paying his rent, he had been boycotted in the neighbourhood in which he resided, and
some of his neighbours were seen in Ballaghadereen on the day on which the assault took
place.”705

Similarly, Martin Horkins of Drumshinagh, Co. Mayo, filed an application
alleging that he had been “severely and most cruelly assaulted by a party of disguised and
armed men who attacked his house on the night of Sunday the 5th day of February 1882
and that he has been since suffering from the consequences of the cowardly outrage.” In
Horkins’s case the motivation, as related to him by some of his assailants, was that “he
had paid his rent which the other tenants in the neighbourhood refused to do.” Following
the attack “in consequence of the feeling displayed toward applicant the authorities
considered it necessary to afford him special police protection and to erect a police hut
within twenty yards of applicants dwelling house.” The assault on Horkins was
apparently quite extensive, as he reported he was “much and permanently injured by the

705 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 6, carton 2, No. 27.
violent assault made upon him” and feared “the result of the brutal and murderous beating inflicted will be life-long infirmity and almost total incapacity for the labours by which he supported himself his wife and six children.”706

In a final example, tenants in the region of Ballyscannel, Co. Sligo, held a meeting on 15 January 1881 at which they attempted to ascertain which local tenants had violated an earlier compact and paid their rent. At this meeting “each tenant was sworn as to whether he had paid his rent, but” a man named William Devins refused. On 16 February “three revolver shots were fired in to Devins’ house” after which “Devins was boycotted for some time, and had to be afforded police protection by patrols.”707

Other incidents stemmed primarily from disputes over the possession of land. For example, in Co. Roscommon, about three miles from the townland of Keadue, a man named John Peyton held a farm of about 90 acres but gave up the farm in 1881 as he expected that he was about to be evicted. A herd named John Geraghty had resided on the farm and herded it while Peyton held the farm, and he continued to do so when a Mr. Thomas Steward, of Erris, Co. Mayo took ownership. On 5 October 1881 Steward asked Geraghty to cut some of the hay for him, which he did for the next few days until the early morning of 9 October when “a party of about 50 men came to Geraghty’s house, armed and disguised, broke in the door and windows, dragged him out in his shirt, put him on his knees, and swore him not to herd for Mr. Stewart any more, or for any other

706 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 6, carton 2, No. 25. In a final example John Byrne of Loughanboy, Co Mayo, filed an application for compensation with the RIC asserting “on Sunday the 30th day of July 1882...when going to mass from his own house” he “was maliciously fired at” and seriously wounded.” This assault was the second in a series of intimidations, which included “shots fired at his house.” He argued that his assault was “owing to the fact that he holds land which had been several years ago” seized for nonpayment of rent and he refused “to give it back to persons claiming some right to it.” (NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 6, carton 2, No. 22).

707 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 4, Carton 10, No.31.
man on that farm.” The assault was not confined to Geraghty himself, as the crowd “also dragged out his son and treated him in the same way. Three shots were fired over them.” The RIC report noted that “Steward gave up on the farm in consequence of the annoyance and boycotting that was going on in the country,” and that it was taken by Mr. Christopher Brydges of Boyle, Co. Roscommon.

On 1 November another notice was posted on a separate farm that Peyton had held, which had subsequently been taken over by a man named David Shera. The notice contained “a rough illustration of a coffin with the words ‘This is yours’ and the message

To Shera, the landgrabber dog, we mean to have you excommunicated from this place for promoting mischief and exciting the minds of the true… if you were guarded by 9,000 men of her army, on the hill you will be shot like a dog in the midst of them, so quit the place or part your life. We mean to abolish tyranny.

As a result of this Shera gave up the farm. The final act of this dispute took place around the 26 December 1881, when Geraghty received a letter threatening him for his continued work as a herd.

In another example from Co. Roscommon in July 1880 a Mr. Martin M’Donnel, of Dunmore, Co. Galway, “seized some crops belonging to a widow named Mrs. Luke Mullen, for non-payment of rent,” and employed a local man, Patrick Kirwan, of Mount Devlin, to mind the crops. In October 1880, “a party of men came to Kirwan’s house and warned him to give up caring [for] the crops,” which Kirwan ignored. The RIC noted that on 2 January 1881, there was a Land League meeting held at Loughboy, Co. Mayo,

---

708 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 4 Carton 10, , Attacking the house of John Geraghty of Cleen, Keadue, 9th October 1881.  
709 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 4, Carton 10, Proclamations relating to meetings of Irish National Land League (VIII), Attacking the house of John Geraghty of Cleen, Keadue, 9th October 1881.  
710 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 4, Carton 10, Attacking the house of John Geraghty of Cleen, Keadue, 9th October 1881.
about two miles from Kirwan’s house, and that on the 4th “about one o’clock a.m., a party
of about twenty men forced in the door of Kirwan’s house, dragged him out, kicked him
in the body, and carded his face.” Following this assault, “he gave up minding the crops,
and no further outrage was committed on him.”

Local League committees also disputed the proper distribution of land within
communities. One example from the parish of Tirerill in Co. Sligo saw a communal
response to a pair of brothers from nearby Ballymote taking possession of a farm which
had belonged to an evicted tenant. The local Land League branch reported to the Sligo
Champion that “a resolution was passed condemning the actions of the Messers O’Brien
in rather strong terms.” Community members followed this up with a popular agitation
that the League branch clearly approved of but stopped just short of taking credit for. The
branch noted that after the resolution was passed the cattle belonging to the brothers were
driven outside the boundaries of the farm night after night, their fences broken, and the
whole place converted into a “common.” The branch also noted that these efforts were
paired with extensive boycotting, with the herd who had worked for the former occupier
refusing to care it, and Pat Torsney, of Ardnescin giving up at the request of the League
branch the hay which he had bought from the farm after it was seized for rent. The branch
characterized these actions as “manifestations of the people’s will,” and approvingly
noted that “in deference to these manifestations... the Messers O’Brien gave up the
farm.”

---

711 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 4, Carton 10, Carding of Patrick Kirwan, of Mount Devlin, Cloonfad,
on 4th January, 1881. Carding refers to the use of steel carding brushes to score the skin as a form of
physical punishment. It was noted to be particularly painful and prone to leave scarring.
712 “Tirerill and Corran Branch of Land League: To the Editor of the Champion,” Sligo Champion, 20
November, 1880.
The *Roscommon Herald* similarly noted an extensive effort to force land redistribution in the winter of 1882. The *Herald* reported that “it had been rumored for some time that the farms of Ballymore, containing about 800 acres, from which the occupier was recently evicted, would be divided by the landlady into holdings, to suit small farmers,” and that certain individuals in the region took steps to hasten this change. In late January the paper noted that “written notices were observed” in the region, reading “Down with Landgrabbers” and calling “on the men of Roscommon and Sligo to come in their thousands on Monday 6th Feb to do the work of justice on the land of Ballymore, and subdivide it into divisions from 10 to 20 acre holdings each.” The signature on these notices read the “right Capt Moonlight.”

It seems that these calls were heeded ahead of schedule, as the *Herald* reported on 4 February that “a considerable amount of damage has been done to the land. About 800 areas have been lockspitted, and cut into 10 and 20 acre allotments, and the foundations of houses with gardens attached have been distinctly traced out,” clearly illustrating a local desire for the land to be redistributed. Efforts were also made to prevent the re-letting of the farm as a whole, as “about twenty graves were dug in different portions of the land” and placards posted up stating that there would be no more threatening notices “that the shonnen’s grave had been dug, and if they came with buckshot and bayonet they would meet with death.” These placards carried the same signature of the ”real Moonlight” as had their predecessors. The *Herald* also noted the scale of the initiative, estimating “that there must have been hundreds engaged in the perpetration of this

---

extraordinary outrage,” further illustrating the extent to which a large part of the local population sought a specific meaning to the phrase ‘the land for the people.’\textsuperscript{714}

A similar outrage took place in Roscommon in the summer of 1882. Three local men, Patrick Kennedy, Michael Heally, and Thomas Queeny bought portions of a farm that had been given up by a prior tenant. According to the local records, other tenant farmers in the region “wanted to boycott this farm, so that it might become a common, and all would have free grazing” to the point where “it was an every day occurrence to get boycotting notices on this farm,” with the cited example reading “Death to any person who would take the Cloghan grass farm.”\textsuperscript{715}

Popular response to the purchase began immediately. The night after the auction a shot was fired through Kennedy’s bedroom window, shots were fired through the kitchen and bedroom windows of Michael Heally’s house, and the “house of Thomas Queeny was also fired into that night.” As a result of this, all three men gave up their portions of the meadow the next day. On 24 October another man, a Mr. P Dolan, took the farm and received a letter on the 30\textsuperscript{th} which read “Mr. Land-grabber, go at once and give up your title of Cloghan farm, or, if not, you and your family, and a few others, I am told, has no time to spare… You will not be long a farmer, nor a bad parible [sic] in the Co. Roscommon.” However, Dolan apparently faced no physical action against himself and retained possession of the land, illustrating the apparent limits of communal action.\textsuperscript{716}


\textsuperscript{715} NAI, Police and crime Records, No. 4, Carton 10, Proclamations relating to meetings of the Irish National League, Firing into the House of Patrick Kennedy, Michael Heally, and Thomas Queeny, of Targbey 19-8-82.

\textsuperscript{716} NAI, Police and crime Records, No. 4, Carton 10, Proclamations relating to meetings of the Irish National League, Firing into the House of Patrick Kennedy, Michael Hally, and Thomas Queeny, of Targbey 19-8-82.
Rarely did agrarian crimes rise to the level of murder, with one of the only examples in the region taking place in Boyle, Co. Roscommon, on 13 December 1881, when someone killed a man named James Brennan. James and his brother Michael Brennan. The brothers were small farmers on the property of Lady Louisa Tennison, the inhabitants of which were noted by police as having “a strong feeling against the payment of rents on the property.” On 21 October 1881 a notice was found posted on a bridge at Carrowbaun, about four miles from where the Brennans lived. It read “Here I am with my coat of arms, Roary of the Hill, at last, to give ye due notice to pay no rent, or if ye do ye may blame yourselves for I swear candidly I will do what I often did before, to shoot ye down on the field or on the road, or on yer beds, wherever it may be yer lot to fall.”

A month and a half later a similar notice was posted on the Court House, at Cootchull, about seven miles from the Brennans’, threatening anyone who paid their rent the next Tuesday “with instant death.” The next day a similar notice was posted at Kilmacroy, about three miles from Brennan’s, headed “to the Irish People” and another notice was found about 200 yards from Brennan’s House, which read “Michael Brennan boycotted for paying rent, the rascal, no man to speak to him. James Brennan take notice to have clear acquittance with Michael Brennan. I give you four day’s notice. Don’t bring me here again… Capt. Moonlight.” The next night as Michael and James Brennan were

---

717 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 4, Carton 10, Proclamations relating to meetings of Irish National Land League (VIII), Murder of James Brennan on 13th December 1881
sitting over the kitchen fire, a shot was fired from outside the home, hitting and killing James.\textsuperscript{718}

There were concerted efforts by local League branches to control agrarian crime, most notably through the creation of Land League courts, systems by which disputes over the ownership of land, or the payment of rent could be adjudicated and, ideally, solved without recourse to violence. The existence of such courts has been extensively examined in Mayo by Jordan, who argued that the everyday concerns of local communities dominated the activities of local League branches.\textsuperscript{719}

Examples of League courts from these years can also be found in preserved RIC records, with the Constabulary in Sligo being particularly active in combatting them, identifying three individuals who played key roles in the setting up of League Courts. All three men, John Kelly of Riverstown, Patrick Kelly of Knockroe, and Peter Foley of Drumcondra near Riverstown, were prominent in local League branches, with the Kellys serving as secretaries and Foley serving as treasurer for their branches. All three men were of relatively comfortable means, as John Kelly was a shopkeeper’s son, Patrick Kelly was a small farmer in “fair” circumstances, and Peter Foley a farmer in “good

\textsuperscript{718} NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 4, Carton 10, Proclamations relating to meetings of Irish National Land League (VIII), Murder of James Brennan on 13th December 1881. Another case where the victim was first presented with several indicators of local displeasure was the shooting of Joseph Hogan of Crossmolina, Co. Mayo, in October 1882. Hogan “was fired at about 400 yard from his house... bullet struck the button of his boat and ran down into his thigh where it lodged and remained,” with the police attributing the attack to his refusal “to join in the agitation which was then and previously very extreme in the district and refuses to contribute toward the defence of a man charged with an offence against a person who has taken an evicted farm.” A series of notices targeting Hogan had come to the attention of the RIC in the years before the assault, as a boycotting notice was posted in December 1880 “cautioning persons against dealing with Joseph Hogan or his brother” his house was “fired into in January 1881,” threatening language was “used toward him in October 1881 and Spring 1882 by Thomas Daly,” and finally threatening letters were sent to one of Hogan’s employees “in 1882 threatening him with death if he did not cease working for him.” See NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 6, Carton 4, No. 1447.

circumstances.” This stands in direct contrast to the other individuals, whose arrest records were preserved in the Police and Crime files, who were noted as being in “bad” or “indifferent” circumstances.\textsuperscript{720}

The focus of the courts on which all three men sat were disputes over land. John Kelly and Peter Foley apparently sat on the same court in the period January-June of 1881. The court dealt with a number of issues, as John Kelly’s file noted that in January he “sat in Land League Court at Ballintogher where several persons were fined for various things.”\textsuperscript{721} The case which brought the court to the attention of the RIC was adjudicated on 22 May 1881 when a farmer named “John Healy was ordered to give up his farm and also desired not to seek compensation for the fences knocked down” in a previous effort at intimidation.\textsuperscript{722} As evidence of typical efforts at intimidation, the RIC stated that nearly two weeks earlier “the fences of… four acres were completely leveled… and a grave dug with a cross in the earth & Healy’s initials marked.”\textsuperscript{723} Apparently Healy did not heed the League court’s order, as on the night of 1 June the fences of the farm were again leveled.\textsuperscript{724}

Patrick Kelly’s file is more extensive and illustrates the extent to which some low-level agrarian crime was used, and even at times welcomed, by local League officials to advance their local aims.\textsuperscript{725} Kelly was accused of sitting on League courts from October 1880 through May 1881 and of making “himself very active in carrying out of the

\textsuperscript{720} NAI Police and Crime Records, No. 5, Carton 1, Nos 60, 61, 62, 31, 23. 423; No. 5, Carton 2, Nos 36, 73, 94, 115, 125, 158, 160, 164, 171,172, 185, 940 . John Kelly’s background is particularly interesting, as Comerford noted that men of his social profile in the 1860s were the main recruiting ground for the IRB, as their relatively elevated social position and relatively limited financial position made them ripe targets.
\textsuperscript{721} NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 5, Carton 2, 171.
\textsuperscript{722} NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 5, Carton 2, 172.
\textsuperscript{723} NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 5, Carton 2, 171.
\textsuperscript{724} NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 5, Carton 2, 171.
\textsuperscript{725} Jordan discusses this on 261 of \textit{Land and Popular Politics}. 
League rules and also interfering in settlement of disputes regarding land—and being a means of having several persons boycotted." Kelly’s file reveals the RIC suspected him of a variety of offenses beyond sitting at a League court, including sending threatening letters inciting others to commit outrages, posting boycotting notice & interfering generally with the maintenance of law and order. Police noted that he sat in that court when a local man named “Michal Boulon was fined 5” shillings “for having worked with Michael Hawley a baliff [sic].” Police also accused Kelly of crimes stemming from an incident on 9 May 1881, when a mob pursued a process server and Kelly “was found ringing the Geevagh chapel bell so as to collect all the people that they might commit outrage or murder the process server,” with the report noting that “he was first cautioned, would not desist, then he was arrested by the police. When released he again headed the mob and did his utmost to urge an attack on police escorting.”

The existence of Land Courts throughout the region, and the specific activities of the two courts noted above, illustrate the efforts of League officials at the local level to resolve disputes, reasonably, peacefully, issuing fines and orders to give up disputed land in the place of the use of force. However, the case of Patrick Kelly in particular illustrates how the line between intimidation and force was blurred by the League courts, with Kelly’s fining of Michael Boulon and his “interfering generally with the maintenance of law and order” being inextricably linked.

However, this linkage contrasted directly with the nationalist narrative that agrarian outrages were the “wild justice of revenge,” actions undertaken by men who were pushed past their breaking point by the inequities of the land system. Despite the

---

726 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 5, Carton 2, 940.
727 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 5, Carton 2, 940.
efforts of League leaders to present crime as doubly isolated, isolated due to its rarity and due to the individual nature of such crimes, most agrarian crime in the evidence from Mayo, Sligo, and Roscommon seems to have been communal, or at the least involved substantial sections of the community.

That is not to say that there were no crimes which matched the nationalist construction of the “wild justice of revenge,” that is, of a lone farmer assassinating a landlord or land agent as he rode past a concealed ambush. For example, George Carter of Westmullet, Co. Mayo, in March 1882 reported that “he was fired at he believes maliciously and willfully from behind a hedge opposite to his gate and his knee was desperately shattered.” The assassination attempt arose out of Carter’s management of estates in the region, first as agent for his brother and then in his own right. In January 1882, he reported to the RIC that he had filed notices of eviction against several tenants, offering to withdraw the proceedings “if they paid one years rent and full costs which some of them declined to pay owing it is believed to the advice of the Land League.” Those tenants who refused to pay were evicted at the end of April 1882, meaning that the March attack may have been an attempt to prevent the evictions from taking place. Carter was also vulnerable on that date as he had “in accordance with a notice previously given to the tenants attended at the rent office in Belmullet [it] being a fair day for the collection of rents.” As he returned to his home, he was fired at and “his assistant Agent Frank Froom… saw three men in the dusk running away across the field.” Carter drove toward Belmullet after this attack and “called a boy whom he met and asked him to get into the dog-cart to assist in managing the horse which was restive.” The boy did so, but when Carter informed him that had been shot the boy requested that Carter not “tell that
he had come with him as he feared he would be murdered,” illustrating the local ill-
feeling toward Carter. Carter ultimately had his leg amputated above the knee due to his 
injuries.728

Another example of this sort is the case of Patrick Hession of Ballinrobe, Co. 
Mayo, who was involved “in the case of firing at with intent to murder Mr. John 
Kearne… petty sessions clerk and land agent.” Kearne was “was fired at and wounded on 
the public road at Killorshine near Ballinrobe… by two men with revolvers at about 3 
o’clock P.M… on account of the eviction” of a local tenant in “1880 for non-payment of 
rent from his farm at Cloongrowla, for which said Patrick Hession exhibited angry 
demeanor toward Mr. John Hearne as agent.” While it was not Hession’s farm which was 
the site of an eviction, the fairly direct connection between an eviction and the attempted 
assassination of an individual involved in that system fits the nationalist image well.729

A further example, occurred on 13 April 1881, when Mr. Jasper Hamilton and his 
wife met Michael Durkan and a Mr. Murphy on a lonely part of the avenue leading from 
his house to Castlemorgarret house” in Co Mayo. Hamilton, steward of Lord Oranmore, 
was “proceeding on his usual business.” Hamilton was suspicious of why Durkan was in 
the area, and when “questioned Durkan stated that he had been at Castlemorgarret house 
seeing the herd which was untrue.” Hamilton’s wife “observed Durkan’s hands behind 
his back and saw that he held a loaded revolver in one of them” and “ordered the two 
men to go away, which they did.” Later that day both men were arrested with “two six-

728 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 6, Carton 3, No. 94. John Oram upon returning to Ireland similarly 
noted in his diary for 1879 that on 30 September, “Mr. Sydney smith [was] shot at near where I was shot 
at in 1872- Mr. Smith’s son returned the shot & killed the man!” (https://digital.ucd.ie/view-
media/ucdlib:256153/canvas/ucdlib:256420)

729 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 5, Carton 2, 36.
chambered red revolvers in their position, Durkan’s being loaded, and 20 rounds of ammunition.” According to the Constabulary, the motive for the attempted assassination was that “Hamilton, acting on behalf of Lord Oranmore had had processes issued against his lordships tenants.”

