

The place of Ireland in the development of American global thought in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries

This thesis is submitted for the degree of Doctor of Philosophy in Trinity
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Kyle Martin

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Summary

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Kyle Martin

This research project pursued the engagement of a select group of American writers and intellectuals from the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries with a certain question: how should the increasingly obvious imperial attitudes and actions of the United States be understood historically?

Their questioning involved adjustments to long developed and still developing American intellectual attitudes about the predestined nature of the rise of the United States in comparison to European powers and, most critically, to Britain. Since the United States was going to overtake Britain as the world-leading global power, the Americans defined their political system's differences from the British. This thesis documents and explains how Ireland, its history and politics, served as a critical component in the arguments of American writers in their explanations of American imperial ascendancy above the British Empire. Within their assessments of Ireland, they revealed an ambiguous attitude about the rise of the United States in the world.

To address this intellectual milieu, representative figures and themes were chosen. First are three case studies of prominent writers from the period: Henry Carey, Henry George, and E. L. Godkin, all of whom considered the imperial rise of the United States and, in doing so, examined accounts of Irish history and politics prominently. This study examines their principal published works and correspondence. They represent three traditions: economic nationalism, classical liberalism, and radicalism.

Second, three themes – the US South, Irish Catholicism, and the American historiography of empire – consider the Irish dimension to the question from a wider perspective. They acknowledge the diversity of American thought in the period and the variety of interpretations of the rise of the United States in global terms. These thematic chapters involve an examination of monographs, literary journals and magazines, newspapers,

essay collections, materials from university archives, and the personal papers of various editors, diplomats, and academics.

This thesis has found that American intellectual interpretations of Irish history and politics was a central means to articulate the increasingly global standing of the United States. The presence of the Irish in America compared to their contentious existence in the United Kingdom proved the better qualities of the United States and the failures of the British system. American writers made this conclusion from a developmental perspective: the rise of the United States was a necessary result of the progress of civilizations in history.

As such, Ireland both proved the legitimacy to this claim and the progressive nature of American imperialism. The US system's consideration for and protection of Ireland showed that the Americans could be a global power without being like British imperialists.

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Introduction

This thesis is a study of a particular dimension of American social and political thought in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries.

During this period Americans became increasingly aware of the emergence of the United States as a major economic and political power on the world stage. Central to this perception was a keen awareness that America's conventionally guarded and often hostile perceptions of the character and aims of the world-leading global power, Great Britain, were in urgent need of examination and reassessment. Essential to those perceptions was a need to address the most troublesome and problematic regions in the British Isles, Ireland. This thesis investigates the way this vein of thought was developed and found expression in the main organs of American public opinion and academic discourse. It does so by focusing on the key areas which defined Ireland's troubled relationship with Britain: first, the unresolved land question, now greatly exacerbated by the consequences of the Irish Famine; second, the related and equally unresolved question of the place of Irish industry and commerce within the British Empire; third, the unresolved question of national self-determination, now deepened by the failure of Repeal; and, fourth, the unresolved question of the role of the Roman Catholic Church, itself a global entity of enormous power in the shaping of Irish society.

It is not a thesis about American advocates of Irish nationalism in the nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Still less is it about American perceptions of Irish immigrants in the United States in the same period, even though both topics come under investigation tangentially in this case. Instead, it is an examination of how the changing American

perceptions of the position of the United States in the world in the postbellum period were influenced by their perceptions of the place of Ireland in the world. The way that they perceived the United States in global terms, in turn, affected the way they perceived Ireland. This inevitably involved an engagement with Irish nationalism and Irish immigration, though the emphasis here is on the effect of these Irish circumstances on a continually evolving American global thought in the late nineteenth century.

The American participants in this assessment of a certain rising imperial nature to the United States were a select group of public commentators. They were journalists and editors published in several intellectually minded publications, such as *The Forum*, *The Nation*, and *The North American Review*. Some were independent scholars, and others were academics working in higher education institutions. As a group, they favored liberal or progressive opinions, and they sought political and social reform.¹ In articles for quarterly journals, in essay collections, and in monographs, they represented the changed and expanded public debate in the United States, in contrast to, for instance, the political polemics, pamphleteering, or the grand historical narratives from earlier in the century.²

¹ An exemplary figure in this group was Henry Adams. See David R. Contosta, 'Henry Adams and his world' in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, lxxxiii, no. 4 (1993), pp 1-122; and Michael O'Brien, *Henry Adams & the Southern Question* (Athens, GA, 2005). For relevant studies of writers in this milieu, see William M. Armstrong, *E. L. Godkin: a biography* (Albany, NY, 1978); Leslie Butler, *Critical Americans: Victorian intellectuals and transatlantic liberal reform* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2007); David D. Hall, 'The Victorian connection' in *American Quarterly*, xxvii, no. 5 (1975), pp 561-75; Earl N. Harbert, 'Charles Francis Adams (1807-1886): a forgotten family man of letters' in *Journal of American Studies*, vi, no. 3 (1972), pp 249-65; Iván Jaksic, 'The lessons of Spain: New England intellectuals and the history of the Hispanic world, 1820-1880' in *Massachusetts Historical Review*, xviii (2016), pp 213-32; John L. Thomas, *Alternative America: Henry George, Edward Bellamy, Henry Demarest Lloyd, and the adversary tradition* (Cambridge, MA, 1983); and James Turner, *Without God, without creed: the origins of unbelief in America* (Baltimore, MD, 1986).

² For the nineteenth century progression of American history writing, see Peter Novick, *That noble dream: the 'objectivity question' and the American historical profession* (Cambridge, 1988), part one, 'Objectivity enthroned', especially pp 21-60; Dorothy Ross, 'Historical consciousness in nineteenth-century America' in *The American Historical Review*, lxxxix, no. 4 (1984), pp 909-28; and eadem, 'A new look at nineteenth-century consciousness from the modern/postmodern divide' in *Modern Intellectual History*, ix (2012), pp. 451-62.

The way these American writers invoked accounts of Ireland in their arguments served a selfish purpose. They exploited Irish history and Irish American concerns to support and defend their own visions of progress and reform. They used abstract comparisons between American and Irish history. The theoretical nature of these arguments meant that they were often detached from concrete realities, such as American and Irish connections established by immigration and trade that began in the late eighteenth century. This abstract quality to Ireland in American debate occurred because American writers were using Ireland to articulate differences or divergences between the British Empire and the United States. When comparing Britain and the US, their interpretations of Irish history and politics helped American writers overcome their ambivalences about the increasingly obvious imperial posture of the United States.³

New perceptions of the place of the United States in the world

At the end of the nineteenth century, American imperialism was, of course, a reality when the United States acquired former Spanish colonies after defeating Spain in 1898. For most American writers of the period, though, 1898 was confirmation of American imperialism, rather than a new direction. The imperial process had begun much earlier, and the latter half of the nineteenth century had seen the process expand more rapidly.⁴

³ For the awareness of an imperial nature to American development, see, for instance, Robert L. Beisner, 'Thirty years before Manila: E. L. Godkin, Carl Schurz, and anti-imperialism in the Gilded Age' in *The Historian*, xvii (1968), pp 561-77.

⁴ See Thomas Bender, *A nation among nations: America's place in world history* (NY, 2006), especially pp 206-11; and Josep M. Fradera, *The imperial nation: citizens and subjects in the British, French, Spanish, and American Empires* (Princeton, 2018), especially chapter seven, 'The long road to 1898', pp 154-84. See also Beisner, 'Thirty years before Manila'.

The victory of the North in the Civil War had altered American intellectual perceptions of their system. The Americans acknowledged and accepted a centralized federal power along with its attendant demotion of the doctrine of states' rights. Three phenomena further defined the developing imperialism. First, the now more centralized and pacified nation experienced rapid industrialization and economic expansion. Mechanical innovations increased the productivity of agriculture, and engineering advancements in steel production revolutionized railroad construction and the burgeoning fossil fuel industry.⁵ The completion of the transcontinental railroad early in the postbellum period foretold of this American industrial advance.⁶ By the turn of the twentieth century, the United States had reached a relative economic parity with Britain.

Second, the process of Southern Reconstruction caused American writers to question the stability of the US system, though the American political system seemingly overcame Reconstruction's challenges. American writers and intellectuals expressed fears that the South continued to challenge the dignified nature of the US system well into the postbellum period. In the ferment of Reconstruction, socially liberal politicians, journalists, and activists of the Northeast argued over how to remake the South within a wider conceptual mentality of imperial growth and decay. They sought an active development of the South to prevent a further erosion of American imperial destiny after the disruption of the Civil War.⁷ Meanwhile, the defeated political and social leaders of the South responded with consternation to any notion that change was being imposed on

⁵ For changes in agriculture, see Ariel Ron, 'Scientific agriculture and the agricultural state: farmers, capitalism, and government in the late nineteenth century' in *The Journal of the Gilded Age and Progressive Era*, xv (2016), pp 294-309. Sven Beckert's 'empire of cotton' is relevant here. See Sven Beckert, *Empire of cotton: a new history of global capitalism* (London, 2014), especially pp xv-xvii. For the US technical and market leadership of the iron and steel industries in the late nineteenth century, see Vaclav Smil, *Still the iron age: iron and steel in the modern world* (Oxford, 2016).

⁶ See Richard White, *The Republic for which it stands: the United States during Reconstruction and the Gilded Age, 1865-1896* (Oxford, 2017), pp 122-35 for the completion of the transcontinental railroad.

⁷ See White, *The republic for which it stands*, pp 136-71.

them. Much of the Southern consternation was reduced with the Compromise of 1877, and the broader theme of a more centralized US system remained, because the principle internal threat had been addressed.

Third, American writers were increasingly aware of the closing of the American frontier. The American version of societal and political development existed as a republican vision that favored a degree of population dispersion over concentration, a legacy of the need to promote settlement of the western frontier of the United States.⁸ Frederick Jackson Turner's frontier, for instance, replaced colonial, oceanic pathways in the effort to identify a uniquely American germination of empire.⁹ The natural environment replaced ancestry or inheritance as the primary means of defining the new American way. In their interactions with the North American wilderness, the Americans had reinvented Anglo-Saxon institutions and proven their manliness and virtue. The sense of a closing frontier at the end of the nineteenth century invited concerns about the sustainability of US cultural and economic expansion.¹⁰

In combination, the newfound economic superiority of the United States, the treatment of the South after the War, and the closing of the frontier compelled a reorientation of American intellectual thought about America's place in the world from what was essentially an ideology of isolationist republicanism to a form of globalism. This

⁸ For histories of this vision of American development, see Eric Foner, *Free soil, free labor, and free men: the ideology of the Republican Party before the Civil War* (Oxford, 1995); and James M. McPherson, 'The United States at midcentury' in idem, *Battle cry of freedom: the Civil War Era* (Oxford, 1988), pp 6-46.

⁹ See David J. Weber, 'Turner, the Boltonians, and the borderlands' in *The American Historical Review*, xli, no. 1 (1986), pp 66-81; and Alex Wagner Lough, 'Henry George, Frederick Jackson Turner, and the "closing" of the American frontier' in *California History*, lxxxix, no. 2 (2012), pp 4-23 and 52-54.

¹⁰ Frederick Jackson Turner, of course, emerged from a tradition of assessment of the American frontier. For the closing of the frontier, see also, in addition to the citation above, David M. Wrobel, 'The closing gates of democracy: frontier anxiety before the official end of the frontier' in *American Studies*, xxxii, no. 1 (1991), pp 49-66.

reorientation made certain assumptions about American empire. The British or Anglo-Saxon origins of the US deserved commendation.¹¹ Researches of American historians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries identified shared institutions, values, and social mores, resulting from the colonial foundations of the United States. Whereas this starting point to the American system was historically justifiable, it became inadequate in the developing imperial mindset because of the modern decadence of the British system on which it was founded. The United States departed from the British world. The intellectual defense of the Union, based in an ideal of the American yeoman and led by northeastern liberals in the antebellum period and during the War, required modification into an argument favoring an expansive American imperialism.¹²

American perceptions of the British Empire in the late nineteenth century

By the turn of the twentieth century, the United States and the United Kingdom enjoyed cooperative diplomatic and trading relationships in relative terms. With America's rising economic might and especially with its status as a world power – whether or not it was a desired status by American writers of the period – there was a need to both revise the history of the Anglo-American relationship and to reconsider what the faults of the British Empire were.¹³ Doing so would allow for a redefinition of how the US system diverged from the British example, and how, by implication, it had improved on the British model.

¹¹ For an assessment of the theoretical background to American empire, see Paul A. Kramer, 'Empires, exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: race and rule between the British and United States empires, 1880-1910' in *The Journal of American History*, lxxxviii, no. 4 (2002), pp 1315-53; Stuart Anderson, *Race and rapprochement: Anglo-Saxonism and Anglo-American relations, 1895-1904* (London, 1981).

¹² For the argument of the yeoman ideal, see Foner, *Free soil, free labor, free men*; for the postbellum inheritance of the ideal, see the prologue in White, *The republic for which it stands*, pp 11-22; and Fradera, *The imperial nation*, pp 172-73.

¹³ Anderson, *Race and rapprochement*.

Throughout the nineteenth century, a significant and influential presence of Anglophobia affected the American consideration of Britain.¹⁴ These attitudes emerged from rather obvious circumstances, including continued hostile behaviors of the British after the Revolutionary War, not least the War of 1812, and British trade and diplomatic positions that threatened American economic development.¹⁵ During the Civil War, a resurgence of Anglophobia occurred because of the neutrality of the British government, the often-strong pro-Southern sentiment of its conservative politicians and journalists, and diplomatic complications, such as the *Alabama* situation – complications which caused concern in the immediate postbellum environment, as well.¹⁶ A change in American attitudes towards the British came with America's postbellum development, though it was slow.

In their reconsideration of Britain from a less antagonistic argumentative position, American writers and intellectuals concluded in the nineteenth century that the British Empire was in a process of decline. Like American accounts of the decline of Spain or invectives against European Catholicism, their consideration of British decline was a

¹⁴ For the long presence of American Anglophobia in the nineteenth century, see John M. Murrin, 'The Jeffersonian triumph and American exceptionalism' in *Journal of the Early Republic*, xx, no. 1 (2000), pp 1-25; Marc-William Palen, 'Foreign relation in the Gilded Age: a British free trade conspiracy?' in *Diplomatic History*, xxxvii, no. 2 (2013), pp 217-47; and idem, *The 'conspiracy' of free trade: the Anglo-American struggle over empire and economic globalisation, 1846-1896* (Cambridge, 2016).

¹⁵ On the extreme end, Anglophobia in the early Republic took on a conspiratorial dimension, with some commentators suggesting that the British wanted to recolonize the United States. See Lawrence A. Peskin, 'Conspiratorial Anglophobia and the War of 1812' in *Journal of American History*, xcvi, no. iii (2011), pp 647-69. Popularly, Anglophobia became connected to the Jeffersonian vision of American development. See Murrin, 'The Jeffersonian vision and American exceptionalism'. For anti-British economic positions of the Americans in the middle of the nineteenth century, see Palen, *The 'conspiracy' of free trade*, pp xix-xxi.

¹⁶ For the tension between the US federal government and the British government during the Civil War and in the immediate postbellum era, see Henry Blumenthal, 'Confederate diplomacy: popular notions and international realities' in *Journal of Southern History*, xxxii, no. 2 (1966), pp 151-71; Adrian Cook, *The Alabama claims: American politics and Anglo-American relations, 1865-1872* (Ithaca, NY, 1975); Brian Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American relations during Reconstruction* (Ithaca, NY, 1969); Marc-William Palen, 'The Civil War's forgotten transatlantic tariff debate and the Confederacy's free trade diplomacy' in *Journal of the Civil War Era*, iii, no. 1 (2013), pp 35-61; and idem, *The 'conspiracy' of free trade*, pp 100-05.

variation of the New World versus Old World narrative.¹⁷ The study of the histories of empires over time proved the inevitability of such a process of decay and decline in standing. It was in this context that the narrative of Irish history and discussions of nineteenth century British governance of Ireland served a useful purpose.

Conceptually, the nineteenth century American reference point for using Ireland in these arguments began with the Famine.¹⁸ The interpretation of British decay, American rise, and Irish otherness came together here and identified a clear divergence between the British and US systems. In American social and economic tracts, the Famine encompassed a confirmatory role of the advanced nature of the US system, evoking the existent American sense of imperial exceptionalism. It reinforced both the retrogressive nature and otherness of Ireland and the illiberal and uncompromising characteristics of the British Empire, because of the notion that Western, progressive societies had advanced beyond the problem of famine by the early 1800s.¹⁹ Its occurrence would forever condemn the viability of British cultural hegemony.

The conception of the seemingly unlimited geographic space of the United States – of a frontier which had shaped American character and progress – allowed for a greater capacity to assimilate others into the system and support an increasing population. The British system, in contrast, was constrained by a limitation of space, which had

¹⁷ For American narratives on the decline of Spain, see Ciaran Brady, 'The Victorians, the Americans and the decline of Spain' in Thomas O'Connor and Mary Ann Lyons (eds.), *Irish communities in early-modern Europe* (Dublin, 2006), pp 322-47 at pp 332-38.

¹⁸ A significant contribution to the American perception of the Irish in the Famine years was the publication of Asenath Nicholson's *Annals of the famine in Ireland, in 1847, 1848, and 1849* (NY, 1851). See Maureen O'Rourke Murphy, *Compassionate stranger: Asenath Nicholson and the Great Irish Famine* (Syracuse, NY, 2014). See also Arthur Gribben (ed.), *The Great Famine and the Irish diaspora in America* (Amherst, MA, 1999).

¹⁹ Jürgen Osterhammel, *The transformation of the world: a global history of the nineteenth century* (Princeton, 2014), pp 203-05.

encouraged repressive treatment of its peoples to ensure political stability. Noting this difference, American writers assessed Ireland with three characteristics of the British imperial system in mind. First, Britain was an antagonistic force. An affinity existed between the Americans and the Irish, because both had taken a stand in the late eighteenth century against British political oppression.²⁰ American historians at the turn of the twentieth century remarked on the necessity of understanding the situations in both Ireland and the United States as part of the same historical political process, following the example of Irish politicians who made this argument in the late eighteenth century.²¹ The results told of differing realities, however, as the Americans achieved independence and the Irish were further subjugated under direct Parliamentary rule shortly thereafter. With the arrival of Irish political refugees into the United States at the turn of the nineteenth century, the narrative affinities became physical reality, an exodus from Ireland to the haven of the United States that repeated itself throughout the century.²² American historians of the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries identified the results of eighteenth century events as decisive in the split trajectories of Ireland and the United States.²³ US economic expansion and its own political centralization in the postbellum era allowed American writers and intellectuals to moderate these arguments against Britain without losing the idiom of American distinction.

²⁰ David Noel Doyle, *Ireland, Irishmen, and revolutionary America, 1760-1820* (Dublin, 1981); and David A. Wilson, *United Irishmen, United States: immigrant radicals in the Early Republic* (Dublin, 1998).

²¹ See, for instance, Edmund Burke: Burke's 'Speech on conciliation with America'; Edmund Burke, 'Burke's speech on conciliation with America' available at Project Gutenberg (https://www.gutenberg.org/files/5655/5655-h/5655-h.htm#link2H_4_0011) (3 September 2020). See Richard Bourke, *Empire and Revolution: the political life of Edmund Burke* (Princeton, 2015), pp 476-87; Conor Cruise O'Brien, 'Edmund Burke and the American Revolution' in David Noel Doyle and Owen Dudley Edwards (eds.), *America and Ireland, 1776-1976: the American identity and the Irish connection* (Westport, CT, 1980), pp 3-13.

²² See Doyle, *Ireland, Irishmen and Revolutionary America*, for a detailed analysis of the Irish and American relationship in those years; and Maurice J. Bric, 'Ireland, America and the reassessment of a special relationship, 1760-1783' in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland/ Iris an dá chultúr*, xi (1996), pp 88-119.

²³ See George Louis Beer, *The old colonial system, 1660-1754* (2 vols., NY, 1912).

Second, the American advance across its western frontier and its growing and economically productive population during the nineteenth century reduced the conception of Britain as antagonist, because of the economic strength of the US system, and increased the perception of Britain as their competitor. The United States had become a more central entity in world trade and diplomacy and sought to extract concessions to long-standing British imperial positions, such as control of a proposed isthmian canal in Central America, which the Americans had determined fell under their jurisdiction.²⁴ Ireland, in this regard, served as a useful means to pressure the British, and it alternately became a nuisance that interrupted what were seen as more consequential diplomatic objectives.²⁵ In the postbellum era the examples of Canadian-American boundary and fisheries disputes illustrated the interplay of forces. The Americans condoned Irish insurgency, such as the Fenian raids into Canada, and they argued for protections for naturalized American citizens arrested under suspicion of insurgency in Ireland, largely as levers to pull in the boundaries and fisheries negotiations.²⁶

Lastly, the common historical calculation was that Britain was the ‘mother’ country of the United States. The Americans owed their very existence to Britain but circumstances dictated the absolute necessity of breaking from Britain. The United States, because of its conception within the British system, its reasoned break from that system, and the

²⁴ For American diplomacy during this period, see Walter LaFeber, *The new Cambridge history of American foreign relations, vol. 2: the American search for opportunity, 1865-1913* (Cambridge, 2013).

²⁵ See Owen Dudley Edwards, ‘American diplomats and Irish coercion, 1880-1883’ in *Journal of American Studies*, i, no. 2 (1967), pp 213-32; and David Sim, ‘Filibusters, Fenians, and a contested neutrality: the Irish question and U.S. diplomacy, 1848-1871’ in *American Nineteenth Century History*, xii, no. 3 (2011), pp 265-87.

²⁶ See Mitchell Snay, ‘The imagined republic: the Fenians, Irish American nationalism, and the political culture of Reconstruction’ in *Proceedings of the American Antiquarian Society*, cxii (2004), pp 291-313; and David Sim, *A union forever: the Irish question and U.S. foreign relations in the Victorian Age* (Ithaca, NY, 2013), pp 69-127.

progressive nature of its own system, could, for the Irish, replace the British system and allow for the proper, sustainable development of the Irish nation.

These three assertions were inherently ambiguous. In the contradictions or uncertainties of the assertions, they suggested an ambivalent American intellectual attitude towards the British system at the end of the nineteenth century, which had replaced the prevalent Anglophobia from earlier in the century. When Ireland presented in this spectrum, it provided the Americans with a convenient means to incite anti-British publicity, to extract diplomatic concessions, and to promote an American viewpoint of liberal progress. Ireland also, however, reinforced the similarities between the British and the US systems, since both had to face, in their own way, the problem of Ireland.

American ambivalences

American writers expressed an ambivalence about the British system, because of their nervousness and concerns about taking its place, given the criticisms they had drawn about Britain because of its status as the world-leading power. They generally overcame these attitudes by emphasizing the American improvements from the British model. The presence of the Irish in the United States further increased American ambivalence. Ireland was a primary means they had used to critique the British Empire. Did this circumstance not make them antithetical to American progression beyond Britain? The Irish were, after all, Roman Catholics – thus, subservient to an undemocratic power in Rome. Their society was undeveloped and, therefore, seemingly unsuitable to an American modernity.²⁷

²⁷ These opinions of the Irish Catholics were long-developed Nativist and British anti-Catholic tropes. See Elizabeth Fenton, *Religious liberties: anti-Catholicism and liberal democracy in nineteenth-century U.S.*

The articulation of a sense of brotherhood between defeated white Southerners and the Irish further underscored this American ambivalence in the late nineteenth century, but it also identified a means for overcoming it. Despite the common, public formulation of the Irish as impoverished Catholics, Southerners formed the comparative connection with Ireland in a way that separated the Irish from their Catholicism. The historical experience of Ireland encouraged Southerners to separate Irish immigrants from labels arising from their religious denominations. The Scots Irish of the eighteenth century, Anglo-Irish revolutionaries of the nineteenth century, and the Catholic Irish of the nineteenth century all shared in a problematic history within the British imperial system.

In this way, American writers in the late nineteenth century navigated their ambivalence through examinations of Irish history and observations of Irish behaviors in the United States. Their argument and narration defined the nature and degrees of their ambivalences. These choices also allowed them to deemphasize or even ignore the Irish circumstances that created the ambivalence in the first place. The important consideration was always the virtuous nature of the US system. Americans could identify ostensibly problematic Irish characteristics to confirm the power of the United States in its ability to overcome them.

literature and culture (Oxford, 2011); Susan M. Griffin, *Anti-Catholicism and nineteenth-century fiction* (Cambridge, 2004); and John Higham, *Strangers in the land: patterns of American nativism, 1860-1925* (2nd ed., Westport, CT, 1963).

Structure of the thesis

Various motivations and impetuses both related and unrelated to Ireland had encouraged the American intellectual engagement with Irish history and politics. From this questioning of Ireland, the Americans drew certain conclusions about the British Empire. Their critique of the British Empire then complemented their central concerns of the rising position of the United States in the world relative to other world powers and of how they should interpret the American advance. The primary reason they addressed Ireland in the first place was, of course, to understand how the US system was different and better than the British Empire. If the United States was becoming more imperial – and, by implication, more like Britain – what did this realization say about how they should interpret Ireland?

Both the occasional and fragmentary nature of the discussion of Ireland and the ambivalence towards Ireland in American global thought, which that discussion revealed, has determined the structure of this thesis. From among a mass of occasional, offhand, and halting observations and reflections on Ireland, key figures have been selected, who, aware of America's global role, for different though overlapping reasons gave especial attention to Ireland's position within the British imperial system. In part one, three chapters are case studies of exemplary exponents of the distinctive place of Ireland in emerging American global thought.

Chapter one is an examination of the argument of Henry Charles Carey, who is primarily remembered as the foremost defender of protectionism in the middle to late nineteenth century. He developed his economic theory as a direct response to British hegemony. He sought a clear American divergence from Britain to foster internal economic activity,

which, he argued, would develop social harmony. His endpoint was, essentially, American equality with Britain in world trade, based on a system that was fundamentally more equitable than the predominant British model.²⁸ From the start of his writing career, Carey used Irish history and politics as his central means to critique the British system. The account of Irish history defined the underlying problems of the British system, and the state of Ireland in the nineteenth century documented, in his opinion, possible outcomes of an American economy subservient to Britain.

A second figure equally concerned with Ireland, though in contrast to Carey he was committed to a certain preservation of the British Empire, was the prominent news-editor, E. L. Godkin, the subject of the second chapter. As founder and long-serving editor of *The Nation*, his influence among the American liberal intelligentsia was singular.²⁹ An Anglo-Irish emigrant to the United States in the late 1850s, Godkin expressed a distinct perspective on the prospects of democracy in both the US and the United Kingdom informed by his Irish background. His opinion was based in classical liberalism. In his interrogation of the postbellum American political system, he noticed problems in the system like those of the British system that had caused breakdown in Ireland. He argued that the United States, in its increasingly imperialistic attitudes and actions, had compromised its founding ideals. His knowledge of Ireland, then, encouraged a criticism of United States development and a reassessment of the progress of democratic politics.

The final case study examines the argument of Henry George, whose connections to Ireland came not through family history but from his intellectual inquiry. Among

²⁸ Both Stephen Meardon and Marc-William Palen have studied Carey extensively, and their work is relevant for this thesis. See, especially, Stephen Meardon, 'Reciprocity and Henry C. Carey's traverses on "the road to perfect freedom of trade"' in *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, xxxiii, no. iii (2011), pp 307-33; and Palen, *The 'conspiracy' of free trade*.

²⁹ See Butler, *Critical Americans*; and Armstrong, *E. L. Godkin*.

American political economists of the late nineteenth century who addressed Irish history and politics, George was, perhaps, the most known for his Irish connections. He was certainly associated with Ireland more than Carey and possibly more than Godkin, despite Godkin's Irish birth. George owed this association to his close connections with the Irish Land League and its leaders in the early 1880s, after the 1879 publication of his book, *Progress and poverty*, which brought him fame. His advocacy for Ireland was direct: through writings and speeches he raised awareness of problematic Irish land policies.³⁰ The analysis here acknowledges his participation in Irish republican activities; however, it emphasizes a more fundamental element to George's Irish argument. The history of Ireland informed the inception and articulation of George's central premise, that private property in land resulted only in inequality. The nineteenth century status of Ireland, as a subject entity under the British imperial system, proved for George that British development was fundamentally flawed. He noticed the parallel nature of American institutions and practices to the British, though the American system was at an earlier stage of development. The Americans, said George, could expect similar ends to the British, which, as seen most clearly in Ireland, was a system of resource centralization and land monopoly. Ireland, then, clarified that the conclusions he was coming to about the development of the United States were correct.

Carey, Godkin, and George used accounts of Irish history and all three demonstrated a deep knowledge of Ireland's nineteenth century politics. In contrast to their careful and considered discussions of Ireland was the way many other American commentators

³⁰ Two recent studies of George are relevant here: Edward T. O'Donnell, "'Though not an Irishman': Henry George and the American Irish", *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, lvi, no. 4 (1997), pp. 407-19; and Andrew Phemister, "'Our American Aristotle': Henry George and the republican tradition during the transatlantic Irish land war, 1877-1887" (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2016). See also Edward T. O'Donnell *Henry George and the crisis of inequality: progress and poverty in the Gilded Age* (NY, 2015)

referenced Ireland in discussions of larger dimensions of the developing American global thought. These dimensions are discussed from a thematic perspective in the three chapters of part two.

The way in which Ireland featured in the postbellum discussion of the place of the South and how Ireland influenced perceptions of the South is the subject of chapter four. In the wake of their defeat, Southern writers and intellectuals sought explanations for their greatly changed circumstances. They had long noticed Ireland, especially in their arguments defending the Southern slave system. For them, the condition of Ireland and Irish laborers had seemed to prove the hollowness of Northern claims to developmental maturity, since the Northern economic system was based on the British example. After the War and the eradication of the Southern slave system, the emphasis of their argument shifted. They accepted the end of slavery, but they articulated its end as a symptom of the North's drive for power. The South was now a conquered territory. In this reconception of their own status, the example of Ireland helped articulate their sense of despair. Ireland proved the negative results of political centralization. Thus, like the Irish, Southerners committed to a separatist political identity.³¹

The way in which Southerners articulated the story of Ireland served an obviously selfish purpose. Any concern they had for the Irish was mostly left unsaid. The Southern intellectual engagement with Ireland, thus, represented a relatively constrained viewpoint.

³¹ See also Robert Emmet Curran, 'The Irish and the Lost Cause: two voices' in *U.S. Catholic Historian*, xxxi, no. i (2013), pp 129-45. The most comprehensive treatments of the connections between Southerners and the Irish are David T. Gleeson, *The Irish in the South, 1815-1877* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2001); and Kieran Quinlan, *Strange kin: Ireland and the American South* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2005). Gleeson and Quinlan focus on the Irish American experience, whereas the emphasis here is on the way Southerners used accounts of Irish history and politics.

The two final chapters in this section, in contrast, advance a broader understanding of the place Ireland occupied in American intellectual thought.

American writers associated Ireland and the Irish people with Roman Catholicism. After the Famine and with the increase of Famine-related emigration to the United States, this association increased, because most of the Irish immigrants were Catholic. American writers first reacted to Irish Catholic immigration in rather predictable and usually concerned ways. Especially in the postbellum period, the American assessment of Irish Catholicism began to change, despite continued complications, including the increasingly hierarchical nature of the Church after the First Vatican Council and the seemingly separatist nature of American Catholicism defined most clearly by its desires for its own education system. This changing interpretation – driven by the changing interpretation of the United States – is the subject of chapter five. The confidence in the United States and in its increasingly imperial characteristics encouraged American writers and intellectuals in the late nineteenth century to abandon what they determined were essentially British viewpoints of Irish Catholicism – and, by implication, viewpoints of Ireland – in favor of an expansive viewpoint of the US system. Americanism was a force that transcended secularism. In this revision, Ireland confirmed the advanced status of the US system in comparison to the British system.

The final chapter raises a question that is underlying all this American assessment of Ireland: why, from a developmental standpoint, was the American divergence from Britain necessary? To address this question, it examines the place that Ireland began to fill in a specific American historiography of British imperial development at the turn of the twentieth century. American historians had conventionally adopted an attitude toward Great Britain, which was at once critical but also ambivalent. It was within this

unconsciously ambivalent thinking about British history that Ireland and its history played an important role in helping historians clarify their own uncertain positions.

In this historiography, American historians noticed certain developmental faults of the British Empire, one principal result of which was the problematic condition of Ireland in the nineteenth century. The United States, of course, had inherited British institutions and social norms that shaped this imperial development. Thus, in their examination of the history of British imperialism, historians documented the American divergence from these inheritances. The Irish presence within this history confirmed, in the end, the failures of the British system and the legitimacy of American imperial ascendancy as its logical replacement.

The implications

As American writers critiqued the history of the British Empire, they were also articulating a new imperial model. This model involved a divergent view on the physical construction of modern progress, which identified the American frontier as a regenerative and assimilative power. This conception encouraged different thinking about Ireland.

American writers first attempted to fit Ireland within the British imperial system. This approach seemed straightforward; however, it involved narrative assumptions based on an American critique of the British Empire. Second, they enveloped Ireland within an American imperial origin story. They removed Ireland from the British Empire, because of what they determined was an inattentiveness of British imperial policy. This involved the minimization of the British Empire from a conceptual standpoint and an emphasis on

an Anglo-American, New World, American Empire as its logical successor. The United States existed on a supranational and supra-historical level, as the historian Guernsey Jones explained: ‘in a broad sense all history is the history of American origins’.³²

The entrance of Irish immigrants, especially those fleeing poverty and famine, into this scene proved the value of the reinvention of British institutions and traditions now present in the US system, because of the positive outcomes experienced by the Irish by the first decade of the twentieth century. Irish history provided one avenue to validate the unprovable hypotheses that American writers had made about the missionary purposes of a new American empire.