A similar incident took place near Keadue, Co. Roscommon, in August that same year. On 18 August, three armed men with veils covering their faces entered a field, shot at four men, Terence Gaffney, Patrick Tanzy, Michael Tobin, and Thomas Kiernan, and set fire to three cocks of hay. The assault stemmed from a dispute over the ownership of con-acre meadows, which the four men had taken possession of earlier in the month. They did so despite a threatening notice having appeared near the chapel gate at Crossna, about four miles from Carricknashee, warning “that any person or persons taking con-acre meadows against the rules shall be deemed a traitor to the country’s cause and treated as such… Rory of the hill.”

The land in question continued to be the center of a series of threatening notices even after the assault of 18 August. On 31 July 1882 a notice was posted reading

Let no man dare take any of the meadows now offered for sale at Arigna or anywhere on the property of the notorious Land Thief Lady Louisa Tennisor, or any meadow or grass land belonging to an agent, landlord, or landgrabber. Let the Crimes Act not induce ye to think ye are safe. Death will be waiting the first man who may be found so base. God Save Ireland.

However, while there were some cases which fit the nationalist image described in chapter three, others targeted not landlords but other tenants. Targeted individuals had generally violated the local codes by taking land from which another had been evicted.

---

730 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 5, Carton 2, 115.
731 Firing at Terence Gaffney, Pat Tanzy, and Michael Tobin, near Keadue, on 18th August, 1881.
732 Firing at Terence Gaffney, Pat Tanzy, and Michael Tobin, near Keadue, on 18th August, 1881.
Attacking them not only kept the land in question vacant for the evicted tenant to return to, but also injured the landlord, depriving him of rents. Such assaults also pushed the communal norm that all were to follow the League rule rather than the landlord-and-state rule, further illustrating the power of alternative conceptions of justice in this period. In December 1879 a tenant named John Naughton of Collumber, Co. Roscommon, had his home fired into following an extended confrontation over the issue of rent. On the first of December Naughton apparently paid his rent, and on the fourth he met a man named Patrick Shea who confronted Naughton, leading Naughton to deny having paid and Shea to assert that he knew “well you paid your rent.” The next night at 11:00 pm “two shots were fired through the window, the shot lodging over a bed in which some of the children were asleep. The door was kicked and voices called for Naughton to come out,” but he was not home as he was sleeping at the house of Pat Murray, the bailiff of the local estate, where he had been working. Undaunted, “the party then went in the direction of the Shannon and fired shots into two boats belonging to Naughton doing considerable damage.”

Apparently, this was not sufficient to satisfy the local desire to punish Naughton, as he “had to get police protection for about two years,” and in 1881 a notice was found on the road near Naughton’s house saying that even if Naughton had 20 police protecting him, he would be shot. A with a coffin, long gun, and were pistol crudely drawn on the bottom of the note. Shortly after this notice was found Naughton, presumably concerned

733 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 4, Carton 10, Proclamations relating to meetings of Irish National Land League (VIII), Firing into house of John Naughton, of Coolumber, on 5th December, 1879.
for his continued health, “joined the League, and no further outrage was committed on him.”

Another character in the incident, Pat Murray, Naughton’s employer, was also impacted by the events of 5 December. On that day Kieram Murray, his son, “proceeded to serve ejectment processes. A crowd of 50 or 60 persons assembled, shouting, yelling, and pelting him with mud and stones. Some of the processes were taken from him. From the violence of the crowd, he had to give up serving them. The crowd followed him home and remained for some time outside his house shouting.” The timing of the two events raises the question of whether the assault on Naughton was tied not only to his paying of rent, but his employment by the Murray family.

Many agrarian crimes involved the community as a whole. This is particularly true for the physical resistance to eviction, which we have seen often went well beyond passive resistance, despite the exhortations of League members and clergy. On several occasions, bands were heavily involved in the commission or aftermath of agrarian crimes. For example, two brothers, Charles and Patrick Foley, were suspected by the police of being involved in the 17 March 1880 murder of a man named William Nicholl.
in Sligo. Following the murder, Charles left for America to avoid arrest, while Pat in order to distract from his emigration “reported that he was going to America, and a local band serenaded him; he even went through the form of bidding all his friends good bye.” The RIC reported that they “received no information or assistance in the neighbourhood although the perpetrators of the outrage must have been well known there, and every possible sympathy was evinced for Pat Foley, who was charged on suspicion and who had threatened the deceased,” further evidence that there was communal approval, if not involvement, in the attack.736

It seems that Nicholl’s murder was not unexpected, as the RIC commentary on his wife’s application for compensation noted that “it was generally believed in the neighbourhood that at some time or other Nicholl would be murdered, from the intense hatred the people bore him.” Their hatred stemmed primarily from Nicholl’s relationship to a major landlord, Colonel Edward Cooper, who followed Nicholl’s advice to enclose “some of the best grazing of the mountain as a game preserve.” “Besides this,” the Constabulary wrote, “Nicholl frequently summoned the people for taking heather… he was continuing in his efforts to prevent poaching, he was suspected of giving police information about illicit distillation.” Additionally, he was apparently an unpleasant person, with the RIC report noting particularly that “when he was drunk his language” was “said to have been most abusive, ribald+ blasphemous.”737

Interestingly the RIC report claimed that “there was not in the vicinity any constituted unlawful association,” but argued that “no doubt the murder was planned before it occurred and several must have been aware that the murder was to take place.”

736 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 6, Carton 2, 39980.
737 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 6, carton 1, 42803.
Additionally, the report argued that “compensation… should be charged solely on the Constabulary sub-district of Dromore West, in which place it is believed all the assassins belonged” because “a great deal of evidence was held back and if the inhabitants of Dromore West + neighbourhood did not actually conceal or give tangible aid to the assassins, they carefully abstained from affording to police one particle of assistance by which the murderers could be discovered.”

Apparently, shortly after Nicholl had given information to the police, “his life was threatened,” and subsequently he was beaten “in a most brutal manner” with over thirteen wounds inflicted on his head, two of which fractured his skull, his right eye being completely destroyed, and his throat torn. The brutality of the attack was further illustrated by bloodstains which showed that he was dragged from where he was first beaten on the road 150 yards towards the workhouse.

However, even at the peak of agrarian violence in the region nonviolent methods could still be employed. One case which illustrated the relatively nonviolent ways that communities could re-draw the lines of communal membership could be seen in Balla, Co. Mayo. Two brothers, Michael Gibbons Jr and Patrick Gibbons, were arrested for their actions during April 1881. On 12 April the local constable was informed by H. Smyth Esq., JP, that the night before “a monument which James O’Connor, JP, had erected in Ballagh chapel some short time ago to the memory of his father had been removed from Ballagh chapel and laid against a fence on the opposite side of the road.” No violence was done to the chapel itself—the sacristy window apparently having been opened from the outside, and the main door unlocked from inside. The police report

738 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 6, carton 1, 42803.
noted that “the monument must have been removed by a very considerable number of persons, as it is very heavy and notwithstanding no injury was done to it, except a portion of cement on top broken off.” The monument was apparently left along the road leading to the O’Connors’ residence—further evidence that the removal of the monument was intended to illustrate the exclusion of the O’Connors from local society.

The motive for the removal of the monument seems to have been that on 11 April “Mr. John O’Connor brother to Mr. James O’Connor served twelve writs on his tenants at Ballagh, which necessitated the local RIC constable and resident magistrate to attend, along with a force of 50 men in order to protect two members of the Defence association, a protective force established to aid landlords, who came from Dublin to serve the writs. The escort was apparently necessary, as the report noted that “during the greater part of the day we were followed by a very considerable crowd of men and women whose conduct was most defiant and threatening,” and that “at a late hour last night a large crowd of disorderly persons, in fact the same as followed us during the day paraded the road in front of the chapel for some time.”

While there was no direct evidence against either brother, their participation in the day’s defiance of process-serving was apparently serious enough that the “Sub-inspector... examined as to outrage at Balla Chapel states that he considers the arrest” of both men “of the greatest possible consequence and necessary for the safety of Mr. O’Conor’s

---

739 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 5, Carton 1, 61.
740 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 5, Carton 1, 62.
741 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 5, Carton 1, 61.
life.”\textsuperscript{742} The conduct of Michael Gibbons Jr was noted as “especially violent and at one time very near causing serious consequences.”\textsuperscript{743}

A final example of an agrarian crime which clashes with the nationalist messaging on the subject was the murder of Henry East and the assault of his son John on 8 June 1882 at Corrantrench, Co Roscommon.\textsuperscript{744} On that date three men “in the presence of his wife and two of his sons” beat Henry East, as well as his son when John came to the aid of his father, with sticks before shooting Henry in both thighs with a revolver.\textsuperscript{745} Henry East succumbed to his wounds three months later, in mid-September.\textsuperscript{746} The motivation for the assaults stemmed from a dispute over land, notably that “Henry East was preparing to cut turf on a bank formerly in the occupation of a Ms. Jane McDonough and on which she had been prevented by the landlord cutting turf since 1880 because she had refused to pay rent for the same.”\textsuperscript{747}

The evening before East’s assault, he was preparing to cut turf from the bank, which apparently prompted McDonough to come to the door of their home and ask if he was planning to cut “her bank,” to which he replied that “he was but that it was not her bank, when she did not pay rent for it, she said that he got a good deal of trials in his lifetime and so did she, when going away from his door she said in an angry manner may

\textsuperscript{742} NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 5, Carton 1, 61.
\textsuperscript{743} NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 5, Carton 1, 62.
\textsuperscript{744} NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 6, carton 3, 44.
\textsuperscript{745} NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 6, Carton 3, 45.
\textsuperscript{746} NAI, Police and Crime Records 6, carton 1, 42803.
\textsuperscript{747} NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 6, Carton 3, No. 44. The bog in question had previously treated as communal property for the tenants on the estate of the East’s landlord, a Major Malloy, while the tenants who rented from other landlords in the area were charged for the privilege of cutting turf. However, beginning in 1878 many tenants from Malloy’s estate had ceased to pay rent which led Malloy to suspend turf-cutting privileges and to transfer the bog from the occupation of Ms. McDonough to Henry East. See NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 6, Carton 3, No. 45.
be it would thrive with him.” The next day, his son reported that “three men came to the door of our house… asked where was the master of the house” and upon leaving the home found Henry East on a hill on his farm. John told the police, “I heard them speaking to him, I could not know what they were saying, but they were speaking about the turf bank, did not hear them mention Ms. McDonoughs name but understood them to be speaking about that turf bank.” This conversation quickly turned violent, as the three men assaulted Henry East with sticks, struck John East when he came to his father’s aid, and finally shot Henry East through both thighs with a revolver as he lay on the ground. Following this, the three men “went across the ditch into the meadow and fired shots into the air, and shouted loud and waived their hats as if people were watching them,” before passing openly by the house of the neighboring Gaffney family, “broke a window and fired a shot.” John East noted in his statement to the police that “in the place where they shot my father, they were in view of other houses… the men wore no disguise,” and that he had “since identified a man as being one of the three men: he resides in the county of Sligo in Geevagh parish,” roughly eight miles from the East’s farmstead.

Henry East did have aspects of his history which served to distance him from his neighbors. As his son John noted in his statement to police, the East family were Protestants, although he stated this almost as an aside, which seems to indicate that that distinction was not terribly important in day-to-day life, going so far as to say that “in

748 NAI, Police and Crime Records No. 6, Carton 3, No. 45
749 NAI, Police and Crime Records No. 6, Carton 3, No. 45.
750 NAI, Police and Crime Records No. 6, Carton 3, No. 45.
751 NAI, Police and Crime Records No. 6, Carton 3, No. 45.
fact my father was on good terms with all the people round so far as I know.” 752 A fact which John East placed more importance on in his narrative was that his father had “joined the Land League, the first year it was started but retained [his membership] only for one year.” 753 However, in both John and his mother Margaret’s statements, and in the opinion of the local magistrate who took those statements, the assault was motivated by the dispute over access to the turf bank.

That is not to say that the general issue of payment of rent was not a pressing concern in the region. On the 21 October 1881 a notice was posted about one and one-half miles from the East’s farmstead, which read

Here I am with my coat of arms, Roary of the Hill, at last, to give ye due notice to pay no rent, or if ye do ye may blame yourselves for I swear candidly I will do what I often did before, to shoot ye down on the field or on the road, or on yer beds, wherever it may be yer lot to fall.

A similar notice was posted on the 2 April 1882 saying that two brothers, Patrick and Jack Gaffney, were boycotted for paying their rent, and closed saying: “I can tell ye people of Ireland that I am on duty as well as Buckshot. Signed, Capt. Moonlight who will blow the head off rent payers.” 754

These notices illustrate the long-standing nature of disputes over land in the region, and the extent to which violent action as seen in the assault on East was something of a last resort. That McDonagh was abiding by the unwritten law to not pay rent for the bogland while East profited from his willingness to break that law clearly made East a target, as did his exodus from the Land League. However, there was ample

752 NAI, Police and Crime Records No. 6, Carton 3, No. 45.
753 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 6, Carton 3, No. 45.
754 NAI, Police and Crime Records, No. 4, Carton 10, Murder of Henry East of Currantrench. It seems that this was the same notice as noted in the Brennan case.
time given between the posting of the notices and the assault for both East and the Gaffneys to reconsider their behavior. East was given two other opportunities in the days leading up to his assault to reconcile his behavior with the code that, as a former League member, he would have been familiar with. The fact that East’s assailants next targeted the Gaffneys, albeit in a less violent manner, positions the assault on East as an instructive lesson to others in the neighborhood that it was subversive law, rather than official law, which held sway. This fact was further illustrated by the brazen nature of the assault and the lack of caution from East’s assailants as they left the region, making no real effort to conceal their identity. Other than the fact that East’s assailants headed toward the Gaffney house following the assault, and shot out its windows, there seems to be no connection between the two notices and the assault on East, further reinforcing the conclusion that the assault was motivated by this long-standing dispute.

Other aspects of the assault seem to similarly illustrate that this event was, in miniature, a complete refutation of the nationalist narrative surrounding agrarian outrage, just as the Monasteraden case was. At the very least, a woman was involved in the events leading up to the assault, and her final statement the day before the assault seems strongly indicative that she was a central figure in the run up to the assault the next day. The men who carried out the assault were not local men driven to crime by desperation but individuals from a different community than the victim, albeit one nearby. Finally, as noted above, the assault was not the desperate act of an individual defending his home and family, but a relatively calculated effort to solve a local dispute--a conclusion heightened by the fact that the gunshot wounds to East seem as though they were intended to punish, rather than kill.
The East case encapsulates how the actual picture of the Land War on the ground looked quite different from the messaging of the Land League leadership, incorporating women in vital roles, pushing accepted forms of protest up to and past the point of violence, and engaging in numerous and long-standing campaigns of harassment and violence to individuals who violated communal norms. What the East case and others like it illuminate are communities self-policing according to communal standards. What precisely that self-policing meant is an area of some discussion in the historiography. From the evidence here, the agrarian protest during the Land War is not precisely the same thing as pre-Famine Outrage. Breandán Mac Suibhne has argued that pre-Famine Outrage grew out of communal responsibilities and a level of anger at the everyday fate of the poor, and that both those communal norms and that day-to-day anger were destroyed by the Famine and its aftermath. The low levels of agrarian Outrage in the post-Famine period outside of periods of crisis seem to back up Mac Suibhne’s argument that Outrage in the old sense was gone by the time of the Land War. However, the higher number of incidents and the continued use of the full repertoire of protest discussed by Huggins seem to indicate that the pressure of the Land War brought some level of the pre-Famine communal solidarity back, leading communities to protest violations of communal norms.

However, that self-policing was deeply problematic for the League leadership. To varying degrees, it drew on these pre-Famine traditions and, in some cases, to pre-capitalist ideas about land ownership, ideas which were seen as incompatible with the concept of modern Irish masculinity that nationalist entrepreneurs spent so much effort promoting. According to the League leadership, the Land War had to entail Irish men
fighting correctly for Irish families because that willingness to fight, and especially the
tactics used, proved their worthiness for self-determination. A rural community coming
together to police itself—especially through violence—looks, in this schema, like
barbarism, or anti-modernity, which proved the British case for coercion and continued
colonial rule. The efforts of the Land League to set up League courts, to mixed effect,
seem like an effort to impose a level of standardization and modernity on these pre-
modern traditions, efforts which would be used to greater effect by the Irish National
League later in the 1880s and by the Sinn Féin party during the Irish revolution.