The manner that American writers and intellectuals addressed and analyzed Irish history implied an undifferentiated acceptance of the imperial qualities of the US system, regardless of the affinities or antipathies of the individuals who participated in the analysis for an overt US imperialism. Before 1898 and overseas territorial expansion, the interpretation of Irish history and Irish politics helped American writers build a fictive US imperial system and, simultaneously, exposed the fiction of that empire, because the real process of empire meant gaining new territories, and the United States would never conquer or annex Ireland.³³ They could pretend that the American empire did not exist, because it protected Ireland, without conquering Ireland, all while entering upon their own career as an overseas imperial power after 1898.

³² Guernsey Jones, ‘Review: reviewed work(s): *History of the commonwealth and protectorate, 1649-1660; vol. iii, 1654-1656* by Samuel Rawson Gardiner’ in *American Historical Review*, vii, no. 1 (1901), pp 131-35 at p. 135. For interpretations of this viewpoint, see Bender, *A nation among nations*; Julian Go, *Patterns of empire: the British and American empires, 1688 to the present* (Cambridge, 2011); and Martin Sklar, *Creating the American century: the ideas and legacies of America’s twentieth-century foreign policy founders* (Cambridge, 2017)

³³ See Go, *Patterns of empire*, pp 7-12 for a proper definition of empire.

Part I: Case Studies

Chapter 1. Henry C. Carey: Irish history and American progress

Henry Charles Carey (1793-1879) was a nineteenth-century American economist, who gained an international reputation as an advocate of American protectionism.¹ He argued that the ‘British free trade system’ or the ‘English system’ had infected the world economy.² The system was like a disease that would spread uncontrollably if left unchecked, subjecting all societies within its orbit first to political, economic, and moral stagnation, and then reversal, in a slide to barbarism and slavery. Resisting the system was the imperative of any society that desired lasting political freedom. For the United States, it was a problem that had been in development since the British settlement of North America, and it was imperative, said Carey, to address it immediately.

Carey turned to Ireland to document a historical basis of his critique of the British system. The narrative of Irish history proved the merits of his protectionist doctrine and suggested a wisdom inherent to adopting protectionist policies, because of the detrimental effects for Ireland, over time, of the hegemonic British system. The narrative of Irish history offered evidence that the British had historically aimed for control, not cooperation or equal

¹ For assessments of Carey, see Rodney J. Morrison, ‘Henry C. Carey and American economic development’ in *Transactions of the American Philosophical Society*, lxxvi, no. 3 (1986), pp i-ix and 1-91; Ariel Ron, ‘Henry Carey’s rural roots, “scientific agriculture,” and economic development in the antebellum North’ in *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, xxxvii, no. 2 (2015), pp 263-75; Stephen Meardon, ‘Reciprocity and Henry C. Carey’s traverses on “the road to perfect freedom of trade”’ in *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, xxxiii, no. 3 (2011), pp 307-33; Marc-William Palen, *The ‘conspiracy’ of free trade: the Anglo-American struggle over empire and economic globalization, 1846-1896* (Cambridge, 2017); Andrew Dawson, ‘Reassessing Henry Carey (1793-1879): the problems of writing political economy in nineteenth-century America’ in *Journal of American Studies*, xxxiv, no. 3 (2000), pp 465-85; Arnold W. Green, *Henry Charles Carey: nineteenth-century sociologist* (Philadelphia, 1951); A. D. H. Kaplan, *Henry Charles Carey: a study in American economic thought* (Baltimore, 1931); Charles H. Levermore, ‘Henry C. Carey and his social system’ in *Political Science Quarterly*, v, no. 4 (1890), pp 553-82; and, William Elder, *A memoir of Henry C. Carey* (Philadelphia, 1880).

² He also used terminology, such as the ‘British Monopoly System’ and ‘the British free trade despotism’. For the former, see Henry C. Carey, ‘Resources of the Union’ in idem, *Miscellaneous works* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1883), ii, p. 23. For the latter, see Henry C. Carey, *Commerce, Christianity, and civilization, versus British free trade; letters in reply to the London Times* (Philadelphia, 1876), p. 36.

companionship, in economic arrangements with other peoples. In Carey's argument, Ireland emerged as a mirror to the position the United States would hold under the British Empire, should the Americans allow the British imperial system to continue its current developmental path without a dedicated resistance to it. His argument was an extension and translation of an underlying anti-British worldview of the Americans that had existed from the earliest days of British colonization of North America, fit for the mid-nineteenth century.

In his examination of the negative effects of British systematic development and in his program of defense against its further encroachment, Henry Carey articulated an advanced critique of the foundations of American progress, because of the continued close relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom despite the seemingly obvious British duplicity. His critique disentangled the multifaceted relationship between the United States and the British Empire. His conclusion was simple: American destiny to lead the world would remain unrealizable until the US system overcame its British problem. A concerted and deliberate development of the US system was required as an alternative to the British system. The narrative of Irish history proved the imperative to do so. The narrative of Irish history, especially with its nineteenth century Famine, demanded the urgency needed to do so.

The political influence from his father: Mathew Carey's Irish republicanism

Henry Carey was born in 1793 in Philadelphia, the son of Mathew Carey and Bridget Flahavan Carey. Little is recorded of Henry's mother. Mathew Carey, an emigrant from Dublin, is known in the historiography of late eighteenth and early nineteenth century

Ireland. He was, says Martin Burke, ‘the most prominent and most respected Irishman [in America] in the first half of the nineteenth century’.³

Mathew Carey was born in Dublin to wealthy Catholic parents.⁴ In 1783 he founded a newspaper, the *Volunteer’s Journal*, which was severely critical of the British government in Ireland. Arrested for incendiary writings, he was charged with libel by John Foster, the Irish chancellor of the exchequer, and jailed in 1784. On his release, he fled to the United States. With financial support from the Marquis de Lafayette, whom he had met during a brief residency in Paris, he founded newspapers and soon a highly profitable book publishing firm in Philadelphia, the same firm that Henry would later join as partner.⁵

Carey was a proud Irish republican and firmly aligned with the ideology which drove the United Irishmen movement throughout his adult life. It was within the context of Irish republicanism that he articulated a critique of the United States, in a writing career that existed alongside his management of the publishing firm. In the ideology of freedom and independence which characterized the US system he found principles shared by the

³ Martin J. Burke, ‘The politics and poetics of nationalist historiography: Mathew Carey and the *Vindiciae Hibernicae*’ in Joep Leerssen et al (eds), *Forging in the smithy: national identity and representation in Anglo-Irish literary history* (Amsterdam, 1995), pp 183-94 at pp 185-86. For Mathew Carey, see also Margaret Abruzzo, ‘Apologetics of harmony: Mathew Carey and the rhetoric of religious liberty’ in *The Pennsylvania magazine of history and biography*, cxxxiv, no. 1 (2010), pp 5-30; Benjamin Bankhurst, ‘Vindicating Ireland: historical memory, Irish America, and Mathew Carey’s later histories of Ireland’ in *Eire-Ireland*, i, no. 3/4 (2015), pp 199-222; Maurice Bric, ‘Mathew Carey, Ireland, and “the empire of liberty” for America’ in *Early American Studies*, xi, no. 3 (2013), pp 403-30; Stephen Meardon, ‘“A reciprocity of advantages”: Carey, Hamilton, and the American Protective Doctrine’ in *Early American Studies*, xi, no. 3 (2013), pp 431-454; and Marc-William Palen, ‘Carey, Mathew (1760-1839)’ in John R. Shook (ed.), *The dictionary of early American philosophers* (2 vols, NY, 2012), i, pp 179-81.

⁴ Mathew Carey, ‘Autobiography of Mathew Carey. Letter i.’ in *The New-England Magazine*, v (1833), pp 404-12 at p. 405. See also Palen, ‘Carey, Mathew (1760-1839)’, p. 179.

⁵ For his introduction to Lafayette, see Carey, ‘Autobiography. Letter i.’, p. 409. For Lafayette’s investment in his nascent publishing career in the US, see Mathew Carey, ‘Autobiography of Mathew Carey. Letter ii.’ in *The New-England Magazine*, v (1833), pp 489-96 at pp 489-90. See also Palen, ‘Carey, Mathew (1760-1839)’, p. 179; Edward Smith and Jason Edwards, ‘Carey, Mathew [*pseud.* Scriblerus O’Pindar] (1760-1839), publisher and author’ in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition (<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001/odnb-9780198614128-e-4655>) (10 February 2021); and David Kaser, *Messrs. Carey and Lea of Philadelphia: a study in the history of the booktrade* (Philadelphia, 1957).

United Irishmen movement. Certain tendencies and attitudes of the Americans in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries, though, challenged Carey's interpretation of the American republican system. In his argument, when he met conceptual challenge, he naturally deferred to the tenets of Irish republicanism, even in this new American context. The Irish republican attitude affected his economic and political argument, then, in particular ways.

In his writings, Mathew Carey gave prominence to the idea of the inherent diversity of American society, a quality which he determined must be protected from degrading influences. The defensiveness of his position here was a product of his experience in the highly sectarian environment in Ireland during his young adulthood. His argument for an inclusive Americanness thus involved a narrative engagement with Ireland, to emphasize the sectarian nature of the British system and to contrast British society with American society. Carey recalled the three 'most important operations of my life': the publication of *The olive branch* in 1814, arguing for American unity during the War of 1812; the publication of *Vindiciae Hibernicae* five years later, a history of seventeenth-century Ireland; and his sustained defense of protectionist economic policies in the early nineteenth century.⁶ All three defined a logic of separation from or challenge to British power in mind and matter.

A narrative of a British cultivation of sectarianism in Ireland defined his anti-British ideology. The 'oligarchy, "The Protestant ascendancy"' and 'the tyranny exercised by

⁶ See Mathew Carey, 'Autobiography of Mathew Carey. Letter xxi.' in *The New England Magazine*, vii (1834), pp 239-44 at p. 239. Edward Carter and Eugene Maier note Carey's identification of these three achievements as well. See Edward C. Carter II, 'Mathew Carey and "The olive branch", 1814-1818' in *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, lxxxix, no. 4 (1965), pp 399-415 at p. 405; and Eugene F. J. Maier, 'Mathew Carey, publicist and politician (1760-1839)' in *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, xxxix, no. 2 (1928), pp 71-154 at p. 143.

this oligarchy over the Catholics' were the root evils of British actions in Ireland.⁷ Here, he emphasized a notion of the British enslavement of its subjects resulting from a long history of an oligarchic refusal to treat its subjects with honor, a process most clearly displayed by the position of Irish Catholics but also of Protestant dissenters in Ireland.⁸ The continued British oppression of the Irish on the basis of religious difference, he wrote in *The olive branch*, served ulterior motives:

'I am an Irishman...I glory, I feel a pride in the name of an Irishman. There is not under the canopy of Heaven, another nation, which, ground to the earth as Ireland has been, for six hundred years, under so vile a proconsular government – almost every viceroy a Verres – a government whose fundamental maxim is "divide and destroy" – whose existence depends on fomenting the hostility of the Protestant against the Presbyterian and Catholic, and that of the Catholic against the Protestant and Presbyterian – there is not, I say, another nation, which, under such circumstances, would have preserved the slightest ray of respectability of character.'⁹

As an Irish republican exile, Carey underscored in his argument the criticality of internal social unity as the first criteria for economic and political development, a theme central to *The olive branch*.

Most relevant for this thesis is the *Vindiciae Hibernicae*, in which he identified and corrected supposed misconceptions about Irish history, strongly defended Irish Catholics, and challenged the predominant British narrative of the Irish Rebellion of 1641 that had emphasized atrocities committed by Catholics and the innocence of the Protestant community.¹⁰ The *Vindiciae* was published by his eponymous firm, M. Carey and Son.

⁷ Mathew Carey, *Sketch of the Irish code, entitled 'Laws to prevent the growth of popery:' but really intended, and with successful effect, to degrade, debase, and enslave the Roman Catholics of Ireland, and to divest them of their estates: with a brief notice of some of the penal sanctions of that code still in force* (Philadelphia, 1823), pp 3-4. See Maurice Bric, 'Mathew Carey, Ireland, and "the empire of liberty" for America'.

⁸ Carey, *Sketch of the Irish code*, pp 3-4; and Bric, 'Mathew Carey, Ireland, and the "empire of liberty" for America', p. 411.

⁹ Mathew Carey, *The olive branch, or faults on both sides, federal and democratic. A serious appeal on the necessity of mutual forgiveness and harmony* (6th ed., Winchester, PA, 1817), p. 332.

¹⁰ For Carey's mission of exposing the sectarian nature of the predominant histories of Ireland, see also Bankhurst, 'Vindicating Ireland', p. 199.

The book is five-hundred pages long and divided into twenty-one chapters. It was a work of history, and his list of sources included many newly published studies and sources, such as the *Works of the Right Hon. Edmund Burke* (1807) and David Hume's *History of England* (1816), among others from the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries.¹¹ The first three chapters critiqued the historiography of the Rebellion, and he stated his purpose from the start of the text:

‘Of all the modes of employing the intellectual powers of man for the benefit of the great family to which he belongs, there is probably none superior, in its beneficial tendency, to history, properly executed...But when this species of writing is made subservient to the sinister purposes of a party or faction – when servile fear induces a writer to calculate his work to palliate their enormities, or to perpetuate their power...then the valuable purposes of history are perverted – the fountains of correct information corrupted and poisoned – an undue bias is given to the public mind, as well as to that of individuals – other pernicious consequences are produced – and the guilty authors have a fair and indisputable claim to the most unqualified censure.’¹²

To clearly make his point that the British were biased, he used the same sources that British polemicists had used when they condemned Catholic behaviors during the Rebellion. He confirmed that most, if not all, of these accounts were based on a false reading of the evidence by Sir John Temple in his *History of the Irish Rebellion*, whose lead they followed.¹³

His research base was extensive and his academic rigor thorough, and he forcefully emphasized his central arguments using a Romantic idiom. His preface stood apart as an especially emotional narrative in contrast to the relatively restrained body of the text. He wrote, for instance, ‘Against the fortresses of fraud and imposture, I have brought a

¹¹ Mathew Carey, *Vindiciae Hibernicae: or, Ireland vindicated* (Philadelphia, 1819), pp v-vi.

¹² *Ibid.*, pp 17-18.

¹³ Mathew Carey, ‘Autobiography of Mathew Carey. Letter xiv.’ in *The New-England Magazine*, xi (1834), pp 400-08. See also Maier, ‘Mathew Carey’, pp 142-43.

battery of eight-and-forty pounders, which can hardly fail to demolish them. The arsenals of enemies, some of them most envenomed, have furnished all the cannon.’¹⁴

For the relevance of the narrative of the 1641 Irish Rebellion for his American audience, Carey’s dedication page, reproduced below, was telling. The *Vindiciae* was an argument against despotism and a plea for sympathy from the Americans for like-minded Irish republicans.

¹⁴ Carey, *Vindiciae Hibernicae*, p. xvii.

TO
THOSE SUPERIOR SPIRITS,
 WHO SCORN THE YOKE OF
FRAUD, IMPOSTURE, BIGOTRY, AND DELUSION;
 WHO,
 AT THE SACRED SHRINE OF TRUTH,
 WILL OFFER UP THEIR PREJUDICES,
 HOW INVETERATE SOEVER,
 WHEN HER BRIGHT TORCH ILLUMINATES THEIR MINDS;
 WHO,
 POSSESSING THE INESTIMABLE BLESSINGS
 OF
THRICE-HOLY AND REVERED LIBERTY,
 ACQUIRED BY AN ARDUOUS STRUGGLE AGAINST
 A MERE INCIPIENT DESPOTISM,
 WILL SYMPATHIZE WITH THOSE
 WHO CONTENDED ARDENTLY, ALTHOUGH UNSUCCESSFULLY,
 AGAINST AS GRIEVOUS AN OPPRESSION
 AS EVER PRESSED TO THE EARTH
 A NOBLE AND GENEROUS NATION,
 WHICH EMBARKED IN THE SAME GLORIOUS CAUSE
 AS LEONIDAS, EPAMINONDAS, BRUTUS, THE PRINCE
 OF ORANGE, WILLIAM TELL, FAYETTE,
 HANCOCK, ADAMS, FRANKLIN,
 AND WASHINGTON,
 THIS WORK IS DEDICATED.

Mathew Carey, *Vindiciae Hibernicae* (Philadelphia, 1819), dedication page.

His defense of 1641 was his contribution to the general debates ongoing in the early nineteenth century about Catholic emancipation in Britain.¹⁵ It was also an effort to defend the honor of the United Irishmen movement, whose downfall was partially

¹⁵ He makes this aim clear in 'Autobiography of Mathew Carey. Letter XIV', p. 400.

attributable to the effective Unionist use of the 1641 Catholic atrocity narratives, and to restore a sense of confidence in non-sectarian republicanism by identifying the unstable foundation of the Irish sectarian divide.¹⁶ The seeming imperative to make such an argument in the United States remarked on both Carey's ever-present commitment to Irish republicanism, decades removed from his time of departure from Ireland, and his sense that the narrative of Irish sectarian conflict was relevant to strengthen or remind his audience of the different nature of the US system from the British system. The argument of the *Vindiciae* represented the continuation of Carey's crusade for Catholic toleration, which he had begun in Dublin.

In his Catholic activism in the early Republic, he promoted a more encompassing culture of religious liberty.¹⁷ Catholicism, he argued, must sit in harmony with other religious communities in the United States. Thus, he did not favor doctrinal conservatism and can be seen in the same light as Catholic Americanists like John Carroll.¹⁸ Carey essentially believed in the unifying nature of the US system with its acceptance of religious diversity, which ostensibly rendered any notice of Christian denominational difference unnecessary. The United States, in this sense, promised the anti-sectarianism that was the central component of his Irish republicanism, and Carey reminded the Americans of the need to support the Irish republican movement, because it desired a similar end to the American independence movement of the recent past.

¹⁶ See Bric, 'Mathew Carey, Ireland, and "the empire of liberty" for America', pp 403-30. For narratives of 1641 as a tool against late eighteenth century Irish republicanism, see John Patrick Delury, 'Ex conflictu et collusione: the failure of Irish historiography, 1745 to 1790' in *Eighteenth-century Ireland*, xv (2000), pp 9-37; and John Gibney, *The shadow of a year: the 1641 Rebellion in Irish history and memory* (Madison, WI, 2013).

¹⁷ Mathew Carey, *The urgent necessity of the immediate repeal of the whole penal code against the Roman Catholics, candidly considered* in idem, *Miscellanies [pamphlets and papers]* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1826), ii, pp 70-143. See Margaret Abruzzo, 'Apologetics of harmony: Mathew Carey and the rhetoric of religious liberty' in *The Pennsylvania magazine of history and biography*, cxxxiv, no. 1 (2010), pp 5-30.

¹⁸ Margaret Abruzzo notes this point in 'Apologetics of harmony', pp 7-8.

He developed a more systematic vision of American development that included an emphasis on the centrality of American religious tolerance, which contrasted with the British system. The argument effectively demanded the protection of American anti-sectarianism to ensure the legitimacy of the system as a whole. The defensive nature of his republican ideology ensured his continued embrace of a protectionist economic legislative program. With the ability to sustain internal economic development, he argued, a stronger social and cultural integration among the religiously diverse American population would follow. As a firm supporter of Irish legislative independence and of Grattan's Parliament, he had promoted the benefits of protectionist policies since the time of his political agitation in Dublin in the 1780s.¹⁹ His protectionism was conditional based on contemporary, American exigencies, though traceable to this experience as an Irish subject of the British system and the political suppression of the Irish in the late eighteenth century.

The centrality of Irish republicanism in his argument led him to occasionally lend support to positions that seemed at odds with his protectionist economic ideology. In 1794, for instance, he sided with Thomas Jefferson in the debate over the Jay Treaty, which established a decade of limited peace between the United Kingdom and the United States, not over strict economic reasons – he would normally have been considered a Hamiltonian – but due to his opposition to the idea that the United States might have closer relations with Britain if the Hamiltonian faction prevailed, which, he argued, would encourage activity that would undoubtedly hurt American manufacturing.²⁰ His primary consideration was to oppose and resist the British system, and Jefferson's faction in this

¹⁹ See Meardon, “A reciprocity of advantages”, pp 431-454; and Carter, ‘Mathew Carey in Ireland’.

²⁰ Meardon, “A reciprocity of advantages”, p. 454.

instance had provided the support for that opposition. Hamilton's protectionist system would, Carey thought, never attain its noble ends if the United States was aligned with Britain above other trading partners.²¹

For Carey, the persistent nature of the British efforts at reducing the value and esteem of the Irish was notable. British historians created a narrative of Catholic violence to justify the oppressive and abusive British treatment of Irish Catholics.²² He encouraged the Americans to deny the British version of Irish history, which had resulted in British 'prejudices [having] been transplanted from their native soil by emigrants and [having] taken root in this country'.²³ In his argument for the Americans, he appealed to a universalism deduced from the narrative of Irish history: Irish values of freedom were human values.²⁴ Americans, he thought, must accept Irish resistance against the British system and Irish demands for political independence as valid, because they were of a like kind to the principles which drove the creation of the US system.

Henry and Mathew Carey's relationship

The themes of political independence and internal social harmony emphasized by Mathew Carey would be central to the protectionist ideology that Henry Carey formulated in the middle of the nineteenth century, and at least some of the knowledge transfer from father

²¹ See Mathew Carey's pamphlets: *Features of Mr. Jay's Treaty* (Philadelphia, 1795); *The treaty of amity, commerce, and navigation of Mr. Jay* (Philadelphia, 1795); and *Address to the House of Representatives of the United States on Lord Grenville's Treaty* (Philadelphia, 1796). See also Meardon, "A reciprocity of advantages".

²² See Carey, *Vindiciae Hibernicae*; idem, 'Autobiography of Mathew Carey. Letters xiii-xv'. See also Martin J. Burke, 'The politics and poetics of nationalist historiography: Mathew Carey and the *Vindiciae Hibernicae*' in Joep Leerssen, A. H. van der Weel, and Bart Westerweel (eds), *Forging in the smithy: national identity and representation in Anglo-Irish literature* (Amsterdam, 1995), pp 183-94 at, p. 191.

²³ Carey, *Vindiciae Hibernicae*, p. xi.

²⁴ Burke, 'The politics and poetics of nationalist historiography', especially p. 194.

to son occurred from their close association and professional partnership in the early decades of the century. Henry Carey was largely self-educated with minimal formal schooling.²⁵ From the age of twelve, he worked for his father's book publishing firm first as salesman and proof-reader – receiving both practical business training and a wide range of content knowledge – and later as shareholder and partner.²⁶ Mathew Carey retired from the business in 1824. In the first decades of the nineteenth century, he was one of the most prolific and well-known writers of American political economy, especially so in his defense of Henry Clay's American System, while his son's life as an economist was a second career, too, which he began after his retirement from the publishing firm in 1838. By the middle of the nineteenth century, Henry Carey had made a name for himself as the 'Ajax of protectionism', following in the footsteps of his father.²⁷ Henry Carey's inspiration from his father is largely underemphasized as an influence on his economic argument.²⁸

Mathew and Henry Carey's relationship experienced severe strain in the final decade of Mathew's life over financial arrangements related to Henry's purchase of his father's shares in their publishing business upon his retirement.²⁹ Mathew Carey publicly accused his son of swindling him out of thirty-seven thousand dollars.³⁰ Henry Carey thought his

²⁵ David Kaser, *Messrs. Carey and Lea of Philadelphia: a study in the history of the booktrade* (Philadelphia, 1957), p. 18.

²⁶ Ibid.

²⁷ For Mathew's writing career and his defense of Clay's American system, see Martin Öhman, 'The statistical turn in early American political economy: Mathew Carey and the authority of numbers' in *Early American Studies*, xi, no. 3 (2013), pp 486-515; Cathy Matson, 'Mathew Carey's learning experience: commerce, manufacturing, and the panic of 1819' in *Early American Studies*, xi, no. 3 (2013), pp 455-85; and Stephen Meardon, "'A reciprocity of advantages'". For 'Ajax of Protection' see Rodney J. Morrison, 'The Canadian-American reciprocal trade agreement of 1874: a Pennsylvanian's view' in *The Pennsylvania Magazine of History and Biography*, cii (1978), pp 457-68 at p. 460.

²⁸ Rodney Morrison does reference Henry's Irish background, but his reference is of secondary concern to other factors. See Morrison, 'Henry C. Carey and American economic development', pp 1-3.

²⁹ See David Kaser, 'The retirement income of Mathew Carey' in *The Pennsylvania magazine of history and biography*, lxxx, no. 4 (1956), pp 410-15.

³⁰ Kaser, 'The retirement income of Mathew Carey', p. 414.

father a spendthrift. This episode passed, and they made peace before Mathew's death in 1839.

Henry Carey's correspondence revealed a growing emotional connection to his father in the final two decades of Henry's life and, through this connection, a greater sense of pride in his Irish background and his father's advocacy of Irish republicanism. There was a continuum in thought from father to son, which Henry articulated in 1871: 'my father taught here [in America] the same lesson he had taught at home, to wit: that without industrial independence there could be no political independence. In his footsteps I have followed...Between us, father and son, it has been carried on for little less than a century.'³¹

Henry Carey was influenced by the example of his father's life as a man subjected to exile because of British cruelty and as a man who eloquently attacked the British system for the broader cruelty perpetrated against his native Ireland. Additionally, Mathew's and later Henry's ability to thrive financially, socially, and politically, can be seen to have confirmed for Henry Carey the merits of a way forward for society – in the form of the New World and American republicanism – wholly distinct from the oppressiveness of the British system, an oppressiveness experienced first-hand by his father. Subsumed deeper within this more general success, though, the practicalities of daily business life and the way Henry Carey conducted his publishing firm shaped his political and economic outlook.

³¹ Henry Charles Carey to Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa (draft), 6 January 1871 (Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Edward Carey Gardiner Collection, MS 227A, box 20, ff 1-3).

His religious practice confirmed the generational difference. Henry Carey abandoned the Roman Catholicism that was an important part of his father's identity and converted to the Episcopal Church sometime before 1825 and was buried in Burlington, New Jersey, at the Episcopal Church of St. Mary's. He was closely associated with the Episcopalian bishop and author George Washington Doane and served on the Board of Missions of the American Episcopal Church.³² Henry Carey existed within a religiously diverse community from his birth, and it was a fact of his very being, given his conversion. With this difference in personal religious practice from his father also came a different emphasis in economic argument, free from a sectarian framework.

Henry Carey's career as a political economist

Henry Carey began to write more consistently in 1833 in response to his anger with the economic crisis that resulted from the defunding of the Second Bank of the United States by the Jackson administration. The crisis was particularly hard for American publishers. Several competitors went bankrupt, and his firm experienced challenging years, though they emerged from it in a position of strength.³³ His career as a writer lasted officially from his retirement from the publishing firm in 1838 until his death in 1879. He wrote eight books and fifty-five pamphlets, in addition to an extensive correspondence with policymakers, writers, intellectuals, academics, and business figures, which he often used for advocacy and framed in argumentative language. From 1849 to 1857 he wrote economic-oriented editorials for Horace Greeley's *New-York Tribune*. In this capacity his

³² See E. Clowes Chorley, 'The missionary march of the American Episcopal Church, 1789-1835' in *Historical Magazine of the Protestant Episcopal Church*, xv, no. 3 (1946), pp 169-208 at p. 207 and George Washington Doane, *The missionary bishop* (Burlington, NJ, 1835), p. 54. There are letters from Doane to Carey in his correspondence archive in the Historical Society of Pennsylvania.

³³ See Kaser, *Messrs Carey and Lea of Philadelphia*, pp 53-57.

American audience would have been significant, as the *Tribune* by 1856 had a daily circulation of 29,000, with the weekly special edition reaching a circulation of 163,000.³⁴ This role was his most direct contribution to popular politics and popular public commentary. His more usual mode of engagement involved argumentation with decision-makers at the highest levels of national politics, both in person at his weekly ‘Vespers’, a salon-like gentleman’s gathering at his Philadelphia home held consistently for decades, and via his letter writing.³⁵ In his extensive pamphleteering, Henry Carey exhibited similarities in publishing methods to American economists and political economists in the early nineteenth century. Carey, however, distinguished himself from most of his American forerunners and peers, because he received international recognition based on theory and argument.

The development of economic thought in the United States in the nineteenth century was a halting and hesitant affair. Most economic arguments took the form of pamphlets and political speeches, and there were a few examples of book-length studies. Mathew Carey’s pamphleteering in support of the American System exemplified the American economic idiom early in the century. Carey and Hezekiah Niles, despite using relatively advanced research methods and developing standards of statistical analysis in the United States – data which was used to promote the American System – remained relatively marginal figures in Western economic thought of their era.³⁶

Academic study of political economy, which would have indicated a deepening engagement with theory, emerged slowly in the United States and was modelled on

³⁴ James L. Cromthamel, ‘The newspaper revolution in New York, 1830-1860’ in *New York History*, xlv, no. 2 (1964), pp 91-113 at p. 103.

³⁵ For information on the ‘Vespers’, see Alex Del Mar, ‘Henry C. Carey’s round table’ in *Gunton’s Magazine*, xiii (1897), pp 99-108.

³⁶ Ohman, ‘The statistical turn in early American political economy’, pp 486-515.

English university practice. From the start, though, American educators and economic thinkers identified a need for a uniquely American interpretation of economic theory because of their concerns with the applicability of classical British economic theory.³⁷ Among those who achieved distinction in this era include Francis Wayland, whose *Elements of Political Economy* (1837) was the first American textbook to find widespread readership. His evangelical moral philosophy added to his popularity with denominational colleges in contrast to the utilitarian drift of British texts.³⁸ Despite their attempts at applying British doctrine to the study of the American environment, Wayland, together with Henry Vethake of Dickinson College and John McVickar of Columbia College, remained more closely aligned with classical economics than was comfortable for American critics of the British, led by the Careys.³⁹ In this space, along with the Careys, Daniel Raymond articulated a robust criticism of Malthus. For this argument, he has been considered by many to be the first important American economist.⁴⁰

In the first three decades of the nineteenth century, despite variances in the levels of their divergence from European theory, most American economists exhibited an inward-looking attitude, and they argued that the US system provided a better canvas to test economic theory than Europe.⁴¹ Over the course of the century their insularity diminished, as the Americans looked abroad for two reasons. First, they confirmed their

³⁷ William J. Barber, 'Political economy and the academic setting before 1900: an introduction' in idem (ed.), *Economists and higher learning in the nineteenth century* (New Brunswick, NJ, 1993), pp 3-14 at pp 3-7.

³⁸ Donald E. Frey, 'Francis Wayland's 1830s textbooks: evangelical ethics and political economy' in *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, xxiv, no. 2 (2002), pp 215-31, especially pp 215-16; and Barber, 'Political economy and the academic setting before 1900', p. 7.

³⁹ Morrison, 'The Canadian-American reciprocal trade agreement of 1874', p. 458.

⁴⁰ See Daniel Raymond, *Thoughts on political economy* (Baltimore, 1820). For studies of Raymond, see Cathy D. Matson, 'Capitalizing hope: economic thought and the early national economy' in *Journal of the Early Republic*, xvi, no. 2 (1996), pp 273-91; George Johnson Cady, 'The early American reaction to the theory of Malthus' in *Journal of Political Economy*, xxxix, no. 5 (1931), pp 601-32.

⁴¹ Craufurd D. Goodwin and Stephen Meardon, 'The international dimension of American economics' in Malcolm Rutherford (ed.), *The economic mind in America: essays in the history of American economics* (London/NY, 1998), pp 295-324 at p. 297.

initial claims of American economic uniqueness, which required more than the cursory comparative economics that they had been doing. Second, they defined the position of the United States in the world as global trade became more interconnected.⁴² Professional and amateur American economists from the period, in these comparisons to Europe and regardless of their adherence to any particular theory, usually expressed condescension for European systems and optimism for the US system.⁴³ A certain style developed that existed within the spectrum of the American exceptionalist argument popular throughout the nineteenth century.

In this tradition, together with the inspiration from his father's argument, neither Henry Carey's insularity nor his Anglophobia was unusual. Daniel Raymond also, for instance, favored protectionism in order to strengthen the still new federal system in the first half of the nineteenth century. Anglophobia, though not a universally held American attitude, emerged from the Revolutionary Era and was easily reinforced by perceived and real hostilities during the early Republic.⁴⁴ Carey's argument, therefore, emerged within an established American idiom of protectionism that was Anglophobic. He did not, however, always consider himself a protectionist. His early entanglements with free trade and the nature of his protectionist argument revealed contingencies made for economic policies, even if he never wavered in his ire for the British system itself. Carey, then, wrestled with an Anglophobic protectionist inheritance. He revised it as he pursued answers for the changing nature of the US system throughout the mid-nineteenth century.

⁴² Goodwin and Meardon, 'The international dimension of American economics', pp 298-300.

⁴³ Ibid., p. 298.

⁴⁴ See William Earl Weeks, 'Expansion, embargo, and war' in idem, *The new Cambridge history of American foreign relations, volume i: dimensions of the early American empire, 1765-1865* (Cambridge, 2013), pp 64-87.