We also see this dynamic clearly in the response to the Sligo affray, where the local
press made a concerted effort to make the event what it very clearly was not because
what it was proved too damaging to the nationalist cause. The issue of agrarian crime
would not be the only time that nationalist leaders needed to present events in a way
which fundamentally differed from what actually occurred. The Ladies’ Land League,
which was the main nationalist organization operating from the fall of 1881 until the
effective end of the agitation in the spring of 1882, by its very nature posed a serious
threat to this nationalist narrative of masculine action, a threat which would have to be
dealt with by nationalist writers both during and after its existence.
Chapter Five

The active role of McDonough in the agitation against the East family presents us with a reality underplayed in the nationalist rhetoric of the time emphasizing masculinity, that is, that women played a crucial role in the land agitations. That reality was, however, undeniable in the final year of the Land War when the Ladies’ Land League, founded in January 1881 initially as a female auxiliary to its male counterpart, took the leading role in the land agitation after the government arrested C. S. Parnell and other top Land Leaguers. The Ladies’ League served as the primary nationalist organization from the fall of 1881 until Parnell and British Prime Minister William Gladstone agreed to the so-called Kilmainham Treaty in the spring of 1882. Nearly four hundred branches of the Ladies’ League were established across Ireland. One of the key activities of the League was providing housing for evicted tenants, generally by erecting wooden houses termed ‘Land League Huts’ as near to the farm from which the tenant had been evicted as was possible. Following the release of the Land League’s male leadership, the question of what to do with the Ladies’ League became a more pressing one, particularly as the Ladies’ League’s leader Anna Parnell, sister of C.S. Parnell, held more radical views on the land question than did her brother, who planned to redirect the agitation toward constitutional politics and the issue of Home Rule. Ultimately, the Ladies’ Land League
was forced to dissolve itself in August 1882 ostensibly over issues of financial mismanagement.\textsuperscript{755}

An examination of the Ladies’ Land League in counties Mayo, Sligo, and Roscommon during the period when it kept the land movement alive allows us to test how its members, generally middle-class women from townlands, internalized and re-articulated the nationalist messaging discussed in chapter three, messaging which, as noted, was fundamentally designed with the expectation that it was being delivered to a male audience. Assessing how the wives, sisters, daughters, and neighbors of this presumed audience absorbed and recast this messaging allows for a fuller picture of the nationalist movement under examination and reveals how middle-class women created spaces for their own political action. Similarly, the reactions of both nationalist opponents and supporters of the Ladies’ League to its efforts demonstrate how the nationalist movement allowed for some level of disagreement within its ranks and underscores which ideals were central to all variations of Irish nationalism in the period. Finally, interrogating how the Ladies’ Land League was ultimately written out of nationalist interpretations of the period further explicates how restrictive and top-down the anti-colonial nationalisms being created during this period actually were, and further illuminates the extent to which such ideologies presented fundamentally restrictive definitions of both masculinity and femininity.

\textsuperscript{755} Margaret Ward gives a general overview of the organization in her essay “‘Short skirts and strong boots’: The Pioneering Feminism of Anna Parnell” in the 2020 edition of Anna Parnell’s memoir. See Anna Parnell, \textit{The Tale of a Great Sham}, ed. Dana Hearne (Dublin, UCD Press, 2020). The organization was also examined in some detail in Ward’s pioneering \textit{Unmanageable Revolutionaries} (London: Pluto Press, 1983), where she argued that for “the first time in Irish history, women were given the opportunity to participate in a political movement and, in the absence of men, found themselves free to assert their own principles and to develop their own organisational skills (4),” As noted in the introduction the dissolution was largely forced by C.S. Parnell, who disliked the more radical tone of the Ladies’ League’s politics and sought to shift Irish politics away from the land question and toward the issue of Home Rule.
An examination of the Ladies’ Land League in the West also allows this study to fill important gaps in the existing historiography. First, until recently the Ladies’ Land League was omitted entirely or largely overlooked in the general historiography of the Land War. As late as 1982 Marie O’Neil described the group as positioned within an oblivion within the historical record from which it deserved to be rescued.  

\[756\] Jordan, for example, dedicated only ten pages to the topic in his examination of Mayo, giving an overview of the League’s foundation, noting the likely social composition of its leadership, and highlighting James Daly’s opposition to the group.  

\[757\] Samuel Clarke similarly dedicated only two pages to the group, again doing little more than offering a narrative of its rise and fall.  

\[758\] Finally, Bull in his \textit{Land, Politics and Nationalism} dedicated only four pages to the group, noting the impact of involving middle-class women in the nationalist movement and the resulting conflict with Victorian social norms.  

\[759\]

Second, while there has been in recent years more of a focus on the Ladies’ Land League, there has been an unfortunate but understandable tendency to conflate the personal ideology of Anna Parnell with that of the broader organization, and to focus on the conflict between the Parnell siblings to the exclusion of studying how the Ladies’ League operated on the ground. The most sustained examination of the group was Ward’s in \textit{Unmanageable Revolutionaries} and her essay “The Ladies’ Land League and the Irish Land War 1881/1882: Defining the Relationship between Women and Nation.” In the former piece, Ward argued that the rapidity of the League’s closure and its exclusion

from subsequent nationalist retrospectives stemmed from political divides between the
League’s leadership and that of C.S. Parnell. In the latter, she asserted that the female
political activism of the League posed an intolerable challenge to the masculine authority
of nationalist leaders, and that the origins of female exclusion from the later task of
nation building in Ireland could be traced to the backlash against female participation in
politics at this juncture. While the general focus on the high politics of the movement
is understandable given the dearth of records on the organization, this chapter seeks
primarily to examine how the women inspired by Anna Parnell, rather than Parnell
herself, sought to present their organization and to navigate the tumultuous period of the
Ladies’ League’s existence.

The early messages in the region calling for the formation of branches of the
Ladies’ Land League generally emphasized the charitable nature of the organization and
the extraordinary circumstances of its founding. A branch of the League established in
Kilmacasser, Co. Mayo, for example, described its members as “actuated by a true
devotion to their country…prepared to lend their brothers a hand in the destruction of that
system which has scattered so many of their kindred over the face of the earth.” The
announcement closed with the declaration that “if we can succeed in protecting one
sufferer from the talons of tyranny, we feel that our labour is amply repaid.” Another

---

between Women and Nation,” in *Gendered Nations: Nationalisms and Gender Order in the Long
Nineteenth Century* ed. Ida Blom, Karen Hagemann and Catherine Hall (Oxford; Berg, 2000), 243-244.
Another valuable recent article is that of Adrian N. Mulligan, which argues that the Ladies’ Land League
provided space for Irishwomen to utilize “the political potential of their everyday spaces” by both
practically organizing in the home and using the rhetoric of domesticity to give political cover to their
operations. See Adrian N Mulligan, ”‘By a Thousand Ingenious Feminine Devices’: The Ladies’ Land League
branch founded at St. James Well, Co. Sligo, stated its purpose as “the disbursement of the Land League funds amongst evicted families,” and its members described themselves “as Christian women, whose sympathies have been aroused on behalf of suffering humanity,” who sought to “come to the assistance, as far as we are able, and in what way we can, of those who may require it.” Branches founded at Grange and Clifffoney, both in Co. Sligo, made similar statements. Speakers at mass meetings at the time of the League’s founding echoed this line of argument, with Anna Parnell traveling to Mayo in February 1881 to call for the general formation of League branches. Local press covered the event much as it had other political mass meetings discussed in earlier chapters. The Roscommon Journal noted that Parnell was met by the Roscommon Band when she arrived in the region, while the Connaught Telegraph emphasized the fact that “the greatest order was maintained.” Although the Telegraph did note that the attendees were “principally females,” there was also “a large number of men and boys [sitting] on the surrounding walls.” The welcoming address placed the League within the context of the Land War itself, referring to Parnell as “a lady of patriotic prestige and of heroic soul… come to witness the results of the sad relations between landlord and tenant, by taking in person a view of the wild waste, once the sites of happy homesteads, from which our kindred in hundreds were once driven,” and arguing that she had come to Claremorris to “encourage, also, the women of Claremorris who constitute a branch of the Irish National Land League.”

763 Sligo Champion, 12 February, 1881.
In turn, the Claremorris branch responded that their members sought to emphasize the compatibility of the League with Victorian gender roles, nationalist history, and Catholic morality. In their address to Parnell, the members said that they were working “under your leadership, to fill the breach, and to sustain the families of those who may be imprisoned or evicted,” and that they would use “every legitimate means in carrying on the battle for happy homes,” thus linking their political struggle to the preservation of the domestic sphere and signaling the acceptance of limits of protest.\(^{766}\) The women argued that they had been inspired “by the moral lessons of courage and strenuous determination inculcated by the Catholic bishops and priests of Ireland,” as well as by the example of “the women of Limerick in their day of trial,” again tying female political activity in the present day to an acceptable event in nationalist history.\(^{767}\)

Newly formed branches sent their own welcoming addresses, which again emphasized the charitable nature of the organization and placed it squarely within accepted gendered expectations. For instance, the “young ladies of Ballidine and Irishtown, the cradle of the Land movement,” apologized to Parnell for their lack of formal education, attributed to the poverty of the region, but they pledged to “make up by our energy, our activity, and our perseverance” any issues caused by their modest status. The opening resolution proposed by the Claremorris branch similarly invoked the domestic sphere in the motivation, and thus legitimacy, of the movement, stating: “That we pledge ourselves to help in every lawful way in our power all those who may be evicted in our neighbourhood, and the families of those who may be imprisoned on


account of their connection with the Land League and that we shall act towards them as if they were our own relations.” The resolution later emphasized that it “simply invites the women of Claremorris and neighbourhood to form themselves into what may be called a relief committee for the purpose of providing for those families.” The chair of the Claremorris branch, a Mrs. McEllin, ended her remarks by claiming that “ ours is to be a Relief and not a political organization.”768 This message, that the League was a charitable organization perfectly compatible with Catholic and Nationalist morality, was also taken up by the local parish priest, Fr. Bourke, who responded to the resolution by asking “Can anything be more noble? It is an epitome of the law of Christ… to feed the hungry.” He concluded by responding to “some persons” who “think it strange, or at least novel, to find ladies in any town leagued even for objects so worthy of all praise” by arguing that “such leagues and associations are not new in the history of the Christian Church.”769

Parnell’s address itself, however, was stridently political, linking the efforts of the Ladies’ Land League not to the prior history of female charitable work or to earlier, less intensely political, events, but rather directly to the contemporary political moment. Parnell proposed a resolution entering “our public protest against the arrest of Michael Davitt and” pleaded that the attendees “avenge his imprisonment in a way worthy of the noble spirit of Christian women by staying the evil efforts of tyranny and legalized violence” through the formation “in each parish [of] a branch of the Ladies Irish National Land League.”770 Parnell further argued that, while the League was “not a

---

political movement,” neither was it “a charitable movement either, because charity is understood to mean alms giving, and this movement has nothing whatever to do with alms.” Parnell offered an alternative definition for the movement, one steeped in the language of self-reliance and self-rule that had been central to nationalist discussion of politics since at least the 1860s. She claimed that the League was “a relief movement,” which would be successful “if the men and women of this country take up a manly and womanly attitude respectively.” She called on them to “rely upon yourselves and to organize yourselves” rather than relying on the central League executive to do so.  

While Parnell did not deny the existence of separate spheres of male and female behavior, she was arguing for an extension of the female/domestic sphere into the world of political, or at the least politically-motivated, activity due to the intrusion of the political realm into the domestic sphere through the destruction of “happy homes.”

Parnell’s peroration continued to blend the domestic and the political, when she urged her audience to effectively boycott members of the RIC. She began the concluding section of the speech by saying that it was “intended for the ears of the women alone,” as women would “know something about those nice young men, the Royal Irish Constabulary.” She noted that she was not “going to advise you not to have them for sweethearts… because I know that you won’t,” but she addressed them because she had learned that the RIC “have a kind of way of going into people’s houses without any particularly pressing invitation and asking all manner of questions that is not any business of theirs, and they have a habit of addressing ladies in the streets whom them have not

been introduced to at all,” emphasizing the violation of the Irish domestic space by the forces of the British state.

Her advice to her audience was for total separation from the RIC and its members. She urged her listeners that “if you see one of the green coats coming into your house, you ask him to walk out…. If one of them speaks to you in the street, don’t answer him at all—hold no communication with him; and I think you will be quite safe.”

Thus, Parnell depicted Irish women as the firm boundary between the Irish home and the British state, and presented the actions of the RIC in combatting the land agitation as a fundamental violation of the protective barriers surrounding women both in and outside of the home. She also, tellingly, assumed that her listeners would refrain from personal or sexual contact with RIC members, in that they would not have members as sweethearts.

---

773 On the concept of women as border guards for the national body, see Banarjee, Muscular Nationalism, including on pages 7, 11, 40-43, 64 and 137. The idea that members of the Ladies’ League performed their national duty through refusing to date RIC members was central to the visual depiction of the group in the nationalist press in Dublin. Shortly after the establishment of the Ladies’ League, the Weekly Freeman published a cartoon titled “The latest kind of “Boy”-cotting.” The cartoon showed several RIC members in distress in the center of the frame, with four members of the League haughtily walking away from them. The legend beneath the cartoon informed the reader that “in several parts of the country the ladies are taking the advice of Miss Anna Parnell and “ostracising” the police,” and provided the commentary of the commander of the RIC detachment, “Oh, boys, we'll never be able to stand this. It is bad enough to be obliged to do the dirty work of the landlords but this bates. We have nothing for it but to resign.” See National Library of Ireland, Special Collection Prints and Drawings, Weekly Freeman 1881 March 5 (A). http://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000220737. The satirical journal Pat published a similar cartoon “A Be Leaguered Position,” in November 1881, as the Ladies’ League was taking over operations from its male counterpart. The cartoon depicted C.S. Parnell bound to a column labeled ‘Land League’ illustrating his imprisoned status. The scene is dominated by a caricature of Gladstone being menaced by a male figure bearing a banner with the device “Home Rule League” on it and a female figure with a banner reading “Ladies Land League,” and carrying a covered basket on her arm reading “for prisoners.” In response to the two figures Gladstone lamented that he “shall never understand this country. No sooner have I with the greatest trouble bound one League that others immediately start up at my feet. These surely are the most League-al people in the universe; they will certainly drive me into a lunatic asylum or the House of Lords.” (National Library of Ireland, Special Collection Prints and Drawings. Pat 1881 November 19 (A). http://catalogue.nli.ie/Record/vtls000224452).
Parnell struck a similar tone during a visit to Keadue, Co. Roscomon, where she noted that the first goal of the League was “to see when a landlord comes down with all the powers of the law on any of his tenants—we should see that none of the tenants suffer, and no one who can help it be idle,” before pivoting to an extended denunciation of Chief Secretary William Forster and the land system.\footnote{“Miss Anna Parnell,” \textit{Roscommon Herald}, 12 March, 1881.} Her commentary surrounding Forster’s policy of coercion reflected a similar understanding of gender as advanced in her Claremorris speech, one which accepted the bifurcation of society into two spheres, while seeking to adjust precisely where that divide was located. She argued that the recent arrest of several women in Connacht was part of a deliberate government policy to heighten “the effect of the feelings of the Irish people to make them lose their self-control and make them succumb to acts of violence.” She advanced arguments nationalists had been using extensively during the Land War to explain instances of agrarian crime. Parnell then argued that “some mothers will give trouble to the process-servers” on the event of an eviction, but that such acts were natural, as “all animals… turn to defend their young.” But, in the contemporary political context, she argued that “when an Irish mother does the same, Forster calls it brutality.” Parnell then called on “young females” to “do your best to be mothers to those whose mothers are imprisoned, that Mr. Forster may be disappointed,” again connecting the domestic role assigned to women with active participation in the political world.\footnote{“Miss Anna Parnell,” \textit{Roscommon Herald}, 12 March, 1881.}

Parnell’s call to establish branches of the Ladies’ Land League was rapidly answered across Ireland. As prior scholarship has noted, the Ladies’ League grew to
encompass nearly 500 branches at its height.\textsuperscript{776} It is difficult to reconstruct the exact activities of Ladies’ Land League branches, however, as the central record of the organization, termed the “Book of Kells” by its creators, was destroyed when the home of the organization’s secretary, Jennie Wyse Power, who had taken possession of the document following the League’s dissolution, burned to the ground during the 1916 Easter Rising. With that record’s destruction, the main avenues still available to historians examining the activities of the Ladies’ Land League are reports of the establishment and activities of branches published in the nationalist press.

The first fact which becomes immediately apparent upon examining the local nationalist press is that the distribution of Ladies’ Land League branches mirrors that of male Land League Branches. Ladies’ League branches were present in all three counties under examination but were most prominent in Roscommon and Sligo. Mayo saw nine branches established,\textsuperscript{777} Sligo, in contrast saw twenty-five branches founded across 1881 and 1882,\textsuperscript{778} while there were fifteen in Roscommon.\textsuperscript{779}

The distribution of these branches offers two key insights into the areas from which the Ladies’ League drew support. First, League branches were found in townlands across the three counties, which seems to illustrate that the Ladies’ League, like its male counterpart, drew primarily from the middle classes located in townlands for its

\textsuperscript{776} Ward, “Short skirts and strong boots,” xxii.
\textsuperscript{777} According to the \textit{Connaught Telegraph}, branches were established at Killadoon, Klimaclasser, Westport, Claremorris, Swinford, Bradford, Keltimagh, Louisburgh, and Castlebar.
\textsuperscript{778} According to the \textit{Sligo Champion} branches were established at Killaragh, Cloonloo, Killaragh, Gurteen, Geevagh, Highwood, Ballinafad, Buninadden, St John, Drumlease, St. James Well, Bunninadden, Tubbercurry, Ballymote, Ballinacarrow, Milcreven and Doo, Emlagfad, Templeboy, Killenumberary, Glenade and Ballinrillick, Ballintogher, Collooney, Clifoney, Grange and Laccagh.
\textsuperscript{779} According to the \textit{Roscommon Herald}, Branches were established at, at Croghan, Claremorris, Manorhampton, Ballymote, Carrick-on-Shannon, Roscommon, Ballyfermoyle, Kilbride, Brackloon and Tully, Kilcorkey, Kilmore, Crossna, Corrigeenroe, Boyle, and Cootehall.
leadership and the majority of its membership. This fact may indicate that middle-class women were seeking to create spaces for their own political activity, efforts which were similar to but distinct from those of the working-class (or rural) women discussed in chapter 4. Second, although Mayo had been the center of the land agitation and continued to suffer from high levels of distress, that county only possessed half the number of branches in Roscommon and roughly a third of the branches found in Sligo, which may indicate that the collapse in Land League support had powerful ripple effects for its female counterpart. In turn, those numbers might indicate that Ladies’ Land League branches were founded less for charitable reasons than for political ones. As Jordan noted, the Land League’s support in Mayo largely collapsed by 1881, as the organization moderated its aims to better attract support from tenant farmers in the more prosperous south-west of the country. Gerard Moran similarly noted a collapse in League support by that date, although he connected that collapse more to the efforts of James Daly, the proprietor of the *Connaught Telegraph*, who personally turned against the Land League because of that process of moderation.\textsuperscript{780} The fact that Ladies’ League branches in Mayo were not founded after the summer of 1881, while branches were founded as late as March 1882 in Sligo\textsuperscript{781} and October of 1881 in Roscommon\textsuperscript{782} also seems to indicate that there was a much lower level of engagement with the Ladies’ League in Mayo as compared to its neighboring counties.