In this Anglophobic milieu the American economic writing that emerged largely followed a style of reacting to predominant British thought. The tradition became one of testing the assumptions of, primarily, Adam Smith, Thomas Malthus, J. R. McCulloch, James Mill, John Stuart Mill, and David Ricardo against observations and data found in the United States. The arguments of American political economists in this period often took the form of response and analysis and then rebuttal or revision of a particular work. Favorite targets included Malthus's *An essay on the principle of population* (1798) and Ricardo's *Principles of political economy and taxation* (1817). Henry Carey was among the principal American detractors from this British ideology along with Raymond, Alexander H. Everett, Jacob D. Cardozo, Willard Phillips, William Jennison, and George Tucker.⁴⁵ Carey challenged both Malthus and Ricardo. Their economic theories were, he said, 'invented for the purpose of accounting for the poverty and wretchedness which are the necessary results' of the 'unsound and unnatural' British system.⁴⁶

His challenge to British economic thought emphasized an upward or expansionary reasoning versus the supposed sense of diminishing returns proposed by the arguments of the British economists. For instance, Ricardo had stated that human settlement followed a certain pattern: man farmed the most productive agricultural lands first, then, as populations grew, less productive lands were brought into cultivation. Carey revised this theorem, proposing that less productive lands – the thinner soils on the sides of mountains and away from rivers – were used first, since they did not require any clearing of trees or draining of swamps. Next, as 'combination' – by means of increased settlement – allowed for specialization, man could clear trees or drain swamps to till the richest lands.

⁴⁵ Cady, 'The early American reaction to the theory of Malthus', especially p. 607.

⁴⁶ Henry C. Carey, *The harmony of interests, agricultural, manufacturing, and commercial* (Philadelphia, 1851), pp 64-65.

Secondly, Malthus's over-population thesis was, said Carey, 'the ready excuse for all the evils of a vicious system'.⁴⁷ Malthus led British theorists and politicians to believe that Irish or Indian famine, for example, resulted naturally from an imbalanced ecosystem and not as a product of political decisions. Carey argued that population numbers would grow sustainably and in tandem with the ability of societies to use the more productive lands, once concentration increased productivity and led to advances in industry.

These fundamental challenges to Ricardo and Malthus formed the basis of Carey's argument. Thus, for Carey, the faultiness of prevailing nineteenth century British economic thought existed at its very foundations, at an elemental level of the economic theory of human development. This allowed him to systematically question all assumptions about how certain societies had arrived at their place in the nineteenth century and to propose an alternative path for the United States, distinct from the British system that, he argued, sought to place the US more firmly under its control.

His first published work was his 1835 *Essay on the rate of wages*, which advocated free trade: 'restraints upon the freedom of trade are injurious to all classes of society, and all measures tending to the removal of those restraints [are] advantageous'.⁴⁸ Much of the *Essay* involved arguments against the wage theories of English economist Nassau William Senior, who had recently published his *Three lectures on the rate of wages*. Carey thought Senior, like other contemporary British economists, had misinterpreted and misstated Adam Smith's theories, with a certain sense of British triumphalism involved.⁴⁹ The exact nature of the falsehood was secondary to the underlying motive. Carey

⁴⁷ Carey, *The harmony of interests*, pp 64-65.

⁴⁸ Henry C. Carey, *Essay on the rate of wages: with an examination of the causes of the differences in the condition of the labouring population throughout the world* (Philadelphia, 1835), p. 59.

⁴⁹ *Ibid.*, pp 7-8.

determined that Senior's perversion of Smith provided justification for British actions that had drastic implications for human welfare: the British system had become a system of war. In this argument Carey defined a cyclical process of expansion and war, funded by debt, followed by the extraction of resources of conquered lands to service the debt burdens.

His second book, *The harmony of nature*, came one year later, though Carey, because he thought his argument not fully developed, prevented its circulation.⁵⁰ In this work, he explored a scientific understanding of society, which he developed more robustly in later works. He further articulated his disagreement with Ricardo and Malthus, as well, arguing, more or less, that any suggestion that nature was responsible for systematic shortcomings of the economy was false.⁵¹

His dissatisfaction with *The harmony of nature* was quickly cast aside, and he published the three-volume *Principles of political economy* from 1837-40. He continued his digression from Malthus, Ricardo, and others for their failures to account for the American environment, and he began to more fully develop his conception of societal development from the moment of first settlement on virgin lands. As Kaplan has noted, during the writing of the second volume of the *Principles*, the US economy endured a banking crisis in 1837. Carey called for less regulation, for 'untrammelled *laissez-faire*', says Kaplan, fearing that increased regulation of banks would promote hoarding-like behavior and only increase the wealth of the banks' shareholders.⁵²

⁵⁰ See Kaplan, *Henry Charles Carey*, pp 35-36.

⁵¹ See Kaplan, *Henry Charles Carey*, pp 35-39, for a summary of *The harmony of nature*.

⁵² Kaplan, *Henry Charles Carey*, pp 39-45.

Within ten years Carey abandoned any support of free trade doctrine, announcing his new protectionist position in his seminal work, *The past, the present, and the future*, published in 1848.⁵³ The story Carey told about this ideological reversal during his lifetime was that he experienced a sudden awakening: ‘lying in bed one morning’, he pictured ‘settlers on the sides of hills, moving down into the valleys and approaching each other, as wealth, power, and civilization grew’ and realized the ‘vital importance of bringing the consumer to the side of the producer’.⁵⁴ Without reducing the significance of his doctrinal reversal, the suddenness and theatricality of his awakening can be questioned, since the reversal came concurrently with the Walker Tariff Act of 1846, which had introduced a liberal, reduced tariff regime, and with the Mexican War, also in 1846, whose supporters Carey knew were aligned with the free trade interest because of their support for the expansion of the slavery system – an expansion which he opposed.⁵⁵ Regardless, his basic protectionism involved a more nuanced change from the 1835 *Essay* to his position from the late 1840s onward. He had, for instance, always insisted that modern British thinkers, like Senior and especially Ricardo, had controverted the thinking of Adam Smith by promoting certain concepts and discounting others, and, in doing so, had changed the underlying implications of Smith’s thought.

Smith, for all intents and purposes, had apparently advocated for Careyite political economy before Carey by warning against the very free trade structure that had developed – against what Carey identified as the essential faults of the nineteenth century British

⁵³ Henry C. Carey, *The past, the present, and the future* (Philadelphia, 1848). Stephen Meardon calls *The past, the present, and the future* Carey’s magnum opus. See Meardon, ‘Reciprocity and Henry C. Carey’s traverses’, pp 315-16.

⁵⁴ Henry Carey Baird, ‘Carey and two of his recent critics’ in *Proceedings of the American Philosophical Society*, xxix, no. 136 (1891), pp 166-73 at p. 171. Stephen Meardon discusses this story, too, in ‘Reciprocity and Henry C. Carey’s traverses on “the road to perfect freedom of trade”’ in *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, xxxiii, no. 3 (2011), pp 307-33 at p. 316.

⁵⁵ Meardon, ‘Reciprocity and Henry C. Carey’s traverses’, p. 316.

system, including the creation of ‘a grand army of non-consuming laborers’ and ‘making, as it must, the whole societary body more and more liable to injury from causes occurring in distant lands, and over which it could exercise no control whatsoever’.⁵⁶ In this sense Carey’s repudiation of free trade resulted as much from his antipathy to the corruption of the Smithian version of free trade than from an outright ideological break with it, though he did later express his disagreement with ‘that greatest of economists, Adam Smith’, largely because Smith’s historical persona came to represent free trade.⁵⁷ Stephen Meardon, in an analysis of Carey’s missals on US foreign trade in the middle of the nineteenth century, has noted Carey’s modifications of his protectionist doctrine, suggesting less rigidity to his thought than commonly assumed.⁵⁸ In trade policy, he favored local commerce, but he understood the value of well-constructed international trade that would buttress local activity.⁵⁹

Carey wrote extensively throughout the middle decades of the century, revising his earlier writings and sharpening his articulation of a scientific nature of human society and development. In this sense, his three-volume *Principles of social science* (1858-60) can be considered a revision of the *Principles of political economy* (1837-40). The change in title also noted the increased importance of a seemingly more holistic and naturistic examination of economic life.

He was a member of the Republican Party from its founding in 1856, helping to articulate its protectionist vision in the immediate antebellum period. Throughout the war period and Reconstruction, he continued lobbying policymakers, arguing for the benefits of

⁵⁶ See Carey, *The unity of law*, pp 281-82 and 366-68.

⁵⁷ See Carey, *Commerce, Christianity, and civilization*, p. 36.

⁵⁸ See Meardon, ‘Reciprocity and Henry C. Carey’s traverses’.

⁵⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 330.

protectionist legislation. Finally, his *Unity of law* was published in 1872, which Kaplan calls ‘evidence of doubt on Carey’s part that his social system had, in his previous statements thereof, achieved the rounded perfection and unity at which he aimed...[it was] a more deliberate effort to treat social science as an aspect of natural philosophy.’⁶⁰

Henry Carey’s vision of a systematic societal development

Henry Carey’s argument was inspired by proponents of Henry Clay’s American System in the 1810s and 1820s, including his father and Hezekiah Niles, with whom Henry had close contact owing to his father’s friendship with Niles. Niles thought North-South relations required a concerted protectionist economic policy to facilitate greater political harmony, a vision of national economic unity that Henry later defined further as a response to the Civil War.⁶¹

In tone and argument, Henry displayed similarities to the German economist Friedrich List, who lived in Pennsylvania from 1825-30 after being forced into exile from his native Württemberg.⁶² During a high point in debate between advocates of the American System and those against, List wrote a series of letters to Charles J. Ingersoll, U.S. District Attorney for Pennsylvania and vice president of the Pennsylvania Society for the Promotion of Manufactures and the Mechanic Arts, published as a pamphlet titled, *Outlines of American political economy* (1827).⁶³ He soon became a doyen of

⁶⁰ Kaplan, *Henry Charles Carey*, pp 61-62.

⁶¹ For Niles and the American System see, Bill Kovarik, ‘To avoid the coming storm: Hezekiah Niles *Weekly Register* as a voice of North-South moderation, 1811 – 1836’ in *American Journalism*, ix, nos. 3-4 (1992).

⁶² See W. O. Henderson, *Friedrich List: economist and visionary, 1789-1846* (London, 1983), p. 70; and David Levi-Faur, ‘Friedrich List and the political economy of the nation-state’ in *Review of International Political Economy*, iv, no. 1 (1997), pp 154-78 at p. 156.

⁶³ Henderson, *Friedrich List*, pp 70-71 and 145.

Philadelphia society, especially among members of the Society for the Promotion of Manufactures, who naturally favored his version of systematic protection and development of local industry. He would have known Mathew Carey, a member of the Society, and likely Henry Carey during this time.⁶⁴

List advocated a ‘national systems’ model based on the premise that true global free trade was impractical, given that states across the world exhibited different stages of development. ‘Infant industries’ within states needed protection to reach their potential, but only those industries that ‘have an assured home market’.⁶⁵ List’s plan involved the support of select local industries with high tariffs in order to prevent business failures and to encourage broader expansion, creating ‘linkages’ to other industries that further enabled industrial growth and economic advancement.⁶⁶ List feared that the vast public lands of the United States open to settlement would, over time, favor agricultural interests at the expense of manufacturing interests, the latter of which required a more concentrated population to market and sell its goods.⁶⁷ Protective tariffs would seemingly help prevent population dispersal by giving life to local industries.⁶⁸ His national systems model meant, for instance, that Ireland belonged in a properly functioning system encompassing the United Kingdom. He noted the failure of the Union of Great Britain and Ireland at the turn of the nineteenth century because of an embrace of principles of free trade that only served to benefit the central power: ‘The United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland’

⁶⁴ Palen, ‘Carey, Mathew’, p. 179. See also idem, *The ‘conspiracy’ of free trade*, pp 4-11; and Michael Yaffey, ‘Friedrich List and the causes of Irish hunger’ in Helen O’Neill and John Toye (eds), *A world without famine? New approaches to aid and development* (London, 1998), pp 84-106 at pp 92-94.

⁶⁵ Friedrich List, *The national system of political economy*, transl. G. A. Matile (Philadelphia, 1856), p. 195.

⁶⁶ P. Sai-Wing Ho, ‘Distortions in the trade policy for development debate: a re-examination of Friedrich List’ in *Cambridge Journal of Economics*, xxix, no. 5 (2005), pp 729-45 at pp 734-35 and 738.

⁶⁷ Henderson, *Friedrich List*, p. 147.

⁶⁸ Ibid., pp 147-48.

presented ‘a striking and decisive example of the immense results of free trade between associated nations.’⁶⁹

Henry Carey extended the Listian economic vision to a ‘social science’ – a unified, organic whole – and for this Auguste Comte’s work played a central role.⁷⁰ Comte’s *Course of positive philosophy* (1853) convinced Carey that observable facts took precedence over theory and that natural law was hierarchical and applied equally to biology and society.⁷¹ Comte, then, stimulated Carey’s progression beyond political theory and to the structured, scientific approach in his argument shown in his *Principles of social science* and especially in *The unity of law*. Carey made this Comtean view relevant to his American audience by referencing periodicals, government-issued statistical reports, transcriptions of political speeches, narrative histories, travel accounts, and an array of economics-oriented pamphlets.

Henry Carey’s narration of Irish history.

A. Pre-Famine narratives

Henry Carey’s plan for the US system stood in marked contrast to what he understood as the imperial British system. Developed over centuries, the results were plain to see. The British system was failing, as seen by the presence of a body of ‘non-consuming’ laborers and a centralized political and financial cabal that profited from the toil of the masses.⁷²

⁶⁹ List, *National systems*, p. 195.

⁷⁰ Carey, *Unity of law*, pp 71-76. See also Adrian Johns, *Piracy*, pp 312-16; and Meardon, ‘Reciprocity and Henry C. Carey’s traverses’ for an overview of Carey’s conception of economic activity and development.

⁷¹ Auguste Comte, *The positive philosophy of Auguste Comte*, transl. Harriet Martineau (London, 1853); Johns, *Piracy*, p. 312.

⁷² He emphasized this theme in many of his works, including Carey, *The past, the present, and the future*, especially pp 284-428; Henry C. Carey, *The slave trade, domestic and foreign: why it exists, and how it may be extinguished* (Philadelphia, 1853); idem, *American labor versus British free trade* (Philadelphia, 1855); idem, *Principles of social science* (3 vols., Philadelphia, 1858-60), i, especially pp 257-60; idem,

Perhaps influenced by his father's distinctively Irish republicanism, he used the narrative of Irish history to support this argument. From the start of his career as a writer of political economy, then, Ireland featured in a prominent manner. The trajectory of his account of Irish history and nineteenth century Irish politics was in some ways predictable and direct. He noticed, of course, the singularity of the mid-century Famine, an event which, because of his already extensive usage of Ireland in his narrative critique of the British system, profoundly confirmed his opinion and argument. In his assessment of Ireland, Carey displayed a consistency before and after the Famine, despite its singularity. Famine, like slavery, was ostensibly not an unusual side-effect of the predominant British economic system.

Carey first used the narrative of Irish history in his economic argument in a critique of absenteeism in his first published work, *Essay on the rate of wages* (1835). Absenteeism reduced the 'ratio of capital to population' and, therefore, the earning power of the laborer⁷³:

'It can hardly be doubted for a moment, that if all the landlords of Ireland were to conclude to live at home for one year, and expend the same amount among their tenants and tradesmen, that they had been accustomed to expend among the people of London, Paris, or Rome, there would be a greater increase of capital among the mechanics and tradesmen of Ireland, than if they had remained abroad.'⁷⁴

Ireland had been 'reduced by the extravagance and absenteeism of its landed proprietors', such that its laborers were unable to accumulate any capital. With an advancing population, as in Ireland, this hoarding of capital resulted in a reduction of acreage

Commerce, Christianity, and civilization, versus British free trade: letters in reply to the London Times (Philadelphia, 1876); and idem, *The way to outdo England without fighting her* (Philadelphia, 1865)

⁷³ Henry C. Carey, *Essay on the rate of wages: with an examination of the causes of differences in the labouring population throughout the world* (Philadelphia, 1835), pp 38-39.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 46.

available for the increasing population and in an existence for most of the population at the 'subsistence' level.⁷⁵

The pre-Famine absenteeism was two-fold. Absentee landlords lived abroad from Ireland, mostly in London, removing culture and influence from Dublin. Absentee capital followed, and it was more adverse for Ireland than the mere absence of landlords and their retinues. Irish profits were removed to England and invested, searching for a higher return than could be had in Ireland, often in the United States. One result was, apparently, a false equivalence in intellectual opinion, which assumed Irish civilization – by which they meant social and cultural development – was less advanced than American or British civilization because of their supposed impoverishment. Carey defended the standard of civilization of the Irish in relation to other peoples of a similar economic or laboring class, such as the French agricultural laborer. He denied the commonplace opinion of Irish poverty, because, he argued, in relative terms the Irish population was in a better economic position than many of its European peers. He explained, 'It is impossible to compare the mass of the immigrants from Ireland to the United States, with those who come from most parts of the continent, without being convinced that the former live better at home.' Emigration, in this conception, proved a higher level of relative wealth: 'The people of Ireland *can and do emigrate*, and the power to do so is evidence that they obtain more than is necessary for their subsistence. In France, there is little emigration, even from one part of the kingdom to another, because of inability to incur the expense of change.'⁷⁶

⁷⁵ Ibid., pp 48-49.

⁷⁶ Henry C. Carey, *Principles of political economy* (2 vols., Philadelphia, 1837-38), ii, pp 422-23.

His purpose in supposedly proving the ‘superior’ nature of the Irish population to its European counterparts was to draw attention to the absence of Irish economic development within the British system. The Irish natural environment and the Irish people were fundamentally amenable to the same progress of industry and wealth that had occurred in Britain and the United States. This development failed to happen, because the British system had prevented the ‘accumulation of capital’. Various measures, including the tithes system – a tax on the laboring class – and the absenteeism of its landholders, prevented a ‘harmony of interests between the owner and cultivator’ from occurring. The British system was a model of colonial extraction, which was squarely at odds with economic growth, a fact proven in history by the ‘peace and harmony’ of the United States that it had exhibited when separated from the United Kingdom.⁷⁷

In *The past, the present, and the future* (1848) – in which Carey firmly rejected free trade doctrine – Carey’s account of Ireland existed as a central means to illustrate and compare the workings of predominant economic systems. He articulated a revision to the national systems theory of economic development and addressed the outcomes of the present systems. He characterized the British system since the Napoleonic Wars:

‘Peace at home, and the consequent growth of wealth and population, have tended to produce local concentration in England; but that tendency has been, and still is, neutralized by a thousand opposing influences. Towns and cities have corporations, with privileges exercising strong repulsive tendencies. Parliament centralizes the power of England, Scotland, and Ireland, within the walls of St. Stephen’s, that it may devote itself more advantageously to the management of the affairs of the world, and thus expel the population and the wealth that might be advantageously employed at home.’

The need or desire for an imperial or external control created an adversarial nature to British centralization. ‘The tendency of centralization in England...is to cause men to

⁷⁷ Carey, *Principles of political economy*, ii, pp 424-29.

mind the business of others, and to neglect their own.’⁷⁸ The ultimate result was the separation of the consumer from the producer, which created instability in the system and prevented proper economic development in the peripheral regions.

In Ireland, though subject to the intensified concentration seen in the nineteenth century – in its case this intensification was exemplified by the dissolution of the Irish Parliament and the union of the kingdoms at the start of the century – his narration probed much deeper into its colonial history within the British system to document a longstanding policy of centralization. Carey explained:

‘Ireland enjoyed the same advantage as regarded the Continent, but she was unhappy in being the near neighbour of the Norman aristocracy, a body whose most distinguishing feature has been at all times unbounded rapacity. Ireland was partially subjugated; and thenceforward the power and wealth of England became an element of perpetual disturbance. The land was filled by English agents, who were anxious for confiscations: and confiscations were to be produced by rebellions. Rebellion were, therefore, to be produced, and the mode of production was oppression. Such is the history of Ireland, the prey of England.’⁷⁹

Ireland was the first and most mature example of the imperial tendencies of the British system, since it had been subject to the British system’s centralizing tendencies since the Norman invasion. From a developmental standpoint, this situation produced a stagnation in Ireland, which had characterized its economy since then: ‘Everything tended towards centralizing the wealth of the kingdom in the capital, on its way outward; the necessary consequence of which was that the people still cultivated the poor soils, and concentration was impossible.’⁸⁰ The process was confirmed by the Union: ‘From that day to the present, the unfortunate country has been deprived of all power of concentration: of all power to place the consumer by the side of the producer.’⁸¹ The outcomes of the British

⁷⁸ Carey, *The past, the present, and the future*, pp 294-95.

⁷⁹ Carey, *The past, the present, and the future*, pp 378-79.

⁸⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 379-80.

⁸¹ *Ibid.*, p. 381.

system in Ireland, said Carey, proved the system was ‘calculated to perpetuate barbarism’.

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The Irish people, despite having been subject to the British system for centuries, still in the nineteenth century actively resisted it, which gave Carey cause for hope.

‘It is from the frequency of agrarian outrages, that the English writers are disposed to infer the incapacity of the Irish for civilization, yet it is from their occurrence that we should most infer their capacity for it. The system is bad: it destroys the souls and bodies of the men who are subject to it: and the outrages complained of are but the natural result of its existence, while they are evidence that man has not yet been so ground down by slavery as to have lost all consciousness of the existence of a right to resist.’⁸³

Irish resistance to the British system inferred their ability for self-government. Self-government, indeed, was the only ‘mode of remedy’ for the systematic debasement of the Irish economy and Irish society.⁸⁴ With political independence, Ireland would put to work its ‘millions of acres of her richest lands as yet untouched, that would alone, if drained, yield food in abundance for the whole population.’⁸⁵

B. The onset of the Famine and the American slavery system

The appropriateness and relevance of Carey’s critique of the British system’s disastrous effect on the Irish economy was both sharpened and confirmed by the increasing awareness of the immensity of the Famine in Ireland. He had for years now made the argument that British policies of centralization had resulted in underinvestment in Ireland and in an unnatural and unnecessary impoverishment of the Irish laboring class because of a want of capital in the country. In a sense, then, with the reality of the Famine, his prolepsis was confirmed.

⁸² Ibid., p. 383.

⁸³ Carey, *The past, the present, and the future*, p. 385.

⁸⁴ Ibid., pp 385-86.

⁸⁵ Carey, *The harmony of interests*, p. 129.

Since he had long noticed the systematic process of suppressing Ireland, he did not need to significantly adjust his argument because of the Famine. A more emotional quality emerged in his argument with a pronounced accusation that the British system had dehumanized the Irish people. The overwhelming nature of the Famine and population loss in Ireland required a greater emphasis on the immediate causes of the nineteenth century disaster. He focused, thus, on two distinct processes: the suppression of the manufacture of wool and the exclusion of Ireland from ‘all participation in the benefits of the navigation acts’. The story here was at first familiar and part of the same patterns exhibited by the British system since the Norman conquest. The British government favored London traders and the centralization of capital, depriving the Irish economy ‘of the power of combination’ and prohibiting Ireland ‘from all pursuits tending to the diversification of employments’. ‘Men, women, and children were regarded as instruments to be used by trade’ and ‘all opportunity for intellectual improvement was denied them.’⁸⁶

The difference in the last century was that the Irish had experienced a period of legislative independence in the late eighteenth century, which witnessed, in contrast, the advance of civilization because of specific economic policy decisions. Protectionist legislation by Grattan’s Parliament rapidly adjusted the Irish economy by preventing capital outflows and encouraging local investment:

‘First among the measures then adopted, was the imposition of duties on various articles of foreign manufacture, with the avowed intention of enabling the Irish people to employ their own surplus labor in converting their corn and their wool into cloth; and thereby enabling them to carry into effect the system so much admired by Adam Smith. Thenceforward, commerce made rapid progress and was attended with corresponding development of the intellectual faculties; as may be inferred from the fact, that small as was her population, there existed so great a

⁸⁶ Henry C. Carey, *Principles of social science* (3 vols., Philadelphia, 1858-60), i, p. 321.

demand for books...More books were published in Dublin by a single house, than now, probably are required for the supply of the kingdom, notwithstanding the increase of population.'⁸⁷

This period, though brief, was defined by intellectual and material progress that resulted from a policy of decentralization within the British system.

The blunt finality of the suppression of Irish political independence by the Act of Union proved the ruthlessness of the British system. With the Act of Union and a reversion to Britain's colonial policy, Ireland 'became a mere appendage to the crown of England'.

Ireland was now subject to a level of centralized control beyond the limits of sustainability. The results were devastating but predictable, and the stage was set for the coming Famine: 'That centralization, slavery, depopulation, and death travel always together, is a fact whose proof is to be found in every page of history'.⁸⁸

C. The example of Ireland for the American slavery question

In the immediate antebellum period, Carey's discussion of Ireland necessarily became entangled with his discussion of American slavery. He continued his economic argument for a 'harmony of interests' or a natural harmony between producers and consumers. Generally, he held that the Irish laborer existed as a product of the British system in the same way that the African American slave existed as a product of the same British system, though American policy makers and intellectuals usually failed to comprehend American slavery in this way. The economic structure of the US South was an ostensibly clear example of the British presence on American soil. Like Ireland, it was a purely agricultural economy that served a colonial purpose of resource extraction for the centralized capitalist power in London. In connecting Ireland to the US South as products

⁸⁷ Ibid., pp 321-22.

⁸⁸ Carey, *Principles of social science*, i, p. 325.

of the same system, Carey sought to use Ireland for the power of persuasion offered by its Famine and deprived economic state, a result of the popular American knowledge of the Famine and sympathy for the Famine-stricken Irish people.

He published an extended essay in 1853 titled, *The slave trade, domestic and foreign: why it exists, and how it may be extinguished*, that focused entirely on the theme of slavery as a natural product of the British economic system. He delineated between countries that he diagnosed as subject to the British system – India, Ireland, Scotland, England, and the southern United States – and countries that insulated themselves from that system, which included Germany, Russia, Denmark, Spain, and Belgium. British opinion called these latter countries despotic. Carey thought that characterization the highest form of hypocrisy: ‘England has what is called a free government, and yet Ireland, the West Indies, and India have been prostrated under the despotism of the spindle and loom...The real despotism is that which looks to cheapening labour, and the real road to freedom is that which looks to raising the value of labour and land.’⁸⁹ Of all countries subject to the British system, though, Ireland held a special position. He argued, ‘The case of Ireland is one of oppression more grievous than is to be found elsewhere in the records of history’. Ireland was ‘an encumbrance rather than an advantage’ and remained ‘prostrate and helpless’.⁹⁰

In the conclusion to *The slave trade*, he turned to Ireland as his narrative means for providing a remedy to the worldwide problem of slavery. He documented how in what he deemed to be the proper economic structure, Ireland’s growth, generated by protectionist

⁸⁹ Carey, *The slave trade*, pp 380-81.

⁹⁰ Ibid., p. 389; and idem, *The harmony of interests*, p. 222.

policies, would lead to English economic growth.⁹¹ The Irish laborer, because of the demotion of Irish industry and the removal of business investment in Ireland, looked for employment in England. This resulted in ‘a glut of the most perishable of all commodities,’ labor.⁹² Irish laborers were willing to take wages below English levels, thus depressing the wages of laborers on a broader scale. Lower wages meant the purchasing power of the entire laboring class of Britain simultaneously reduced, lowering the price of food and lessening the demand for manufactured goods. The cycle continued: lower prices and less demand reduced profits, and this reduced investment. ‘Land, labour, and capital thus suffered alike from the adoption of a policy having for its object to prevent the people of Ireland from mining coal, making iron, or availing themselves of the gratuitous services of those powerful agents so abundantly provided by nature for their use.’⁹³

Policies for ‘local association’ and ‘local commerce,’ if pursued for Ireland, would serve the opposite function, to increase wages, stimulate demand first for basic goods and then for manufactured goods:

‘What Ireland needs is, the motion of society – the power of combination – which results from the differences in the modes of employment. Let her have that, and she will cease to export food, while her people perish of famine at home. Give her that, and – her land ceasing to be impoverished by the extraction and exportation of its most valuable elements – her people will be both “fed and employed;” and then, the doctrine of over-population will cease to find support in the harrowing details of Irish history.’⁹⁴

The British system kept the Irish laborer in a static position. The removal of barriers to local industries would create a dynamism of expansion that would improve not only the lives of Irishmen but also the profits of the British factory owners by halting the

⁹¹ See Carey, *The slave trade*, pp 383-85.

⁹² *Ibid.*, p. 385.

⁹³ Carey, *The slave trade*, p. 386.

⁹⁴ Carey, *Principles of social science*, i, p. 337.

downward pressures on laborers throughout the United Kingdom and increasing their collective purchasing power.

D. Postbellum adjustments

In many ways, Carey's interpretation of Irish history remained largely the same in the postbellum period as it had all along. The end of the Southern slave system was necessary, but it did not alter the situation facing Ireland and, in fact, it did not mean an end to the problem facing American economic development. If Irish impoverishment and Southern slavery were both like outcomes of the same overarching economic system, it remained for the Irish situation to be rectified. The change that occurred was in the imagery he used to describe the economy. Derived from late nineteenth century developments in electricity, he envisioned society as a great battery with various 'positives' and 'negatives' that facilitated 'circulation':

'In close proximity to the English people those of Ireland have never been permitted so to diversify employments as to cause Irish positives and negatives to come together in such order as was required for production of any societary force whatsoever. Directly the reverse of this, everything has been done, both without and within, to maintain disorder and to perpetuate the dominion of matter over mind; the result being seen in constantly-recurring famines, and in the expulsion of millions of men, women, and children who, had they been allowed the power of self-direction would before this time have constituted a nation of high intelligence, and great productive power. Have they at any time since the days of Henry II been capable of any real exercise of will?'⁹⁵

His examination remained one of outcomes and the Irish still faced a lack of economic opportunity.

Though a watershed, the abolition of slavery did not by violence and political authority address the underlying causes that gave rise to slavery in the first place. The Civil War

⁹⁵ Carey, *The unity of law*, p. 172.

did not abolish the conditions that enabled slavery. Slavery, he argued, would revive under disguised forms in the postbellum order. With this argumentative imperative in mind, Carey re-emphasized his conception of the Irish people as slaves of the British, which he had developed in the antebellum period. In addition, Southern slavery and the Civil War should have proven that the US system had an unnatural connection, despite its supposed political independence, to the British colonial system, because slavery, whether African chattel slavery or Irish labor slavery, was the outcome of the British system.

Ireland again proved this point:

‘To England is due the honor of having first invented a course of action so obviously tending to retain man in the condition of slave to nature, and the weaker portion of mankind in that of slaves to their fellow-men. First commenced in Ireland, and there continued under various forms – with the exception only of the period of Irish legislative independence from 1782 to 1800 – to the present time, its effects exhibit themselves in a subjection of mind to matter without parallel in any country claiming to be civilized; men, women, and children perishing at times by millions; and poverty, wretchedness, and slavery far worse than that of the well-fed American negro, having been the normal condition of the Irish people.’⁹⁶

This argument was effectively a restatement of his antebellum argument, seen especially in *The slave trade*.

In his postbellum argument Carey recommitted to the idea that the British system used the Irish people to forward its own agenda. This argument was made in relation to his assessment of the United States in Reconstruction. For Carey, a strident Republican, the laboring classes of the United States, including most Irish immigrants, facilitated an acceptance of limited change to the antebellum system with their support of the Democratic Party. The power of the British system was indeed extensive, in Carey’s estimation, such that it had created a vast class of passive actors to do its bidding.

‘Civilization consists in that self-respect which comes as a necessary consequence of growing power to command the great natural forces; and which manifests itself in respecting in others, whether individuals or nations, those rights whose exercise

⁹⁶ Carey, *The unity of law*, p. 182.

we claim as inherent in ourselves. Barbarism exhibits itself in that self-indulgence, on the part of those who are strong and rich, whose effects, throughout all those portions of the world subjected to the control of Britain's great non-consuming army, now manifest themselves in growing tendency toward the establishment of serfage as the condition of the toiling millions; and whose best apologists are found in men who teach that in quiet submission to the orders of that army's chieftains is to be found the panacea for all human ills.⁹⁷

The US system must, he said, properly address its British problem, which had caused the War in the first place.

How Ireland shaped Carey's assessment of US progress in the postbellum era

Carey's continued Anglophobia was illuminated in September 1875 by the account of the English economist and Cambridge don Alfred Marshall, who visited the eighty-one-year-old Henry Carey in Philadelphia. Marshall had travelled to the United States to study 'the problem of Protection on the spot'.⁹⁸ Philadelphia, as Marshall well knew, had the reputation of being the hub of protectionist doctrine – and Carey its leading exponent. The two met in Carey's home in central Philadelphia. To Marshall, Carey seemed fiery and argumentative. He dominated the conversation – going on tangents first about British aims to subjugate the world, next the theories of Malthus, then those of John Elliott Cairnes, Michel Chevalier, and William Stanley Jevons. Carey's tone was harsh: 'Cairnes is diffuse' and 'Chevalier is a humbug'; Jevons was a 'jackass [who] does not know that the utility is great only when the value is small'. Marshall soon pressed Carey on why he urged protection for Ireland 'and yet maintain that Alabama has no right to erect custom houses round herself'. Carey 'winced' and responded "'Oh I do not say that Ireland ought

⁹⁷ Carey, *The unity of law*, p. 372.

⁹⁸ *The early economic writings of Alfred Marshall, 1867-1890*, ed. J. K. Whitaker (London, 1975), p. 89. Marshall made this aim of his 1875 U.S. travels clear in an address to the British Association in 1890.

to have protection”. He [then] spouted at me his old views at great length.’⁹⁹ Given Marshall’s social and cultural background, he had clearly prejudged Carey and his argument.

A clearer impression of Carey’s continued Anglophobia was seen in an exchange four years earlier with the Fenian leader, Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa. In a letter, he congratulated Rossa for his ‘escape from the hands of the Philistines’, in reference to his release from prison in an amnesty agreement in late 1870, after which Rossa sailed to the United States. Along with his congratulations he sent a copy of ‘a little work [of mine] whose object, as you will see by its title, is that of showing “how to outdo England without fighting her”’, referencing his 1865 pamphlet by that title. He continued, ‘From the days of slavery Irishmen have sought...by force of arms, to accomplish that object, but have always failed.’¹⁰⁰

He decried the political habits of the Irish American immigrant to Rossa. He thought the Irish in America were made to play the same role as the Irish in Ireland, as pawns of the British: ‘Anti-Saxon in their words they have been steadily Saxon in their acts. But for their votes we should long since have achieved state industrial independence...[the Irish] as here established, constitute the support on which now rests the whole edifice of British power...with their withdrawal from that position the whole must totter to the ground.’¹⁰¹ This final point holds the key to both his response to Marshall and his encouragement to Rossa: the objective was ‘state industrial independence’.

⁹⁹ *The early economic writings of Alfred Marshall*, pp 92-93.

¹⁰⁰ Henry Charles Carey to Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa (draft), 6 January 1871 (Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Edward Carey Gardiner Collection, MS 227A, box 20, ff 1-3).

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*

Although Carey made a distinction in using the terminology of ‘Saxon’ and ‘anti-Saxon’, it was clear that he would have preferred to move beyond issues of identity-based politics, because his system transcended politics. Political intrigue and electioneering were simply some of the layers that had been built that distorted a clear picture of the problems emanating from the foundation. Like-minded interests were set in opposition. Thus, as was his characteristic tactic, he reestablished the base and questioned the origin story. His critique focused on British civilization as formative to American civilization, and he noted an origin story of the Americans that was firmly British:

‘...between Americans of the free States and the now dominant portion of the English people there exists, on either side, so little of that kindly feeling which should prevail throughout the world. So far as the former claim descent from England, they represent the country of Hampden and Milton, and *not* that of Charles II. and his successors. So far as they are Scottish, or Scotch-Irish, they more or less represent the men who so severely suffered at the hands of Lauderdale and Claverhouse. So far as they are Irish they represent the only nation on record that, in effect, has perished in a time of profound peace. So far as, together, they are Americans, they have throughout the past and present centuries, been constant sufferers under that “warfare” which has had for its object that of compelling the sale of food and raw materials at low prices, and the purchase of cloth and iron at high ones.’¹⁰²

This American settlement narrative pointed to a commonality. The New World had represented a fundamental and strategic break from oppression. The oppressor had always been the same: the men at the center of the British government – those who pursued social and political strategies for the base purpose of preserving self-interested positions. The actions of the government at the behest of these interests forced English, Scotch, and Irish subjects to emigrate to the United States. The forbears of most Americans in the ‘free States’ did choose to leave the British Isles, but it was hardly a free choice. To stay meant acceptance of their relegation to a secondary status. So, in each case, the pursuit of a new life in the United States represented a conscious rejection of the status quo and an acceptance of the inherent injustice of the British system. The reach of

¹⁰² Carey, *The unity of law*, footnote p. 362.

the British system, though, had softened what to Carey should have been a hard break and prevented Americans in the late nineteenth century from remembering how the United States had previously rejected that system and why rejection was still necessary.

The Southern states, in contrast, had defined the British influence in the United States. Virginia and her neighbors were structured on the direct model of the British system – established by London traders with the objective of exploiting land and people to benefit a distant market.¹⁰³ This different foundation had ostensibly led to the Civil War: ‘Slavery did not make the rebellion. British free trade gave us sectionalism, and promoted the growth of slavery, and thus led to rebellion.’¹⁰⁴ In the rising tensions of the 1850s and early 1860s, American sectionalism, for Carey, was of course first a North versus South position; however, it was additionally the US South and Great Britain versus the northern and western states. Thus, he wrote in 1854, ‘The policy of the North looks homeward...[and] Southern policy looks outward.’¹⁰⁵

As such, Carey believed that British behavior during the war – their tacit support of the Confederacy and antagonistic attitudes towards the Union – was merely the British behaving as they always had and should not have come as a surprise to supporters of the Union. Further, it offered proof of true British intentions regarding their relationship with the US economy.¹⁰⁶ Since, for him, the British system in its American setting had caused the Civil War, anything but a profound restructuring of the pre-existing American economic structure would prove inadequate. He thought that without secession and without the war, the country may have been beyond saving – that the British would have

¹⁰³ Carey, *The unity of law*, p. 359.

¹⁰⁴ Henry C. Carey, *Reconstruction: industrial, financial, and political. Letters to the Hon. Henry Wilson, Senator from Massachusetts* (Philadelphia, 1867), p. 16.

¹⁰⁵ Henry C. Carey, *The North and the South: reprinted from the New York Tribune* (NY, 1854), p. 15.

¹⁰⁶ See Carey, ‘The way to outdo England without fighting her’, pp 31 and 88.

indeed achieved their aims of total control of the United States economy.¹⁰⁷ The sacrifices of the war were immense, but the cause, industrial independence, fully justified these sacrifices.

His convictions concerning Britain's role in bringing about the crisis of the American Civil War enabled Carey to re-emphasize his argument for a systematic internal development of the United States, so that it could stand independently from Britain. Carey's proposals for the reconstruction of the South were policies that encouraged diversity of employment and small landholdings, the building of railroads that ran 'North and South' versus 'East and West', the opening of mines, and the facilitation of immigration. Two years after fighting ceased, though, this restructuring was not yet in process, and there was no sign that politicians would pursue a course like the one he proposed. This reality caused him to change the orientation of sectionalism in his postbellum argument.

In his tract on Reconstruction published in 1867, he demarcated 'trading states' versus 'producing states'. He subsumed the defeated South into the producing group with the central and western states. In the northeast, all states north of Pennsylvania constituted the trading group. What had resulted for most Americans was merely 'a change in masters', power having gone 'from the extreme South to the extreme North' – to the 'trading states'.¹⁰⁸ Sectionalism still reigned supreme, and sectionalism limited the connectivity of the American economy. Unprivileged regions were still made to compete unnaturally against one another for distant masters. Carey had determined, 'So long as

¹⁰⁷ See Henry Charles Carey to Dr. William Elder (draft), 11 May 1865 (Historical Society of Pennsylvania, Edward Carey Gardiner Collection, MS 227A, box 20, ff 1-3).

¹⁰⁸ Carey, *Reconstruction*, pp 3-4.

our legislation on all economic subjects shall continue to be sectional in its tendencies it is wholly vain to hope for permanent reconstruction.’¹⁰⁹ His Listian inheritance put this vision of national economic integration to the fore, but the continued sectional strife – always the object of British free trade capitalists – had paradoxically, as a result of the War, become more deeply interwoven into the fabric of American society.

Carey’s Reconstruction-era anxieties were founded in his fear, firstly, of centralization within the United States, and, secondly, of an American centralization that was subservient to London. He explained, ‘British free trade, industrial monopoly, and human slavery travel together, and the man who undertakes the work of reconstruction without having first satisfied himself that such is certainly the fact, will find that he has been building on shifting sands, and must fail to produce an edifice that will be permanent.’¹¹⁰

The postbellum shift of ‘masters’ was more problematic than the antebellum order:

‘The end in view is trading despotism, of all despotisms the most degrading to the unfortunate beings subjected to it. The name by which it is generally known is that of British free-trade – a freedom that carries with it slavery in the various forms of war, poverty, famine, and pestilence, and for emancipation from which, as has so well been proved in Ireland, its unfortunate subjects can find but a single road – that one which terminates at the grave. Of all, it is the meanest, most selfish, most soul-destroying; yet are its advocates among ourselves found among those who most profess a belief in human freedom.’¹¹¹

The example of Ireland proved that Southern slavery was not the cause of disunion for America and that the Civil War did not mark an endpoint, because the true cause was much deeper and more pervasive. Ireland had experienced the slavery and barbarism of the British system for centuries; the United States had for a much briefer period. The success of the Union over the Confederacy did not mean the success of freedom over slavery.

¹⁰⁹ Ibid., p. 11.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., p. 8.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 9.

He reacted so strongly to Marshall's insinuation that he wanted protection for Ireland and not for Alabama because of his fundamental conviction that individual human freedom must be guaranteed everywhere – a freedom that was triumphantly affirmed by the men and women who first resisted the British system in Ireland and then fled from its tyranny to North America.¹¹² He feared, though, that it was forgotten by their nineteenth-century inheritors, including Irish immigrants who, as he wrote to O'Donovan Rossa, supported the very system that forced their emigration. True freedom would only be achieved when men throughout the United States stood on an equal industrial footing, when policies that promoted local association and local commerce took precedence over the desires of Northern politicians to cement their standing as overlords of a federal government on the false pretense that they had withstood the ultimate challenge to the American political and economic system. When that day came, America would serve as an example of enlightenment and progress to Ireland and all others subject to the British system.¹¹³

Henry Carey, Ireland, and American republicanism

Mathew Carey's Irish republicanism of the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries influenced his son's American republicanism of the mid-nineteenth century. The emergence of a different type of republicanism in Henry Carey resulted from the generational divide. The British system's oppressive presence in Ireland defined Mathew Carey's theory. An anti-sectarianism thus consistently emerged in his thought in response to the nature of the British oppression in Ireland, which he continued to emphasize in his

¹¹² See Ho, 'Distortions in the trade policy for development debate', pp 735-36, for a discussion of the broader objectives, beyond protectionist economics, that Friedrich List's system aspired to, objectives which were akin to Carey's here.

¹¹³ See Carey, *The past, the present, and the future*, p. 446.

American argument. In the US system he believed in the promise of nonsectarian politics. The calming effect of this arrangement encouraged his strident defense of the broader system which had facilitated such an advancement beyond the British system he knew so well from his life in Ireland.

Henry Carey, in the Americanization of his father's Irish republicanism, articulated similar theoretical priorities, though his justifications were different. He transformed the religious sectarian argument of his father – an argument he abandoned long before when he converted from the Roman Catholic Church to the Episcopal Church – into a critique of the sectarianism of classical British political economic thought. In his argument, British economic theory had inflicted the same appalling damage on Ireland as religious sectarianism had, under the guise of policies for development and growth. Famine was plainly just as problematic of an outcome of political policies as was religious persecution. Fundamentally, both father and son recognized an unshakable sectarianism within British thought and practice. The narrative of Irish history and of the nineteenth century Irish political environment, then, centrally informed Henry Carey's economic argument, because it proved the imperative for a distinct American separation from the British system. Finally, Ireland's political status in the nineteenth century, defined by the Famine and emigration, also provided confirmation of the wisdom of his argument.

Not everyone, of course, was sure that the United States could or should be separated in this way from the British system, as the next case study in this thesis shows. It examines the argument of E. L. Godkin, who, unlike Henry Carey, was not sure that the religious sectarianism in the Anglo-Irish divide could be eliminated.

Chapter 2. E. L. Godkin: the imperial British and US systems and liberal empire

The politically influential New York based editor Edwin Lawrence ('E. L.') Godkin (1831-1902) was in one sense a quintessential British liberal of the late nineteenth century. In firm agreement with the argument of J. S. Mill, he articulated a political criticism that emphasized the imperative for governments to foster individual freedoms and the protection of private property. The free trade system of the British, he argued, had encouraged modernizing reforms throughout the Empire. The very global nature of the British Empire had allowed for the spread of liberal principles of governance. He was confident in the preeminence of British culture and in the ultimate wisdom of its political system, though he accepted that it was at times flawed – and sometimes severely.¹

Godkin was Anglo-Irish, which inserted a level of bewilderment into a critique of British imperial politics that resulted from how the British approached Irish governance. He observed from his youth until his death Ireland's problematic presence within the British Empire. The experience of Ireland showed that the British political system was still hostage to the aristocratic influence that had initially established the system, despite nineteenth century reform. In his disillusionment with British politics, he turned to the United States. The United States might have offered a necessary revision to the British system, since its newness and supposedly virgin lands had removed the aristocratic presence. The United States, of course, had become home to countless Irish, who left the

¹ For studies of Godkin, see William M. Armstrong, *E. L. Godkin: a biography* (Albany, NY, 1978); idem, *E. L. Godkin and American foreign policy, 1865-1900* (NY, 1957); Louis Filler, 'The early Godkin: toward an evaluation of a significant Victorian' in *The Historian*, xvii, no. 1 (1954), pp 43-66; *The life and letters of Edwin Lawrence Godkin*, ed. Rollo Ogden (2 vols., NY, 1907); and, C. P. Lucas and Roger T. Stearn, 'Godkin, Edwin Lawrence (1831-1902)' in *Oxford English Dictionary*, online edition (<https://doi.org/10.1093/ref:odnb/33432>) (28 April 2017).

United Kingdom because of the failures of its political institutions, and Godkin joined them as an emigrant in 1856.

In theory, the United States served as a bulwark against the imperialism of the British, because of its model of devolved government. What he found in his five decades of residence there was a failure of the US system to sustain his theoretical vision of natural liberal advance. In the United States, like in the United Kingdom, the problem of Ireland challenged the functioning of the system, though for different reasons. In his final calculus, Ireland showed the weakness of the notion of an American liberal advance. The American acceptance of a place for the conceptual Irish nation within their system confirmed its growing imperial nature.

Godkin's uncertain identity

Godkin was born in 1831 in Moyne, County Wicklow, Ireland, to James and Sarah Godkin. His father, though raised a Roman Catholic, was a Congregationalist minister and writer, who sought more amicable relations between the Christian denominations in Ireland and was an early supporter of Irish home rule. Sarah was the daughter of an Anglo-Irish Wicklow landowner.² E. L. was educated in a Yorkshire grammar school and entered Queen's University Belfast in 1849.³ He lived abroad as a journalist covering the Crimean War and in London before his emigration to the United States.

² For James and Sarah Godkin, see G. B. Smith and C. A. Creffield, 'Godkin, James (1806-1879), writer on Ireland' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography* (Oxford, 2004), online edition (<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-10874>) (9 February 2021). See also James Godkin, *Motives for leaving the Roman Catholic Church, in ten letters to William Furlong, teacher of classics at Ballyhally, near Wexford* (Dublin, 1827); and idem, *The land-war in Ireland: a history for the times* (Dublin, 1870).

³ See Godkin to Seeley in *The Gilded Age letters of E. L. Godkin*, ed. William M. Armstrong (Albany, NY, 1974), p. 173.

With his birth in Ireland into a family of status and means, his decidedly British education and early professional experience, his elective emigration to the United States, and his taking of American citizenship in 1872, Godkin existed centrally within the Anglo-Saxon transatlantic world.⁴ His movement throughout that world and the various perspectives that such a transient identity enabled created a level of uncertainty in both his political argument and in how others, especially in the United States, came to interpret his argument. He wrote to Charles Eliot Norton in 1865 – soon after founding *The Nation*, the liberal, weekly newspaper of which he served as editor until 1899 – that he was ‘as American in feeling as [anyone] in the country’, defending himself against charges of bias towards the British in an anxious stage of the Anglo-American relationship immediately following the American Civil War.⁵

His sense of being an American resulted from his conception of a certain universalism in being an American, because of the underlying principles of liberty and equality that Americanness incorporated.⁶ He would later, especially in the 1880s, confirm his Irish identity, though it was always hyphenated to his Englishness, and he emphasized his family’s English heritage. His critics noticed the changeable nature to his identity. Henry

⁴ Duncan Bell and others refer to this nineteenth century, Anglo-Saxon, transatlantic community as the ‘Anglosphere’. See Duncan Bell, *Reordering the world: essays on liberalism and empire* (Princeton, 2016), especially chapter 8, ‘The project for a new Anglo century: race, space, and global order’, pp 182-207; and Peter J. Katzenstein, ‘The West as Anglo-America’ in idem (ed.), *Anglo-America and its discontents: civilizational identities beyond West and East* (London, 2012).

⁵ Letter from E. L. Godkin to Charles Eliot Norton, 30 June 1865 (Houghton Library, E. L. Godkin Papers, bMS Am 1083, ff 1114-1196, 2/25). See William M. Armstrong, *E. L. Godkin: a biography* (Albany, NY, 1978) for information on Godkin’s tenure as editor of *The Nation*. See also Frank Luther Mott, *A history of American magazines, 1865-1885* (Cambridge, MA, 1938), pp 334-39. The Houghton Library in Harvard University has the archive for the founding and early years of *The Nation*.

⁶ See *The life and letters of Edwin Lawrence Godkin*, i, pp 10-11, for an excerpt from Godkin’s journal in which he referenced a sense of awe with the United States from his university days.

Cabot Lodge said of him in 1894, tongue in cheek, '[He] is by birth an Irishman, it is true, and by residence he is an American, but professionally he is an Englishman.'⁷

His status as an Anglo-Irishman and American citizen allowed him the ability to expand and contract his argumentative identity during his journalistic career. The persona captured a certain 'double perspective', to borrow a label that Edward Said used for European émigrés in the Second World War era.⁸ Godkin commented on American politics in British periodicals from the perspective of an American. He thus preserved a level of separation from what might have been construed as a notably English assessment of American political progress. Likewise, his Anglo-Irish journalistic background gave him a level of authority when discussing European affairs in American periodicals, as someone who had professional experience on both continents. In combination, the detachment and attachment afforded by his Anglo-Irish and American status gave him an air of confidence in arguments with British thinkers about American and European society and politics, because he might recall his transatlantic experiences and memories. The actual physical separation from the United Kingdom, in his mind, provided intellectual clarity on British politics, especially so in the case of Ireland, compared to writers across the Atlantic. His authority existed from this Anglo-Saxon intellectual status and the double-perspective it afforded him – as a journalist and editor studying the modern political environment, as someone living amongst what he understood as the greatest political experiment in modern history, and being both a participant in American democracy and simultaneously a detached critic.

⁷ Quoted from Armstrong, *E. L. Godkin*, p. 201, note 3.

⁸ See Edward W. Said, 'Intellectual exile: expatriates and marginals' in *Grand Street*, xlvii (1993), pp 112-24.

Many of his contemporaries labelled Godkin a curmudgeon and a snob, especially as his criticism of US politics became increasingly harsh in the final decade of his life.⁹ In this telling, he was an aggrieved Anglo-Irishman, exiled from Ireland, because Ireland offered inadequate opportunities for its middle class. He was firstly, though, an Anglo-Irishman who emigrated to the Anglo-Saxon United States by choice because of its innovative politics and society. His movement in this transatlantic world demonstrated his acceptance of the idea of an advancing Anglo-Saxon, liberal empire.

The US system and the advance of liberalism

The idea, however, that Godkin was a European émigré involved a certain element of deceit. Later in his life, he seemed to be this intellectual, émigré figure, and he made it seem like it was so all along in his correspondence explaining his decision to emigrate, convinced that he had come to the United States in such a persona. In truth, he came to America as an opportunist, as someone determined to make his way in the world, because he thought his prospects for a career in journalism – and wealth and fame – would be better realized as an American correspondent.¹⁰ Under the auspices of the London-based *Daily News*, he travelled to the United States in October 1856. The US system, considering the course of his young adulthood, was in reality both a nouveau Anglo-Saxon empire and a Wild West then. The conception of being able to find career success and wealth through personal initiative and intelligence was, of course, closely connected to the ideals of Anglo-Saxonism and to Godkin's liberal philosophy. Thus, despite an

⁹ Historians have also noticed Godkin's supposed snobbery. See, for example, Armstrong, *E. L. Godkin*, especially pp 179-96.

¹⁰ See *ibid.*, pp 35-53 for his decision to move to the US and for his early years of residence in the US.

opportunism in his decision to come to the United States, it did not reflect a reduction in his esteem for the new world system. Rather, it confirmed its merits.

The United Kingdom – and indeed all western Europe – should have been a stronghold of liberal politics in the middle of the nineteenth century, but it was not, said Godkin, because of the persistence of an aristocratic influence and the presence of a centralization of political, social, and economic power resulting from that influence. Owing to the hegemonic status of Britain in the nineteenth century, conceptions of political and cultural authority were centered in the narrative of Anglo-Saxon historical advance, especially in the second half of the century. Liberalism, said Godkin and its many advocates, was a natural result of the long Anglo-Saxon advance and the political and military stability provided by British hegemony.¹¹ The British system appeared to be unable to properly nurture liberalism, however, because of the persistence of its aristocratic presence and its relative developmental maturity in comparison to other Anglo-Saxon communities. The United States and its political system, thus, was poised to sustain and develop the liberal system more so than the United Kingdom, due to its status as an alternative and modernized Anglo-Saxon system.

The US system was an outgrowth of the Anglo-Saxon advance, as seen in its intensive individualism, which, in the liberal ideology, was a virtue. Anglo-Saxons exhibited a ‘marked individualism’.¹² Godkin argued that ‘the cardinal idea of the American system’ was ‘the development of the individual man’.¹³ The vast reserve of theoretically open and

¹¹ For an example of his references to Anglo-Saxons, see E. L. Godkin, *History of Hungary and the Magyars* (London, 1853), pp 368-69.

¹² E. L. Godkin, ‘The democratic view of democracy’ in *The North American Review*, ci, no. 208 (1865), pp 103-133, p. 112.

¹³ E. L. Godkin, ‘The labor crisis’ in *The North American Review*, cv, no. 216 (1867), pp 177-213 at p. 212.

available western lands preserved a sufficient level of American individuality.¹⁴ In a sense this argument explained the US system as a product of manliness, which preferred an independence of thought and activity to collective behavior:

‘The agency which, in our opinion, gave democracy its first great impulse in the United States, which has promoted its spread ever since, and which has contributed most powerfully to the production of those phenomena in American society which hostile critics set down as peculiarly democratic, was neither the origin of the Colonists, nor the circumstances under which they came to the country, nor their religious belief; but the great change in the distribution of the population, which began soon after the Revolution, and which continues its operation up to the present time.’¹⁵

The ability of man to find his own destiny was the instrumental element here. As such, the western frontier was the wellspring of the American ‘doctrine of the equality of men’.¹⁶

Individualism did not, however, necessarily imply an overwhelming approval; rather, it defined the difference of the US system. He argued,

‘A society composed at the period of its formation mainly of young men, coming from all parts of the world in quest of fortune, released from the ordinary restraints of family, church, and public opinion, even of the civil law, naturally and inevitably acquires a certain contempt for authority and impatience of it, and individualism among them develops itself very rapidly.’¹⁷

The example of the American laborer demonstrated this difference. American laborers had greater individual freedoms than their European counterparts, and they were unwilling to accept ‘very rigid rules of discipline’ as would be expected in labor unions in Europe.¹⁸ This individualism, of course, fostered democracy because it fostered independent thinking, yet it bred a contempt for institutions that was problematic.

¹⁴ Ibid., pp 178-79. He also used this argument in ‘Aristocratic opinions of democracy’ in *The North American Review*, c, no. 206 (1865), pp 194-232, and ‘The democratic view of democracy’.

¹⁵ Godkin, ‘Aristocratic opinions of democracy’, p. 212.

¹⁶ Godkin, ‘The democratic view of democracy’, p. 108.

¹⁷ Godkin, ‘Aristocratic opinions of democracy’, p. 213.

¹⁸ Godkin, ‘The labor crisis’, p. 179.

The US system experienced natural economic progress, strengthened by the support provided with the availability of lands for settlement and farming, that demonstrated its ‘entering upon the last stage in the process by which the working classes have been raised from the condition of slaves into that of freemen, and by which the last vestige of stigma will eventually be removed from the practice of “the base mechanic arts”’.¹⁹ The promise of American individualism affected all, not only the working classes: ‘Nobody is now predestined by law to any calling or condition. When he has reached the years of discretion, he can determine what his pursuit shall be. The lives of all of us, of course within the limits prescribed by our circumstances and our capacity, are regulated by contracts of our own making, and not by legal rules or traditions or customs.’²⁰

The intellectual appeal of the US system, for Godkin, was in its democratic advance, as a product of Anglo-Saxon history. The American frontier preserved and encouraged an individualism that naturally created liberal democrats. Such a setting offered ostensibly ideal conditions for the principles of political and social liberalism to mature. The process should have occurred and continued naturally. In his genealogy of liberalism, the key elements were Anglo-Saxonism, the protections of individual freedoms, a physical environment that allowed for population expansion and dispersion, and an economic environment that fostered private enterprise. The US system, since it was theoretically an improvement of the British system, in the sense that it was home to the hardiest of the Anglo-Saxon individualists, should likewise have seen, over time, an advancing liberalism.

¹⁹ Ibid., p. 181.

²⁰ Ibid., pp 181-82.

American society was characterized by an individualistic philosophy that prompted a certain freedom of expression and behavior, which meant its social outcomes were still in a process of gestation. The absence of an American aristocracy was ostensibly both a cause and a symptom of this individualism. The British aristocracy may have been experiencing a decline in its importance politically, but its presence was still intricately woven into the fabric of British society.

Godkin used an example of community policing to articulate a concept of ‘civil discipline’ that articulated the American difference. Normative British political and social behaviors of the late nineteenth century had resulted from the example of the aristocracy. The public policing of service-oriented businesses, for example, came from aristocratic expectations of a certain standard of service, rather than, as in France, from an excessive government policing. In England the public would not permit a poor quality of service based on those aristocratic-inspired expectations, whereas in France the government required a heavier police force to enforce the same standards, because the public did not assume a proactive role. The United States, meanwhile, had ‘neither the surveillance of the Continental police nor the surveillance of well-to-do citizens’.²¹

What this quality of American individualism equated to in hard reality, documented by Godkin in his early residence in the United States, was a degree of chaos. While in one sense it inspired a level of excitement, he was increasingly concerned about the progress of the system. The promise of liberalism was intimately connected to individual initiative and personal responsibility. Without a pre-existing social structure in place on which to encourage a restrained variety of individualism, the foundation of liberalism might

²¹ E. L. Godkin editorial, ‘Civil discipline’, *The Nation*, 10 October 1867.

become detached from its operation in society. Such American chaos would lead, of course, to entirely unpredictable outcomes.

The problem of the South

Before the founding of *The Nation*, Godkin covered the Civil War as the American correspondent for the London *Examiner* and the London *Daily News*. After the secession of the Southern states, much of the British public, led by their leading newspapers, took a neutral or pro-Southern opinion. Godkin condemned these positions in his letters to the *Examiner* and *Daily News*. He argued that the United States and Britain should be in concert; however, ‘English cupidity’ accepted Confederate propaganda that had changed the terms of the American fissure from slavery into a debate on trade policy.²² This public opinion in Britain had given the South legitimacy and hope.²³ Further, England behaved as a ‘bully’ when defending a non-conventional neutrality.²⁴ These positions reinforced for Godkin the negatives of the British system at mid-century: it was still beholden to an aristocratic, land-holding interest, whose trade and manufacturing investments experienced steep declines in value due to the hostilities, and whose interests, therefore, proved unprincipled and revealed a selfish attitude. His criticism of the British government’s conduct during the American Civil War, incidentally, was of the same type of criticism he would later direct at the American government because of their diplomatic conduct towards Britain in the postbellum years.

²² E. L. Godkin, ‘Does the North fight against slavery?’, *The Examiner*, 14 September 1861.

²³ *Ibid.*

²⁴ E. L. Godkin editorial, ‘England and America’, *The Nation*, 2 December 1861.

Godkin agreed with the contention of many British writers and parliamentarians that secession proved that the US Constitution and American federalism had failed, however, he firmly denied the British aristocratic contention that secession proved the shortcomings or defects of democracy.²⁵ The framers of the Constitution had designed a system to uphold a union of states. The US federal system had allowed sectionalism to develop, and sectionalism had spawned war. In accepting this verdict, he called for a stronger union that would prevent a reoccurrence of secession and civil war. The terms of peace, the desires to deal harshly with Confederate politicians, and the encouragement of a stronger central government were necessary responses for a situation that was fundamentally about law and order – a situation that had resulted from the breakdown of the political order predicated on treasonous actions by individual men. Proper Reconstruction measures, he thought, would inaugurate a new era of American democratic growth by properly recognizing the national nature of the American polity. This approach was, in his mind, a resistance to a reintroduction of the aristocratic tendencies in the South that had led to secession.²⁶

Further, the idea that federalism had failed was ostensibly a public and international misconception and a result of deceit. Antebellum sectionalism had articulated a misplaced understanding of federalism and an ahistorical narrative of American government by Southern nationalists to justify secession. If anything, Godkin argued, the aristocratic class of the South took advantage of a certain gullibility of its less-educated Southern neighbors to promote an idea of a Southern nation that only served the needs of

²⁵ E. L. Godkin, 'The Constitution, and its defects' in *The North American Review*, xcix, no. 204 (1864), pp 117-45 at p. 120.

²⁶ E. L. Godkin editorial, 'The essence of the Reconstruction question', *The Nation*, 6 July 1865.

the aristocracy. Therefore, the Civil War did not equate to a failure of federalism, per se. Rather, in Godkin's telling, it was a failure of politics.

In the postbellum period Godkin wanted 'to abolish sectional institutions, to make the bases of society and government the same in all parts of the Union', decidedly non-federalist language when removed from its accompanying text: 'or in other words to render it more thoroughly democratic'.²⁷ Southern sectionalism had reduced democracy and federalism only worked within proper democratic government; thus, for federalism to thrive, the institutions of democracy must first be revived. The federal government had a duty to address failures in its constituent states, if those failures threatened the unity of the whole.²⁸ The Civil War had proven that a centralized bureaucracy was needed, because, 'The spectacle of a great nation limping and stumbling to its destiny is not a pleasing or a hopeful one; and though mistakes and waste of power cannot under our system, any more than under any other system of government, be entirely avoided, they may be reduced to a minimum'.²⁹ The promise of reviving democracy was possible given the very uniqueness of the US system.

The US system was thus presented with a singular opportunity to reinvigorate its underlying liberal qualities with a proper Reconstruction of the South and the entire system more broadly, centered in liberalism. The fractious politics of the Reconstruction era, however, challenged Godkin's faith in the commitment of the Americans to a liberal politics and in the quality and nature of its institutions. It caused him to question his assessment of the United States as a natural setting for sustaining and developing

²⁷ 'The essence of the Reconstruction question', *The Nation*, 6 July 1865.

²⁸ See Godkin, 'The Constitution, and its defects', p. 143, for his ideas about how to address this.

²⁹ Godkin, 'The democratic view of democracy', p. 127.

democracy. His observations of the US system in the postbellum years raised suspicions that the US expansion into its western frontier had generated an imperial attitude, rather than the individualism that he had initially observed.

Though he recognized the frontier and the availability of lands for new settlement as a means of assisting in the growth of American democracy, Godkin limited his approval of new schemes of US territorial expansion in the middle of the nineteenth century and ultimately denounced the acquisition of new territories by the end of the century because of an anti-democratic nature of a developing American imperialism. There were a number of unique factors involved in each case or proposal of expansion during the period, however he did articulate a general anti-imperial vision.³⁰ Godkin's opposition to US intervention in Mexico in the mid-1860s – when the French were attempting to revive their own American imperialism – and to the attempts of the Grant administration to annex Santo Domingo at the end of the decade rested in a framework of natural and unnatural expansion of democracy. In both the Mexican and Santo Domingan examples, the relative lack of social and political liberal advancement of the population, in comparison to Anglo-Saxon populations, had ostensibly inserted the Americans into an environment that encouraged their participation in political and economic graft, corruption, and adventurism.³¹ The activities of scalawags and carpetbaggers in the US South in the immediate aftermath of Southern defeat confirmed his fears of an unhealthy opportunism and especially of a tacit political acceptance of unnatural interventionism existent within American democracy that would find further fuel with territorial expansion. American democracy remained in an insecure position in its early postbellum

³⁰ See Robert L. Beisner, 'Thirty years before Manila: E. L. Godkin, Carl Schurz, and anti-imperialism in the Gilded Age' in *The Historian*, xvii (1968), pp 561-77, for another analysis of Godkin's long-held opinions on US territorial expansion.

³¹ See *ibid.*, pp 565-68.

years and to introduce the additional requirements into the system needed to manage new territorial possessions seemed unnecessary and dangerous.

Godkin ultimately applied federalist principles to his final assessment of Reconstruction, informed by his fears of the imperialist drift that he had noticed. The sustainability of the US system required a firm recommitment to federalism and local control of local governance:

‘if there be any value whatever in the theory on which American polity is based, the remedy of Southern disorders must come from the Southern people, through their experience of the folly and suffering of disorder. If this be not true, the whole American system is a mistake, and is destined ere long to perish. Our business is now to leave every Southern State to its own people, first, because this is the only practicable course, and, secondly, because it is the only wise one.’³²

In the Reconstruction Era the requirement of the system, said Godkin, was to now defend the system from a certain imperial-mindedness that sought to remake or reform Southerners in the image of Northerners by imposing external rule. This was, apparently, the ‘natural’ way forward. In noting what he identified as the problems that had appeared in the South during Reconstruction, not least the ‘grossest ignorance’ of Southern blacks with political office, whose management of public finances threatened to damage faith in the overall US credit system, he argued:

‘The remedy for all this is to pass an act of general amnesty, and leave every community to its natural action. Let whatever there is of intelligence in it resume its natural weight. It is as much the interest of the negro as of the white man—indeed, far more the interest of the negro than the white man—that the States should be well governed, and most of the political talent and experience is in the hands of white men, who are either disfranchised themselves, or so disgusted by the disfranchisement of their friends, that they will take no part at present in political affairs. No closing of the Reconstruction process will be safe or real which does not give them their *natural* influence on the government; artificial influence they have lost for ever; but of the other it is an offense against civilization to deprive them.’³³

³² E. L. Godkin editorial, ‘The problem at the South’, *The Nation*, 23 March 1871.

³³ E. L. Godkin editorial, ‘The end at last’, *The Nation*, 19 May 1870.