The reports of the nationalist press on Ladies’ Land League branches illustrate another commonality between branches of the Ladies’ Land League and branches of its

---

\textsuperscript{781} *Sligo Champion*, 5 March, 1882.  
\textsuperscript{782} *Roscommon Herald*, 8 October, 1881.
male counterpart: the resolutions of both organizations, as published in local nationalist newspapers, share remarkable similarities in focus and content. In fact, most resolutions passed by Ladies’ Land League branches expressed opinions on contemporary political developments in the same language as those passed by their male counterparts, portraying those engaged in the land agitation as fulfilling their duty to their country and, for men, their masculine duty. Those opposed to the movement were portrayed either as agents of an irredeemably oppressive British state or as anti-national and thus unmanly dupes of that state.

The main category of League resolutions were those condemning the actions of the British state in combatting the land agitation. For example, the Swinford, Co. Mayo, branch on the occasion of Michael Davitt’s arrest in February of 1881 resolved “that the conduct of her majesty’s [sic] government in arresting the brave Michael Davitt should be condemned by all Irishmen, and especially the Swinford women who know him so well and know his past life and all he has done for Ireland.”\footnote{Connaught Telegraph, 26 February, 1881.} Similarly, the Ballinacarrow branch passed resolutions protesting “against the arrest of that law-abiding, peace-preserving advocate of the cause of the oppressed and harassed tenantry of Ireland, Mr. Michael Davitt.” The treatment of Davitt, they proclaimed, led to their “want of confidence or hope in that so-called Liberal Government now in office,” and
their “adhesion to the cause of the oppressed people of Ireland.” “Come weal come woe,” they concluded, “we are determined to battle for our country’s cause.”

Another prominent category of Ladies’ Land League resolutions were those praising individuals for their commitment to the nationalist cause, particularly those individuals singled out for prosecution by the British state. A typical series of resolutions were those passed by the Emlaghfad, Co. Sligo, branch on 17 June 1881. The members resolved first “to assist by every means in our power in this great struggle” and to “call upon the ladies that have not joined the League to cooperate with us.” The members then passed further resolutions stating “our warmest sympathies be conveyed to the best men of our race who are shackled in English bastilles” and declaring that “we shall never yield to coercion; and that we hereby condemn the felonious system of landlordism.”

Four months earlier, the Ballymote branch had passed similar resolutions stating that as they had been founded “to show our esteem of the gifted and patriotic Davitt, we now comply with one of his last wishes before his kidnapping took place… to form a branch of the Ladies land league.” They then closed by saying that “no coercive measures… shall ever stay our actions on behalf of our down trodden country. But contrary that we will work for its regeneration- until we see Ireland “great glorious and free,/ first flower of the earth/ and first gem of the sea.”

At times these two categories of resolution

---

784 *Sligo Champion* 19 March 1881. These resolutions bear remarkable similarities to those passed by male League branches, for example the Boyle, Co. Roscommon, branch resolved in June of 1881 “Resolved- That we, the members of the Boyle Branch of the Irish National Land League, do condemn the cowardly conduct of the Irish Executive in arresting Mr. James Cull, Mr. Joseph Cox, Mr. Thomas Fallon, and Mr. Owen Brehany; and we now assert that until the last one amongst us is sent to prison we will faithfully combat landlordism until it is a thing of the past.” See “Boyle Branch of the Irish National Land League,” *Roscommon Journal*, July 2, 1881.) For other examples see *Roscommon Herald* 4 June, 1881, 9 July, 1881, 8 July, 1882; *Sligo Champion* 4 December, 1880, 23 April, 1881; *Mayo Examiner* 22 October, 1881.


786 *Roscommon Herald*, 23 July, 1881

787 *Sligo Champion*, 5 March, 1881.
would meld into one another, with condemnation for the state turning to praise of its victims, as when the Geevagh, Co. Sligo, branch passed resolutions protesting “the cowardly and unjust action of the Government in arresting two of Ireland’s bravest and noblest sons, Mr. John Dillon, and Mr. Thomas Brennan” and tendering “them, and the other victims of Coercion, our heartfelt sympathy in their prison cells.”

Other Ladies’ League resolutions showed the clear influence of the arguments discussed in chapter three regarding the performance of masculinity. For example, the Manorhamilton, Co. Letrim, branch, located just outside of Co. Roscommon, condemned what they termed “the anti-Irishmen of this town who fell from our cause,” while the Cootehall, Co. Roscommon, branch passed a resolution calling “on our countrymen to adhere to the teachings of Michael Davitt, and remember that outrages of the kind never did any good for Ireland,” language which could have been lifted directly from a Land League speech or publication. The Ballyrush, Co. Sligo, branch argued that its founding was “another proof, if such were needed, of the earnestness of our people in constituting their efforts” and added “should we shirk our duty at this crisis, we will be looked upon by the men of other nations as lying braggarts who do not mean what we say.” The Ladies’ League of Ballyrush then concluded that “imprisonment under the Habeas Corpus Suspension Act, and death afterwards, is more manly than to lie down and die… without even leaving on record a protest against the villainous system which dooms our people.”

---

788 Sligo Champion, 4 June, 1881.
790 Sligo Champion, 5 March, 1881.
confiscated” but argued that their presence was evidence that “the old patriotic spirit is kept still alive.”

Finally, some Ladies’ League branches went so far in their resolutions as to suggest concrete political actions for the male nationalist community to take, not only urging them to join the land agitation or to remain steadfast, but specifically advising their male peers on whom to vote for to fill political office. For example, in March 1882 the Killaraght, Co, Sligo, branch offered its support to a “Mr. T Judge, TC,” and requested “that the people of the locality to join in assisting the cause of Ireland by supporting him [for] PLG for the divisions, and by so doing trample under foot landlordism.” Similarly, at a meeting held on 9 April 1882, the Cloonloo, Co. Sligo, branch resolved that “the deceitful conduct of our Sligo representative, Denis M O’Connor, in assisting an alien, prejudiced and priesting-hunting government to muzzle our representatives in the House of Commons must be recorded.” However, the members went further than simply condemning O’Connor, calling “upon the electors to remember his action at the next general election,” and linking his support of coercive legislation to “the policy to govern Ireland by brute force since 1172.” The Killaraght branch members also directly linked their charitable efforts to their political aims, closing the meeting by resolving to “continue our work of charity until we behold the glorious

791 Sligo Champion, 5 March, 1881
792 Roscommon Herald, 11 March, 1882.
793 Roscommon Herald, 15 April, 1882.
794 Roscommon Herald, 15 April, 1882. 1172 was the year King Henry II of England came to Ireland to formalize control of lands which had come under the control of one of his vassals, Richard De Clare. De Clare had accepted an invitation from Dermot MacMurrough, formerly king of the south-eastern Irish province of Leinster, to marry MacMurrough's daughter and ultimately inherit the province in exchange for De Clare's aid in restoring MacMurrough to his throne. De Clare’s expedition in 1170 was successful, prompting Henry’s expedition in 1171-2 to extract further oaths of fealty from De Clare regarding his Irish lands and to establish direct crown rule over Dublin and the surrounding seaport towns. In nationalist memory this date marked the beginning of English rule over Ireland.
banner of freedom unfurled and fluttering in the breeze on every hilltop in Ireland, saluting the rising sun of liberty and independence.”

Overall, therefore, most resolutions examined in the regional press were practically indistinguishable from those passed by their male counterparts and showed a clear internalization of nationalist rhetoric from the preceding years and particularly from the Land War period. Some resolutions, however, actively manipulated Victorian concepts of gender to make the case for the validity of the League’s activities or, more often, to argue that opponents of the League were in fact the ones operating outside of Victorian gender norms.

Many such resolutions passed during the initial formation of the League sought to present its creation as fitting within Victorian ideas about proper conduct for respectable women. The branch founded at Grange, Co. Sligo, for example, defined the mission of the organization as cooperation “with Miss Parnell in the distribution of relief to the evicted tenants of our country,” while the branch at Cliffoney in the same county pledged “to form a branch of the Ladies’ Land League to assist that patriotic lady in the distribution of the funds placed at her disposal for evicted tenants.” Similarly, the Kilmaclasser, Co. Mayo, branch argued at its founding that its members had “no desire to bring themselves before the notice of the public,” but that “actuated by a true devotion to their country they are prepared to lend their brothers a hand in the destruction of that system which has scattered so many of their kindred over the face of the earth.” As a final example, members of the Templeboy, Co. Sligo, branch described their planned

---

796 *Sligo Champion*, 19 February, 1881.
797 *Connaught Telegraph*, 12 February, 1881
activities in strictly conventional terms, noting that they hoped to “to co-operate with the male branch of the league… as the ladies of this parish are… happy to know that the men of Templeboy have their hearts in the cause of Dear Old Ireland.”

Other resolutions directly manipulated gender ideals to imply that it was the opponents of the League, rather than its members, who were acting in an aberrational manner. In June 1881, for example, the St. James Well, Co. Sligo, branch condemned “the cowardly act of the so-called Liberal government” in arresting a local priest involved in the land agitation and went on to contrast the behavior of the Government to that of “the brave men who are incarcerated in the prison cell for loving their country,” strongly implying that it was this latter group of men who were acting in a sufficiently masculine fashion. The same branch continued this assertion that true men were nationalists when, in a later resolution, branch members stated “that we despise any young man who is not a true Parnellite, and he may rest assured he shall not be accepted as a suitor by any lady Land Leaguer.” This latter resolution continued the idea prevalent in Land League speeches and publications, that membership in the League conferred masculine status while a failure to join signaled emasculation, and then tied these ideas to the notion that the women of Ireland would play their role by refusing membership in the Irish nation to such men.

This argument, that opponents of the League were proving that they were not truly men, remained a common aspect of League resolutions. The Geevan, Co. Sligo, branch, for example, responded to criticism levelled at them by the local Catholic priest

---

798 Sligo Champion, 12 March, 1881
799 Sligo Champion, 11 June, 1881.
800 Sligo Champion, 11 June, 1881.
by referring to his statement as an “unmanly and unjust attack which our parish priest
made on the ladies of this branch.” The Keadue, Co. Roscommon, branch similarly
condemned “the unmanly and unprecedented conduct of Mr. PJ Smyth MP and Mr.
Michel Henry MP on their frivolous attack on the Irish National Land League,” and
expressed the hope that “the patriotic electors Tipperary and Galway will have an
opportunity of telling them to stand aside,” again portraying “correct” political conduct as
indicative of masculine strength. The Glenade and Ballintrillick branch similarly
condemned “in the strongest possible manner the arbitrary arrest of four of the most
respectable young men of this parish… upon the unsubstantial information of some base
and cowardly hireling,” contrasting respectability with the actions of the informer.
Perhaps the most extensive resolution contrasting Irish masculinity and anti-national
emasculating was passed by the Geevagh branch in June 1881, condemning a Mr.
Robinson who acted as land agent in the region, and “who came to Ballyfarnon escorted
by soldiers and buckshot police, to prosecute some of the brave and patriotic men of
Geevagh, whom, he said, hunted him through the country until he had to take refuge in
Geevagh police barracks, but they, in reality, were only amusing themselves by following
a band along the road.” The resolution, in short, continued a trend discussed in chapter
three of mocking the defensive preparations of process servers as evidence of their
cowardice.

801 Roscommon Herald, 25 March, 1882. What Henry did to earn the branch’s ire is unclear, although he
did note his opposition to the policy of obstructionism on the passage of the 1881 Protection of Persons
and Property Act. Smyth broke from the Land League in 1881 over criticism of Parnell’s leadership,
referring to the League as the League of Hell. David Murphy and Own McGee, “Smyth, Patrick James,”
802 Sligo Champion, 21 May, 1881.
803 Sligo Champion, 4 June, 1881.
At times the resolutions passed by Ladies’ League branches were paired with reporting from the local nationalist press which furthered the arguments the members of the League sought to set forth. One example of this was the result of a confrontation between members of the RIC and of that same Geevagh branch of the League. In reporting on the incident, the Roscommon Herald noted that “the business of the day was almost concluded when two ‘subs’ walked into the room. One of them rubbed his hands to his nose, spat on the floor, and said ‘Good evening, ladies.’**804 As the officers entered the room, members of the branch were caring for children who were singing the nationalist ballad “Parnell Aboo.” Calling their organization “a Political Prisoners’ Aid society,” branch members proposed and adopted a resolution in the presence of the officers “that we indignantly protest against the intrusion of two policemen into our committee-room, and we hereby pledge ourselves to carry on our work of charity in aiding evicted families and political prisoners.”**805 This evocation of the ideas of charity and the contrast between the women and children on the one hand and the police on the other—typifying the domestic and political spheres respectively—was heightened by the conclusion of the article on the event: “The police were in plain clothing, they thought to play the ‘gentlemen,’ but like the ass in the lion’s skin, their speech betrayed them.”**806 Given that most members of the RIC were Irish Catholics, symbolically placing them

---

**804 Sligo Champion, 10 December, 1881. This tendency to portray those employed by opponents of the Land League as crude and lacking the proper restraint required of respectable men was a somewhat common one. For example, the Roscommon Herald in reporting on the court case of a tenant arrested for poaching described the chief prosecution witness, a gamekeeper to Col. King-Harman, as coming to “the witness table with blood besmearing one of his hands,” described his conduct as “annoying” to the accused’s sister and elderly father and concluded by describing him as “this genius of a gamekeeper, who could not come into court without having his hands dyed with blood.” See Roscommon Herald, 5 February, 1881.

**805 Sligo Champion, 10 December, 1881.

**806 Sligo Champion, 10 December, 1881.
outside of the domestic sphere and depicting them as lacking the respectability of League members continued the theme of League resolutions mirroring those from the male Land League. Membership in the League and in the agitation proved one’s manhood and fitness for self-government, while refusal to join—or worse, to be an agent opposed to their mission, confirmed negative ideals regarding both individuals and the Irish race.

The language of League branches did, tellingly, shift further in the direction of weaponizing ideas of gender when the Ladies’ Land League was declared an illegal organization in the same way that the Land League itself had been. League branches across counties Roscommon and Sligo, which had expressed increasing outrage at the arrest of their male counterparts, reacted to the arrest of their own members by emphasizing the charitable nature of the organization, the middle-class status and orderly conduct of the arrested members, and the position of women as boundaries of the nation. In other words, they positioned the Irish generally and both land leagues specifically as acting within the bounds of convention, while the British government was aberrational and violated the bounds of proper masculine conduct.

Following the designation of the Ladies’ Land League as an illegal organization, on several occasions the leaders of League branches were arrested on charges of holding illegal meetings. Several confrontations between League members and RIC officials, at Keadue, Co. Roscommon, Drumlease Co. Letrim, and Ballyleague Co. Roscommon, were the subject of much attention from the local nationalist press and, apparently, the local community. The manner in which League members navigated these confrontations adds an interesting dimension to the public presentation of the Ladies’ League and the
ways in which its members actively made use of the intersections of their gender and class to promote their political aims.

The first of the three incidents took place at Keadue on 1 January 1882. During a meeting of the Ladies’ League branch from that township three members of the RIC entered the room and ordered the meeting to be dissolved on the grounds that it was a meeting of an illegal organization. The branch president, a Mrs. Walsh, refused to comply “on the grounds that her meeting was legal.”807 The RIC constable then informed Walsh that if she refused to dissolve the meeting, he would place her and the branch secretary, a Ms. Ward, under arrest, to which the women stated “they were prepared to abide by the consequences.”808 After making that reply, Walsh then read a prepared statement, which ran “That we pledge ourselves this New Year’s Day to mitigate the sufferings of those of our countrymen and countrywomen who are victims to British misrule and Irish landlordism,” centering the charitable nature of the organization while connecting its aims to the broader political aims of the Land agitation.809 While being arrested Walsh read out another statement which similarly emphasized the charitable nature of the League while connecting the group’s activities to the broader anti-imperial project: “That even though we hear the clink of English chains, or, worse still, that the triangle and halter which that alien Government has used in bygone times to punish our people awaits us, we will still persist in doing the work of charity.”810

Following the arrest of the two women, as well as the branch’s treasurer, a Ms. Skeritt, for refusing to leave the scene, all three were brought before the local magistrate.

Ward made a third statement along the same lines as the previous two, arguing that “they assembled that day to do the work of charity; that their sole object was to provide for the political prisoners, their families, and evicted tenants, and she hoped that as the British Government were about putting down all charitable associations they would at once suppress the Distressed Ladies’ Fund,” an organization which sought to relieve female poverty and whose primary patroness was the Queen.  

The long-term impact of the arrests was minimal for the leaguers in question. The magistrate announced that he planned to release them, over the vociferous protest of the RIC constable who had carried out the arrests. The arrested branch leaders were able to make a final statement, “that as they were guilty of no crime they would not enter bail. They said they would go to prison with a light heart, but that they would not allow themselves to be bound over, as they would commit the same offence next day, if they thought it was an offence,” and then they were allowed to return to Keadue. According to the Roscommon Journal, they met with an enthusiastic welcome: “The Ballyfarnon band turned out and played them back to Keadue amidst cheers for the Land League and groans for the police.”

The arrests were immediately condemned by the wider press and framed in a similar manner to the statements put forth by the arrested League members. The Roscommon Herald wrote an extended editorial which referred to the arrests as “the most despotic acts which the officials of the present Government have yet attempted.”

---

and as an event where “three ladies, who were engaged in the noble work of charity and benevolence were seized by a number of common policemen.”

The *Herald* then advanced an argument that echoed the statements made by the branch leadership, emphasizing the charitable nature of the League as further evidence of the injustice of the arrests. “When a few months ago the Crowbar Brigade was engaged in the work of eviction on the rack-rented Kilton estate,” the leading article read, “the sufferings of the homeless outcasts were attended to by Miss Ward, Mrs. Walsh, Mrs. Skerret and the other good ladies of that parish.” The piece went on to state that “their efforts were entirely unselfish and were prompted by motives of the purest patriotism and the tenderest devotion of suffering humanity,” and that it was “because they were engaged in one of the highest missions that could engage the heart of woman, the three ladies named were adjudged… as being guilty of an ‘offense against law and order.’” The article concluded by stating that “these ladies deserve the thanks of the community for the nerve and determination in a good work which they exhibited on this trying occasion; and there are ‘very’ few true Irishmen, who read the report of the proceedings, that will not consider Miss Ward worthy of the highest commendation.”