Only by accepting that Southerners should again govern their own affairs would the Americans successfully emerge from the destruction of the Civil War and return democracy to a more stable foundation.³⁴

Such an attitude did not necessarily equate to an endorsement of the political viewpoints of Southerners in the Reconstruction Era. Rather, though he continued to hold racist opinions about the abilities of African Americans to properly execute the responsibilities of suffrage and political office, Godkin agreed that they must have the same constitutional rights as other citizens. The most important consideration of the liberal, democratic US system, he argued, was that peoples should be left to determine their own affairs. If a local or state government failed in its abilities to serve the desires of the population, it would, naturally, experience economic and social degradation over time: ‘If [Southerners] are so demoralized that they go on robbing, and murdering, and “Kukluxing” each other, we cannot intervene effectively, and had better not intervene at all. The American punishments for a State which permits these things are two—impoverishment and emigration.’³⁵ A liberal empire promised those ends. An imperialist system validated illiberal behaviors and promised the perpetuation of the demoralization of marginalized populations within the system.

Godkin and Irish America

The obvious, contemporaneous parallel to this conception of the US South – with its separatist identity, social problems, and conflict – was Ireland’s status in the United

³⁴ See also Godkin’s discussion of the US South in the postbellum era in his ‘American home rule’ in *The Nineteenth Century*, xix, no. 112 (1886), pp 793-806.

³⁵ E. L. Godkin editorial, ‘The problem at the South’, *The Nation*, 23 March 1871.

Kingdom, and Godkin's language directed at the Southern Reconstruction Question might be construed as an oblique critique of British governance in Ireland. It certainly indicated his understanding of the differences between the political systems of the US and the UK and a warning about the results of a divergence from its federalist principles if the US federal government should continue its overt intervention and control of the South. The proper, liberal approach was for the government to facilitate the free movement of peoples and to facilitate the establishment of local governance. The local choices and the consequences of those choices remained the responsibility of local governments.

The temptation of the central, federal power to exert control on the South was a relatively natural response to the end of a violent conflict, and the return to a level setting of dispersed political power seemed counterintuitive, though it was apparently necessary to prevent a perversion of the US system from developing. Increasingly in the postbellum era, Godkin noticed a departure from the fundamental principles of the system. It began, of course, with aggressive Reconstruction schemes. The presence of elements within American politics that sought an uncompromising approach to the South helped create and sustain an atmosphere problematic for democracy. It was, essentially, an environment in which special interests pursued legislative priorities for their own benefit and power.

In this atmosphere of a corrupted American democracy, the presence of the Irish in the United States became an acute concern for Godkin. If the US system had used the end of the Civil War as a moment to recommit its politics to its founding liberal principles, it might have properly addressed certain problems presented by the Irish Americans. The system should have, throughout the period, integrated the Irish Americans more thoroughly into the Anglo-Saxon American culture and encouraged the participation of

the naturally conservative Irish in a liberal political culture. Instead, in the postbellum era the system seemed to encourage an undemocratic and illiberal nature of the Irish Americans, in a manner which threatened for the proper functioning of the system at large.

In the immediate postbellum era, the Fenian movement complicated an already acrimonious diplomatic relationship between the United States and the United Kingdom. The primary troubles between the powers centered on US monetary claims made against the British for damages committed by Confederate merchant raiders constructed in British naval yards, a history well-covered in the historiography.³⁶ Godkin explained the intersection of the opportunism of the Irish American radicals and the troubled diplomatic environment: ‘the American public had been so irritated by the course of the English government during the war as to be disposed to wink at and even encourage Fenian enterprises; nay...it was not impossible that the weight of the Irish element in American politics might precipitate a bloody solution of the *Alabama* difficulty’.³⁷ This complication was in spite of the fact that the Fenians were ‘the least formidable rebels that have ever existed’.³⁸

The more significant consideration for Godkin, however, was what this atmosphere revealed about the US system, rather than how untrained in military tactics or how misguided ideologically the Fenians were. Fenianism was a ‘swindle’ of the impoverished Irish Catholic class enabled by American politicians.³⁹ This

³⁶ For studies that address the *Alabama* claims, see especially, Adrian Cook, *The ‘Alabama’ claims: American politics and Anglo-American relations, 1865-1872* (Ithaca, NY, 1975); Brian Jenkins, *Fenians and Anglo-American relations during Reconstruction* (Ithaca, NY, 1969); and David Sim, *A union forever: the Irish question and U.S. foreign relations in the Victorian age* (Ithaca, NY, 2013), pp 69-96.

³⁷ Godkin editorial, ‘The situation in Ireland’, *The Nation*, 23 December 1869..

³⁸ Godkin editorial, ‘The latest phase of Fenianism’, *The Nation*, 2 January 1868.

³⁹ See Godkin editorial, ‘Fenianism as a swindle’, *The Nation*, 2 June 1870.

acknowledgment, of course, was a response to the diplomatic opportunism of some American politicians, who used their tacit approval of Irish republicanism as a means of pressuring the British during the postbellum *Alabama* claims negotiations, knowing that the chance of a successful, Fenian-led Irish independence movement was minimal. One result of the American encouragement of the Fenians was the identification of a disunifying element for the US system: 'There are nearly as many Irishmen in America who are only nominally Americans and bestow their hearts and allegiance elsewhere as there are Irishmen in Ireland who are only nominally Britons.'⁴⁰ In these ways Fenianism exposed an illiberalism within American democracy in addition to its exclusionary vision of Irish nationality.

In addition to Fenianism, the encouragement of a collectivist mentality to Irish Catholic voting by American political leaders in the postbellum era challenged Godkin's preconceptions of the US system and questioned the nature and substance of American political ideals. The desires for the Irish to obtain political influence were wholly understandable, said Godkin: 'The rage of the Irish for political offices is one of the most curious phenomena in history, and is a really unprecedented result of extraordinary and long-continued oppression.'⁴¹ The way Irish Catholic voters were used by the American political establishment, however, suggested a corruption and regression of democracy. It ostensibly revealed a developmental status of American democracy in which the machinery and process of voting had 'fallen, as it were naturally, into the hands of an idle class'.⁴² American democracy had returned 'to the earlier system', to a less advanced, more primitive state.⁴³

⁴⁰ Godkin editorial, 'The latest phase of Fenianism' in *The Nation*, 2 January 1868.

⁴¹ Godkin editorial, 'French Canada, II', *The Nation*, 20 August 1868.

⁴² E. L. Godkin, *Unforeseen tendencies of democracy* (London, 1898), p. 73.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 74.

He was referring, of course, to the ‘machine’ political establishment in this criticism.

American politicians had encouraged a collectivist mentality for selfish ends, and it had created a system of compounding negative effects:

‘What we call the machine, for instance, has undoubtedly affected public life and political manners unfavorably; but then the machine could hardly have grown to its present proportions without public apathy; and public apathy, in turn, is due partly to the machine, and partly to the size of the masses which have to be handled and persuaded, before any direct effect can be produced. So we find ourselves in a vicious circle in accounting for any of the leading features of our democracy. Government is, undoubtedly, the product of the national character; but, on the other hand, it does much to mould the national character. The machine has assumed functions which have to be discharged by somebody, but in discharging them it produces indifference or dislike of the work among the rest of the community.’⁴⁴

The Irish Americans were in a sense the perfect victims and the perfect perpetrators of the problem of collectivist politics because of their supposedly tribal mentality. Regardless of Irish susceptibility, such an outcome for the US democratic system confirmed its lengthening drift from liberalism.

He had expressed an ambivalence to granting voting rights to African Americans after the Civil War, which mirrored his concerns about Irish Catholics and machine politics. On one level, he considered both examples of favoring democratic expansionism at the expense of a democratic advance centered squarely in liberalism – supported by greater literacy and increased property ownership, for instance. In both cases, though, he concluded that the appropriate course was an acceptance of an increased size to the voting population of the US system, despite his fears of the results.

⁴⁴ Ibid., p. 75.

Since Godkin had gradually determined, as his career in the United States progressed, that liberal empire, as a process of systematic political and social development, was not functioning properly in the US, his study of the US system emphasized that it had reached a rather precarious position in the postbellum era. This realization would become especially apparent in the 1880s and 1890s, but it was evident in his assessment of Reconstruction politics and the example of American support of Fenianism. The example of the voting habits of Irish America was but one of several examples of this failure of liberalism in what he had previously presumed to be a system infused with liberalism. Corruption in the civil service was another, which, of course, was closely related to the machine politics of the Irish Americans. As participants in the system that enabled the civil service to exist in its corrupt state and as recipients of the spoils of the system, Irish Americans held a negative position here, too. Lastly, a noticeable rise in the acceptance of – and indeed the desires for – an American imperialism was the culmination of Godkin’s concerns. This concern with imperialism is addressed at the end of this chapter. The promise of mid-century American liberalism, given a true chance of success with the defeat of the Confederacy, had resulted in a perversion of itself.

Godkin’s changing views on Ireland

Godkin’s attention in the late Reconstruction period was increasingly turned to Ireland, because of Ireland’s primacy in British Parliamentary politics of the era, the continued interest of the American public in Irish developments, and because of his ongoing assessment of the interconnected nature of Irish, British, and American politics. Godkin’s observations of the illiberal developmental path of the US system encouraged him to revise his analysis of Irish politics. His changing views on Ireland were conditioned by

this broader developmental concern and factors internal to Ireland. In this analysis, the awkward position of Ireland within the British Empire, which he had known from his youth, came back into central focus. Stabilizing Irish politics was seen as critical to the transatlantic liberal reformist agenda.⁴⁵

Godkin came to the same conclusion for the Irish in the late nineteenth century that he had for American Southerners after the Civil War: the only natural remedy for Irish distress was to enable local control of the political system. His analysis of Irish politics and society in this era identified the apparent problem of Irish nationalism. The proper assessment of the cause of such a problematic nationalism seemed necessary. Given Godkin's Anglo-Irish emigrant status and his American citizenship, the seeming threat that Ireland posed to the relations between the United States and the United Kingdom had, of course, caused great concern, because the very Anglo-Saxon empire and the program for liberal political and social reform in both countries might have suffered irreparable damage. Thus, the long history of Irish nationalism and of the systematic British suppression of Irish nationalism required Godkin's attention.

Ireland had once seemed to be a land of promise for sustaining an advancing Anglo-Saxon political system, especially in the late eighteenth century before the Act of Union ended its legislative independence. In the late nineteenth century, however, the problematic nature of the British approach to incorporating Ireland within its system proved the need for new thinking. Godkin understood the historic failures of England's conquest of Ireland in two distinct ways. First, the Anglo-Saxon community in Ireland

⁴⁵ See Leslie Butler, *Critical Americans: Victorian intellectuals and transatlantic liberal reform* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2007), pp 232-41, and Sim, *A union forever*, pp 129-51, for the Anglo-American liberal intellectual community's engagement with Ireland.

never received a fair opportunity to govern the country and was prevented from instituting necessary and suitable political reforms that might have encouraged societal development. The suppression of Grattan's Parliament proved this absence of Anglo-Irish political opportunity. Secondly, an Irish Catholic nationalism developed in opposition to the British system and to the Anglo-Irish community. This culturally distinct nationalism ostensibly resulted from the failure of the British to foster the natural political leadership of the Anglo-Irish.

In his assessment of Irish political history, therefore, Godkin identified a generalized problem of a centralization of political power. The results were an Anglo-Irish community who seemed to enjoy the advantages of social and political distinction yet enjoyed nothing of the sort, and an Irish Catholic community who looked outside of the system for its social and political needs. Godkin, born an Anglo-Irishman, complained of the situation:

‘There is no part of the world to-day in which an Irishman, no matter how well affected he may be to the English government, or how English he may be by blood and education, does not find that his calling himself or thinking of himself as an Englishman is treated as a sort of usurpation; that he is regarded as belonging to an inferior class of British subject, like the Maltese, and, though entitled to the protection of the flag, as having no right to be proud of it. This is true, as I have said, not simply of the Catholic Celts but of the Protestant Saxons. In one way or the other the descendants of the English colonists find themselves as Irishmen dissociated from the glories and greatness of the British Empire just as completely as the descendants of the aborigines, and there is absolutely nothing in Irish history or in English institutions to compensate for it.’⁴⁶

Godkin, of course, had intimately known the problems of British governance of Ireland, and it affected his decision to emigrate to the United States. On the occasion of Queen Victoria's Golden Jubilee in June 1887, he noted that the Irish question was ‘the one great mistake of [her] reign—[a] persistent failure or refusal, and the failure or refusal of every

⁴⁶ E. L. Godkin, ‘An American view of Ireland’ in *The Nineteenth Century*, xii, no. 66 (1882), pp 175-92 at p. 181.

member of her family, to bestow on the Irish any of these marks of favor, sympathy, or good-will, partly royal, partly feminine, by which she has won the hearts of Englishmen and Scotchmen.⁴⁷ This condemnation came alongside his praise for Victoria's ability to meet and embrace 'the rising tide of democracy...the entrance into the political arena of the great industrious, frugal, money-making, God-fearing middle class'.⁴⁸

His criticism of Queen Victoria was, of course, a critique of the monarchy and its relationship to Ireland. How could the Irish, Godkin seemed to ask, possibly accept British governance and the institutional apparatuses that accompanied it, when they were clearly accorded a secondary status to the other constituent parts of the monarchy? The British presence in Ireland was, ostensibly, only sustainable if the people accepted the authority that existed behind its institutions. In failing over centuries to establish a connection between the Irish people and the monarchy, the British government had fundamentally undermined the basis of its own authority.

Such an indefinite existence for the Irish confirmed the improper ends of the British system. As a peripheral region of the centralized power, a certain cultural confusion and deprivation had emerged. For the Irish Catholics the division caused an even more fundamental break with the system. Daniel O'Connell and his movement symbolized this divergence of the Irish Catholics:

'The agitation begun by O'Connell had the immense advantage of rousing the self-respect of the Catholics, and achieving complete political equality for them, but it divided the two creeds as they had never been divided, and gave the leadership of the masses wholly into the hands of the priests, and, through this,

⁴⁷ 'The Victorian Jubilee', *The Nation*, 23 June 1887. See K. Theodore Hoppen, 'An incorporating union? British politicians and Ireland 1800-1830' in *English Historical Review*, cxxiii, no. 501 (2008), pp 328-50, for a longer history of these same opinions about the lack of British interest in Ireland that Godkin referenced here.

⁴⁸ 'The Victorian Jubilee', *The Nation*, 23 June 1887.

allied Irish liberalism with reaction on the Continent, and made hostility to England and fidelity to the Pope the two solitary planks in its platform.’⁴⁹

Thus, the British system had successfully divided the people of Ireland in such a way that a rapprochement seemed unattainable. The division based on a seemingly contrived nationality created a more definable emphasis on the Irish difference from Anglo-Saxon norms.

The Irish, O’Connellite democracy was undoubtedly backwards and illiberal, which episodes in its nineteenth century history demonstrated, especially with the onset of Fenianism. Godkin criticized Irish society, writing at the height of the years of Fenian distress:

‘It may be quite true, and we believe is true, that one cause of Irish trouble over and above English misgovernment is, that the Irish have not moved on in the general stream of European progress, that they have not yet emerged from the clan condition, and that they are, therefore, still unable to grasp and comprehend the great political ideas by which the other constitutional nations of the world are guided.’⁵⁰

In arguing for a changed approach to Irish governance, he admitted that he might be arguing for a retrogressive position. This counterintuitive argument reflected his conflicted position with the Irish Catholics. Despite his concern with Irish Catholic political behaviors, he affirmed that the fault of the situation ultimately rested with the British system, and, because of the intensity of the fault, the solution might be antithetical to the theoretical liberal progress supposedly underway in the Anglo-Saxon world in the nineteenth century.

Fenianism, despite its non-sectarian appeal, which could have suggested closer cooperation between Catholics and Protestants, was the result of the British system’s

⁴⁹ E. L. Godkin editorial, ‘Mr. Lecky on Ireland’, *The Nation*, 22 February 1872.

⁵⁰ E. L. Godkin editorial, ‘The latest phase of Fenianism’, *The Nation*, 2 January 1868.

double failure in Ireland. For Godkin, Fenianism exposed the fissures within an Irish society devoid of both aristocratic and democratic leadership. It further reduced the opportunity for political solutions within Ireland made already challenging by the O'Connellite divide. Further, its methods lowered the attraction of Anglo-Saxon democratic advance in the United Kingdom and the United States.

Beyond his assessment of Fenianism, Godkin was centrally involved in the transatlantic liberal engagement with the Irish question that increased in political prominence in the 1870s and 1880s, especially with Charles Stewart Parnell's rise. In these arguments over home rule for the Irish, Godkin articulated a critique of the British system based on the same principles as his critique of Radical Reconstruction in the United States. The political nature of the movement created a sense of optimism that liberal reform could be revived, though the illiberal tendencies of the Irish population foretold that, whereas liberalism might provide an overarching structure, the politics internal to Ireland would be informed firstly by the inclinations of the Irish people, not by any liberal structure.

Godkin and Irish Home Rule

Irish reactionaries and political reformers existed as part of a larger movement of social discontent, often seen in other communities in the form of labor unrest, 'due mainly to the multitude of new problems we have to face, to the immensely improved means of spreading ideas, to the wonderful economic changes effected by science and invention, and, though last not least, to the appearance on the scene of the new schools of political

economy to preach the limitlessness of the province of government'.⁵¹ Irish agitation thus existed within an era of contentious social relations in Europe and the United States:

'[The] Irish are not peculiar in their manner of expressing their discontent with a government directed or controlled by the public opinion of another indifferent or semi-hostile community...lawlessness and cruelty, considered as expressions of political animosity, do not necessarily argue any incapacity for the conduct of an orderly and efficient government.'⁵²

British rule of Ireland ran counter to the central requirements of political governance in the nineteenth century. Political systems that promoted happiness and prosperity, that provided physical security, and ministered 'to their self-love', said Godkin, succeeded.⁵³ The value of government was determined 'in men's hearts'.⁵⁴

Like elsewhere in the West, the improper governance of Ireland caused a split between the central seat of government and the periphery, because of the loss of an emotional connection between the political class and the working classes. The means of Irish protest seemed counterintuitive to the democratic ends they desired; however, like white Southerners, the Irish were faced with an obtrusive and militaristic external presence in their communities. A certain untethered quality to their opposition was an expected outcome to such a presence.

The litany of charges made against the Catholic Irish by the British was ostensibly based in historical truths. Irish political and social behaviors needed 'considerable mending'.⁵⁵ Irish civilization had 'serious' defects, and their methods for seeking independence from British rule were often repugnant.⁵⁶ Godkin moderated these criticisms of the Irish

⁵¹ E. L. Godkin, 'The economic man' in *The North American Review*, cliii, no. 419 1891), pp 491-503 at p. 503.

⁵² E. L. Godkin, 'American home rule,' *The Nineteenth Century*, no. 112 (June 1886), pp 793-806 at p. 801.

⁵³ *Ibid.*, p. 795.

⁵⁴ *Ibid.*

⁵⁵ Godkin, 'An American view of Ireland,' p. 178.

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 177.

because of their origins in long-established disfranchisement: ‘the Irish have thoroughly learnt the terrible lesson that the way to work the House of Commons into activity about Irish grievances is not to send good men to sit in it, but to commit a good many outrages at home’.⁵⁷ Protest was a natural outcome when government served the interests of a minority at the expense of the majority. The routine nature of Irish discontent involved an acknowledgement that Fenianism and later reactionary, physical-force movements like the dynamiters in the 1880s-90s resulted as centrally from the isolation placed on Irish politics by the British Parliament as did Parnell’s Parliamentary movement.

In this assessment of the situation in Ireland, Godkin first argued that the only proper solution for Ireland was the end to landlordism, which was the solution proposed by J. S. Mill, and he advocated for Gladstonian Home Rule.⁵⁸ Landlordism restrained the opportunity for legislative reform and improper legislation had resulted in an impoverished Ireland and in the Fenian movement. Calling for an end to landlordism reinforced his understanding of the role of the liberal movement regarding the Irish question, that ‘the true road to the redress of Irish grievances lies through a cordial union [of Irish liberals] with the English Radicals’, because this was the only way to challenge the landlord interest in Parliament.⁵⁹ The presence of Fenianism in the United States had apparently prevented the alliance of Irish liberals and English radicals, because it either militarized Irish liberalism or made any association with Irish liberals toxic, regardless of whether they were sympathetic to the Fenians.⁶⁰

⁵⁷ Ibid., p. 186.

⁵⁸ See Godkin’s editorial, ‘Mr. J. S. Mill on the Irish difficulty’, *The Nation*, 12 March 1868, for his endorsement of Mill’s argument in *England and Ireland* (London, 1868).

⁵⁹ E. L. Godkin editorial, ‘The Fenian sop’ in *The Nation*, 4 October 1866.

⁶⁰ Ibid.

Godkin's conclusion regarding the cause of Irish discontent can be considered akin to the tenor of his conclusions for the US South: impoverishment and emigration resulted from illiberal governance. O'Connellism might have ruptured the seemingly appropriate alliances needed between the classes in Ireland to advocate for sustainable solutions, and Fenianism might have delayed political solutions to continued Irish distress. More pointedly, both movements merely confirmed the inability of the British to integrate Ireland within the system because of the British unwillingness to consider the Irish as a community deserving of the same political and social rights that they enjoyed.

The problem of the illiberal actions of the Irish people, which had justified the continued suppression of all aspects of Irish social, political, and economic activities – and had created the situation where the middle class was left unsupported, unnurtured, and without the means to expand – was, ostensibly, a problem of British imperialism. When the imperial system changed in the seventeenth century, the center of the system – its administrative machinery, its aristocracy, its monarchy, and its merchant class – did not change its approach to Ireland. The Navigation Acts, for instance, applied a regulating effect in Ireland until their repeal in the nineteenth century. Their repeal demonstrated a desire to modernize the British system's approach to Ireland. The liberal system, however, was not working properly and not much had truly changed, as he had described in his annoyance with Queen Victoria.

The British government failed, especially so before Gladstone's ministries, to comprehend the complexities and true character of the Irish question. Thus, the system exhibited a certain deficiency of proper political evolution. British politicians, *The Nation*

said, showed ‘an absence of all genuine interest in the Irish question’, if they were being honest, which further strengthened the argument for home rule.⁶¹

The US Civil War had taught Americans, Godkin said, that ‘homogeneousness, social as well as political, is the first condition of our national existence’.⁶² If the same test were applied to Ireland, what did this criterion mean? A coherence that adhered to Godkin’s conception of liberal society was clearly not possible in Ireland in the final decades of the nineteenth century because of religion and history and his own observations on the divergent paths taken by the Catholic Irish and the Anglo-Irish. The majority would rule in Ireland in a manner like it had in the United States, which was proving a detriment to American liberalism: ‘The majority will not respect [any mechanical] contrivance for preventing their tyranny any more than anything else. You have to choose between trusting their good sense and good feeling, and to the influence on them of argument, and pathos, or else to govern by force. All restraints imposed must be imposed by themselves.’⁶³

The problem here was that men of special training and qualifications were apparently needed for the proper management of modern democracies. The Irish, in promoting a particular type of exclusionary nationalism, pushed Godkin’s natural leaders, the Anglo-Irish community, to the outside of the social system. In such an environment, he thought, Irish democracy would hardly be democratic. Whereas the other participants in the Anglo-Saxon world – the UK, US, Canada, and Australia – had, by the 1890s, theoretically attained the political freedom that had been the driving political objective of

⁶¹ ‘The week’, *The Nation*, 3 June 1886.

⁶² E. L. Godkin editorial, ‘The danger of the hour’, *The Nation*, 21 September 1865.

⁶³ *The gilded age letters of E. L. Godkin*, p. 96.

their communities throughout the nineteenth century, the Irish remained in this particular type of agitation.⁶⁴ The combination of factors affecting Irish governance, particularly this sense that their objectives were outdated compared to others – that they were essentially reliving 1848 continuously – created a situation that, in Godkin's mind, had disconnected the desired political objectives of the Irish with the proper means of attaining those objectives.

If the principles of liberalism had been properly integrated into the British political system, there would have been, in theory, no need for home rule. The abandonment of mercantilist policy in the middle of the nineteenth century and the commitment to free trade had promised such an end. Ireland had been particularly burdened by the mercantile system and, despite the nationalist voices who had since at least the late eighteenth century advocated for protectionist policies, a program of systematic liberal reform throughout the United Kingdom promised to deliver a fundamental level of change that would modernize the Irish economy and, in doing so, reduce the inherited sectarian problems.

By the 1870s, Godkin recognized that a natural, passive liberal pathway out of the Irish problem had stalled, and he supported Gladstone's efforts for Home Rule. This position reflected an acceptance by Godkin that the British system was inherently flawed and that the risks associated with granting home rule for the Irish were far less than the possible benefits, which might include a resettlement of the system on a more stable foundation. Irish Home Rule appealed to Godkin in the final estimation because it preserved a banner of British control, while modernizing the system because of its decentralized nature.

⁶⁴ See Godkin, *Unforeseen tendencies of democracies*, p. 72, for his description of political liberty and nineteenth-century political progress.

A criticism of imperialism

Such a conclusion left him in a bit of a conundrum because it meant an admission that neither the British nor the US system truly provided the proper setting for advancing the political principles of liberalism, at least with haste. Godkin's assessment of the imperial nature of both systems at the end of the nineteenth century demonstrated the nature of the conundrum and the nature of his conclusion about American democracy. His knowledge of Ireland and its place in both systems informed the conclusion he made about imperialism as the predictable outcome of the certain developmental path of the United States.

The Irish political situation in the Anglo-Saxon world in the late nineteenth century questioned the universal nature of the Millian liberal program. Godkin continued to emphasize the original principles of liberalism, despite the challenges, and he particularly focused on the importance of liberalism's evidently still-relevant challenge to aristocratism. His continued emphasis on the struggle between aristocracy and democracy might have seemed like an antiquated argument in the late nineteenth century, especially when applied to the Anglo-Saxon world. The British system had introduced reforms throughout the century that increased voting rights, and the US system had removed slavery and expanded US citizenship. His position here encouraged later assessments of Godkin that he had come to represent a relatively conservative-minded opinion, favoring, for instance, law and order above defending radicals desiring increased political rights.⁶⁵ Godkin persisted in the argument, because certain patterns of political

⁶⁵ See, for example, Armstrong, *E. L. Godkin*, pp 179-96.

and social behavior revealed retrogressions that favored privileged positions, in his opinion, none more so than the growing enthusiasm for American imperialism.

American imperialism seemed to combine the worst of nationalism and its closely related populist politics, which had surged in the US in the 1890s, with the aristocratic tendency of the promotion of undemocratic political governance structures. Godkin was, of course, one of a chorus of anti-imperialists in the United States in the 1890s, whose collective voice grew strongest during the Venezuelan boundary crisis of 1895 and especially so with the Spanish-American War of 1898.⁶⁶ A diverse group altogether, Godkin was in relative terms a typical Mugwump in this debate, who were by this time seen as aging and representative of views that many in the United States at the turn of the century deemed antiquated.⁶⁷ Godkin and the Mugwump anti-imperialists had determined that populist politicians, together with sensationalist newspapers, had misled Americans into supporting expansionism on the false basis of patriotism for the purpose of garnering their political support, while accusing their opposition of being un-American.⁶⁸ Imperialism was, in this sense, the extremism of the problem of excessive democracy.

⁶⁶ For the anti-imperialists, see James A. Zimmerman, 'Who were the anti-imperialists and expansionists of 1898 and 1899? A Chicago perspective' in *Pacific Historical Review*, xlv, no. 4 (1977), pp 589-601; Walter LaFeber, *The Cambridge history of American foreign relations; volume ii, American search for opportunity, 1865-1913* (Cambridge, 1993); Robert L. Beisner, '1898 and 1968: the anti-imperialists and the doves' in *Political Science Quarterly*, lxxxv, no. 2 (1970), pp 187-216; and Fred H. Harrington, 'The anti-imperialist movement in the United States, 1898-1900' in *The Mississippi Valley Historical Review*, xxii, no. 2 (1935), pp 211-30. For Godkin's views in this era, see especially Myles Beaupre, "'What are the Philippines going to do to us?': E. L. Godkin on democracy, empire and anti-imperialism' in *Journal of American Studies*, xlvi, no. 3 (2012), pp 711-27; and Robert L. Beisner, 'Thirty years before Manila. See also Paul A. Kramer, 'Empires, exceptions, and Anglo-Saxons: race and rule between the British and United States empires, 1880-1910' in *The Journal of American History*, lxxxviii, no. 4 (2002), pp 1315-53.

⁶⁷ See Butler, *Critical Americans*, pp 241-61. For the diversity of the anti-imperialists, see Harrington, 'The anti-imperialist movement' and Zimmerman, 'Who were the anti-imperialists'.

⁶⁸ See Armstrong, *E. L. Godkin*, pp 193-95.

Godkin was distinguished among the anti-imperialists, especially among the Mugwump anti-imperialists, because of the Irish background to his argument.⁶⁹ He continued to represent opinion based on his experience as an Anglo-Irishman within the British imperial system and based on his assessments of the Irish presence in the United States. The American popular acceptance of an imperial system was effectively enabled by the same atmosphere of bossism and political corruption in which the Irish had earlier been participants and pawns.⁷⁰ Again, Godkin was not alone in noticing this trend, but he was unique in the perspective he provided about the import for the broader conceptual liberal empire of the late nineteenth century.

Even in his continued critique of imperialism and the renewed sense of aristocratism that came with it, though, he expressed a conflicted position, especially at the very end of the century, because he determined that the British aristocratic class provided the best managers for its colonies. The English Colonial Service was initially ‘thoroughly corrupt’, but a ‘pure service’ was introduced ‘that purified the Colonial Service’. The presence and sustainability – through the great wealth of the British people – of an aristocratic class enabled this reform and late nineteenth century success of the Colonial Service. Here, he was discussing the ‘real pride and glory of England – the corps of men which she employs in the government of India’, who were drawn from a class with

‘a tendency to nourish overweening social ambition, to create a certain unwillingness to “go into business,” a great love for athletics, and fondness for a life of adventure. The consequence is that England turns out every year a very large body of educated and muscular youths in search of employment – especially in the open air – which is permanent and well paid. The result is that the English Government has a vast class of young men to choose from, for all the offices of the state. They are not, as so often with us, the men who have failed in life, or the men who shrink from what is called “making their way,” who present themselves

⁶⁹ He was not the lone immigrant, of course – Carl Schurz and Andrew Carnegie were prominent members of the Anti-Imperialist League, for example.

⁷⁰ Myles Beaupre notes how Godkin connected these undemocratic tendencies in ““What are the Philippines going to do to us?””.

for the public service: they are the young, the vigorous, the well-educated, and the hopeful.’⁷¹

In this sense, because the British aristocratic system had such a distinctive maturity, it had proved a blessing. The US still existed within a developmental stage that was characterized by uncertainty and that lacked a certain element of wisdom. In such a stage, the management of colonies was not appropriate.

Godkin’s endorsement of British aristocratism and his tacit endorsement of British imperialism might have seemed like a betrayal of his argument related to Ireland, since he had determined that British institutions were unable to provide the appropriate governance of Ireland in the past and in the late nineteenth century. There were three considerations he made here. First, Ireland was fundamentally of a different territorial type within the British system, given its absorption after conquest and its long presence as a constituent element of the system. Second, by the end of the nineteenth century, the British colonial apparatus had years of administrative experience, and the system, thus, was better equipped to manage and promote the necessary political institutions in the colonies. Third, there was a racist element here that considered India and the African and far eastern colonies to be a fundamentally different type, which precluded comparisons to Ireland. These colonies were essentially frontier lands for the still advancing Anglo-Saxon, liberal empire. In the case of Ireland, Godkin condemned the historical imperialism of the British, whereas he accepted that the late nineteenth century colonialism of the British system existed as the process of extending liberal empire.

⁷¹ E. L. Godkin, ‘The conditions of good colonial government’ in *Forum*, xxvii (1899), pp 191-203 at pp 198-99.

Finally, what his disappointment with the US system and its new imperialism at the end of the century revealed was a long developing uncertainty with American liberalism. The US system was not a model that might be replicated to promote liberal government, rather it was a system that must be contained and limited, despite the expansive tendencies it had exhibited thus far, because it had not attained the systematic maturity needed to become a proselytizing force:

‘People are familiar enough with the rules of good administration; but they are not so familiar with the great truth that these rules are just the same for political as for private affairs, and that men work in the public service under the influence of precisely the same motives as in private business. A recognition of this fact is the secret of success for democracy. Without it, *at home* as well as abroad, I do not myself believe it will succeed in the long run: it will be converted into some kind of bossism. You may have big fleets and armies, and you may rule enormous areas, but they will not be ruled by democracy any more than New York is ruled by its people. What I fear now is that we are placing too much reliance on our conquering powers, and are attaching too little importance to the duty and the difficulty of using the really great administrative talents of the nation in the public service.’⁷²

In this sense, Ireland might be spared of the problem of American liberalism, since, even if granted home rule, it remained within a federalized British system.

Godkin had believed that the US system was destined to developmental advance in a way that reflected its universal nature. The imperialism of the 1890s put those beliefs to final rest, after a long period of reckoning in the postbellum years during which he considered that he might have been wrong. He reverted to the more ethereal advance of liberal empire, though, by the turn of the century, that conception, too, was considered antiquated. Godkin, ambivalent in his assessment of the suitability of the Irish for political leadership and conflicted in his assessment of the late nineteenth century development of liberalism, stood in contrast to the next generation of liberal and progressive writers and activists in the Anglo-American world, who argued that liberal

⁷² Godkin, ‘The conditions of good colonial government’, p. 203.

institutions and norms had contributed to the very problems that he had identified as detrimental to the US system. In this space stood labor leaders, socialists, and others, including Henry George, who used nationalistic fervor to agitate for a new approach. George agreed with Godkin that the US system was in peril. Unlike Godkin, he was certain that its underlying first principles still provided the means to fix the system and then to proselytize the system for the benefit of Ireland and others subject to illiberal governance. It is to George's argument that this thesis turns next.