Three months later the paper commented further that the “the ruffianly conduct of two policemen towards its members… reveal a state of things which exist in no other civilized country,” again continuing the framing of agents of the British state as unmanly and outside the category of Irishness. The *Sligo Champion*’s coverage also contrasted the conduct of

---

817 *Roscommon Herald*, 22 April, 1882.
the arrested members with that of the police, who were framed generally as comedic ruffians left “in a wonderful state of mind when they saw the ladies drive off amid cheers and waving of handkerchiefs.”

Other League branches in the region similarly condemned the arrests, again centering the charitable aspects of the League’s operations to ground their arguments in the injustice of the arrests. The Emlaghfad League branch passed a series of resolutions at their first meeting of 1882, including three which condemned the arrests of League members. The first responded to the arrest of 21-year old Hannah Reynolds, a prominent member of the League’s Central Committee saying “that we condemn the action of the so-called British Government in imprisoning Miss Reynolds for doing her utmost to forward the work of charity, and we sympathize with her in her present position, caged as a murderer, and we are determined to carry on the work of charity despite buckshot and bayonets.” The second statement condemned the arrests in Keadue, expressing hope that the response would “let the RIC learn in time that the ladies of Ireland are not to be discouraged either by threats or blandishments from supporting a cause which they believe to be righteous and essential to the ends of justice.” Finally, the third resolution drew the national and local crises together, saying that “we pledge ourselves to do all in our power to assist those who are imprisoned through their connection with the Land League, and we look with hate and disgust at the action of the Government in arresting Miss Reynolds, who was a true friend to her Irish sisters.”

819 Reynolds was arrested under a law dating to the reign of Edward III which required women “not of good fame” to post bail as a guarantee of their good behavior. Reynolds refused to post bail and was imprisoned in Cork Gaol for three months.
Another extended confrontation between the League and the RIC in the region took place in Drumlease, Co Leitrim, roughly four miles from the border with Sligo and just over sixteen miles from Sligo town. Members of the constabulary approached the Drumlease branch as it held a meeting, and the constables asked if the meeting was a Land League meeting. According to a report forwarded to the *Sligo Champion*, the members replied that “they were engaged in a work of charity, and did not require any instructions from the RIC,” and they went on to add that “they would not be prevented by all the Coercion Acts ever framed and passed in an alien House of Commons from doing all in their power (within the Constitution) to alleviate the sufferings of their imprisoned countrymen and countrywomen.”

Following an extended confrontation with the police, during which it was reported “the constable lost his temper (to the great amusement of the ladies),” the branch passed a series of resolutions protesting “against the conduct of the police in endeavouring, by threats of prosecution and arrest, to prevent us from proceeding in our work of charity.” Members pledged “to assist Miss Parnell and the other members of the Ladies’ Land League in their noble efforts to relieve the families of evicted tenants, and of persons arrested under an arbitrary Coercion Act, from the dangers to which they are exposed.”

Finally, members of the Ballyleague, Co Roscommon, branch were tried at the Roscommon petty sessions court on 21 January 1882. The suit levied by the local RIC constable alleged that on the first of that year “at a meeting of the Ladies’ Land League held in the house of one John Rorke made use of language and behaved in a manner

---

calculated to further the illegal purposes of the Land League… and thereby acted so as to create discontent in the minds of people.” Centrally, the police asserted that the women at the meeting referred not to the Ladies’ Land League but to the Land League. As in the Keadue case, when confronted by the police the members of the branch asserted the charitable nature of their organization. One of the leaders of the branch, Catherine Hughes, read a resolution “that the members should continue their work of charity, and continue their subscriptions for the poor evicted tenants,” while another member, a Miss O’Carroll, called on branch members to “uphold the principles of the Irish National Land League,” and a third member, Miss Curtain, stated “I think a charitable duty should not be interfered with by the police. Hold your meetings and do not be afraid of the police.” As in the Keadue case the women were openly confrontational with members of the RIC, saying in court that “there was no concealment, nor did they appear to be one bit afraid of us. They said they were doing works of charity and Sunday was a good day for that.” The three women who directly confronted the police were offered the opportunity to avoid imprisonment on the condition that they posted bail for their future good behavior, which all three refused to do, arguing that their behavior had not constituted bad behavior, and accordingly the court confined them to prison until late February. As in the Keadue case, this case attracted both popular attention and support. The Journal noted that when Catherine Hughes was released from prison in February 1882, “the Roscommon brass band and the Kilteevan and Cloonturskert fife and drum

bands, accompanied by a pretty large crowd” met her at the local train station and escorted her home.826

In their reaction to coercion, League members advanced a twin-pronged argument. They asserted in the strongest possible terms that they possessed the middle-class respectability that imperial narratives of Irish inferiority would deny them. This can clearly be seen in the physical confrontations between League members and RIC officials, where League members leveraged the power that their gender and class granted to protest against the intrusion of the British state and the arrest of female members. Significantly, the League members advanced a second argument proceeding from the first. As respectable middle-class women, they argued that they were entitled to make statements on political affairs—that the political nature of their organization co-existed, and at times superseded, its charitable nature. This can be seen in the number of resolutions pertaining to political matters, and in the talismanic use of the word “charity” following the coercive efforts in order to cloak the League’s broader aims in the language of acceptable behavior. However, both opponents and supporters of the League would concern themselves primarily with the first phase of this argument—whether League members in fact possessed respectable status—and largely ignored the argument for how that status could be employed, a development which paved the way for the organization’s

826 “Release of Miss Hughes,” Roscommon Journal, 18 February, 1882. Police harassment of League branches continued along these lines through the early spring of 1882. The Kikulla branch on the 11th of March had its proceedings interrupted by a constable and three sub-constables, who asked what the purpose of the meeting was. The branch members asserted that “it was to extend their charity for the support of their imprisoned leaders and evicted families” and refused to disburse, at which point “a constable laid hands on one of them and put her rudely outside the door” of the meeting room and the rest of the branch members adjourned of their own accord. (“The Police and the Ladies, Roscommon Journal, 18 March, 1882). On 20 March RIC officers confronted a meeting of the Boyle Co Roscommon branch and informed members that they would be prosecuted if they held any more meetings. (Roscommon Journal, 25 March, 1882.)
radical political aims to be first marginalized and, ultimately, erased from the nationalist narrative of the period.

The most significant opposition to the Ladies’ Land League was expressed by Archbishop Edward McCabe of Dublin, who denounced the league in an 1881 pastoral letter. In the letter he argued that “the modesty of her daughters was the ancient glory of Ireland….Like Mary, their place was the seclusion of the home. If charity drew them out of doors, their work was done with speed and their voices were not heard in the world’s thoroughfares.” He argued that, due to the efforts of the Ladies’ Land League, “all of this is now to be laid aside, and the daughters of our Catholic people, be they matrons or virgins, are called forth, under the flimsy pretext of charity, to take their stand in the noisy arena of public life.” This line of argument was immediately, and publicly,
contested by other members of the Catholic hierarchy, notably by Thomas Croke, the
Archbishop of Cashel, who challenged the “monstrous imputation” of McCabe’s pastoral
letter. 829

While McCabe’s argument was not grounded in anything approaching nationalist
politics, his general line of argument did find some adherents within the nationalist
community. The Roscommon Journal, which while a nationalist paper, was decidedly of
a more conservative political bent, argued on the occasion of the arrests of Ladies’
League members that “we think the Government and the Ladies’ Land League are acting
equally foolish; and that one-fourth of the money at present being spent on supplying
wooden houses to evicted tenants would enable the poorer among them to pay a ‘live and
thrive’ rent.” The article went on to argue that such funds would make the tenant-farmer
population “peaceful and contented—and, instead of their holdings becoming ‘waste,’
afford the tenant the means of cultivating them properly, and thus enable them to
maintain their families in comfort and decency.” 830

The most notable nationalist opponent of the organization was James Daly, the
proprietor of the Connaught Telegraph. At the foundation of the Ladies’ League, the
Telegraph published an extended editorial, in response to “having heard so much said and
written upon the desirability of forming ladies’ Land Leagues through-out Ireland.”
While the editors did not “desire to oppose any measures or means that can be devised to
advance the situation a step towards the goal of victory, we confess we look on the
organization of ladies’ Land Leagues as ill-advised and unnecessary in the extreme.”
Further, following on McCabe’s logic that “God or nature never intended woman to take

the advanced position in fighting for the emancipation of any nation,” the paper advanced a telling extension of the archbishop’s argument by announcing their disbelief “that the manhood of any nation could be so cowardly and demoralized as to intrench themselves behind the fair sex, and expect from that point successfully, to fight their battle, and attain their objects.” 831

The central element of the Telegraph’s editorial was the assertion that allowing women to lead the land agitation would degrade Irish manhood and lead inevitably to the defeat of the land movement and the broader nationalist campaign for self-government. The editors argued that the true leaders of the land agitation had conducted themselves in accordance with both the law and the general demands of masculine restraint, only demanding “a feasible settlement of the bane of Irish discontent,” not arguing “against the State or its constitution” or advocating for “revolution or insurrection. They have, in our minds, not transgressed.” 832 Staying that course would ensure victory, even in the face of coercion: “Although they succeed in imprisoning guiltless men, they shall never succeed in imprisoning a just cause.” Turning the cause over to women was, however, not only foolish but positively dangerous. 833 The editorial continued that any effort to have women lead the political struggle could only result in a failure of masculine strength and an abandonment of the political cause: “We do not see how any man or body of men having Celtic blood coursing in their veins can be found to descend to or condescend to female leadership in Irish constitutional warfare.” The Telegraph concluded that “we would be wanting in that duty we owe ourselves and the manhood of Ireland if we did not

831 Connaught Telegraph 12 February, 1881.
832 Connaught Telegraph 12 February, 1881.
833 Connaught Telegraph 12 February, 1881.
enter our solemn protest against having the responsibility of Irish affairs vested in
women, and abandoned by Irishmen through fear of Coercion.”834 This argument, that
female political leadership could only be accomplished through a cowardly abandonment
of their proper position by Irishmen, echoed anxieties about the masculinity of Irishmen
discussed in prior chapters of this study, most notably the fears surrounding masculine
degradation expressed in the *Irish People* in the 1860s.

In June 1882, the *Telegraph* reasserted this claim by reprinting “the very able and
truthful letter of Dr. Gilmore, Lord Bishop of Cleveland, U.S.A., in condemnation of the
Ladies Land League, whom his Grace designates as a lot of brawlers.”835 Gilmore
adhered to a similar line of argument as that offered by McCabe the previous year,
claiming that he was motivated to act by his belief in “the impropriety of women
becoming politicians or appearing in the indecorous role of noisy agitators”; and that
“home was woman’s sphere; there she was queen, and there God has destined her to
wield her influence… and that when women attempted to play the part of man she
FORGOT HER SEX AND HER PLACE IN SOCIETY.”836 The *Telegraph*, in endorsing
the bishop’s letter, went a step further than the traditional conservative commentary on
separate spheres, underlining that “We concur that it is disgusting to think that the
manhood of any country should intrench themselves behind the petty-coats of a lot of she
mercenary patriots,” again linking female leadership to masculine passivity and
emasculaton.837

834 *Connaught Telegraph* 12 February, 1881.
835 *Connaught Telegraph*, 24 June, 1882.
836 “Lady” Leaguers,” Bishop Gilmour’s condemnation of unwomanly women in his Diocese,” *Connaught
Telegraph*, 24 June, 1882.
837 *Connaught Telegraph*, 24 June, 1882.
Another statement of this type was furnished by P.J. Smyth, MP for Westmeath, who published a letter on the topic of the Ladies’ Land League in the *Roscommon & Letrim Gazette* and the *Mayo Examiner*. Smyth described the League membership as “Irishwomen, forgetful of the modesty that becomes their sex, and for which the women of Ireland have heretofore been celebrated,” and he posited that female political activity equated to the feminization of Irishmen: “[I] hang my head for shame as an Irishman; and the question forces itself irresistibly upon me, whither have fled the pride, the manhood, the virtue of our race.”

Most often, however, the *Telegraph*’s criticism of the Ladies’ League stemmed from political disagreements. The *Telegraph*, in its criticism of the Land League Leadership argued that in its moderation it had abandoned the principles articulated at Irishtown that had driven the movement to such heights of popular support, and argued, in the face of the collapse of the League in Mayo, that the lack of true leadership had led to a collapse in the willingness in the farmers of Mayo to continue fighting for the Land League. “The inactivity, amounting to demoralization, on the part of the tenant-farmers,” the paper claimed, could be “attributed to the want of confidence on the part of the people in the leadership of those paid, white livered, whining, mercenary patriots of the Land League.”

This argument added depth to the initial denunciation of the Ladies’ League, placing them as part of a general concern for the collapse of the Land Movement, and additionally illuminates the criticisms leveled by the *Telegraph* of Ladies’ League members. League members were portrayed in stunningly misogynistic terms as the

---

female counterparts of the Land League leadership, who according to the *Telegraph*, amounted to nothing more than a gang of con artists intent on swindling Irish tenant farmers and Irish-American workers out of their money in the service of base political aims. Thus, the *Telegraph* reacted to news of donations to the Ladies’ League by asking “what will those ‘vinegar faces,’ or ‘childless women,’ better known as the Ladies’ Land League, do with all this money? Can it be possible they will try a similar game to that played by their male relatives and friends… to start a Ladies Swindle Company (limited).”

A notice published in 1882 further sought to connect the failures of the Land League leadership to the activities of the Ladies’ League, noting “that a rather stale looking specimen of Land Leaguer-ess has taken a tour through South Mayo, as bill poster, in advance to the swindle company.” The paper criticized John O’Connor Power for having “lost all vitality towards a sense of duty towards country,” a state of affairs which “this vinegar faced Venus will take all the credit [for] herself, that by her action in Mayo she made our Parliamentary representatives do their duty.”

The final discussion of the Ladies’ League in the *Telegraph* followed the same trend. An editorial discussing emigration from Connemara argued that “the flower of the peasantry of Connemara [who] pine and starve, uncovered save by the blue vault of Heaven, and uncared for save by the all-seeing eye of their Lord and Master,” had received no support from “the over-charged and under-rated and accounted for Exchequer of the Land League … either through Mr. Davitt, or his fulsomely-praised

---

841 “A Female Bill Poster,” *Connaught Telegraph*, 1 April, 1882.
apostles in petticoats, who are the…accredited regenerators of Ireland as a nation.”

“While those apostles of the Land League make great rhetorical flourishes,” the Telegraph concluded, “the Connemara peasantry are treated much after the fashion of the rather rude but appropriate adage, ‘Live, horse, and you’ll get grass,’” a turn of phrase given added impact by the continued disputes between small farmers and larger grazers.842

The application of the muscular nationalist framework helps to explain why those nationalist commentators, who were engaged in the project of creating and promoting archetypes of proper and bifurcated masculine and feminine conduct, rejected the Ladies’ League’s argument that its activities constituted an acceptable extension of the Domestic sphere for fundamentally different reasons than their conservative counterparts. To such nationalist commentators the existence of women engaged in political activity undermined the archetypes of masculine and feminine behavior which had by this point become central to the project of Irish nationalism. The presence of women activists implied a lack of masculine control and willingness for self-sacrifice, which in turn would justify the imperial exclusion of Irishmen from the full categories of masculinity and whiteness.

This seeming discomfort with the Ladies’ League, or at least with League members acting as fully activated political individuals, was even notable when those nationalist papers which supported the League discussed the group. As noted above, newspapers in the region primarily covered the group through publication of meeting

842 “Depopulated Connemara,” Connaught Telegraph, 10 June, 1882.
minutes written by League branch leaders, except for when extraordinary events, such as
the arrest of League members, occasioned specific comment.

At other moments the papers would discuss League activities in a way which
indicated the authors intended their readers to sympathize with the League and its
members. A notable example of this was when the *Herald* described the arrest of the
Keadue members as “the most despotic acts which the officials of the present
Government have yet attempted,” and the women in question as “engaged in the noble
work of charity and benevolence.” The article continued that “the sufferings of the
homeless outcasts were attended to by Miss Ward, Mrs. Walsh, Mrs. Skerret and the
other good ladies of that parish… their efforts were entirely unselfish and were prompted
by motives of the purest patriotism and the tenderest devotion of suffering humanity.”
Moreover, the *Herald* claimed, “because they were engaged in one of the highest
missions that could engage the heart of woman, the three ladies named were adjudged…
as being guilty of an ‘offense against law and order.’” The article concluded by
stating, “These ladies deserve the thanks of the community for the nerve and
determination in a good work which they exhibited on this trying occasion; and there are
‘very’ few true Irishmen, who read the report of the proceedings, that will not consider
Miss Ward worthy of the highest commendation.”

Similarly, the *Sligo Champion* had weighed in on the controversy sparked by
Archbishop McCabe, first by stating that it was “a terribly dangerous thing for any man,
especially an exalted Prelate of the Church, to impute motives,” and later by publishing

---

the aforementioned letter in support of the League by Archbishop Croke. Croke expressed his thanks to Alexander Martin Sullivan, saying he was “delighted to find that some one of mark has at last stepped forward from the ranks of the laity to vindicate the character of the good Irish ladies who have become Land Leaguers, and to challenge publicly the ‘monstrous imputations’ cast on them by the Archbishop of Dublin.”

Sullivan—journalist, historian, and Home Rule politician—was indeed a layperson with impeccable credentials, as indeed was Croke—soon to be known as the founding sponsor of the Gaelic Athletic Association.

The Champion’s coverage of the Keadue arrest also illustrated that the paper’s editors supported, at least to a point, the activities of the Ladies’ League. The paper reported that following the release of the Keadue leadership, “they were met as soon as they went to the road by the Ballyfarnon fife and drum band, who played a series of national airs,” and the paper claimed that “great excitement prevailed” throughout the day. “Every house,” the story read, “except those of the landlord and the police barrack was illuminated. The band played for hours, and the crowd cheered for the Ladies’ Land League.” Both the Herald and the Champion also noted that the arrested women had “accepted their fate with the greatest composure,” language reminiscent of how the crowds at nationalist demonstrations were described as acting.

However, as the Ladies’ League moved toward its dissolution, the coverage of both papers illustrated a desire to move past the Ladies’ Land League and return to the normalcy of masculine leadership within the nationalist movement. The Herald’s

---

coverage of the Ladies’ League slackened in the months leading to August 1882, and it noted the dissolution of the League only in passing. In a longer editorial regarding the relief of distress, the *Herald* stated that “the Ladies’ Land League have been dissolved in consequence of the formation of this protective association for the evicted, and we must say that the ladies undoubtedly discharged a difficult and arduous task in a manner which reflects the highest credit on their courage, ability, and patriotism.” The editorial went on to argue that the League’s members had “dared the prison of the oppressor and the calumny of the false friend, and right nobly have they done their work.” It concluded by claiming that “the Mansion House Committee will now take up their mission of succoring and alleviating the lot of the victims of extermination.”

The editorial appears to have defined the motivation of League members as rather reluctantly extending their material role as caretakers to the Irish nation for a time, before gratefully laying down that burden with the return of male political leadership, meaning that there had been no deviation from the symbol of chaste femininity to which Irishwomen were enjoined to aspire, in stark contrast to how League members portrayed their own experience.

The *Sligo Champion* similarly reduced its coverage of the League after the spring of 1882. The *Champion* broke its silence only to comment on the death of Fanny Parnell in August. Living in New York, she had founded the Ladies’ Land League in America, where her work had focused on fund raising, promotion—especially through her poetry, and organizing among the Irish in the USA. The paper described her in remarkably conventional terms, as having “under the approbation and direction of her respected

---

849 “The Evicted” *Roscommon Herald*, 19 August, 1882. The Mansion House Committee was a charitable organization set up to relieve distress in Ireland. It was founded by the Lord Mayor of Dublin and included in its subscribers several large-scale landlords.
mother,” founded the Ladies’ League, but had to “resign all official connection with the organization” due to her failing health. The Champion also reprinted a tribute to Parnell originally published in the Buffalo Catholic Union, which described her as “stricken down in the flower of her days, in the midst of her fruitful labors, and with songs of patriot cheer upon her lips,” and asked “who shall count the naked clothed, the hungry fed, the homeless sheltered by her and through her example and influence.”

The League that she founded was similarly reduced to what the editor viewed as its essential aspects, as “so useful an agent in defense of the people against the combined power of the landlords and the government,” rather than as an active organization seeking specific political aims.

As in Roscommon, the final press coverage of the Ladies’ League in Sligo came on the occasion of its official dissolution and the establishment of the Mansion House Committee which assumed its charitable efforts. However, in Sligo the League itself was omitted from coverage of its successor group’s founding. The Champion claimed that “since the suppression of the Land League the tenant farmers of Ireland have been left almost absolutely at the mercy of the landlords,” a reading of recent history which totally omitted the Ladies’ League. The editorial went on to refer to the foundation of the Mansion House Committee as an instance where the “leaders of the Irish people have launched the good ship, and it will be the duty of the Irish people themselves to bring her safely and victoriously over the troubled waters.” The paper urged men to enroll as subscribers for the benefit of the Committee by saying “to work then, Men of Sligo, and

850 “Death of Miss Fanny V. Parnell,” Sligo Champion, 12 August, 1882.
852 “Death of Miss Fanny V. Parnell,” Sligo Champion, 12 August, 1882.
show MacMurrogh Kavanagh, and your quondam ‘Home Rule representative,’ King-Harman, that their nefarious contrivance for the extermination of your race shall never succeed.” The lack of commentary on the dissolution of the Ladies’ League, the erasure of it from the narrative of recent events, and the call specifically for the men of Sligo to enroll as subscribers to this new charitable organization, all suggest a nationalist press uncomfortable with a group of politically active women.

While the moment of crisis was at hand, it seems, the nationalist press in Sligo could tolerate the Ladies’ Land League and even at times refer to it in a positive light. Once the crisis passed, however, the Champion argued that it was time for masculine action and for the men of Sligo to return to their sole leadership on political questions. This argument would become central to the discussion of the Ladies’ Land League in the years following the conclusion of the Land War. Indeed, it would eventually pave the way for the League to be almost entirely written out of the history of the period, in favor of narratives which emphasized masculine strength and heroism, narratives upon which the Irish case for nationhood could more easily rest.

In fact, this reluctance to engage with the Ladies’ Land League on its own terms and discuss the organization as it actually existed continued in nationalist retrospectives of the Land War period. Nationalist authors downplayed the radicalism of the organization as well as its importance to the latter years of the Land War in favor of

854 “An Urgent Duty- A word to Sligo,” Sligo Champion, 26 August, 1882. King-Harman was the recently defeated MP for Sligo. Although elected as a Home Rule member, King-Harman was closer to the Conservative Party in outlook and was defeated in the 1880 general election. King-Harman was also a large landlord in the county and thus was a target of particular dislike by the nationalist press in the region. MacMurrogh Kavanagh was similarly a large landowner from Co. Carlow and had served as Conservative MP for the county until his defeat in the 1880 general election. After losing his seat, MacMurrogh Kavanagh served as a member of the Bessborough Commission which concluded that the 1870 Land Act was largely ineffective, although he published his own dissenting opinion to the committee report.
advancing an argument which centered on a reading of the Land War as a period of individual masculine regeneration, which resulted in a stronger case for Irish self-government, a narrative which could not easily accommodate the Ladies’ Land League.

Interestingly, given the trend toward a marginalization of the Ladies’ Land League in retrospectives, one of the first histories of the Land War, E.J. Hoares’ *The Legion of Honour* published in 1882, placed the Ladies’ Land League in a position of prominence. Hoare opened his narrative celebrating those arrested under coercive legislation by arguing that “no event in modern Irish history has been more far reaching in its consequences than the formation in Ireland of a Ladies’ branch of the Irish National Land League.” He went on to argue that “there can scarcely be a doubt that it would have gone far to push the Land League agitation out of the region of practical politics, had not the Ladies’ Land League arisen to baffle and confront the calculations of English statesmen.” Hoare’s central argument was that coercion was threatening to destroy the land agitation by removing the agitation’s leaders and intimidating the rank-and-file members of the Land League, but that “when, in every part of Ireland, intelligent, educated, and patriotic ladies were ready to take the place of their imprisoned countrymen, the authors of coercion were entirely beaten, and their much vaunted weapon was broken in their hands.”

However, as much as Hoare argued that this action was important, he took pains to argue the motivations and actions of the women who joined the Ladies’ League were perfectly in keeping with Victorian conceptions of gender. He contended that their activities were far from being an example of aberrational female involvement in political

---

life. According to Hoare, “there was really no difference between the action of those patriotic ladies who collected funds for the relief of the famishing victims of landlordism—the evicted, and those pious ladies who, in the cause of religion, employed all their energies to rendering bazars and other devices successful.” Furthermore, he wrote, the members of the Ladies’ League had only “with the utmost reluctance, and in obedience to the imperative call of humanity and patriotism…come out from the retirement of the domestic circle,” further containing the League and its members within Victorian conceptions of gender. He again raised that point in his description of Anna Parnell’s activities, claiming that “she had not only to contend with the inexperience of public affairs of those ladies associated with her, but also to endeavour to help them in overcoming the natural reluctance they felt to engage in any pursuit that would withdraw them from the retirement of private life.”

This central argument, that the Ladies’ Land League’s members engaged in their actions only reluctantly and that those actions were an acceptable extension of the domestic sphere, was further advanced by Hoare in his description of the activities of the Ladies’ League. He portrayed the League as fundamentally performing nurturing, domestic activities, in essence expanding female care for one’s family to one’s nation. For example, Hoare described the housing of evicted tenants as relieving harsh conditions, which threatened the continued existence of idealized, patriarchal Irish families, making it so that “no longer was it possible that the descending snow of a winter’s night should be the winding sheet of a sickly wife or child whom the brutal

---

myrmidons of landlordism would not permit the cabin’s roof for one day more.”

This description of the victims of landlordism as “delicate women and…children of tender age” was a continual theme of Hoare’s work, as was his description of the Ladies’ League members as “truly ministering angels, who have added to the renown of their countrywomen.”

The dire conditions faced by these women and children, he claimed, justified the limited expansion of the domestic sphere by the League and its members. It was, he wrote, the “the prospect of hundreds of women and children finding themselves without better shelter than the workhouse or the roadside through eviction” which first “made possible, then an absolute necessity, an organization which showed the world what philanthropic and noble-minded women like Miss Parnell were capable of accomplishing in a sphere hitherto considered out of their reach.”

These actions were also justified by presenting the destruction of patriarchal Irish families as an existential threat to the Land agitation, arguing that

To be thrown out upon the roadside at any season and in all weathers; to have one’s home broken up; to see the household furniture scattered in all directions; to see one’s delicate wife and helpless children seeking the shelter of a ditch; to know that no fellow tenant, no matter how well inclined, could offer a night’s shelter’ this was a trial from which the bravest/ might well recoil… [but] when the Ladies’ Land League came upon the scene, some of the worst features of eviction were effaced.

While Hoare noted that the main activity of the Ladies’ League was the sheltering of evicted tenants, he focused specially on the sheltering of women and children, both portrayed as without the agency to provide for themselves. The only cases dwelt upon by Hoare of men who were aided by the Ladies’ League were those men imprisoned under

---

860 Hoare, Legion of Honour, 6.
862 Hoare, Legion of Honour, 11.
863 Hoare, Legion of Honour, 6.
coercive legislation, arguing that “in every State prison were tangibly felt their womanly foresight and care, and to them the suspects must ever feel indebted for whatever was bright and bearable in imprisonment.” He went on to note that “the Ladies’ Land League did all that mortals could do” to help with “the poor prison diet”; meanwhile, he claimed, the cells of arrested League Leaders “were neatly furnished by the Ladies’ Land League,” again drawing attention to the more domestic activities of the organization.

The question which arises from Hoare’s account is why does his depiction of the Ladies’ League clash so greatly with the actual day-to-day activities of the organization as described by both Anna Parnell in her narrative of the organization’s progress and in the self-reported activities of Ladies’ League branches in Roscommon and Sligo? To cite but one example, Hoare’s depiction of quintessentially Victorian ladies moved reluctantly to venture only slightly from their assigned sphere to alleviate the overwhelming suffering of other women and children sits uneasily beside the reality that the women of Keadue reacted to the threat of imprisonment by writing carefully tailored statements to be read at the time of their arrest and ensured that members of the local press would be available to disseminate those statements throughout the region.

It seems possible that Hoare was motivated to describe the Ladies’ League in a less-than-accurate manner in order to refute the arguments made by Archbishop McCabe that female participation in the League was un-womanly and problematic. Hoare argued that opponents of the League, whom he characterized as giving “vent to their spleen in unmanly sneers at what they called ‘patriots in petticoats’” had “the most narrow and illiberal conception of ‘women’s mission divine,’” again asserting that what the League

---

864 Hoare, _Legion of Honour_, 15.
865 Hoare, _Legion of Honour_, 27, 28.
members had done was nothing out of the ordinary for Victorian middle-class women.\textsuperscript{866} Regarding McCabe himself, Hoare condemned both the “hereditary enemies” of the Irish race and also those “whose position lent weight and influence to their words,” which were expressed in “strangely unscriptural language” that depicted members of the League “as un-Irish, un-Catholic, and unmaidenly.”\textsuperscript{867}

If Hoare’s description of the Ladies’ League as a whole was designed to refute McCabe’s denunciations, then his account of the two founders of the organization, Anna and Fanny Parnell, sought to portray them as completely within the bounds of Victorian womanhood. But the details of his portrayal of the two sisters also illustrates the extent to which even Hoare, as invested in portraying the Ladies’ League as central to the success of the land agitation as a whole, ultimately forced politically active women, somewhat clumsily, into more socially acceptable categories.

In describing Anna Parnell, he argued that the chief problem she had to deal with was not only “the inexperience of public affairs of those ladies associated with her” but also their “natural reluctance” to withdraw from private life.\textsuperscript{868} He even applied this logic to Parnell herself, arguing, that it was only the prospect of the destruction of Irish families and harm being visited upon Irish women and children which created the circumstances for her and her League to flourish.

His description of Parnell also emphasized her feminine qualities, while downplaying, and indeed omitting, the actual radicalism of her ideals. He called her “fragile, gentle, and delicate…born to all that wealth and social position could offer,” and

\textsuperscript{866} Hoare, \textit{Legion of Honour}, 2.
\textsuperscript{867} Hoare, \textit{Legion of Honour}, 5.
\textsuperscript{868} Hoare, \textit{Legion of Honour}, 11.
as something of a martyr, who “gave herself with passionate earnestness to alleviate the
wants and sufferings of her less fortunate countrymen and women.” 869 This language of
sacrifice reoccurs when Hoare described the closing days of the League’s operation. He
noted that she had worked unceasingly on behalf of the League and the evicted tenants
until “at length, her untiring exertions and the unexpected death of her sister completely
prostrated her. Ireland watched for days with trembling anxiety by the bed side where lay
as pure and noble a spirit as ever has done honor to the name of woman.” 870 This
narrative completely sidestepped the contentious closure of the Ladies’ League and the
very real splits between Anna and her brother C.S. Parnell about the motivation and
direction of the nationalist movement in favor of a depiction of Anna as a near-martyr for
Ireland some of whose deeds, but few of her ideals, needed to be celebrated.

If the near martyrdom of Anna Parnell dominated Hoare’s description of her, then
the death of Fanny Parnell was the lens through which he wrote about her life, down to
the title of the chapter as “the Dead Sappho.” Hoare made this parallel explicit early in
the chapter, writing:

Her labors in the cause of Ireland, in the cause of the Irish National Land League,
were beyond her strength, and that the strain they put upon her delicate
constitution ultimately broke it down, and were directly the means of her
premature death… her young life was sacrificed in the cause of country, as truly
as ever was the life of martyr sacrificed in cause of Faith. 871

Hoare similarly portrayed Fanny Parnell as a woman “possessed [of] a
sensitiveness that would have made her shrink from the public platform or public life,”
but also of “an overpowering sense of duty to her country and to her species,” which

869 Hoare, Legion of Honour, 11.
870 Hoare, Legion of Honour, 14.
871 Hoare, Legion of Honour, 16.
prompted her to “often abandon the attractions of a luxurious home, and the admiration of a polished circle, in order to aid the cause of the oppressed.” Her actions during the land agitation were not the direct aid to the distressed or direct involvement in the Ladies’ League, but rather “awakening and keeping alive the spirit of enthusiasm and determination which marked the Land League struggle more than that of any other recorded in our annals.” She worked, he wrote, to tear “off the mask from the veiled features of landlordism, and” expose their “selfishness and fraud to the gaze of an astonished world.” Much of the chapter on Fanny Parnell centered on her poetry. Hoare described her “Hold the Harvest” as “such lines as Tyrtaeus might have addressed to the Spartans when he wished to rouse them against their foes,” and her “A mother’s mourning” as “a wail of passionate sorrow for what, in some hour of despondency, seems to the poet the hopeless fate destined to be forever the portion of her native land.”

Hoare’s descriptions of Fanny Parnell’s poetry were broadly sympathetic and accurate, certainly more so than his discussion of Anna’s greater role on the ground during the height of the movement. This contrast, and the fact that Hoare spent more time discussing Fanny than Anna, seems to illustrate that even Hoare, dedicated as he was to ensuring that the Ladies’ League received credit for their actions during the Land War, was somewhat uncomfortable with the full implications of what that credit meant. His desire to refute McCabe’s accusations by emphasizing the domestic nature of the Ladies’ League’s activities, his reduction of Anna Parnell to a delicate near-martyr rather than an actual and radical political activist, and his valorization of Fanny Parnell, who had in life

---

872 Hoare, *Legion of Honour*, 16.
neatly filled an acceptable role for a woman as a poet, and who was now conveniently
deceased and unable to offer any controversial opinions, seems to illustrate the extent to
which gendered ideas about proper nationalist conduct were central to even the earliest
memorialization of the Land War. Other retrospectives similarly offered narratives of the
period which centered male activities and downplayed or ignored completely the
activities of women during the campaign, both those of women on-the-ground during the
agitation generally and those of the Ladies’ Land League.

For example, the famed Fenian and Irish-American activist John Devoy—whose
support for what he termed a “new departure” had been instrumental in launching the
Land War in the first instance—mentioned the Ladies’ Land League only once in his The
Land of Eire, also published in 1882. He argued throughout that the central outcome of
the Land War was the creation of “a more manly and self-reliant spirit,” which prompted
the farmers to resist rack-rents and evictions.\(^{875}\) When he mentioned the Ladies’ Land
League, it was in this context of general resistance, saying that “the landlords were
resisted at every step, evicted tenants were reinstated in their homes, or in huts erected
near them, and the Ladies’ Land League was kept busy attending to cases of distress.”\(^{876}\)
Devoy did note the arrest of Ladies’ League members, saying “Ladies were arrested on
the most flimsy pretexts and cast into the common jail, with the object of frightening
them into submission,” but he argued that such measures “only tended to deepen the

\(^{875}\) John Devoy, The Land of Eire: The Irish land league; its origin, progress and consequences, preceded by
a concise history of the various movements which have culminated in the last great agitation (New York:
Patterson and Neilson 1882), 58.

\(^{876}\) Devoy, Land of Eire, 86.
hatred of the Government and their Irish officials, which was already strong enough among the people.”

This sparse reference to the Ladies’ League in Devoy’s narrative found an echo in perhaps the most comprehensive examination of the Land War from a nationalist perspective, Michael Davitt’s *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland: Or, The story of the Land League Revolution*. As in Devoy’s account, the central goal of Davitt’s narrative was to portray the Land War as the period when “men of the Irish race, scattered by eviction and the evils of unsympathetic rule in Ireland to all parts of the earth, were ‘enlisted’ in the final struggle for the soil and rule of the Celtic fatherland.” This framing of the conflict as having a decidedly masculine character echoed the sort of racial and masculinist anxieties discussed in chapter three. Throughout the book, Davitt built on what he called the aim of his narrative in the preface: to present “a connecting narrative between the struggle of the present and the conflicts of past generations of the Celtic people for the repossession of the soil of the country.” This struggle, he argued, had been an almost unbroken one, extending over seven generations or more of intermittent agrarian warfare. Herein there is seen a persistency of purpose and a continuity of racial aim not associated by English or other foreign critics of Celtic character with the alleged mercurial spirit and disposition of the Irish people.

In this reading the persistence of struggle against foreign oppression illustrated the righteousness of the Irish demand for self-rule and asserted quite strongly that the

---

877 Devoy, *Land of Eire*, 86.
878 Michael Davitt, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland: Or, The story of the Land league Revolution* (New York and London: Harper & Brothers, 1904), xii. Davitt had an extended career as a journalist and MP between the Land war and the publication of the Fall of Feudalism. Several of his works, notably *The Boer fight for freedom, and Within the pale: the true story of anti-Semitic persecution in Russia* illustrated the ways in which European notions of white racial superiority were part of his consciousness. For more on Davitt see T.W. Moody *Davitt and the Irish Revolution 1846-1882* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); Carla King, *Michael Davitt* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2009).
879 Davitt, *The Fall of Feudalism*, xiii
racialized depictions of the Irish in the British media were inaccurate. Davitt’s framing of the Land War as a coming together for the men of the Irish race specifically to win the soil and the rule of the Celtic fatherland is a further part of this assertion.