Chapter 3. Henry George: imperial American republicanism and reform for Ireland

Henry George (1839-1897) was an American economist, who advocated for the full taxation of ground rents.¹ George and his theories achieved widespread recognition with the American public following the publication of his *Progress and poverty* in 1881, which sold more copies than any book other than the Bible in the United States in the 1880s and 1890s.² His popularity extended throughout Europe and Australia, especially to Britain and Ireland.

George's call for the full taxation of ground rents equated to a policy of essentially nationalizing land. It was a radical vision and a threat to the accepted sacrosanctity of property rights in the United States political and legal system. Despite what might have appeared to be an anti-American position, he developed one of the most prominent and successful arguments for a universal application of American republicanism, a vision which only could have emerged in the social and political environment of the postbellum era. In doing so, he envisioned a certain manifestation of Western liberal empire, arguing that the precepts of the US system – a system that was the result of Western liberal

¹ For biographical information and studies on Henry George, see Edward T. O'Donnell, *Henry George and the crisis of inequality: progress and poverty in the Gilded Age* (NY, 2015); Andrew Phemister, "'Our American Aristotle': Henry George and the republican tradition during the transatlantic Irish land war, 1877-1887" (PhD thesis, University of Edinburgh, 2016); Anna George de Mille, 'Henry George: the "Progress and poverty" period' in *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, ii, no. 4 (1943), pp 543-55; and John L. Thomas, *Alternative America: Henry George, Edward Bellamy, Henry Demarest Lloyd and the adversary tradition* (Cambridge, MA, 1983).

² See Jeffrey Sklansky, *The soul's economy: market society and selfhood in American thought, 1820-1920* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2002), p. 115; and Eric Foner, *Politics and ideology in the age of the Civil War* (NY, 1980), p.185. The edition of *Progress and poverty* used here is Henry George, *Progress and poverty* (5th ed., NY, 1881). This edition was a 'popular' edition, though the text remained the same as the first edition, other than the fixing of spelling and grammatical errors.

development – were still valid, despite distinct challenges that had emerged in the late nineteenth century.

George is generally interpreted in one of two ways. First, historians of economic thought have sought to explain his single tax theory in the context of Gilded Age America. He was an original thinker without much formal education, and his argument developed from his lived experience in the United States during the Civil War and postbellum eras. Despite his non-academic background or career, his theories were influential, though often unacknowledged, in the development of American economic thought.³ *Progress and poverty* was a representation of a distinctive American voice in economic theory of the late nineteenth century.⁴ Second, historians of Irish America and Irish republicanism have identified his enthusiastic support of the Irish cause as a catalyst for broader recognition of the Land League of 1879-82. George, without any Irish heritage, championed the cause of Irish nationalists, which was evidence of the expanding appeal of the Irish cause in that era.⁵ George has been remembered as an American theorist for Irish radicalism in the land wars.

³ For George and the development of American economic thought, see Neil B. Niman, 'Henry George and the development of Thorstein Veblen's theory of capital' in *Journal of the History of Economic Thought*, xxxii, no. 3 (2010), pp 419-31; Terence M. Dwyer, 'Henry George's thought in relation to modern economics' in *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, xli, no. 4 (1982), pp 363-73; Michael Silagi and Susan N. Faulkner, 'Henry George and Europe: the far-reaching effect of the ideas of the American social philosopher at the turn of the century' in *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, xlv, no. 2 (1986), pp 201-13; Donald R. Stabile, 'Henry George's influence on John Bates Clark: the concept of rent was pivotal to equating wages with the marginal product of labor' in *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, liv, no. 3 (1995), pp 373-82; Thomas E. Borcharding, Patricia Dillon, and Thomas D. Willett, 'Henry George: precursor to public choice analysis' in *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, lvii, no. 2 (1998), pp 173-82.

⁴ See Sklansky, *The soul's economy*.

⁵ See Foner, *Politics and ideology*, pp 184-89; Ely M. Janis, *A greater Ireland: the Land League and transatlantic nationalism in Gilded Age America* (Madison, WI, 2015), pp 129-32; Phemister, "'Our American Aristotle'"; David Sim, *A union forever: the Irish question and U.S. foreign relations in the Victorian Age* (Ithaca, NY, 2013), pp 148-51.

Irish nationalists in the United States and Ireland were drawn to George's theory because of its radical approach to land reform, which they thought might be a template to change Irish land policy. Since Irish nationalists in the early 1880s seized the argument for their partisan purposes, the relevance of Ireland within the argument has been distorted. This chapter revises interpretations of George in its emphasis on what is essentially the middle ground between the two interpretations discussed above, a position that usually receives only passing reference, but which is critical for a proper assessment of George, his moment, and the development of American global thought. The chapter is a case study of George's use of Ireland and Irish politics in *Progress and poverty* and related writings. Before George became a darling of the Irish radicals, his cultural knowledge of Ireland affected the formulation of his criticism of and vision for US development in the late nineteenth century.

Henry George before Progress and poverty

A. The influences of his early life

Henry George was born in Philadelphia in 1839. His father was a printer of religious books, and his mother a homemaker.⁶ They lived a comfortable, 'typical' middle-class existence – as Henry George's daughter, Anna George de Mille, later described it in her biography of her father – with the 'large, heavily-bound family Bible, standing on a pedestal table, [occupying] a prominent place in the front room'.⁷ George's father was deeply religious and the family life was relatively austere, with 'cards, dancing, and the

⁶ He left the printing business because it was 'too unremunerative', said Anna George de Mille. See Anna George de Mille, 'Henry George: childhood and early youth' in *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, i, no. 3 (1942), pp 283-306 at p. 289.

⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 284.

theatre' forbidden.⁸ George attended weekly Episcopalian services, his close friends were the sons of the local Episcopalian bishop, and 'daily reading of the Bible gave [him] a thorough grounding in the English language as well as in the sacred scriptures'.⁹ He was educated in an Episcopalian school until the age of twelve, followed by and a mixture of private tutelage and high school until the age of fourteen, when he convinced his father to allow him to end his formal schooling, so he could find work.¹⁰

Four components of his youth strongly affected his intellectual development.¹¹ First, his family's religion was an ever-present influence. Second, he consistently attended lectures at the Franklin Institute of Philadelphia with his uncle, who was a member, which exposed him to a variety of scientific and philosophical arguments.¹² Third, his decision to stop his education in order to earn a living demonstrated a commitment to finding his own path through hard work and thrift, and it established a foundation for the sympathy he later showed in his economic argument for the challenges facing laborers in the postbellum United States.¹³ Fourth, his precocity in employment, his hard-work mentality, and his 'restlessness' led to his being hired at the age of fifteen by Captain Sam Miller, a family friend, as a deckhand on Miller's merchant ship bound for the Far East.¹⁴

⁸ George de Mille, 'Childhood and early youth', p. 287.

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid., pp 289-90. For information on this period of George's life, see also George, Jr., *Life of Henry George*, pp 1-18.

¹¹ O'Donnell notes two 'critical influences in Henry George's early life': his evangelical faith and the 'emerging culture of entrepreneurial republicanism and...the celebrated ideology of "free labor"'. O'Donnell, *Henry George*, pp 8-9.

¹² For the Franklin Institute see A. Michal McMahon, "'Bright science" and the mechanic arts: the Franklin Institute and science in industrial America, 1824-1876' in *Pennsylvania History: a Journal of Mid-Atlantic Studies*, xlvii, no. 4 (1980), pp 351-68. For biographical information, see George de Mille, 'Childhood and early youth', p. 291; and O'Donnell, *Henry George and the crisis of inequality*, p. 10.

¹³ George de Mille, 'Childhood and early youth'; idem, 'Henry George: early California period' in *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, i, no. 4 (1942), pp 431-46; O'Donnell, *Henry George and the crisis of inequality*, pp 3-32.

¹⁴ George de Mille, 'Childhood and early youth', pp 291-92.

The ship travelled to Australia and then to India. Historians have generally concluded that his impressions of India during this voyage strongly influenced his understanding of social and economic inequalities – an influence that George himself noted. Anna George de Mille later described her father's observations, based on her recollections of conversations she had with him on these subjects and through an examination of his journals from his Eastern voyage:

‘As the boy had had a chance to see a little of Australia, during a period when times were hard and thousands were out of work, so now he had a chance to see India, and notice the extremes there of riches and poverty, beauty and squalor. As he later said, the carrion birds seemed to be held more sacred than the country's human beings. In the new country, Australia, and in the old country, India, there seemed to be the same problem of poverty that was to be found at home in the United States.’¹⁵

In Calcutta he had noticed the opulence of the British merchant residences compared to the squalor of Indian neighborhoods.¹⁶ His immersion into British colonialism in India resulted in a recognition of the deep inequalities present within the British imperial system and in a concern for the common man, subject to an unequal access to the wealth and resources of the system. This experience encouraged his later criticisms of the US system because of his observations of the growing similarities between American and British society.

B. To California

George moved to California in December 1857, one year after returning home from his journey on Miller's ship, having determined that his career prospects in Philadelphia were dim and desiring a change in personal circumstances. During his year in Philadelphia, he apprenticed in a printer's workshop, work he obtained through a professional connection

¹⁵ George de Mille, 'Childhood and early youth', p. 296.

¹⁶ See Thomas, *Alternative America*, p. 9.

of his father, and learned how to set type, a skill crucial to his finding employment when he arrived in California.¹⁷

His early years in California were characterized by an instability in his employment. After trying his hand and failing at prospecting, he found inconsistent work as a journeyman printer. In 1861, he married Annie Corsina Fox, a Roman Catholic of English and Irish ancestry, whose religion raised objections from his parents.¹⁸ George worked for the *Sacramento Union* newspaper, and during the Civil War, he was promoted twice, becoming first a journalist and then an editor of the paper. He lost his position as editor, though, due to a disagreement with management. A similar pattern – of marginal success and then a struggle to make ends meet – continued throughout the 1860s. He worked for several newspapers, including the *Daily Times* (San Francisco), the *San Francisco Herald*, and the *San Francisco Monitor*. It was not until the publication of *Progress and Poverty* a decade later that he experienced financial stability.¹⁹

The realities of life in northern California, from his arrival in 1857 until he left for New York in 1879, confirmed a growing presence of an underlying inequity in the US system, akin to the inequities he had observed in the British system in India. He observed soon after his arrival that a minority of elites held an abundance of land and wealth. His work as a journalist in Sacramento and San Francisco confirmed this conclusion, and he documented its negative effects for the laboring classes. For George, California, with its

¹⁷ George, Jr., *The life of Henry George*, pp 40-52; George de Mille, 'Childhood and early youth', pp 301-03; O'Donnell, *Henry George and the crisis of inequality*, p. 11.

¹⁸ For the note on the ancestry of Annie Fox George, see George, Jr., *Life of Henry George*, p. 105.

¹⁹ See O'Donnell, *Henry George and the crisis of inequality*, pp 16-26.

monopolistic property ownership, would come to represent the endpoint of the US system on its current trajectory.²⁰

C. The development of an argument against monopoly interests

George progressively became more involved with political journalism, through which he developed the theoretical basis for the argument of *Progress and poverty*. His work at two newspapers influenced his political awareness and encouraged the development of his argument. Additionally, George wrote a treatise in 1871 titled, *Our land and land policy*, which expressed his anti-monopoly views in a more holistic manner.²¹

First, his work at the *Daily Times* (San Francisco) in 1867-68 as an editorialist under the editorship of Noah Brooks allowed him the freedom to articulate his continued notice of the structural inequalities in California's economy. He soon became managing editor of the paper.²² The idiom he developed while at the *Times* was seen in an article titled 'What the railroad will bring us', which he wrote for *Overland Monthly* soon after leaving the *Times* in the fall of 1868. The article predicted the continued and increased advance of wealth and population in California with the completion of the transcontinental railroad, and it warned of the detrimental effects of an unequal distribution of wealth:

'Is England, with her population of twenty millions to an area of not more than one-third that of our State, and a wealth which per inhabitant is six or seven times that of California, a better country than California to live in? Probably, if one were born a duke or factory lord, or to any place among the upper ten thousand; but if one were born among the lower millions – how then?...The truth is, that the completion of the railroad and the consequent great increase of business and population, will not be a benefit to all of us, but only to a portion. As a general rule...those who have, it will make wealthier; for those who *have not*, it will make

²⁰ See Henry George, *The subsidy question and the Democratic Party* (San Francisco, 1871); idem, *Our land and land policy, national and state* (San Francisco, 1871); idem, *Progress and poverty*, pp 55-59, 129-31, and 418-19.

²¹ Henry George, *Our land and land policy, national and state* (San Francisco, 1871).

²² Anna George de Mille, 'Henry George: the formative years' in *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, ii, no. 1 (1942), pp 97-110 at pp 105-10; George, Jr., *Life of Henry George*, pp 173-80.

it more difficult to get...And as California becomes populous and rich, let us not forget that the character of a people counts for more than their numbers; that the distribution of wealth is even more important than its production.’²³

His notice of England here foretold a comparison that he made more explicit in his later argument, that the United States was merely replicating a problematic and unjust British system.

Second, in 1871 George founded *The San Francisco Evening Post* with William Hinton and A. H. Rapp, soon a successful and popular paper, which he edited until an economic panic in 1875 led the paper’s creditors to seize control of its assets and force George to resign.²⁴ Editorially, though the *Post* focused mostly on Californian affairs – particularly in its criticism of the Union Pacific Railway – it supported Horace Greeley in the 1872 Presidential race and noticed issues of political corruption and economic inequality on the national level.²⁵ As would become George’s refrain in *Progress and poverty* and his later writings and speeches, the *Post* condemned the government’s policies of deeding extensive public lands to the privately-owned railroad corporations. George wrote in an editorial from April 1873:

‘Jay Gould, the railroad king and millionaire, furnishes a good illustration of the unprincipled selfishness which dictates and governs the political actions of our corporation magnates...Love of country is regarded by them as a sickly sentiment...They worship Mammon, and in the mad pursuit of wealth and power are guilty of acts which should call the flush of shame to the cheek of the humblest citizen of the land.’²⁶

He continued to articulate a defense of the laboring classes in California and across the nation in his writings, in the face of increasing wealth disparities.

²³ George, Jr., *Life of Henry George*, pp 177-79.

²⁴ Anna George de Mille, ‘Henry George, the editor’ in *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, ii, no. 3 (1943), pp 377-86.

²⁵ George de Mille, ‘Henry George, the editor’, p. 380.

²⁶ *San Francisco Evening Post* (24 April 1873); see also George de Mille, ‘Henry George, the editor’, pp 380-81.

With the political connections he had made in his journalism, he was hired in a patronage position as inspector of gas meters after his forced resignation from the *Post*.²⁷ Its consistent income – though he complained it was insufficient to properly support his family – and predictable and limited hours in comparison to his work in the newspaper allowed him the space and freedom to write. He wrote articles as a freelance journalist for *The Sacramento Bee* and remained politically active, giving speeches in support of Tilden in 1876.²⁸ In his first speech for Tilden delivered in San Francisco, he decried the existence of ‘unemployed men roving over the West in great bands, stealing what they cannot earn...[their presence was] the sure symptom of that leprosy of nations, chronic pauperism’.²⁹ George gained a state-wide reputation as an orator and continued giving speeches that emphasized the need for political and social reform in order to address the structural inequalities present in California and the nation. During this time, he had begun writing *Progress and poverty*, seeking to synthesize and sharpen the opinions developed in his speeches and in his past journalism. He completed the book in March 1879.³⁰

Progress and poverty as a moment in time

With the publication of *Progress and poverty*, George would soon achieve the financial security and professional stability that had alluded him since his move to California, though it was not until 1881 that the book became a bestseller. By then, George had moved his family to New York to properly promote the book, after receiving positive reviews from critical readers. The popularity of *Progress and poverty* caused it to assume

²⁷ Anna George de Mille, ‘Henry George, the “Progress and poverty” period’ in *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, ii, no. 4 (1943), pp 543-55 at pp 543-44.

²⁸ Ibid., pp 545-46.

²⁹ The speech was titled, ‘The question before the people’ (15 August 1876). See *ibid.*, pp 545-56.

³⁰ Ibid.

a life of its own, in a way that separated it from its existence as a product of a distinct progression of George's thought. Historians of George and *Progress and poverty* have encouraged this disconnect, none more so than in the telling of George's endorsement of and advocacy for Irish republicanism, which resulted from the publication of *Progress and poverty*. It has given too much significance to George's professional career at the expense of what was the uniqueness and importance of *Progress and poverty* in the development of American global thought in the late nineteenth century.

Particularly, the presence of Ireland within George's argument, especially as the argument was expressed in *Progress and poverty*, has become something different than what it was – and for good reason: George's popularity helped raise the profile of the Irish Land League and the sense of a universal appeal to the Irish struggle of the 1880s. Ireland affected George's argument before he became an international figure. *Progress and poverty* presented a prime example of the argumentative role that the narrative of Irish history and Irish politics played in the developing externalization of American thought.

Further, George was influenced more so by the circumstances of his life and the trajectory of his journalistic career, as documented above, than by the study of economics, at least in a relative sense, though he certainly was not blind to nineteenth century economic theories. In his youth and young adulthood, he read mostly literature and some history.³¹ When writing *Progress and poverty*, he read economics texts, though what he studied has remained a topic of discussion, because he did not keep records of his study.³² His argument showed distinct similarities to Hegel, though he seemingly had not read Hegel

³¹ See George de Mille, 'Childhood and early youth' and idem, 'Early California period'.

³² O'Donnell, *Henry George and the crisis of inequality*, p. 29.

and had developed his thought independently.³³ Commentators identified the parallel nature of his argument with that of the French Physiocrats, though George claimed to have been unfamiliar with them: ‘Without knowing anything of Quesnay or his doctrines, I have reached the same practical conclusions by a route which cannot be disputed and have based it on grounds which cannot be questioned by the accepted political economy’.³⁴ It was similar, too, to Thomas Paine’s *Agrarian Justice*, however no evidence has been found that he read Paine.³⁵

The theorist who most clearly influenced George was John Stuart Mill, a point that Arnold Toynbee made in a January 1883 lecture critiquing George’s argument:

‘[Henry George] saw in a country with natural resources greater than those of France, and with a population at that time numbering not more than 600,000 people, tramps and paupers make their appearance...He also saw the concentration of land in a few hands – one peculiar evil, that is to say, of an old country making its appearance in a new one. Properties there were at the time which exceeded almost anything we know in England, properties of more than a quarter of a million of acres held by men who did not even go through the pretence of rendering any public service as the condition of their tenure. Mr. George pondered on these things, and whilst he was pondering, he stumbled across Mill’s pamphlets, published in 1870, on the reform of land tenure.’³⁶

Toynbee noted that Mill’s pamphlets were rearticulations of arguments expressed in his 1848 *Principles of political economy*; arguments which, in turn, emerged within the same category of thought of James Mill’s argument from earlier in the century. Toynbee suggested that George’s argument emerged from a clear progression of thought related to theories for the economic reform of British controlled India.³⁷ Regardless of the

³³ Robert Siemens, ‘The problem of modern poverty: significant congruences between Hegel’s and George’s theoretical conceptions’ in *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, lvi, no. 4 (1997), pp 617-37.

³⁴ George, *Progress and poverty*, pp 380-81. See also Frank Petrella, ‘Henry George’s theory of state’s agenda: the origins of his ideas on economic policy in Adam Smith’s moral theory’ in *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, xliii, no. 3 (1984), pp 269-86 at p. 272.

³⁵ Phemister, “‘Our American Aristotle’”, pp 20-21.

³⁶ Arnold Toynbee, *Progress and poverty*, a criticism of Mr. Henry George; being two lectures delivered in St. Andrew’s Hall, Newman Street, London (London, 1884).

³⁷ Toynbee, *A criticism of Mr. Henry George*, pp 8-9.

substance of Toynbee's criticism and of the speculation of theoretical influences on George's argument, George undoubtedly proclaimed a distinctively American interpretation of the predominant and modernist land theories of the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries.

The American universalism of George's argument

Arnold Toynbee also noted that George studied Henry Carey.³⁸ In tone and structure, George used an argument with similarities to Carey, and he might be seen to have assumed a persona like Carey as a popular economist. George's political position, however, was judged by his contemporaries as radical compared to the conservatism assigned to Carey. Both Carey and George used Britain and Ireland as primary examples to underscore the shortcomings of the present norms that they challenged, and both diverged from classical economic theorists favored in British intellectual circles. The similarities of Carey and George resulted from a desire to replace the prevailing and overarching theoretical structure with a novel structure that properly integrated the American environment. Both, too, argued for the universal applicability of their theories. The similarities between Carey and George reflected the reality that they both were, in their own ways, addressing the challenge of industrial capitalism in the postbellum era.³⁹

George, in his universalism, argued for a departure from a national framework, whereas Carey's universalism required pronounced national systems that existed side by side with specific points of interaction to protect the manufacturing and agricultural interests of the

³⁸ Ibid., p. 10.

³⁹ See Sklansky, *The soul's economy*, pp 112-14 for a discussion of George and William Graham Sumner and their arguments related to industrial capitalism.

national systems. This difference arose from divergent analyses of land as the foundational element to economic systems. Carey's approach, detailed in chapter one of this thesis, emphasized a settler mentality of resource extraction. George applied a romantic idealism to his land theory and partially argued for resource preservation, in the sense that a natural level of extraction would occur with a properly distributed population, rather than the unnatural, monopolistic extraction seen with current land ownership practices.⁴⁰ Both defined a need to maximize the utility of the land, with the primary distinction being that George envisioned a dispersed model to Carey's vision of concentration of various and interconnected industrial hubs. George, though there was nuance to his argument, effectively argued that the circumstances of economic activity were the same everywhere.⁴¹

George segmented land from agriculture and industry, because the latter were products of labor's actions upon the land.⁴² His separation of land, as an object to be considered by economists solely for its purely natural state, allowed George to articulate an applicability in his argument regardless of national borders or of stages of societal development. He did not ignore stadial development; however, his conclusion that all Western societies in the late nineteenth century experienced the same fundamental problem of 'progress and poverty', meant that a notice of relative levels of culture was unimportant.⁴³ The simplicity of George's economic argument suggested a reliability to his contention that a single land tax might apply with equal effectiveness in all legal and political jurisdictions.

⁴⁰ See George, *Our land and land policy*, pp 27-32; idem, *Progress and poverty*, pp 3-4, 455-73.

⁴¹ See George, *Progress and poverty*, pp 495-96; idem, *The Irish land question*, p. 2.

⁴² George, *Progress and poverty*, pp 27-79.

⁴³ See, for example, George, *The Irish land question*, p. 2.

The way he structured his argument, especially in *Progress and poverty*, created an appeal to the higher, religious values of his audience. In doing so, he exposed a particularly American sentiment to his argument, with its underlying message based in an idiom of the missionary nature of the American political, economic, and social system.⁴⁴ Thus, George's universal argument existed within his vision of an expansionary Americanism, despite its claim at impartiality and detachment from the constraints of the US system. When his audience changed in writings and speeches for Irish, English, and Australian audiences, the argument remained within such a declared universality that had been formulated in an American context.⁴⁵ The context of George's argument encouraged an eliding of local circumstances, for instance in his analysis of Ireland, in deference to principles observed in the American experience.

His American theory began with a declared adherence and commitment to the principles of liberty and freedom as defined in the Declaration of Independence.⁴⁶ His discussion of land theory began within his conception of the frontier. The frontier was an arena that allowed for a levelling of society, in the sense that it was uncontrollable by man, thus giving each an equality in what was in essence a game of chance. The frontier experience, westward migration, and the desires of American citizens for their own agricultural land proved that land was the central component to the American experience.

⁴⁴ For his articulation of the missionary elements to the United States, see Henry George, 'Problems of the time, ii. Political problems' in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (21 April 1883); and idem, 'Problems of the time, iii. Coming increase of social pressure' in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (28 April 1883).

⁴⁵ For an example of George's argument for a British audience, see Henry George, 'The "reduction to iniquity"' in *The Nineteenth Century*, xvi, no. 89 (1884), pp 134-55.

⁴⁶ See George, *Progress and poverty*, pp 321 and 490.

This acknowledgment confirmed that capital was not the ‘prime factor in production, [with] land as its instrument, and labor as its agent or tool’.⁴⁷

The frontier conception allowed George to downgrade heredity and raise ‘education and habit’ as more central influences on man’s place in the world.⁴⁸ Access to theoretically unclaimed or virgin land by a populace committed to liberty and equality had allowed for economic development and increased community wealth, despite its questionable ends. A portion of the American population had benefitted because of this free and open system.⁴⁹ The American advance across its western frontier, then, clarified a certain type of societal development and civilization, even if George was concerned about the sustainability of the advance.

The United States, its errors, and its promise

Before George argued, especially in the 1880s, for the natural rights of Irishmen to their land, he had developed his argument for an American audience, albeit with a stated universal appeal. He first examined the Californian economy, which he used as a starting point to critique the US economy. In turn, his examination of the US economy served as the foundation of his universal critique.

⁴⁷ Ibid., p. 145. For George and the frontier, see also Alex Wagner Lough, ‘Henry George, Frederick Jackson Turner, and the “closing” of the American frontier’ in *California History*, lxxxix, no. 2 (2012), pp 4-23 and 52-54.

⁴⁸ George, *Progress and poverty*, pp 440-54.

⁴⁹ Ibid., pp 230-31.

A. California and George's observations of structural flaws in the US system

The development of California in the mid-nineteenth century existed in George's narrative as a microcosm of the structural defects present within the US system.⁵⁰ Since California's development was new, the speed at which it began to exhibit signs of decay alarmed George. California was a state of extremes within a country of extremes: the divergence between the capital owning classes and the laboring classes had appeared there soon after the rush of settlement in the middle of the century.⁵¹

For George, California exemplified an inadequate and misguided approach to governmental land policy. The problem that occurred during California's development was relatively straightforward: a select minority of individuals and corporations received land grants and monopoly rights to ostensibly encourage economic development.⁵² In the midst of fast-growing economic activity and visible signs of rising wealth, the economic and social injustices caused by these grants were not fully apparent. Describing this situation, George wrote, '[In California] there are on every hand the most striking and conclusive evidences that the production and consumption of wealth have increased with even greater rapidity than the increase of population, and that if any class obtains less it is solely because of the greater inequality of distribution'.⁵³

⁵⁰ For the influence of California on George's economic thought, see also Charles A. Barker, 'Henry George and the California background of "Progress and poverty"' in *California Historical Society Quarterly*, xxiv, no. 2 (1945), pp 97-115; and O'Donnell, *Henry George*, pp 12-41.

⁵¹ See George, *The subsidy question*; idem, *Our land and land policy*; idem, *Progress and poverty*, pp 55-59, 129-31, and 418-19. Francis A. Walker said George was 'profoundly affected' by the wild speculation in Californian lands during an economic boom period that began with the Gold Rush of 1849 and lasted until the economic depression of 1873. See Francis A. Walker, *Land and its rent* (London, 1883), pp 163-64.

⁵² George, *The subsidy question and the Democratic Party*; idem, *Our land and land policy*; idem, *Progress and poverty*, pp 55-59.

⁵³ George, *Progress and poverty*, pp 130-31.

California's obvious and growing labor problem questioned the supposed advances of the US system beyond its mid-century slavery problem. The nature of California's development in the latter half of the nineteenth century proved that the postbellum promise of a more universal freedom for the entire United States rang hollow, because the new order confirmed the principal elements that had provided an environment for slavery to exist in the first place. Freedom continued its existence entwined with enslavement: 'Our boasted freedom necessarily involves slavery, so long as we recognize private property in land. Until that is abolished, Declarations of Independence and Acts of Emancipation are in vain. So long as one man can claim the exclusive ownership of the land from which other men must live, slavery will exist, and as material progress goes on, must grow and deepen!'⁵⁴

The presence of chattel slavery in the United States during its developmental years pointed to a structural flaw. Like Henry Carey and others, George said chattel slavery was a symptom of the system's distress, rather than the cause.⁵⁵ The political arguments that rightfully called for slavery's end and the military conflict that brought it to an end obscured the underlying distress. Its eradication suggested, in the simple observation that it had disappeared, the mending of the US system. This attitude, though, ostensibly revealed the problematic nature of emancipation because of a readiness of the public for passive acceptance of the status quo. The continued and growing presence of a class in American society in the late nineteenth century that was required 'to compete for employment at starvation wages', proved the disconnect between American ideals and the realities of American systematic development.⁵⁶

⁵⁴ Ibid., p. 321.

⁵⁵ For Carey's views here, see Henry Carey, *The slave trade, domestic and foreign: why it exists, and how it may be extinguished* (Philadelphia, 1853); for George, see *Progress and poverty*, pp 313-14, 321, and 472-73.

⁵⁶ George, *Progress and poverty*, p. 490.

A comparison of the US system to ancient Rome proved apt here to suggest a future trajectory of the present restrictions to equality and liberty. George joined other social critics of his era in this comparison to ancient civilizations of societal decline. The new realities of the postbellum United States invigorated, in their minds, the sense of a Roman-like decline, because it confirmed a deficiency of freedom and a growing political, social, and economic centralization. The signs included the retreat of agrarianism and the advance of urbanization; the fall of states' rights and the strengthening of the federal government; the expansion of the military and its presence as a political force; and industrialization and the growing conflict between capitalists and laborers.⁵⁷

The US system differed from the Roman system in the manner of its expansion. The United States had developed westward across the continent by 'an advancing line of colonists'. Rome had advanced outward 'by conquest which merely reduced the new province to general subjection, leaving the social and generally the political organization of the people to a degree unimpaired'.⁵⁸ In this view of development, California very clearly signified an endpoint, confirmed by its geographic location at the western edge of North America.

The imperial rise of the United States occurred on a different spectrum from that of Rome, of the feudal powers of continental Europe, and of post-feudal Britain.⁵⁹ An unequal level of access to the benefits of the economic advance of the US system,

⁵⁷ See Thomas, *Alternative America*, p. 2.

⁵⁸ George, *Progress and poverty*, p. 451.

⁵⁹ For George's comparison of these developmental stages, see *Progress and poverty*, pp 335-39.

however, flattened the differences between past western imperial powers. There was a simplicity of argument in George's comparison of the United States to Rome, which reflected his emphasis on the simplification of the US system itself.⁶⁰

The patterns of imperialism in history proved a tendency to concentrate wealth and resources at the center of the systems, which began with policies that limited the freedoms of most of the population for the benefit of a minority. In the postbellum United States, 'the van leader of modern civilization', a ruling class had emerged, a reality seen with special clarity in California.⁶¹ The semblance that a growing US imperialist posture was underpinned by a system of equality of opportunity and of access to political and economic resources created, however, more sinister outcomes for the system, compared to the Roman and British systems because of the sense of a finality in the lost opportunity. If the United States, the apparent outcome of civilization's systematic advance towards a society based in individual freedoms, could not uphold a fair and equal society, then freedom's prospects anywhere seemed wholly uncertain.

B. The development of the frontier

George's argument relied on an adjustment of the system. Despite the imperial pattern that had been revealed in the postbellum period, the US system preserved within itself the means to address the problem. This required a deeper assessment of the system's peculiarities. The first British settlers of North America had 'reverted to first principles' in government. In doing so, they pledged the developing system to liberty and freedom. The presence of a vast frontier ensured a protection of individual property rights, because

⁶⁰ See, for example, Henry George, 'Problems of the time, iv. Two opposing tendencies' in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (5 May 1883).

⁶¹ See Henry George, 'Problems of the time, ii. Political problems' in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (21 April 1883) for 'van leader'.

land was available for newly arrived immigrants or younger sons not inheriting the family homestead. As a result, adjustment towards collective land ownership had occurred, as had been seen in the stadial adjustment between the Roman and feudal systems. In exceptional circumstances, like in the initial Gold Rush settlement of northern California, a natural return to collectivism or communalism in settlement had occurred. Such situations, though, were temporary and exceptional. The advance guard of settlers established a society that, because of the developed American tradition of private property in land, was easily exploited by moneyed interests.⁶²

Individualism in land ownership remained the norm in the United States, as it had from the start of British settlement in North America, because of the inheritances from the British system. Thus, with their departure from the United Kingdom, the American settlers reformed an unjust political system but ostensibly failed to address the underlying injustices of the British system. The effects of this failure to address the shortcomings of the British system, said George, had taken decades to emerge.

Nineteenth century liberal development was characterized by a tendency towards political and legal equality, which George called a 'general law [that] is shown by the fact that just as this tendency has asserted itself civilization has advanced, while just as it has been repressed or forced back civilization has been checked'.⁶³ The US system existed in history as the realization of this tendency. The United States was at once the manifestation of liberal advance and at the same time an outlier given the peculiarities of its development. This assessment of the progress of western civilization from Europe –

⁶² See George, *Progress and poverty*, pp 418-19 for the situation in California during the Gold Rush. For 'first principles', see p. 348.