Because Davitt’s aim was to assert the ability of Irishmen to engage in a struggle which proved their racial status, masculinity, and fitness for self-government, his coverage of the Ladies’ Land League and their activities was fundamentally limited. Were he to acknowledge the centrality of the Ladies’ League to the struggle, even in the limited way Hoare had done, it would have undermined the narrative he was so clearly attempting to advance. He did note that in a moment of crisis the Ladies’ League played a useful role in thwarting the impact of coercive legislation, saying, “No better allies than women could be found for such a task. They are, in certain emergencies, more dangerous to despotism than men. They have more courage… when and where their better instincts are appealed to by a militant and just cause in a fight against a mean foe.”

He also noted that “boycotting, more systemic and relentless than had ever yet been practiced, was the weapon with which the Ladies’ Land League were to fight Mr. Forster, and to beat him.” He tempered this statement, however, by saying that “it was neither the business nor desire of the ladies’ league [sic] to inquire too closely into the motives or methods of those who, driven from open combination and public meetings, resorted to such expedients as were available in carrying on the fighting policy of the movement.” Thus, he clearly differentiated the activities of the Ladies’ League from those carried out by the Irish men he credited with the success of the movement. This separation is somewhat ironic as Anna Parnell’s political views centered on the idea of land

---

880 Davitt, The Fall of Feudalism, 299.
881 Davitt, The Fall of Feudalism, 340.
nationalization, which Davitt also supported, illustrating the extent to which gendered concerns were central to Davitt’s narrative.

The bulk of Davitt’s description of the Ladies’ League and its activities centered less on the activities of the organization and more on their motivations. He characterized the Ladies’ League as acting “to save the homes of Ireland—the sacred, domestic domain of woman’s moral supremacy in civilized society, while the enemy was the system which had ruined tens of thousands of Irish girls, morally and otherwise in evictions and in consequent misery and wrong.” Thus, their activities were acceptable in light of the grave circumstances effected by evictions, reinforcing that the ideal place for women in Irish society was in the home.\textsuperscript{882} This explanation for the Ladies’ League’s motivation also echoed Davitt’s statement that the Land League as a whole was created because “homes that ought everywhere to be (what they have conspicuously been in Ireland) the nurseries of moral virtues were placed at the mercy of a sordid greed, under the laws of eviction.”\textsuperscript{883}

This concern for the destruction of Irish homes and the resulting danger for Irish women played a role in Davitt’s criticism of Archbishop McCabe’s condemnation of the Ladies’ League. In an extended passage, Davitt argued that McCabe “was greatly alarmed about the ‘modesty’ of the women of Ireland,” but sarcastically claimed

\begin{quote}
It was a tender concern awakened for the first time in this respect. The dens of Dublin, the conduct of British soldiers in the streets each night, outside his grace’s hall door, the tens of thousands of Irish girls who had been driven to shame and ruin in foreign cities in being evicted from Irish homes by the system the Land League had resolved to cripple or destroy, never once appealed to the moral indignation of political thoughts of this Castle bishop. He was only aroused from his peaceful pastoral slumbers on the question of modesty when ladies, belonging to families at least as respectable as his own, felt called upon to face an infamous
\end{quote}

\textsuperscript{882} Davitt, \textit{The Fall of Feudalism}, 299.
\textsuperscript{883} Davitt, \textit{The Fall of Feudalism}, xvi.
law and system in defence of the homes of Ireland and to run the risk of imprisonment in a struggle for righteousness\textsuperscript{884}

In this Davitt echoed the argument advanced by Hoare that the members of the Ladies’ League did not want to involve themselves in the agitation but were forced to by circumstance. This continuity prefigured another that resonated across nationalist examinations of the Ladies’ League, a fascination with and attempted centering of Fanny Parnell.

As noted above, Hoare dedicated more of his narrative to the celebration of Fanny Parnell’s life and poetry than he did to discussing her sister’s actual accomplishments at the head of the Ladies’ League. Similarly, the regional nationalist press examined earlier in this chapter dedicated more space to Fanny Parnell’s death and the resulting incapacity of Anna Parnell, than they did to the dissolution of the Ladies’ Land League. Davitt’s narrative continued this trend, discussing Fanny Parnell’s poetry at length and linking its message to his narrative as a whole.

In particular, Davitt devoted space to Parnell’s poem “Hold the Harvest,” which Hoare had also quoted extensively in \textit{The Legion of Honour}. Davitt explicitly linked its writing to the growth of the agrarian agitation, and thus to the growing sense of self-determination among Irishmen. According to Davitt, “The cry of ‘Hold the Harvest!’ rang out at those gatherings which were held in the West… it was a fighting cry, and in response to its spirit there came across the Atlantic from the pen of Miss Fanny Parnell the following rousing appeal.”\textsuperscript{885} The poem itself echoed the rhetoric that nationalist ideological leaders had been espousing during the Land War period, arguing against the

\textsuperscript{884} Davitt, \textit{The Fall of Feudalism}, 314.
\textsuperscript{885} Davitt, 266.
use of violence in favor of non-violent resistance, saying “Let the pike and rifle stand, we have found a better way, boys/ Hold the rent and hold the crops, boys,/ Pass the word from town to town; Take away the props, boys./ So you'll pull Coercion down.”886

Another extended discussion of Parnell’s poetry centered around a verse which fitted neatly into Davitt’s categorization of the Land War as a period of masculine reawakening. The poem, ‘Hold the Harvest’ opened by arguing that Irish masculinity was questionable before the Land War. Parnell asked directly: "Now, are you men, or are you kine,/ Ye Tillers of the soil?/ Would you be free, or ever more/the rich man’s cattle toil?/ The shadow on the dial hands/that points the fatal hour/-now hold your own! Or, branded slaves, forever cringe and cower.”887

This dichotomy, that Irishmen could either free themselves through action or remain as emasculated slaves of an unjust system was the central theme of the poem, which went on to urge Irishmen “by the God who made us all-/ The seignior and the serf-/Rise up! And swear this day to hold/ your own green Irish turf;/Rise up! And plant your feet as men/ where now you crawl as slaves,/ and make your harvest-fields your camps,/ or make of them your graves.888

The poem argued that the Land War was the “natal hour” of the Irish race, before connecting the Land War, as Davitt did in his narrative, to the history of the Irish people, saying:

Three hundred years your crops have sprung,/ by murdered corpses fed/your butchered sires, your famished sires,/ for ghastly compost spread;/ Their bones have fertilized your fields,/their blood has fall’n like rain;/ They died that ye might eat and live-/ God! Have they died in vain?889

886 Davitt, The Fall of Feudalism, 267.
887 Davitt, The Fall of Feudalism, 291.
888 Davitt, The Fall of Feudalism, 291.
889 Davitt, The Fall of Feudalism, 291.
The points made by Parnell in her poetry echoed precisely the themes advanced by Davitt in his narrative. Just as Parnell sought to connect the “natal hour” of the Land War to a narrative of Irish suffering and resistance, Davitt portrayed that continued struggle as proof of Irish racial status and manhood. Just as Parnell presented the pre-Land War Irish man as living in a doubtful state, not clearly man or slave, Davitt argued that the greatest harm inflicted on the Irish by the landlord system was the “slavish social attitude” reinforced among the Irish tenantry “towards not alone the landlord but his agent and whole entourage.” In fact, Davitt argued that this condition had been inflicted by “generations of suffering and tyranny.”

Taken together, then, Davitt advanced a clear narrative of the formation, motivation, and tactics of the Ladies’ League: the women formed an organization with the sole aim of preserving “the sacred, domestic domain” of the home, who were motivated by concern for “tens of thousands of Irish girls… driven to shame and ruin.” The women acted solely through boycotting, albeit of a “more systemic and relentless” nature than had previously been practiced. Ultimately Davitt echoed the language and arguments of previous commentators on the subject. His description of the reasons for the formation of the League, the domestic motivation and respectability of its members, and the reliance of the League on boycotting—a form of protest which, as noted in prior chapters, was designed in large part to address concerns about a supposed Irish propensity toward violence—all presented the League and its members as a temporary organization of respectable women acting out of charitable concern—in other words a group that was completely within the norms of ‘proper’ female behavior.

---

890 Davitt, The Fall of Feudalism, 164, 165.
The emphases throughout all the retrospectives examined here illustrated the extent to which nationalist writers were ill-equipped and/or ill-disposed to incorporate the Ladies’ Land League into their historical narratives. The self-evidently political nature of the League’s operations, the fact that such operations had caused conflict with leading figures in the Irish Catholic church, as well as exacerbating lingering anxieties surrounding the masculinity of Irishmen and what a movement of politically activated Irishwomen might mean for that masculinity, all came together to make the topic a difficult one for later writers to engage with. Thus, we see Hoare attempting to make the women of Keadue, who directly confronted the RIC and ensured that their confrontation was properly politicized, into women only reluctantly leaving the confines of their domestic circle and happy to return to it at the conclusion of the crisis. We see Davitt lauding the Ladies’ League for their efforts but granting primacy to Fanny Parnell’s poetry, which he read as designed to rally a male audience, rather than acknowledging the actual activities of the Ladies’ League. Such activities, and the level of popular support the League commanded, as seen through the popular celebrations which accompanied the release of arrested League members, clashed with the narrative of the Land War as a time when Irishmen could prove their own and their nation’s manhood.
Conclusion

The nationalist narratives examined in chapter five were by no means the only accounts of the Land War published in its aftermath. One particularly notable such publication was Clifford Lloyd’s *Ireland under the Land League: A Narrative of Personal Experiences*, published in 1892. Lloyd, a figure so notorious among nationalists that Davitt had singled him out in speeches at Manchester and Liverpool in 1882 as a symbol of the inequity of British rule in Ireland, portrayed the Land War as a period of unprecedented violence committed by a racially inferior Irish peasantry at the behest of a duplicitous Land League leadership. Lloyd concluded his narrative in hyperbolic fashion, saying “Blood the Land League wanted, and blood it caused to flow, with a cruelty and savageness unsurpassed in history.”

Lloyd came into contact with the Land League following an extensive career in the British overseas empire, serving in the Burmese police and as deputy commissioner in the Burmese commission before being appointed as a Resident Magistrate in Ireland in 1874. His description of the individuals he met during the course of his duties demonstrated how he applied the racialized views that were central to the British colonial project which had formed the core of his adult life to the indigenous Irish. Lloyd described the Irish tenantry as “fine able men,” but he claimed that “in these days [they] were wild to an extraordinary degree. They had been led away like their neighbors by the Land League, and not being under much supervision, became very daring in their lawlessness.” In this vein, he further described them as “ignorant and excitable people

---

[who] were but the dupes and victims, while the real delinquents who goaded them on to disorder and crime were at their ease in Dublin or making Land League speeches in the House of Commons.””\textsuperscript{893} Beyond their susceptibility to being led into outrage, he claimed, the Irish were “utterly lost to every sense of decency: and that “unseemly exhibitions of ill-feeling were by no means confined to corner-boys.””\textsuperscript{894} Thus, he argued, the enforcement of the law needed to be undertaken harshly because “if the Irish are treated with strength, firmness, and justice in government, there is no people more easy to rule; but, on the other hand, there is no people who will more readily take extreme advantage of the smallest display of weakness.””\textsuperscript{895} The argument that the Irish peasantry needed to be ruled by force was a common one across Lloyd’s narrative, as he argued

the Irish are very discerning. If they see they can trample the law under foot, they will do so with unfeigned pleasure but when they find that the law is strong, and that it is administered with a determination that it shall be respected, they adapt themselves to the position with ready submission.\textsuperscript{896}

On several occasions Lloyd made his comparisons of the Irish to other colonized peoples of the empire more explicit. Lloyd claimed that “an Irish mob can certainly emit the most extraordinary sounds ,the like of which I have never heard in any part of the world,” a statement which carries a great deal of weight given the history of Lloyd’s career referenced above.\textsuperscript{897} Lloyd also compared the Land War to the Indian Mutiny of 1857, saying that:

as in the Indian Mutiny the officers of Sepoy regiments refused to believe in the treachery of those among whom they had passed their lives, and remained at their posts until shot down in their mess-rooms, so the gentry in Ireland who remained

\textsuperscript{893} Lloyd, Ireland under the Land League 71.  
\textsuperscript{894} Lloyd, Ireland under the Land League 106.  
\textsuperscript{895} Lloyd, Ireland under the Land League 200.  
\textsuperscript{896} Lloyd, Ireland under the Land League 112.  
\textsuperscript{897} Lloyd, Ireland under the Land League 152.
in the country were loath to believe individually that their doom/ had been decreed, and that the executioners were to be found among their own tenants. 898

This comparison is quite telling. The Irish gentry, the class of people whom Lloyd was born into, were the good-hearted leadership class of the Irish colony murdered through a base treachery they could not comprehend. The comparison to the Sepoy Mutiny, an event which was immediately described in thoroughly racialized terms and the suppression of which was undertaken through the use of immense brutality, furthered Lloyd’s argument that the way to suppress the Land League was through the application of military rather than civil force, one which he pioneered during his law enforcement career in Ireland. In essence, Lloyd argued that the racial inferiority of the Irish peasantry removed them from the guarantees of British citizenship and necessitated their being treated much like a non-white colonized people.

Lloyd argued that two groups of people were of a different character than the ordinary Irish peasant. The first of these were the inhabitants of what would become Northern Ireland. Lloyd described an early Land League meeting in Belfast, stating that calls for violence against landlords did not go over well with “the brave and manly farmers of the north,” and that “their feelings were outraged by such diabolical suggestions.” 899 In this description, Lloyd drew a clear distinction between the wild, violent, and presumably Catholic tenantry of the south and the brave, manly, and probably Protestant farmers of the north of Ireland. His other distinction was between the violent tenantry and the loyal, manly individuals in the RIC. This is interesting because

898 Lloyd, Ireland under the Land League 50-51.
899 Lloyd, Ireland under the Land League, 14.
constables were overwhelmingly drawn from the Roman Catholic tenant farmer population.

Lloyd highlighted the distinction between members of the RIC and the ordinary Irish peasantry, asking “why one-half of the sons of farmers in Ireland, who have been or are members of the Royal Irish Constabulary, represent a body of men unequalled for their respectability, loyalty, and courage,” while the other half “have made up the ignoble army of moonlighters cattle-maimers, and crouching assassins of whom we have all unfortunately heard so much?”

Lloyd’s response was that it was imperial discipline which effected this transformation in the recruits to the RIC, devoting a sizable portion of his narrative to a discussion of the process by which RIC recruits were vetted. Lloyd noted that members of the RIC were “obliged to undergo a physical as well as an educational test, having qualified in which, they join the depot in Dublin, where a course of discipline and instruction in both military training and civil duties is imposed upon them.”

He argued that the:

transformation that takes place, apparently in every characteristic is very remarkable… showing, on the one hand, the natural weakness of the Irish character, and on the other, the facility with which it can be molded and turned to good account. The recruit joins the depot a “wild Irishman”; he leaves it a steady, loyal, respectful, thoughtful, and disciplined member of society.

However, even in his assertion that the Roman Catholic population of Ireland could be transformed into a population capable of serving the empire, Lloyd continued to assert Irish inferiority—that it was the natural weakness of the Irish character which rendered them capable of this transformation. Taken together, then, Lloyd’s narrative

900 Lloyd, Ireland under the Land League, 137.
901 Lloyd, Ireland under the Land League, 52.
902 Lloyd, Ireland under the Land League, 53.
presented the indigenous population of Ireland as outside the bounds of whiteness and as something akin to the ‘martial races’ of the overseas empire.

Alfred Edward Turner described the indigenous people of Ireland in similar terms in his 1912 memoir *60 years of a soldier’s life*. Turner, who held a series of appointments in the Dublin Castle regime, ultimately serving as private secretary to the viceroy, described the Phoenix Park Murders, for example, as “the isolated act of revenge on the part of a small secret society composed of men of excitable Celtic blood, burning with suppressed fury and sense of injustice under Mr. Forster’s coercion.”\(^{903}\) He similarly described a series of murders in Co. Kerry in 1886 as “committed under circumstances of revolting barbarity” and argued that “a wave of crime appeared to be passing over the country, exciting to frenzy the usually courteous, kind-hearted and easy-going peasantry.”\(^{904}\)

He argued, in the same vein as Lloyd, that these murders were the result of racial inferiority in the indigenous population, noting that the crimes corresponded to the return of individuals who had emigrated “to see their relative at home as they always called it, and to look at the holdings out of which their fathers and mothers had been driven. The sight of these worked powerfully upon their emotional Celtic minds, and often drove them into a state of furor.”\(^{905}\) He also complained that whenever attempts were made to serve eviction notices in Kerry “the wild people of the hills, armed with blackthorns, scythes and the like, had made a violent onslaught on the party, and had forced them to beat a hasty retreat.”\(^{906}\)

---

\(^{904}\) Turner, *Sixty years of a soldier’s life*, 187.  
\(^{905}\) Turner, *Sixty years of a soldier’s life*, 193.  
\(^{906}\) Turner, *Sixty years of a soldier’s life*, 199.
Interestingly, Turner did take pains to draw a distinction between the Irish indigenous peasantry and C.S. Parnell, who was importantly a member of the Anglo-Irish ascendency and therefore could be presented as removed from the mass of the Irish population. Following his discussion of the Phoenix Park Murders and his assertion that they were committed by excitable Celts, he noted that they also were “a fatal blow to the fulfillment of the aspirations of the Irish people.” “Any sane person could not fail to see that it could not be otherwise,” he suggested, “and Parnell, the ablest and most level-headed of men, had more reason to deplore it than anyone, for it entirely blocked and frustrated his work.”907 He also commented on a speech Parnell gave just before his death. He described Parnell as presenting “a wonderful appearance; his long hair floating in the wind and with wild gesticulations he uttered a most telling speech,” but that “he appeared worn out and delicate.”908 The contrast between Turner’s depiction of the Irish peasantry and Parnell, drawn from the Irish landlord class, would indicate the extent to which racial attitudes were central to how the Crown regime viewed its Irish territories and subjects.

While the racial attitudes of Lloyd and Turner are unsurprising, they do share interesting and surprising similarities with those expressed by Davitt and Devoy, particularly regarding the possibility of the Irish to overcome those aspects of their character which rendered them incapable of fully equal racial status to their British counterparts. The nature of those similarities, and the details of the prescriptions given by Davitt and Devoy on how to overcome them, further illustrate the extent to which anxieties about Irish masculinity and their racial status continued to shape Irish

nationalism in the years following the Land War. Ultimately, such tensions contributed to the Irish Revolution much of its contradictory character as simultaneously conservative and revolutionary.