⁶³ George, *Progress and poverty*, p. 476.

primarily Britain – to the United States required an acceptance of a European inheritance. George simplified matters by stating that the fundamental need for freedom was a part of the human condition, rather than a component of politics. Whereas societies across the western world in the late nineteenth century professed their commitment to and indeed exhibited a defined progress towards greater equalities, only in the US system it seemed could such progress be said to exist at a higher stage of civilizational advance.⁶⁴

George, in stating his law that society advanced when political and legal equalities were the objects of the advance, recognized the growth of the United States as a product of its promotion of equal rights for its citizens. The key to understanding US systematic advance was, then, in the interaction of its political ideology with its geography. George's analysis focused on the production of an American national character by its public domain. Rather than settlers carrying ideas of freedom and equality with them westward across the American continent, the land itself performed the equalizing role: 'This vast background of unfenced land has given a consciousness of freedom even to the dweller in crowded cities, and has been a well-spring of hope even to those who never thought of taking refuge upon it.'⁶⁵

While his discussion here was centered on the conditions facing the widespread immigration and urbanization of the late nineteenth century, George argued that the presence of the frontier had served this role since the first colonists had arrived in North America. 'All that we are proud of in the American character; all that makes our conditions and institutions better than those of older countries, we may trace to the fact

⁶⁴ For this conception of the United States, see Henry George, 'Our land and land policy' in Francis K. Peddle and William S. Peirce (eds.), *The annotated works of Henry George; vol. i, Our land and land policy and other works* (Madison, WI, 2016), pp 78-161 at pp 129-30; *Progress and poverty*, pp 489-91.

⁶⁵ George, 'Our land and land policy', pp 129-30.

that land has been cheap in the United States, because new soil has been open to the emigrant.’⁶⁶

C. The problem of the vanishing frontier

The frontier was a source of hope but also of fear. A concentration of wealth and resources had accompanied the US system’s expansion into the frontier, as the example of California showed. Now that the United States was in the last stages of transcontinental development, so it seemed, concentration was more problematic, because the available frontier was now finite.⁶⁷ Evidence of concentration was diffuse. George again thought a comparison to Rome apt:

‘Never since great estates were eating out the heart of Rome has the world seen such enormous fortunes as are now arising. And never more utter proletarians. In the paper which contained a many-column account of the Vanderbilt ball, with its gorgeous dresses and its wealth of diamonds, with its production of roses...and its precious wines flowing like water, I also read a brief item telling how, at a station-house near by, thirty-nine persons—eighteen of them women—had sought shelter, and how they were all marched into court next morning and set for six months to prison.’⁶⁸

His first condemnation here was the obvious concentration of wealth. He also, though, criticized journalistic priorities that devoted more newsprint to elite extravagance than common hardship, for accepting these inequalities. Such attitudes of wonderment at the activities of the rich and of passive acceptance of the vast wealth disparities present in the system proved that concentration of wealth and resources was an unchallenged component of the US system.

⁶⁶ George, *Progress and poverty*, p. 351.

⁶⁷ See Lough, ‘George, Turner, and the closing of the frontier’.

⁶⁸ Henry George, ‘Problems of the time, iv. Two opposing tendencies’ in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* (NY, 5 May 1883).

George determined that this process was part of a developmental shift, ‘similar to that infeudation which, in Europe, during the rise of the feudal system, converted free proprietors into vassals, and brought all society into subordination to a hierarchy of wealth and privilege’.⁶⁹ Rather than built on heredity, the new system was built on chance. Both the old and the new system resulted in the dispossession of most of the population to their deserved share in the profits of labor. In history as in the present, economic concentration was the process of turning the masses into tenants of the few.⁷⁰

In the manner of its development, the United States had ostensibly proven that the Malthusian over-population theorem was invalid. The proper assessment for the creation of the unsustainable economic environment – based within modern, late nineteenth century, American circumstances, and from the benefit of an expanded knowledge of population and economic data – was an emphasis on the ‘decadence of population’.

Decadence of population was, it seemed, was the more likely cause of the large volume of poverty in the United States and elsewhere than was the Malthusian commonplace of over-population. Economic growth and geographic expansion accompanied by private property in land had resulted, in his mind, in decadence.⁷¹

George’s critique of the United States in the late nineteenth century involved a critique of the predominant historical narratives of American settlement and development. He emphasized the disparate backgrounds of the immigrants who came to the United States, who ‘were poor, dissatisfied, unsuccessful, or recklessly adventurous—many [came]

⁶⁹ Henry George, ‘Problems of the time, v. The march of concentration’ in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* (NY, 12 May 1883).

⁷⁰ Henry George, ‘Problems of the time, v. The march of concentration’ in *Frank Leslie’s Illustrated Newspaper* (NY, 12 May 1883).

⁷¹ See George, *Progress and poverty*, p. 95 for ‘decadence of population’; see pp 92-114 for his argument related to decadence of population and his critique of Malthus.

because they were kidnapped, many as self-sold bondsmen, as indentured apprentices, or mercenary soldiers'.⁷² In this way his economic argument appealed to a moralistic sentiment with his determination to insert into the historical narrative those classes in American society who had not received proper visibility in the historical record.

The economic expansion at mid-century was increased with the conclusion of the Civil War, which had allowed a stronger federal government to pursue transportation and infrastructure initiatives that emphasized connectivity to the west coast free from the diversion created by Southern, proslavery interference of Western development.⁷³ George determined that the US system, with its postbellum centralization, had achieved a position near the apex of its possible developmental outcome.⁷⁴ Further economic expansion within the current geographic boundaries was possible and likely, by way of increasing urbanization and population density, helped by immigration into the cities.⁷⁵ It was, however, an undesirable type of development, and it represented a process of decline rather than advance. It strengthened the postbellum centralization, and it allowed those who had already benefited from such centralization an entrenchment to control the economic advantages produced by the development. The situation required, in his mind, a readjustment to immigration and a dedicated move away from policies that promoted urbanization.

⁷² Henry George, 'Problems of the time, iii' in *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper* (28 April 1883).

⁷³ George, *Progress and poverty*, pp 248-49.

⁷⁴ See the entire series of articles George wrote for *Frank Leslie's Illustrated Newspaper*, 'Problems of the time', published from 14 April 1883 to 26 May 1883, especially Henry George, 'Problems of the time, v.'.

⁷⁵ George, *Progress and poverty*, pp 96 and 216-17.

Ireland's universal character

In George's inquiry into the problem of inequality in the United States, he found a ready example in the state of Ireland as a subject component of the British system. His narrative engagement with Ireland initially, thus, resulted from this search. Additionally, George worked for a short period of his newspaper career for the *San Francisco Monitor*, a Catholic newspaper that catered to the Irish immigrant community. At the *Monitor*, he became more aware of Irish political concerns.⁷⁶ Ireland represented an endpoint for George in his argument in *Progress and poverty*: '[The Irish people] lived on the potato, because rack-rents stripped everything else from them.'⁷⁷ There was no unoccupied frontier, and the productivity of its land and labor was severely limited or seemingly absent. The mid-century Famine demonstrated Ireland's stagnant and declining economic activity, because the Famine was a result of systematic faults that had reached maturity. In reality, Ireland could have supported a population, 'in ample comfort', larger than what existed at the time of the Famine.⁷⁸

In the context of his argument in *Progress and poverty*, thus, Ireland served to disprove Malthusianism: 'Ireland, of all European countries, furnishes the great stock example of over-population. The extreme poverty of the peasantry and the low rate of wages there prevailing, the Irish famine and Irish emigration, are constantly alluded to as a demonstration of the Malthusian theory worked out under the eyes of the civilized world.'⁷⁹ In this regard, he continued the American economic idiom – seen earlier in the nineteenth century, especially with Henry Carey – with his articulation of an argument

⁷⁶ Phemister, "'Our American Aristotle'", p. 13.

⁷⁷ George, *Progress and poverty*, p. 111.

⁷⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 110.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

that contrasted with Malthus and prevailing British economic thought. For Carey the connection to Ireland had come through his heritage as much as through Ireland's existence as a prominent example in the American economic idiom of his time. George did not have this existing personal connection, but he formed professional connections that increased his fame and broadened his appeal in Ireland and Britain.⁸⁰

A. George's opportunistic Irish argument

There were two distinct periods of George's authorial career that mirrored two distinct levels of engagement with Ireland, separated by the publication of *Progress and poverty* in 1879. In emphasizing Ireland after then, George effectively seized an opportunity.⁸¹ An 18 December 1880 letter noted his jubilation that Michael Davitt had endorsed *Progress and poverty*. Davitt promised to promote the book in the UK.⁸² The circumstances within Ireland and the Irish American community that served to increase George's fame were fortuitous: Davitt's release from prison and the publication of *Progress and poverty*, both in 1879, and the consolidation of Irish opposition with the agreement made by Charles Stewart Parnell and Davitt to form the Irish National Land League in that same year.⁸³ It seemed that with Davitt's support, Ireland might become a test case for turning George's economic argument into policy, if its republicans achieved the political change they desired.

⁸⁰ For George's relationship with Irish Americans, see Edward T. O'Donnell, "‘Though not an Irishman’: Henry George and the American Irish" in *The American Journal of Economics and Sociology*, lvi, no. 4 (1997), pp 407-19.

⁸¹ O'Donnell notices George's opportunism regarding Ireland as well. See O'Donnell, "‘Though not an Irishman’".

⁸² George, Jr., *Life of Henry George*, p. 341.

⁸³ For an overview of the Land League in the United States, see David Brundage, 'The new departure in America, 1878-1890' in idem, *Irish nationalists in America: the politics of exile, 1798-1998* (Oxford, 2016), pp 111-26.

In October 1881, thanks to the popularity of *Progress and poverty* among the Irish American community, Patrick Ford, editor of the *Irish World*, hired George as special correspondent, on an assignment to Ireland and England. A series of letters was published in the *World* during 1881-82. While in Ireland and England, he met with dissidents and politicians including John Dillon and Charles Stewart Parnell. His experiences, including harassment by police and an arrest and short stay in a Galway jail, confirmed the appropriateness of his opposition to the British. This tone was seen in his first letter to the *World*, describing his initial reactions to British governance in Ireland: ‘It is not merely a despotism; it is a despotism sustained by alien force, and wielded in the interests of a privileged class, who look upon the great masses of the people as intended but to be hewers of their wood and drawers of their water’.⁸⁴

B. Three peoples subject to the British system

Despite the distinctiveness in the now personal connections to Ireland and George’s increased usage of Ireland as a critical example in his argument, his overall argument remained generally similar in both periods because of its inherent universalism. In *Progress and poverty*, Ireland was a primary example in his economic argument against land monopoly, though it shared space with China and India. Of these latter two, India was most like Ireland. In India, ‘For ages and ages...all wealth that could be wrung from the people was in the possession of princes who were little better than robber chiefs quartered on the country’.⁸⁵ British rule of India promised a better future, one founded on law and sound economic principles, ‘Yet, with increasing frequency, famine has

⁸⁴ *Irish World* (3 November 1881). See also George, Jr., *Life of Henry George*, p. 359. For his time in Ireland, see also Phemister, “‘Our American Aristotle’”; and O’Donnell, *Henry George and the crisis of inequality*.

⁸⁵ George, *Progress and poverty*, pp 101-02.

succeeded famine, raging with greater intensity over wider areas.’⁸⁶ India was ‘like a great estate owned by an absentee and alien landlord’.⁸⁷ India’s poverty and starvation were caused by ‘tyranny and insecurity’, by ‘the rapacity of man’.⁸⁸ Western, liberal assessments of Ireland, India, and China were ostensibly symptomatic of the tendency of a ruling class to develop ideologies that defended their position and deflected responsibility. First, then, George used the examples of Ireland, India, and China to argue that man, not nature, created hardships, poverty, and famine.⁸⁹

Second, the similar outcomes for English laborers, Irish farmers, and Indian peasants proved the existence of systematic failure. The unwillingness to accept that the impoverishment of the Irish peasant class as fundamentally of a similar quality to the challenges facing English farming and industrial laborers reflected intensive efforts to misdirect or obscure the proper object of reproach. The condition of the farmer in England was ‘harder, more hopeless and more brutalizing than that of the average slave under any system of slavery which has prevailed in modern times’.⁹⁰ What the similar conditions of the Irish peasant and the English farmer emphasized, then, was a problematic cultural separation between the Irish and the English, whose non-landowning classes should have been natural allies:

‘To denounce Englishmen is simply to arouse the prejudices and excite the animosities of Englishmen – to separate forces that ought to be united. To make this the fight of the Irish people against the English people is to doom it to failure. To make it the common cause of the people everywhere against a system which everywhere oppresses and robs them is to make its success assured.’⁹¹

⁸⁶ Ibid., p. 104.

⁸⁷ Ibid.

⁸⁸ George, *Progress and poverty*, pp 102 and 108.

⁸⁹ Ibid., pp 101-14.

⁹⁰ George, ‘Our land and land policy’, p. 127.

⁹¹ George, *The Irish land question*, p. 35.

The encouragement of racial or cultural divisions was a tactic of the centralized power.

Further, for George, this articulation of the similar outcomes of two parallel classes within the same system served as further confirmation of the wisdom of his stated universal argument.

C. George and the account of Irish history

In defining the substance of the Irish problem of the late nineteenth century, George denied any singularity in this history:

‘That Ireland is a conquered country; that centuries ago her soil was taken from its native possessors and parcelled out among aliens, and that it has been confiscated again and again, has nothing to do with the real question of today – no more to do with it than have the confiscations of Marius and Sulla. England, too, is a conquered country; her soil has been confiscated again and again; and, spite of all talk about the Saxon oppressor and the down-trodden Celt, it is not probably that, after the admixture of generations, the division of landholder and non-landholder any more coincides with distinction of race in the one country than in the other. That Irish land titles rest on force and fraud is true; but so do land titles in every country – even to a large extent in our own peacefully settled country.’

Such an attitude caused some in the republican movement to distance themselves from George.⁹² Since George’s emphasis in his Irish argument was on stadialism and developmental processes, as it was in his American argument, the historical pattern was more important than the uniqueness of the case. The regressive politics and failing economy of Ireland were not products of Irish racial or cultural differences, rather, they resulted from a history of oppression under the British system.

In George’s Irish argument and its singular focus on a history of oppression, his conclusions were based in class and political influence. He continued to emphasize the commonality of the social and economic problems facing late nineteenth century Western

⁹² See Sim, *A union forever*, pp 149-50.

economies, and he described the symptoms of distress within the systems in common as well. In this context the singularity of the Irish Famine was removed. It was a 'financial famine', not a 'true famine arising from the scarcity of food...but from the poverty of the people'.⁹³ George cited an unnamed English writer for this characterization of the Famine and used the example of 'Indian famines'.⁹⁴ The presence of famine in Ireland or elsewhere was, of course, central to the land question itself, because it 'provoked the land agitation'.⁹⁵ Famine was a sign of the developmental maturity of a monopolistic system.

Ireland, like the rest of the United Kingdom in the late nineteenth century, exhibited the ends of individualism in landownership. Ireland was 'fully occupied' in contrast to the United States, which was approaching this status, despite many opinions and assurances as to the continued and widespread availability of western lands.⁹⁶ The results of Ireland's existence in its state of full occupation ostensibly proved insightful for what the United States could soon anticipate. In the preface of *Progress and poverty*, George made this connection clear: 'the great movement which has begun in Great Britain in the Irish land agitation' was confirmation of the 'pressing problem' that faced the United States and the path that the US system had chosen.⁹⁷

The British system of landowning had produced a form of slavery, especially seen in the condition of the 'rack-rented Irish peasant', an argument which again called forth the idiom of Henry Carey.⁹⁸ The public collapse of Irish class relations by the end of the nineteenth century and the publicity of violent means of Irish protest apparently obscured

⁹³ George, *The Irish land question*, p. 7.

⁹⁴ Ibid.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 8.

⁹⁶ George, *Progress and poverty*, p. 317.

⁹⁷ Ibid., p. xi.

⁹⁸ Ibid., p. 316.

the cause of the condition of the most impoverished peoples in Ireland. At the very least, it prevented a reasoned debate on causes, instead emphasizing piecemeal solutions that inevitably deferred to a presumed authority in the landholding class, simply because of their status as property owners, without questioning the wisdom of such a deference.

George ultimately used the same answer he had always used to address societal inequities, decrying private property in land: 'The root of Irish social and political difficulties is the injustice which makes Irish land the exclusive property of some of the Irish people and denies to the rest of the Irish people all legal right to live or work in Ireland save as they buy or beg it of the favoured class.'⁹⁹ British legislation, in particular the Ashbourne Act of 1885 and the Balfour Bill of 1890, sustained an injustice. Parliament substituted 'the right of property in the things produced by labour from land' with 'the right of property in land itself', which, once again, was an unnatural and improper arrangement.¹⁰⁰ The British had used a legal mechanism to articulate ownership in land to protect the results of military conquest, on top of which rested their control of Ireland. The system, said George, was based on 'the violation of the principle of equal rights'. New approaches without admitting this fault amounted only to attempts 'to protect a fundamental injustice for a little longer by a fresh violation of the principle'.¹⁰¹

It was not to agricultural districts alone that the system displayed the results of injustice. The extreme depth of poverty in Dublin, Glasgow, and London showed a 'degradation of the mind' and a 'death of the soul'. Agricultural laborers subject to the British system were driven to urban poverty, because they were driven off the land. Based on this

⁹⁹ Henry George, 'Land purchase for Ireland' in *The New Review*, ii, no. 11 (1890), pp 346-54 at pp 346-47.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 351.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, p. 352.

evidence, he concluded that the means to prevent an equal level of depravity from occurring in the United States was to ‘open the land that is locked up’.¹⁰²

In the case of Ireland, ‘The claim of the landlords to the land rests not on natural rights, but merely on municipal law – on municipal law which contravenes natural right.’¹⁰³ Landholders in Ireland, as throughout the world, had no ‘right claim either to the land or to compensation for its resumption by the people’.¹⁰⁴ Land, in this conception would never be individual property. God created land, and no man had a right to exclusive ownership to ‘things created by God’.¹⁰⁵ The rise in the value of land when society grew was itself a ‘natural law’, a ‘tendency willed by the Creator’.¹⁰⁶ This formulation meant simply that there existed no ‘right to property’. This absence of protection to a right to property was distinct from a ‘right of possession’, which George considered legitimate.¹⁰⁷

D. Ireland’s relevance for the United States

Ireland was for George ‘a stalking-horse’ for his discussion of ‘the most vital of American questions’.¹⁰⁸ Ireland was for George a prominent and necessary example, because of the visibility of the Irish land question in the political debate and popular opinion of the United States in the 1880s. As such, it offered a means to convince Americans of the need to revise their own system. In expressing ‘sympathy’ with Ireland, Americans had committed – wittingly or unwittingly – to an opinion that recognized the inherent inequality of their own system.

¹⁰² Henry George, *The crime of poverty* (Cincinnati, OH, 1885), pp 31-31.

¹⁰³ George, *The Irish land question*, p. 22.

¹⁰⁴ George, *The Irish land question*, p. 30.

¹⁰⁵ Henry George, *The condition of labour: an open letter to Pope Leo XIII* (London, 1891), pp 3-4.

¹⁰⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 20-21.

¹⁰⁷ George, *The condition of labour*, p. 5.

¹⁰⁸ George, *The Irish land question*, p. 55.

‘How futile any such attempt to secure equality would be—how even more clearly futile must be any attempt to establish an Irish peasant proprietary—may be seen from the fact, stated by Macaulay, that at the time of the accession of James II the majority of English farmers were owners of the land they tilled; by the fact that the number of French peasant proprietors is steadily diminishing, although the habits, customs, and traditions of the French peasants are much more favourable to the permanence of small properties than are those of the Irish; and especially by the fact that in the United States, where we started with a closer approach to equality in the division of land than in a country like Ireland is now attainable, a process of concentration has been steadily going on which is rapidly turning the great mass of our people into tenants.’¹⁰⁹

American sympathy with the Irish was in this sense ironic, because the US system perpetuated the faults of the British system that had created the Irish distress. Worse still, the American case was absent of the sense of home and ‘family affections’ found in Ireland. The stadial development of Western, then British, private property in land had created a US system of ‘misery’ and made the laborer into a ‘nomad’. The political promise of the United States suggested that it ‘should be ours to show [Ireland] the way. This we have not done; this we do not do.’¹¹⁰

A new system

Henry George used an account of Irish history and politics to promote a universal vision. In his universalism, he articulated a reform that combined the ideologies of classical liberalism and socialism. The merits and moralistic basis of liberalism retained their value, yet the progress of liberal empire proved the presence of certain faults in the system that in turn affected the ability of liberalism to function. Poverty, whether of the Irish farm laborer or the urban city dweller, for example, effected a reduction of

¹⁰⁹ George, ‘Land purchase for Ireland’, p. 348.

¹¹⁰ George, *The Irish land question*, pp 55-56.

individual freedoms and independence and, thus, its growing presence throughout the late nineteenth century indicated systematic liberal decline.¹¹¹

More importantly, George noticed the US system conceptually as the outcome of the progress of liberal empire, especially after the trial and renewal of the Civil War. George had determined that the US system in its current iteration, as an improved but similar system to the British system, perpetuated the institutional problems seen in the UK and Europe, despite its claims to fundamental change or a new path for humanity. As in the examples of Henry Carey and E. L. Godkin, Ireland was a useful means to compare the systems and articulate the divergent path of the United States. In George's case, however, Ireland very clearly confirmed the similarities of the US and the British systems. The destitute Irish farmer was synonymous to the impoverished laborer who George passed on the streets of San Francisco. Both were results of the same extended period of societal development, and both thus identified the shortcomings of liberalism.

Socialistic practices would restore an equilibrium to society. The collective, Western, ideological failure emerged from land ownership practices based on a misunderstanding of history. It was not true, he said,

‘that land had always and everywhere been treated as private property...On the contrary, the common right to land has everywhere been primarily recognized, and private ownership has nowhere grown up save as the result of usurpation. The primary and persistent perceptions of mankind are that all have an equal right to land, and the opinion that private property in land is necessary to society is but an offspring of ignorance that cannot look beyond its immediate surroundings – an idea of comparatively modern growth, as artificial and as baseless as that of the right divine of kings.’¹¹²

¹¹¹ George, *Progress and poverty*, p. 257.

¹¹² George, *Progress and poverty*, p. 332.

Since the failure was of a practice so central to the development and functioning of political institutions in the modern Western world, the resistance to the change would be great, which was ostensibly why the US system proved the most appropriate venue to realize the change. George encouraged politicians and voters to look beyond the immediate and familiar histories of Western Europe and the United States. In his argument, society had reached a developmental stage from which it would inevitably experience decline without a fundamental adjustment to its institutions. The fact that the historical and modern examples of common ownership of land seemed ‘primitive’ or from an earlier stage of social development – from ‘the early history of society’ – did not imply their inadequacy. It merely identified the various points of departure, where the modern systems of the West, including the US system, began their process of decline.¹¹³

This oneness to his conception of stadial development did not preclude him from distinguishing the US system. The United States still presented as the system with the best ability to change. The narrative of Irish history and the presence of the Irish in the United States helped clarify the advanced nature of the US system, even if it was subject to the same, universal problem of private property in land. George’s means to achieve a properly balanced liberalism and socialism was to abolish private property in land. Given the radical and separatist nature of Irish republicanism, Ireland singularly occupied his attention, because it might have been a test case for his theory.

This thesis now turns to the intellectual defense of the US South in the broader Civil War era, which was an articulation of a conservative vision that contrasted with George’s radicalism. To Southern writers and intellectuals, socialism assumed an imperial posture

¹¹³ For quoted text, see George, *Progress and poverty*, pp 332-33.

when the North supported abolitionism and the destruction of the Southern system.

Private property, especially in land, was sacrosanct.

Part II: Themes

Chapter 4. Southern writers and Ireland in the Reconstruction Era

In July 1865 James Murray Mason, Confederate commissioner to the United Kingdom and to France during the American Civil War, found himself in the home of his English friend, William Shaw Lindsay, recently retired Member of Parliament for Sunderland and a wealthy merchant involved in the cotton trade. Lindsay had prominently lobbied for his government's support of the Confederate States and during this time he became a close associate of Mason. Mason reflected on the defeat of his South. These were still early days and emotions ran high. His insights, though, encapsulated the Southern nationalistic sense of defeat and a commitment to continued resistance. He wrote, 'What is to be the future of the South...It is certain as the result of the war, the whole South is now prostrate and powerless—that war was for independence—an independence believed to be from political considerations indispensable to the safety and welfare of the people.'¹ 'Prostrate and powerless' – that much was true. Military defeat left its leaders consigned to the margins. For men like Mason in 1865, there was no nation, a 'war for independence' had been lost. It was more bitter, too, because it was professedly a defensive war for 'the safety and welfare of the people'. Mason's understanding of defeat rested on three principles: 'Independence is deferred', 'the people of the North and South as communities are separated forever', and the United States government 'is no longer a Republic'.²

This re-conception of Southern nationalism is hardly a mystery to historians. Drew Gilpin Faust, Heather Cox Richardson, and Gaines Foster, among others, have traced its

¹ James Murray Mason, 'Memorandum' from *Mason and Hotze letters, miscellaneous, 1862-68*, p. 165. (Massachusetts Historical Society, Charles Francis Adams II Papers, carton 26/29).

² Ibid.

long development and permanence.³ Historians, including Faust and Thomas Bender, have situated the American ideologies present in the broader Civil War era in a global context, both from the perspective of individual mindsets, in the sense of thinking globally, and from a comparative perspective, since violent nationalism was widespread in the mid-nineteenth century.⁴ James Murray Mason's reflections were in one sense wholly insular. He thought of his South, his home, now in a state of physical destruction. Mason and fellow Southern nationalists, though, had for many years considered their arguments as part of the larger political struggles taking place in Europe in the middle-nineteenth century against 'centralization', 'despotism', and 'tyranny'. Defeat in the Civil War may have changed the tone, sometimes only slightly, but it did not erase the notion Southerners had of their connections to others in the Western world in their own struggles for liberty.

In this transnational milieu of intellectual engagement with nationalism and sovereignty, Southern writers and intellectuals frequently cited the example of Ireland as a subject entity within the British Empire. Like their arguments about the South itself, there was continuity and change in the way Southerners invoked Ireland as a reference point in the middle-nineteenth century – changes based on new realities, most significantly, of course, Southern defeat. The Southern interpretation of Irish history and politics in one sense revealed the complications of the Southern intellectual sense of place and purpose in the broader Civil War era. Southern writers and intellectuals defended the South as a social

³ See Drew Gilpin Faust, *A sacred circle: the dilemma of the intellectual in the Old South, 1840-1860* (Baltimore, MD, 1977); eadem, *The creation of Confederate nationalism: ideology and identity in the Civil War South* (Baton Rouge, LA, 1982); Heather Cox Richardson, *West from Appomattox: the reconstruction of America after the Civil War* (New Haven, CT, 2007); and Gaines Foster, *Ghosts of the Confederacy: defeat, the Lost Cause and the emergence of the New South, 1865-1913* (2nd ed., Oxford, 1988).

⁴ See Drew Gilpin Faust, 'A southern stewardship: the intellectual and the proslavery argument' in *American Quarterly*, xxxi, no. 1 (1979), pp 63-80, especially pp 72-73; and Thomas Bender, *A nation among nations: America's place in world history* (NY, 2006), chapter 3, 'Freedom in the age of nation-making', pp 116-181.

and economic system of distinction with a higher calling in the course of human history, qualities that they also noticed as inherent to Ireland. The narrative of Irish history was used by Southern writers to help define the nature of their continued and growing sense of concern with the seemingly aggressive and oppressive behaviors of the federal government. Their use of Ireland helped articulate a sense of a separate Southern nation that persisted despite the military defeat.⁵

Defining the distinctiveness of the Southern system

Southern writers and intellectuals in the antebellum period, exemplified by the ‘sacred circle’ of William Gilmore Simms, James Henry Hammond, Edmund Ruffin, Nathaniel Beverley Tucker, and George Frederick Holmes, intentionally placed the history and current status of the South in a global context, established within the Romantic idiom that then predominated in American and European thought.⁶ The diligent study of historical trends and principles allowed them to see history as, essentially, a ‘moral science’, as Holmes remarked.⁷ Their appeals to world history and politics in their writings revealed many layers to their conceptions of the position of the US South in comparison to other historical systems.⁸ Promoting Southern nationalism, they emphasized a progressiveness within the Southern system, weighed against the ‘free’ systems of the northern states of the Union and of Europe.

⁵ For studies of the Irish Americans and the US South, see especially David T. Gleeson, *The Irish in the South, 1815-1877* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2001); and, Kieran Quinlan, *Strange kin: Ireland and the American South* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2005). See also David T. Gleeson, 'Another "Lost cause": the Irish in the South remember the Confederacy' in *Southern Cultures*, xvii, no. 1 (2011), pp. 50-74.

⁶ See Faust, *A sacred circle*, pp 18-19. Simms came up with the notion of a ‘sacred circle’.

⁷ Quoted in Faust, *A sacred circle*, p. 73.

⁸ For the ‘sacred circle’ and their analyses of historical narrative, see *ibid.*, p. 75.

The Southern system in the mid-nineteenth century turned on the cultivation and export of cotton. The intellectuals' defense of the system, then, reflected a particular point in Southern history: an endpoint of a half-century of growth in cotton production.⁹ Cotton comprised over half of national exports between 1815 and 1860.¹⁰ Cotton instituted industrial and economic change on a global scale. The American South was at the center of this global economy, and Southerners in the early to middle nineteenth century recognized their centrality. Sven Beckert remarks, 'American cotton farmers had succeeded in turning themselves into the world's most important growers of the industrial age's most important commodity.'¹¹

The Southern intellectual narrative of history developed a clear evolutionary line from the ancients to the American South. This general conception of a grand historical drama of the decline and fall and rise of nations, of course, was shared by Northerners and Western Europeans. The Southern narrative was distinguished for its justification of slavery and the new plantation model, as unique from European examples of plantation. Southern writers defended slavery in the 1850s through the start of the Civil War in 1861 as a response to abolitionism and the realities of American western expansion, which had gradually and perceptibly reduced Southern political influence and weight in Washington. This process seemed to be a contradiction to what they had observed as the reality of Southern prominence.

They responded using various formats. William Gilmore Simms, for instance, used fiction to remind his readers that Southerners served the central role in the American

⁹ See, Sven Beckert, *Empire of cotton: a new history of global capitalism* (NY, 2014), especially chapter 5, 'Slavery takes command', pp 98-135.

¹⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

¹¹ *Ibid.*

Revolution. They appealed to history. The most prominent of the historically-focused writings that explained the South in terms of human progress emphasized the ‘natural’ order – a biblically-derived world view that identified slavery’s existence from the earliest days of recorded history, sanctioned by God as a suitable means of civilizing uncivilized and un-Godly peoples.¹² This conception meant, too, that government itself was ‘natural and prescriptive – God-made, not man-made’.¹³ In practice, Southern writers said the slave-owning planter exemplified missionary Christianity and served the good of human progress. This religious appeal was a direct challenge to the abolitionists. The justification of the planter and the rights of property in slaves in present political circumstances worked in tandem, in their minds, with the true political history of the United States and the larger narrative of global history. The long view upheld slavery as Christian and progressive, and the short view defended the legitimacy of Southern slaveholding as guaranteed in US constitutional law.

These long and short views converged in the mid-nineteenth century as a critique of the alternative system, the ‘free’ labor industrialism of the North and Europe, especially of Britain. Southern writers anchored their critique with global references. Capital and labor, they said, prevented human development. The polemicist George Fitzhugh suggested that instituting white slavery would recapture the value of the white laborer lost in the industrial system.¹⁴ He argued, ‘Slavery is but domestication and civilization.’¹⁵ These Southern writers, even those more calmly analytical than Fitzhugh, used the terminology of slavery and freedom in a wider sense, and they agreed that Southern chattel slavery was more humane than Northern industrial slavery – hence the trope of

¹² See especially Faust, *A sacred circle*, for commentary on this religiously-inspired Southern argument.

¹³ George Fitzhugh, ‘Horace Greeley and his lost book’ in *Southern Literary Messenger*, xxxi (1860), pp 212-220 at p. 212.

¹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 219.

¹⁵ Fitzhugh, ‘Horace Greeley and his lost book’, p. 219.

‘white slavery’. Non-human ‘capital’ was cold, lifeless, harsh, and unforgiving.¹⁶ The free system dehumanized the worker, making him ‘worse than a slave’.¹⁷

The critique of the industrial system was often the point where Southern writers invoked Ireland. Ireland proved the weaknesses of the system: ‘To speak of Ireland would be superfluous. The orator, the poet and the historian have recorded her woes in memorials more lasting than brass. She stands as the Niobe of modern times, turned to very stone for the loss of her children, swept away by starvation and disease.’¹⁸ The state of Ireland ostensibly demonstrated the idea of ‘free’ societies hypocritical. There was nothing free about a system that drove men to toil and emigrate for fear of starvation and that led to famine.¹⁹ In these arguments, Southern writers were Malthusians, arguing that free systems promoted overcrowding and created artificiality and unnecessary accumulation.²⁰ Southern politicians, too, cited Malthus.²¹ The fundamental point was that the Northern system was based on the British system. The British system had created urban squalor and vice, and rural famine and depopulation, and was unsustainable, just as Malthus had warned.

The purpose Southern writers had in mind was two-fold: to attach Northern anti-slavery politicians, journalists, and activists to the British; and to question the motives of these Northerners. In 1850 in *The Southern Quarterly Review*, David James McCord utilized

¹⁶ See, for example, George Fitzhugh, *Cannibals all!* (Richmond, VA, 1857) and idem, ‘The white slave trade’ in *Debow’s Review*, xxiv, no. 4 (1858), pp 269-74.

¹⁷ R. E. C., ‘The problems of free society’ [i/iii] in *Southern Literary Messenger*, xxvi (1858), pp 401-418 at p. 416.

¹⁸ Ibid., p. 408.

¹⁹ See R. E. C., ‘The problems of free society’; George Fitzhugh, ‘Horace Greeley and his lost book’; and, George Fitzhugh, *Sociology for the South, or the failure of free society* (Richmond, VA, 1854), especially pp 14, 42-43.

²⁰ R. E. C., ‘The problems of free society’, p. 403.