We saw in chapter five that the central argument Davitt advanced in *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland* was that the Land War was a period of masculine regeneration for Ireland. Davitt used such ideas to sideline the Ladies’ Land League in his narrative, but elements of his argument also echoed Lloyd’s and Turner’s portrayals of the Irish as a non-white race. Davitt complained that before the Land War, “there was a greater evil than economic ignorance to beat down among the tenantry of Ireland, and that was their slavish social attitude towards not alone the landlord but his agent and whole entourage.”

“It was a hateful and heart breaking sight,” he lamented, “to see manly looking men, young and old, doffing their hats and caps and cringing in abject manner to any person connected with an estate.” Davitt maintained this behavior “was a moral malady, born of feudalism and fear, the demoralizing results of the power possessed by those who owned the land and who had the legal authority to carry out the dreaded penalty of eviction.” Such a position recalled arguments made in the 1860s in the *Irish People* about the evil effects of the land system, and Davitt argued that the reversal of this degradation, as well as reform of the land system, was the task of the Land League, such that “‘the gospel of manhood’ as well as that of ‘the land for the people’ became a necessary part of the new propaganda.”

Davitt contended that the League’s efforts in this regard were generally successful, contrasting the cringing non-men of the early part of his narrative with the

---

909 Davitt, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland*, 164-165.
910 Davitt, *The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland*, 165.
strong, masculine peasantry he encountered in the later years of the agitation. When
relating a visit to Carraroe, Co. Galway, for example, Davitt reported:

While compelled to wonder at the tenacity with which the people clung to
such homes, surrounded by nothing which was not repugnant to the eye,
unrelieved by even a tree or shrub, there could be no mistaking the sense
of independence which such a wild, rugged country would engender in the
breasts of those who inhabit it, and a look at the erect and manly forms
which came in view as I mounted the road to the head of the bay
convinced me that the men of Carraroe were all that mountaineers are
generally found to be.911

He later noted in his description of the same visit that his arrival in the village
“brought some dozen women and children from a few hovels in the neighborhood,
and these, together with my dozen heroes, formed quite a picturesque group, the
men with their fine, manly forms clad in 'bawneens,' and the women dressed in
their red petticoats (the universal Connemara wear).”912 In his description of
Carraroe, Davitt drew a strong contrast between the degenerated men of the pre-Land
War years and the strong men formed during the agitation. He also portrayed this
redeemed Irish village in gendered terms. The men were all that mountaineers are
generally found to be, with fine manly forms, while the women were dressed in their
indigenous finery and portrayed as tied to their homes and their children.

Meanwhile, Devoy in his The Land of Eire, similarly argued that in the years
leading up to the Land War “the old dislike for English rule, the old longing for a
separate national existence… did not show itself in public acts.” To be sure, Devoy
argued that the reason for this lack of energy was the failures of Isaac Butt’s early “ill-
defined and cumbrous plan” for attaining Home Rule rather than any racial failing on the

911 Davitt, The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland, 214.
912 Davitt, The Fall of Feudalism in Ireland, 214.
part of the Irish.\textsuperscript{913} Devoy argued that when the Land War began the Irish peasantry were more than willing to take up their part, saying that “a new generation had grown up that would not tamely submit to what their fathers had patiently borne during that terrible period.”\textsuperscript{914}

However, Devoy did argue that, if left to their own devices, those young men would have erred greatly. He reported that in Mayo and Sligo in the early summer of 1879 “meetings of another kind began to be held. Groups of young men would assemble in the darkness of the night, and disguising themselves, make a violent demonstration either against a neighboring landlord or some weak-kneed member of their own class.”\textsuperscript{915} Devoy cautioned that the efforts of such men would not result in Irish liberation, but rather “in a more extensive system of Whiteboyism than had ever been seen in Ireland before” and “a hopeless agrarian war would be the result,” again echoing arguments made in the \textit{Irish People} against agrarian outrages.\textsuperscript{916}

Devoy attributed the lack of violence in the early days of the agitation primarily to the personal efforts of Davitt, saying “Davitt saw the danger and determined to make a desperate effort to avert it… and induced the young men to give other methods a trial.”\textsuperscript{917} However, Devoy noted that this was not the only time that the threat of disorganized agrarian violence became apparent, saying that in the late summer of 1879 the renewed “danger of the situation was promptly reported to Davitt and his friends” with the result that Davitt went “down to his native county, examined things for himself, and used all his

\textsuperscript{913} Devoy, \textit{The Land of Eire}, 12.
\textsuperscript{914} Devoy, \textit{The Land of Eire}, 47.
\textsuperscript{915} Devoy \textit{The Land of Eire}, 47-48.
\textsuperscript{916} Devoy, \textit{The Land of Eire}, 47-48.
\textsuperscript{917} Devoy, 48.
influence with the Nationalists to restrain the people and to induce them to continue the
meetings and keep their condition before the public."\textsuperscript{918} The continued need for Land
League leaders to restrain the people from irrational and hopeless violence illustrated the
extent to which British depictions of Irish racial inferiority had been internalized by
nationalist leaders. While Devoy did not go so far as to say that the tendency of young
Irishmen toward self-defeating agrarian violence was evidence of their racial failings, it is
telling that he portrayed that as the initial impulse of Irishmen which needed to be
restrained and channeled to better efforts by Irish political leaders.

Taken together, these two nationalist narratives advanced an argument
surprisingly similar to that of the two Government officials described above. Davitt
argued that through the efforts of the Land League the Irish tenantry were transformed
from cringing, slavish servants of the land system into manly opponents of the same—a
transformation reminiscent of Lloyd’s description of the impact of the training received
by members of the RIC. Devoy argued that, if left to their own devices, the Irish tenantry
would have resorted to wide-spread and ineffective agrarian violence—but were
restrained from doing so by the intervention of Davitt, an argument which echoed both
Lloyd’s and Turner’s depiction of the Irish tenantry as undisciplined and prone to
violence. These narratives reinforced what has been the central underpinning argument of
this dissertation—that Irish nationalists and British imperialists held remarkably similar
views about the ambiguous racial status of the Irish, and in an effort to ameliorate those
concerns, nationalists sought to impose standards of behavior derived from the colonial

\textsuperscript{918} Devoy, 49.
metropole, thus furthering the efforts of that same metropole to destroy indigenous ways of life.

In chapter one we saw how both the IRB, through the *Irish People,* and constitutional nationalists held deep-seated anxieties about the manliness of the rural Irish population. While the methods advocated by the two groups to alleviate the issue differed greatly, with the IRB arguing that preparing for violent revolution would redeem Irishmen and allow for a redeemed future and constitutional nationalists arguing for the emasculating effects of engaging in political actions, the central assertion was the same: that Irishmen must act now or risk losing their status as a white race forever.

In chapter two we saw this argument advanced further, as the constitutional nationalist political movement grew in stature and in power. We also saw the efforts of such nationalists to explain away instances of agrarian violence and crime which seemed to confirm narratives of Irish inferiority and impulsivity and instead to present them as the understandable, if not acceptable, impact of British misrule.

In the last three chapters of this study, we saw this narrative reach its zenith through an intensive look at the Land War in counties Mayo, Sligo, and Roscommon. Chapter three examined the efforts of nationalist leaders to portray the Land War as the ultimate expression of respectable Irish masculinity. This was particularly evident through the continued efforts of nationalist thought leaders to create definitions of Irish behavior designed along the lines described by Valente in his description of Parnell and Irish literature—illustrating the type of restrained masculinity which was necessary for the assertion of Irish equality. This took its fullest form in the nationalist triptych described in that chapter, that the Land War was being undertaken by Irish men to save
Irish families, by engaging in the land agitation generally Irishmen could prove both their own masculinity and the worthiness of the Irish race for self-government, and finally that the agitation was, and needed to be, conducted along strictly peaceful lines in order to bolster arguments in favor of Irish self-discipline.

In chapter four we saw the popular response to that triptych, and more generally to the masculinist concerns of nationalists expressed since chapter one. Popular resistance during the Land War, as we have seen, was not solely undertaken by men, not solely limited to the nonviolent methods advocated by the Land League, and above all seemed to have been grounded in indigenous concepts about justice which were deeply problematic to the Land League leadership. The continued use of force against landlords, land agents, and tenants who paid their rent, all undermined much of the argument offered in chapter three regarding Irish self-discipline. The prominent role of women in the agitation, and the seeming popular acceptance that their activities had, undermined the argument advanced by political actors across this study that political action was the province of Irishmen alone and that Irishwomen were solely the passive victims of their circumstances. The Monasteraden affray and its aftermath served as an excellent example of the longstanding antagonisms which underlay such instances of violence and the communal nature of the response, while the efforts of the nationalist press in the region to portray the event as something in keeping with the Land League messaging illustrated the extent to which popular responses were in direct conflict with the efforts of nationalist leaders.

Finally, chapter five investigated the actions of local branches of the Ladies’ Land League and the reception of those actions to see how and whether they built on the issues
discussed in chapters three and four. The central role that ordinary women played in the functioning of the Ladies’ League and the extent to which their actions mirrored those of the male League illustrated the penetration of nationalist political messaging across gender lines. It also highlights the ability of middle-class women to alter such messaging to their liking, in this case discarding the notion that they should simply be passive victims and instead actively work toward the advancement of the national cause. The interactions between Lady Leaguers and the RIC also illustrated the women’s ability to weaponize ideas of gender, cloaking their activities in the language of charity even as their actions belied that argument. Finally, the treatment of the Ladies’ League following its dissolution made manifest the extent of discomfort with female political activism in the nationalist movement. Even supporters of the League found themselves compelled to explain the group in strikingly inaccurate terms in order to make it fit within the nationalist imaginary; meanwhile, opponents of the group or neutral parties found it more expedient to downplay and eventually remove the Ladies’ League from their narratives, the better to portray the period as one of masculine action.

Taken together the evidence from Connacht illustrates the extent to which a major goal, if not the primary goal, of nationalist leaders across the period was the establishment of a system of social control which would allow the challenging collectivity described by Clark to impose their own standards of behavior and morality on the remainder of the Irish population. By establishing such a system and dictating the tactics to be used in anti-colonial resistance, such individuals could ensure that their political messaging was not contradicted by the actions of individuals on the ground. Still, they were largely unsuccessful in establishing such a system during the Land War.
itself and were largely forced to settle for managing the retrospective narrative about the period to downplay this failure. The preoccupation with the racial status of the Irish and the tactical decisions made during the years examined in this study illustrate how such concerns fundamentally shaped the development of Irish nationalisms in the period, and hint at how such thought leaders would act if they managed to set up a system of social control in Ireland.

The coexistence of this deeply felt desire to implement a system of social control and to effect fundamental and radical changes in Irish society and politics, it seems, did not expire with the Land War or even with the end of the lives and careers of the men who led Irish nationalist movements during those periods. As Roy Foster noted in his monograph *Vivid Faces: The Revolutionary Generation in Ireland, 1890–1923*, the Irish revolution took place because “enough people—especially young people—changed their minds about political possibilities to bring about a revolution against the old order, which included not only government by Britain but the constitutional nationalism of the previous generation.”919 Foster also noted that the series of reforms in the early twentieth century meant that “a solid rural bourgeoisie was firmly in place,” so that “social revolution was never on the cards” at the end of the Irish War of Independence.920 This, it seems, resulted in a revolution that was fundamentally revolutionary but also restrained, so that by 1923 members of the Cumann na nGaedheal party could describe themselves as “the most conservative-minded revolutionaries that ever put through a successful revolution.” This did not mean that the Cumann na nGaedheal party rejected

---

wholeheartedly the ideals of the revolution. Thus, Jason Knirck has noted the party centered ideas of self-determination, anti-imperialism, and Irishness derived from the revolutionary Sein Féin party in its program, but it does illustrate the extent to which the Irish revolution was recognized in its immediate aftermath by some of its partisans as a conservative revolution.\(^{921}\) This mixture of revolutionary rejection of British rule and ideas of restraint derived from that same rule has been seen throughout this study as the preferred expression of national identity, particularly by Land League and Irish Parliamentary Party members.

The conservatism of the Irish revolution is further illustrated by the fact that some of the first acts of the independent Irish state were to restrict the agency of Irishwomen who did not fit the national ideals. In March 1925, for example, elements of An Garda Síochána (the Civic Guard/state police force) launched a large-scale raid into Dublin’s famed red-light district, the ‘Monto.’ As Beatty argued, this action appeared motivated by a fear that the conditions within the neighborhood “seemed to confirm the Irish nation’s ambiguous ‘white’ racial identity” and by a desire to remove “a living symbol of the failure of Irish Men; their failure to protect Irish women, [and] their failure to control Irish women,” in short by the sorts of concerns that have been examined at length in this study.\(^{922}\)

This process expanded with the creation of Ireland’s “architecture of containment,” the integration of the Irish state and the Roman Catholic church in Ireland to systematize an array of interdependent institutions including “Mother and Child


Homes” and “Magdalene Laundries.” These institutions served the Irish state by working “to confine and render invisible segments of the population whose very existence threatened Ireland’s national imaginary.” While elements of this architecture had existed since the late eighteenth century, the system expanded following the establishment of the independent Irish state, with 10,000 women confined to “Magdalene Laundries” over the life of the Irish state, and some 56,000 confined to “mother and child homes” over the same period. Women in both institutions were subjected to physical and emotional abuse, while later inquiry into mother and child homes has revealed elevated levels of infant mortality, as well as the forcible adoption of children born in mother and child homes without their mothers’ consent. Taken together the two sets of institutions comprised a “massive interlocking system…carefully and painstakingly built up…over a number of decades,” part of Ireland’s "larger system for the control of children and women." This system has been termed Ireland’s “architecture of confinement” which Beatty defined as “a statist power coded as male power that would allow for greater social control” through the imposition of “moral regulation, by church

923 Both sets of institutions were generally run by religious orders, with mother and child homes serving as locations where unwed women were sent to deliver their babies, and Magdalene Laundries serving as quasi penitentiaries where ‘fallen women,’ generally former prostitutes, could be ‘rehabilitated.’ For more on mother and child homes see Mike Milotte, Banished Babies: The Secret History of Ireland’s Baby Export Business (Dublin: New Island Books, 2012). For more on Magdalen Asylums see Frances Finnegan Do Penance or Perish: a study of Magdalen Asylums in Ireland (Kilkenny: Congrave Press, 2001).

924 James M. Smith, Ireland’s Magdalen Laundries and the Nation’s Architecture of Containment (South Bend, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 3.


926 Mary Raftery and Eoin O’Sullivan Suffer the Little Children: The Inside Story of Ireland’s Industrial Schools (Dublin: New Island, 1999), 18.
and state” in order “to impose standards of idealized conduct, particularly on women, that would return the nation to purity.”

This architecture was built on the desire for social control identified in this study. That the independent Irish state, beset with deeply rooted economic and social challenges, spent so much of its energy on imprisoning, mistreating, and effectively removing from society the women who generally had violated no law save the moral code of the nation suggests strongly that that moral code and the gender roles associated with it had become synonymous with national identity. Thus, women who sexually transgressed removed themselves from the body of the nation in a way which had no clear analogue for men, but which was clearly motivated by anxieties surrounding Irish masculinity. As we have seen in the latter chapters of this study, nationalists could re-work instances of masculine violence into a more acceptable form, most notably in the case of Monasteraden, but they found themselves unable to fold nonconforming women into any acceptable narrative. Male violence could be re-worked as zeal for the nation, the ultimate expression of a man’s duty to his nation. Female misbehavior, in contrast, could only be silenced, as the members Ladies’ Land League were after their time had passed and as thousands of their sisters would be in the years to come.

---

Bibliography

Primary Sources

Newspapers

Ballinrobe Chronicle
Connaught Telegraph
Freemans Journal,
Irish People
Mayo Examiner
Mayo Telegraph
Roscommon & Letrim Gazette
Roscommon Herald
Roscommon Journal
Roscommon Messenger
Sligo Champion
Sligo Independent
Sligo Journal

Archival Collections

Diaries of John and Arthur Oram.
George D. Cahill Papers, John J. Burns Library, Boston College.
Patrick A. Collins papers, John J. Burns Library, Boston College.
National Archives of Ireland (NAI), Chief Secretaries Office Registered Papers
NAI, Fenian Briefs
NAI, Police and Crime Reports, Fenian Papers, Abstract of Persons Arrested Under Habeas Corpus Suspension Act, 1866-8
NAI, Police and Crime Reports, Fenian papers, Index of names
NAI, Police and Crime Reports, Fenian Papers R series
NAI, Police and crime records 1848-1920.
National Library of Ireland (NLI), Ms. 11,289 Papers of S. L. Anderson, Crown Solicitor. Police reports (printed, many incomplete) of proceedings and speeches at Land League meetings, 1880.

National Library of Ireland, Special Collection Prints and Drawings


UCD, National Folklore Collection, Manuscript Collection

UCD, National Folklore Collection, The Schools’ Collection

Published Materials

A verbatim copy of the Parnell commission report with complete index and notes. London: Irish Loyal and Patriotic Union: 1890.


Devoy, John. The Land of Eire: The Irish land league; its origin, progress and consequences, preceded by a concise history of the various movements which have culminated in the last great agitation. New York: Patterson and Neilson 1882.

Executive summary of the Final Report of the Commission of Investigation into Mother and Baby Homes.


House of Commons Hansard archive.

Land League songs : a collection of patriotic Irish ballads celebrating deeds of valor performed by Erin's sons in the past, and suited to the present agitation : wit, sentiment and patriotism. New York: Richard K Fox, 1880.


Numerical returns of outrages reported to Constabulary Office in Ireland, 1881

Report of the Inter-Departmental Committee to establish the facts of State involvement with the Magdalen Laundries.

Return of number of agrarian outrages committed in Ireland reported to Inspector General of Royal Irish Constabulary, 1881, 1882 and January 1883

Return of outrages reported to Constabulary Office in Ireland, 1869.

Return of outrages reported to Constabulary Office in Ireland, 1870-71.


**Secondary Sources**


Appendix:

Figure One

---

928 John J. Burns Library, Boston College M 1668.2 L2 1880, *Land League songs: a collection of patriotic Irish ballads celebrating deeds of valor performed by Erin’s sons in the past, and suited to the present agitation: wit, sentiment and patriotism* (New York: Richard K Fox, 1880).
Figure Two\textsuperscript{929}

\textit{Land League songs}: a collection of patriotic Irish ballads celebrating deeds of valor performed by Erin’s sons in the past, and suited to the present agitation: wit, sentiment and patriotism (New York: Richard K Fox, 1880).

\textsuperscript{929} John J. Burns Library, Boston College M 1668.2 L2 1880,
Figure Three

Figure Four