²¹ See Dennis Hodgson, ‘Malthus’ *Essay on population* and the American debate over slavery’ in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, li, no. 4 (2009), pp 742-770 at p. 744.

these tactics in a critique of the British Navigation Laws, an argument seconded by his spouse, Louisa S. McCord, four years later in the same periodical.²² David McCord wrote that the Navigation and Corn Laws were the basis of all protective legislation that served only to protect those already wealthy and ‘to retain white slavery, while they profess abhorrence for black’.²³ Money and political power accumulated at the center, ‘for the benefit of the monopolist “at home”’, while the peripheries withered.²⁴ Timing was critical here: McCord wrote one year after the repeal of these Navigation Laws. The implication was that the Northern system sought to replicate a discredited British colonial system.²⁵ New England desired to make ‘colonies of the South’.²⁶ Lest northerners forgot – and the argument here was primarily aimed against the northern protectionists – the United States had rebelled against that very system.²⁷

In the early 1850s, the McCords identified the tariff as a primary example of Northern interference in the Southern system, an attempt to commandeer the profits of the global cotton trade. Ireland featured in these antebellum protectionist arguments because of its status as a subject member of the British system that Southerners claimed the North replicated, and because Northern protectionists themselves, especially Henry Carey, against whom Louisa McCord directed her pen, often used Ireland as an example of the negative effects of the ‘British free trade system’ in their writings promoting protectionism.²⁸ Thus, both Southern and Northern political economists noted Ireland as helpful to separate sides of the same argument. Northern protectionists like Carey were

²² David James McCord, ‘The anatomy of the navigation laws’ in *Southern Quarterly Review*, xvi (1850), pp 416-444; Louisa S. McCord, ‘Carey on the slave trade’ in *Southern Quarterly Review*, xxv (1854), pp 114-84.

²³ D. McCord, ‘The anatomy of the navigation laws’, p. 417.

²⁴ David James McCord, ‘Navigation laws’ in *Southern Quarterly Review*, xvii (1850), pp 48-75 at p. 54.

²⁵ D. McCord, ‘The anatomy of the navigation laws’, p. 423.

²⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 425.

²⁷ L. McCord, ‘Carey on the slave trade’ pp 131-32.

²⁸ See chapter one of this thesis for Henry Carey.

wrong in their facts, though, said the McCords: before 1780, Britain treated Ireland as ‘a foreign conquered country’, below the status of a colony.²⁹ Fear of insurrection led Parliament to grant Ireland colonial status. Ireland, thus, was a false example. If anything, Ireland proved the errors of protectionism, not of free trade.

Identifying the shift in British policy upon the repeal of the Navigation Acts allowed Southerners to endorse current British trade policy, which was important because of the significance of the British to the Southern cotton export trade.³⁰ Southern writers assessed Britain as a colonial power in neutral terms, a response conditioned by their hierarchical views of society. Britain’s possessing of colonies, even under what could be characterized as despotic rule, was not bad per se. Colonial subjects required the guiding hand of British government.³¹ In antebellum Southern writings, in fact, the presence of the British colonial system seemed helpful to Southern arguments about their own system. The British system had already experienced a long period of development, it was still expanding, and it was still a dominant feature of the global political setting. Southerners readily conceded that there were negative byproducts of it. The conclusions made, though, were positive because of the narrative of the British as a civilizing power. The important point was that it was a contained system and not an American one.

Like the British colonial system, slavery might have occasional negatives. The trajectory, though, remained in a positive direction. The slave population grew, lands under slave labor expanded, and slaves domesticated and lived in peace. Its uniqueness did not imply wrongness. In antebellum defenses it proved the opposite. The successes of the Southern

²⁹ D. McCord, ‘The anatomy of the navigation laws’, p. 430.

³⁰ Ibid., p. 444.

³¹ See L. McCord, ‘Carey on the slave trade’, pp 165-68.

system, present and future, meant everything except an exit from slavery. Arguments, as they had for years, emphasized the rights to expansion of lands under cultivation within this system, because control of lands equated to influence within the federal government. In this framework, antebellum Southern writers portrayed the North and its interests in Congress as interrupting their legitimate access to natural growth. The fundamental precept that allowed them to compare the Southern slave system and the British colonial system from a patriarchal perspective without drawing the conclusion that slaves would eventually outgrow their inferior status and deserve independence from that power, like American colonists had, was, of course, the racist conception of blacks as beneath whites.

In the antebellum period the agrarian simplicity of Ireland had a certain appeal to Southerners, who thought of the South in this same way.³² Outsiders painted Ireland as backwards, a narrative that Southerners often forwarded, too. Northerners and many Europeans did the same for the South. The Southern intellectual defense against such attitudes rested on their sense of distinctiveness. Foreigners – including, in the minds of Southerners, their fellow American citizens of the North – made judgments without justification. Any comparatives these foreigners referenced proved inadequate. Only Southerners knew the true character of the system. Thus, while they found Ireland appealing for its pastoralism and sympathized with the Irish because of British oppression, it was unlike the South, because it existed as a component of the British system, and the Southern system was unique. Southern writers and intellectuals understood their system, being the first of its kind in the world – a truly patriarchal, Christian slave system – as siloed from the outside world. For them, the South was

³² The opposite – of the Irish thinking that Ireland was like the South – John Mitchel was the foremost example. See James Quinn, ‘John Mitchel and the rejection of the nineteenth century’ in *Éire-Ireland*, xxxviii, nos. 3-4 (2003), pp 90-108.

progressive. It had as much or more of a claim as a New World advancement from the Old World as any other region or component of the US system. Ireland, a symbol of the wrongs of the British economic system, which the North had imported into the US, helped to prove this claim.

The dislocation of war and reconceptions of the system

The Young Ireland exile J. F. X. O'Brien emigrated to the United States in the late 1850s, settling in New Orleans. In Louisiana, he met one of his former Dublin associates, Richard D'Alton Williams. O'Brien, in his autobiography written between 1895-98, recalled a story Williams told him of Williams' early days in the United States. A traveling Yankee salesman had hired Williams to assist him during a business trip to the South. They peddled goods and ended in Savannah, Georgia, where the salesman left Williams to tend the store they had set up there, while he returned North to replenish supplies. Soon after the Yankee left, an angry mob approached the store, declaring that they had been swindled. They verbally and physically abused Williams, who cried innocence of any knowledge of improper dealings. Soon enough the crowd determined that he was an Irishman, thanks to a fellow Irishman's presence in the mob. Thereafter, the crowd 'united in welcoming and feting him'.³³ Maybe this minor story should be dismissed as insignificant, because the social makeup of the crowd is unknown, the exact circumstances are murky, and it had only been recorded on paper forty years after it occurred. The tenor of the story suggests otherwise, however, because his identity as an Irishman helped him. The Yankee, understandably, was the enemy. When Williams'

³³ J. F. X. O'Brien, *For the liberty of Ireland at home and abroad*, ed. Jennifer Regan-Lefebvre (Dublin, 2010), pp 56-57.

background was revealed, his association with the Yankee evaporated, and he became one of the crowd.

What O'Brien's story does invite is a questioning of this curious personal element to Irish and Southern perceptions of their similarities with each other. Though it is only one small example, it would suggest that David Gleeson and Kieran Quinlan are correct to argue that Irish immigrants in the South experienced less animosity from 'native' Americans than their counterparts in the North.³⁴ Perhaps the mob saw in Williams a reflection of themselves, both victims of governments they thought had no place for them. Or were both the Southerners and the immigrant merely the stooges of the Yankee?

All these types of connections – a brotherhood in political marginalization, the societal othering of them, the victims of Northern deception – imparted meaning to the Williams encounter in Savannah. The setting of Savannah itself increased the likelihood of familiarity with the Irish immigrant, since it contained one of the largest Irish-immigrant communities in the South.³⁵ In Southern urban centers like Savannah and Charleston, relations between Irish immigrants and 'native' citizens at times, undoubtedly, proved contentious, as they did throughout the country. Frictions were tempered, though, because the Irish were white and of a nation that stood, at least conceptually, alone. In the antebellum and Civil War era, many Southerners thought of the South in this same way – as a nation within a nation.

³⁴ See Gleeson, *The Irish in the South*; and Quinlan, *Strange kin*.

³⁵ See David T. Gleeson and Brendan J. Butimer, "'We are Irish everywhere': Irish immigrant networks in Charleston, South Carolina, and Savannah, Georgia" in Enda Delaney and Donald R. MacRaild (eds), *Irish migration, networks, and ethnic identities since 1750* (London, 2007), pp 39-61, for evidence of the vibrancy of the Irish immigrant community in Savannah.

The terminology of Southern ‘nation’ was used as a synonym for race or a ‘type’ of person.³⁶ One view of the Southern nation – not the exclusive view but certainly the most prominent among Southern intellectuals in the 1850s and 1860s – validated longstanding political differences of the North and the South by emphasizing differences in the origins, classes, and religions of the colonial settlers of New England and the South. This historical narrative allowed Southern intellectuals to distinguish white Southerners from white Northerners in racial terms.³⁷ This notion of a Southern nation was patriarchal, with the white male planter as the ideal type. He was often defined as a Cavalier in contrast to the radical Puritan men who had achieved prominence in Northern society.³⁸ Historians have attributed the Southern attention to the Puritan versus Cavalier narrative as a religious argument that centered on the moral progress of the nation.³⁹ This religious development argument served as further evidence by the 1850s of divergent traditions and divergent political and social philosophies, with the South favoring conservatism and the North liberalism.⁴⁰

In 1861 the conceptual Southern ‘nation’, of course, became an actual nation upon the establishment of the Confederate States of America. Southern writers and intellectuals by and large assisted the war effort and put their literary careers on hold. Several served in the Confederate War Department, others kept a modicum of a newspaper service alive,

³⁶ See Faust, *The creation of Confederate nationalism*.

³⁷ See ‘Northern mind and character’ in *Southern Literary Messenger*, xxxi (1860), pp 343-349; J. Quitman Moore, ‘Southern civilization; or, the Norman in America’ in *Debow’s Review*, xxxii (1862), pp 1-19; and ‘The difference of race between the Northern and the Southern people’ in *Southern Literary Messenger*, xxx, no. 6 (1860), pp 401-409.

³⁸ See William R. Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee: the Old South and American national character* (3rd ed., Cambridge, MA, 1979), especially pp 327-341.

³⁹ See Jan C. Dawson, ‘The Puritan and the Cavalier: the South’s perception of contrasting traditions’ in *The Journal of Southern History*, xlv, no. 4 (1978), pp 597-614; Dawson referenced earlier studies with these same conclusions, including Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee* and Rollin G. Osterweis, *Romanticism and nationalism in the Old South* (New Haven, CT, 1949).

⁴⁰ Dawson, ‘The Puritan and the Cavalier’, pp 599-600, and Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee*, p. 335.

and others went to Europe as Confederate diplomats.⁴¹ The onset of fighting changed, for most, the argumentative defense of the nation. Northern politicians, abolitionists, and journalists had previously attacked the Southern race, using Congressional legislation and public opinion to reduce Southern influence and slander Southern values. Physical attack, understandably, meant more.

Violent conflict altered the Cavalier story of the South. What was previously an emphasis on differing moral codes and religious values now became more emphatically a political argument.⁴² In this vein Southern writers and intellectuals interpreted the American Civil War as the final battle of the English Civil Wars.⁴³ Confederate president Jefferson Davis noticed this narrative in a December 1862 speech in Jackson, Mississippi:

‘Our enemies are a traditionless and a homeless race; from the time of Cromwell to the present moment they have been disturbers of the peace of the world. Gathered together by Cromwell from the bogs and fens of the North of Ireland and of England, they commenced by disturbing the peace of their own country; they disturbed Holland, to which they fled, and they disturbed England on their return. They persecuted Catholics in England, and they hung Quakers and witches in America.’⁴⁴

The War, though, also exposed the fiction of the Puritan versus Cavalier narrative, because Southerners did not fight to preserve or reestablish an aristocracy; their fight, they said, was against a moneyed aristocracy of the North.⁴⁵ The Cavalier-planter type,

⁴¹ See Terry A. Barnhart, *Albert Taylor Bledsoe: defender of the Old South and architect of the Lost Cause* (Baton Rouge, LA, 2011), pp 125-45 for an example of one Southern journalist’s activities during the Civil War. See Marc-William Palen, ‘The Civil War’s forgotten transatlantic tariff debate and the Confederacy’s free trade diplomacy’ in *Journal of the Civil War Era*, iii, no. 1 (2013), pp 35-61, for an examination of certain diplomatic objectives of the Confederacy.

⁴² Dawson, ‘The Puritan and the Cavalier’, p. 612.

⁴³ *Ibid.*, p. 607.

⁴⁴ ‘Jefferson Davis’ speech at Jackson, Miss.’ in *The Papers of Jefferson Davis*, available at Rice University, The Papers of Jefferson Davis online (<https://jeffersondavis.rice.edu/archives/documents/jefferson-davis-speech-jackson-miss-0>) (3 February 2021).

⁴⁵ See Taylor, *Cavalier and Yankee*, pp 336-37.

then, existed as another narrative symbol of a lost promise of the South, of an ideal based in partial truths that symbolized, in their minds, better times.⁴⁶

The symbolism of the Cavalier South persisted during and after the war, and for a time it persisted in practice as a corollary of Confederate diplomacy, or at least a convenient reference point for Confederate diplomats, who sought recognition from the British government of their independent status. George Murray Mason, Henry Hotze, Edwin De Leon, and others lobbied Parliamentarians and published articles in the British press in attempts to sway public opinion to their cause. Their main supporters in Parliament and business were industrialists connected to the cotton trade, whose own financial interests had become intertwined with the South. Mostly Tories and many from the landed gentry class, they emphasized the South's fight for sovereignty and de-emphasized the importance of abolitionism in the war.⁴⁷ Nonetheless, at a surface level, Confederate diplomats and intellectuals noticed a theoretical link between the aristocracy, i.e., the Cavalier-type, and the Southern Cavalier/planter ideal. This partial truth mostly evaporated when it became clear in 1863 that the British government would not publicly recognize the independence of the Confederacy.

During the war years, the exigencies of conflict dispensed with nuance. The Irish had previously fit into Southern conceptions of 'nation' as separate from the rest of the United Kingdom. Southern diplomats ignored ephemeral matters and pragmatically pushed Parliament to notice and restrict the recruitment of Irish citizens into the Union armies. The war, as Noel Ignatiev has noted, served to assimilate the Irish immigrant into full

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ For discussions of British support of the Confederacy, see Palen, 'The Civil War's forgotten transatlantic tariff debate'; see also Henry Blumenthal, 'Confederate diplomacy: popular notions and international realities' in *Journal of Southern History*, xxxii, no. 2 (1966), pp 151-71.

American citizenship, because of the notable and visible participation of the Irish in both the Union and Confederate Armies.⁴⁸ Even before fighting, though, the Southerner William Archer Cocke, writing in the *Southern Literary Messenger* in 1855, noted the Irish as part of ‘the Caucasian family’ – a notable difference from an earlier characterization in the *Southern Quarterly Review* of the ‘native’ Irish as ‘an imbecile clan’.⁴⁹ By the end of the Civil War, then, Southerners viewed Ireland with the pre-existing narratives – a place of sadness, emigration, famine, and poverty – and with a people that were used by the Northern armies for battle based on the helplessness of their condition.

Postbellum adjustments

Defeat and the cessation of fighting left most Southern writers and intellectuals with despair and many with personal financial distress, often with loss of property and livelihood. A modicum of order slowly came, as seen in the re-establishment of *Debow’s Review* in 1866 and the establishment of *The Southern Review* in 1867. Southern writers and intellectuals took account of what they had lost and the prospects for their society. In this philosophical moment, the Irish participation in the Civil War presented an example of a lost opportunity. A contributor to *Debow’s Review* in 1869 characterized the Southern conception of the Irish at the time:

‘We were always of opinion that the Irish immigrants who quitted their native country because of the oppression of England, should have strongly sympathized with the Southern States. Those who condemned O’Connell because his political agitation was not sufficiently decisive, especially. The Scotch and Irish rebellions, so called, were both wars for secession; for regaining the separate sovereignty, and recognized representation of each of these States. Perhaps we should appreciate

⁴⁸ See Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish became white* (2nd ed., NY, 1995).

⁴⁹ William Archer Cocke, ‘Types of mankind; concluding view’ in *Southern Literary Messenger*, xxi (1855), pp 23-30 at p. 26. For ‘imbecile clan’, see: J. Y. B. ‘Prichard’s unity of the races’ in *Southern Quarterly Review*, xx (1851), pp 206-238 at p. 236.

the ardent love of native country that considered the Union much more efficient to affect the liberation of Ireland, than the agency of two separate and independent sections, each embittered against the other, and therefore not willing to cooperate in anything. We have had many evidences during the war, and more since, that the Irish influence in America is for a just and equal reconstruction, and against reducing any State of the Union to the exact condition in which Ireland finds herself, and which many emigrants quitted the country to avoid. The love of country would cover any mere error of judgment, and the memory of Cleburne and the thousand other Irishmen who sanctioned the Confederate cause with their blood, is too dear to us to justify any hostility towards those of their countrymen who took a different view in the contest.’⁵⁰

These Irish references recall the themes of James Murray Mason’s missive and his conclusions: that the South had missed one opportunity for independence, though the objective remained; that North and South were still, fundamentally, separate communities; and that the US government abandoned its original republican principles.

The tone of the connections made between the South and Ireland by *Debow’s* was entirely intimate, but the writer revealed certain anxieties about the Irish as immigrants to the United States. Separately, this editorial again suggested a Southern mindset imbued with global history. A basic familiarity with Ireland was to be expected. Irish historical references might seem unremarkable in this sense. What is noteworthy is how the writer used this Irish history implicitly to weigh the American Civil War on the scales of time and history. There was, the editorialist said, an alignment between Irish rebellion in 1848 and Southern secession in 1861. That connection was easier because of the O’Connell condemnation – O’Connell’s intense abolitionism was known throughout the United States. Paired with the notice of ‘the Scotch and Irish rebellions’ of the seventeenth century, the implication was that political compromise was unsatisfactory in both the short and the long term.

⁵⁰ ‘The Irish in America’ in *Debow’s Review*, vi, no. 4 (1869), pp 307-310 at p. 310.

After establishing this historical setting, the editorialist appealed to the readers' emotions. It was a sense of disappointment, of a lost opportunity for the Irish to prove themselves on the world stage as the advocates of sovereignty that they always proclaimed to be. This frustration did not mean condemnation, because the Irish, it seemed, held the love of their own country above all else, even if it served to the detriment of the South in the late Civil War. The Irish showed a 'love of county [that] would cover any mere error of judgment', by implication the same love of country that Confederate soldiers embodied. The Irish who fought in the Union armies received their dispensation. In giving this dispensation, Southern writers effectively assumed the role of a Catholic priest with all its connotations: they blessed the Irish in their continued struggles for independence; they forgave their missteps; they noted their deeply felt concerns for the well-being of the Irish people; and they offered penance, which meant a continuance of Irish American support of 'a just and equal reconstruction'.

This paternalistic forgiveness, however, implied shortcomings. Harsher judgment than what was seen here in *Debow's* rendered the Irish who fought for the Union as unthinking puppets of the power-hungry Northern system. Such a critique remarked on both the realities of military recruitment during the war years, when Irish immigrants were drafted into service soon after arrival in American ports, and on the antebellum discourse of Irish depravity in the North, resulting from the Northern industrial labor system.

Southern reactions to the Fenian agitations of this immediate postbellum period, too, reinforced the judgmental view of the Irish. Fenianism often occupied the front pages of newspapers across the country in the late 1860s and editors frequently commented on Irish revolutionary activity and Irish politics. The most sensational of this newspaper coverage followed the Fenian raids into Canada in April and June 1866. The *Abbeville*

Press (South Carolina), for example, said it spoke for all Southerners in calling the Fenian movement ‘entirely chimerical’.⁵¹ Jefferson Davis called it ‘a farce to make angels weep’.⁵² The American government’s unwillingness to suppress Fenianism and the Northern population’s encouragement of the Fenians seemed spiteful, reactionary, and obviously in opposition to neighborly behavior.⁵³

It might have seemed that a more obvious Southern reaction to rebellion against a great power would have been encouragement rather than disdain and pity. The relationship between Southerners and Irish Americans was complicated, as *Debow’s* had said, but Fenianism, surely, proved the Irish commitment against tyranny. Southern writers were generally unwilling to encourage the Fenians, though, because they were unwilling to assign proper agency to the Irish as a free-thinking and self-acting people.

The Fenian raids into Canada demonstrated to one Southern writer that the United States was a ‘first rate power’ to Britain’s ‘second rate’.⁵⁴ The US government allowed the Fenians to organize and train on American soil; and, even after a flagrant breach of territorial sovereignty that was repelled by the British Canadians, Congress censured the President when he issued a proclamation denouncing the Fenian raid at Ridgeway in June 1866 and demanded that he lobby for the release of Fenian prisoners held by the Canadians.⁵⁵ While this behavior in reality proved the importance of the Irish vote, said a contributor to *The Southern Review* in 1867, it was evidence for Southern writers that the

⁵¹ ‘The Fenian invasion of Canada’ in *Abbeville Press* (15 June 1866), available at *Chronicling America: Historic American Newspapers*, Library of Congress, (<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042527/1866-06-15/ed-1/seq-2/>) (28 November 2018).

⁵² John Joseph Craven, *Prison life of Jefferson Davis* (2nd edition, NY, 1905), p. 216.

⁵³ ‘The British North American provinces and the United States’ in *The Charleston Mercury* (28 February 1867).

⁵⁴ ‘Canada and the United States’ in *The Southern Review*, ii, no. 4 (1867), pp 448-61 at p. 457.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

Radical Republican-controlled Congress was not motivated by noble principles.

Separately, the British would have been entirely within their rights to apply more pressure to the US government, hence the opinion emerged of Britain as a second-rate power to the United States as a first-rate power.

The implication here was that the Irish were pawns in the confrontational political atmosphere between the United States and the United Kingdom after the war, which they in a sense were. In both these scenarios in the immediate postbellum environment, then, Southern writers expressed the Irish as unthinking or passive actors. The Irish lacked wisdom when they fought for the Union and when they attacked Canada, but they did not lack passion. They were misguided, perhaps, but admirable. More so than passive actors, they were victims of two imperial powers, the United Kingdom and the US North.

While usually accompanied with the caveat that the Irish were not ready for self-government, Southern writers also used Fenianism as proof of what they said was permanent racial antagonisms. This time, unlike in antebellum racial diatribes that accentuated the distinction of a Southern white race from a Northern white race, though that notion persisted, the primary emphasis rested on proving blacks and whites in the South would never co-exist successfully.⁵⁶ Despite political union, the Irish remained separate from their British fellow-citizens.⁵⁷ The Irish, for Southern writers, were a race apart. Their presence proved that amalgamation of peoples was sometimes not possible or desirable.

⁵⁶ See Dr. Stuart, 'The Anglo-Saxon mania' in *Southern Literary Messenger*, xxxvii (1863), pp 667-688 for the antebellum conception of distinct Southern and Northern races.

⁵⁷ See, for example, 'The danger of antagonism between the races' in *The Charleston Mercury* (15 March 1867).

Even Southern assessments of Irish American participation in the Civil War, in both Confederate and Union armies, set the Irish in a middle ground. This judgment kept the Irish partitioned from the Northern 'race'. A contributor to *The Southern Review* noted 'exhibitions of courage in Irish troops', whose 'persistent gallantry elicited universal admiration'.⁵⁸ The foreignness of the British in Ireland, the oppression of the Irish by that foreign presence, and the protracted nature of the Irish struggle against foreigners served as the focal points in Southern narratives on Ireland in this period. The Irish race had been threatened on many fronts but had remained a race apart: 'this old Hibernian race, were privileged to retain...through all invasions and admixtures of other races, their native tongue and their own civilization'; 'with spirit unbroken' they persisted in the effort 'to recover some reasonable share of their lost liberties and ancient rights'.⁵⁹

The case of The Southern Review

The Southern Review, a quarterly periodical established in 1867 by former Confederate War Department official Albert Taylor Bledsoe (1809-1877), thought this Irish example of continued commitment to heritage and tradition important for its readers. Frank Luther Mott, the foremost chronicler of the history of American periodicals, called the *Review* an 'incomparable' source for 'an interpretation of the postbellum mind of the intellectual South'.⁶⁰ Bledsoe and his *Review* helped define the Lost Cause narrative.⁶¹

⁵⁸ 'Ireland and her miseries' in *The Southern Review*, ii, no. 3 (1867), pp 3-34 at pp 14-15.

⁵⁹ 'Ireland and her miseries', pp 9 and 15.

⁶⁰ Frank Luther Mott, *A history of American magazines* (5 vols., Oxford, 1938-1968), iii, p. 383.

⁶¹ For the most recent biography of Bledsoe, see Barnhart, *Albert Taylor Bledsoe*; see pp 158-59 for Barnhart's discussion of Bledsoe's importance to defining the Lost Cause narrative.

Before founding the *Review*, Bledsoe defended the right to secession in his 1866 book, *Is Davis a traitor; or was secession a constitutional right previous to the war of 1861?*, largely written during his residence in London from 1863-66. He argued that Northern powerbrokers had denied their true goals of centralizing federal power and that Northerners held little regard for the Constitution. *Is Davis a traitor* concluded that, based on the text of the Constitution, secession was legal. The outcome of the war, however, meant the Constitution had now been permanently altered – a reality that Southerners must recognize – and a conclusion shared by other Southerners, including J. D. B. DeBow, who took a more optimistic view of how the South could respond to defeat by promoting immigration and industry.

Bledsoe's position of fundamental constitutional change evoked a 'trial by battle' conception – the idea that the long-gestating sectionalism of American government could only have been settled in conflict.⁶² In the pages of *The Southern Review*, Bledsoe and his contributing writers extended this argument, along with many narratives that became hallmarks of the myth of the Lost Cause.⁶³ They celebrated, for instance, Robert E. Lee and the resolve of the Confederate armies despite the overwhelming resources of the North.⁶⁴ More critically than these occasional remembrances of Lee and Confederate leaders, though, *The Review* seized a historical narrative that it thought proved the legitimacy of Southern nationalist ideology and disproved Northern liberalism, a continuation of the historical narrative previously used to justify slavery, with modifications. Bledsoe and his contributors used world history to both frame and

⁶² See Cynthia Nicolette, 'The American Civil War as a trial by battle' in *Law and History Review*, xxviii, no. i (2010), pp 71-110, especially p. 76.

⁶³ See Gaines Foster, 'Review of *The myth of the Lost Cause and Civil War history* by Gary W. Gallagher and Alan T. Nolan' in *The Georgia Historical Quarterly*, lxxxv, no. 2 (2001), pp 319-21 at p. 319 for a summation of the principle elements of the myth of the Lost Cause.

⁶⁴ See Albert Taylor Bledsoe, 'Davis and Lee' in *The Southern Review*, ii, no. 3 (1867), pp 231-42.

strengthen their defenses of the South. Like so many American journals of the period, they gave French and British history and politics significant notice. More so than contemporaneous journals, though, *The Southern Review* used the history and politics of Ireland in a relatively concerted manner.

During *The Southern Review*'s twelve-year run, five articles reviewed Irish affairs, in addition to several short book notices featuring Irish history and politics. 'Ireland and her miseries' appeared as the first article in the third issue of *The Southern Review* in July 1867 and was the first article in the *Review* to have a singular focus on one foreign country. Its aim was to document similarities in the histories of Ireland and the US South as a means of drawing larger conclusions about humanity: 'As human nature is much the same everywhere, and like causes produce like results...evils of this very kind [as experienced in Ireland] will, without some improvement not now indicated, be here the fruitful progeny of unauthorized coercion on one side, and ineradicable resentment on the other'.⁶⁵ The politically-charged 'Ireland in 1870' concluded by asking skeptically, 'When we think of the faction fights and the election riots of [recent] years, we might well ask, in case the Irish achieve their independence, "What will they do with it?"', a pessimism that seemed contradictory given that the article noted direct parallels between Southerners and the Irish.⁶⁶ In 1873 an article appeared titled, 'The annals of Loch Cé' – saying as much about the eclecticism of the *Review* itself as highlighting an interest in Ireland.⁶⁷ A rather judgmental account of the Irish peasantry came in 1874; tragedy and nostalgia in the form of 'Robert Emmet' in 1876.⁶⁸ Articles in the *Review* were unsigned and scant records exist today. It seems possible that an American resident in Ireland or

⁶⁵ 'Ireland and her miseries', p. 18.

⁶⁶ 'Ireland in 1870' in *The Southern Review*, viii, no. 15 (1870), pp 187-206 at p. 206.

⁶⁷ See 'The annals of Loch Cé' in *The Southern Review*, xiii, no. 28 (1873), pp 367-87.

⁶⁸ See 'The Irish peasantry' in *The Southern Review*, xv, no. 31 (1874), pp 117-39; and, 'Robert Emmet' in *The Southern Review*, xx, no. 40 (1876), pp 370-95.

Great Britain wrote ‘Ireland in 1870’, ‘The annals of Loch Cé’, and ‘The Irish peasantry’, based on the sources and textual references. Mary Stuart Smith of Virginia wrote ‘Robert Emmet’.⁶⁹ The most consequential article for this analysis, ‘Ireland and her miseries’, though left unattributed, adhered closely to Bledsoe’s idiom.

The Southern Review built the Irish metaphor, most clearly in ‘Ireland and her miseries’, as an anti-imperialist directive. Centralization was the crux of the concerns facing those of Bledsoe’s ilk, because it conceptually encapsulated the fears they had expressed in their defense of Southern institutions and the devolution of power prior to secession, and it provided a framework for expressing feelings of diminishment in the immediate postbellum years. Northern imperialism had won the latest battle in the supposedly long struggle between devolution and centralization. *The Southern Review* recalled similar themes from earlier Southern writings and used Ireland to define their heightened relevance, given the North’s now stronger claims to ascendancy in the confidence of victory. The Irish had lost to a stronger military power many times, after all, but they still fought.

‘Ireland and her miseries’ was based on a review of the English barrister and historian Francis Plowden’s five-volume history, *An historical review of the State of Ireland*, published in London in 1803 and printed in Philadelphia two years later, and the four-volume American edition of Archibald Alison’s *History of Europe from the fall of Napoleon in 1815 to the accession of Louis Napoleon in 1852*, published in New York in 1860. A pedestrian account of Ireland’s natural resources and geography established a

⁶⁹ Smith’s authorship is noted in Frances E. Willard and Mary A. Livermore, *A woman of the century* (Buffalo, NY, 1893), p. 669, and a typed manuscript of the article is contained in the Papers of the Smith and Harrison Families at the Small Library, University of Virginia.

baseline that Ireland may now be the image of misery, but it was not owing to natural causes. Evidence, too, proved that Ireland's pre-modern civilization succeeded. Since, unlike Britain, the Romans and Saxons never invaded Ireland, 'they really stand forth before the nations as among the most venerable of the tribes of Christendom, holding their country by a title more ancient perhaps, and therefore more unquestionable, than that of any other people in Europe'.⁷⁰ Ireland's insularity meant Christianity, once introduced and made sustainable, flourished as compared to its European peers. Irish education advanced beyond match. It became 'virtually a university for other countries of Europe'.⁷¹ In this early period, Ireland exhibited 'a most gratifying degree of order, intellectual and moral development, and general well-being'.⁷² The Viking invasions, the author conceded, challenged this notion of a strong Irish civilization. Though the Irish eventually triumphed over the Danes, the protracted nature of that struggle left a power vacuum that encouraged 'local strife among the composite [now intermixed with Danes] population, antagonism between the provinces composing the kingdom, and contests for supremacy on the part of rival chieftains', which left Ireland exposed to her English neighbors, who now 'lust[ed] for empire'.⁷³ This narrative confirmed that external factors, when introduced into an established community, brought disunity, social regression, and weakness.

This background provided the framework for the pivotal moment, one that adhered closely to Plowden: Pope Adrian IV's issuance of *Laudabiliter* in 1155.⁷⁴ A false and deceptive directive, it ostensibly provided cover for the English to invade Ireland. Adrian

⁷⁰ 'Ireland and her miseries', p. 9.

⁷¹ 'Ireland and her miseries', p. 10.

⁷² *Ibid.*, p. 11.

⁷³ *Ibid.*, pp 12-13.

⁷⁴ See Francis Plowden, *An historical review of the state of Ireland* (5 vols., Philadelphia, 1805), i, pp 25-28.

IV authorized William the Conqueror to take possession of Ireland to – the author quoted *Laudabiliter* – ‘root out from among them their foul sins and wickedness’. Adrian required ‘all the people of that land do with all humbleness, dutifulness, and honour, receive and accept you as their liege lord and sovereign’ and that the Irish people pay an annual tithe to the papacy.⁷⁵ *Laudabiliter* allowed the British to ‘accomplish so effectual a settlement in [Ireland] as to defy dislodgement, and to become the basis of a claim to national control, and of harassing operations, which have, during these seven hundred years, proved to the Irish people nothing short of an unmitigated curse’.⁷⁶ What began with the Danish invasion – the foreign as destructive influence – became entrenched with the Norman invasion, such that the British presence could not be removed.

The theme of the foreign element itself stood on a level ground with the theme of greed. The foreign created conditions for greed to flourish. Power-hungry individuals used disturbance for personal advancement and enrichment. Their actions fed a growing centralization. In Ireland after *Laudabiliter*, the clergy assumed this role. The clergy held responsibility for the disunity and sectional strife that existed at the time of the Norman invasion and that prevented a successful resistance, because of the clergy’s desire to favor a centralized power structure as a means of ensuring close adherence to Rome.⁷⁷ The author cited the 1317 remonstrance letter from Irish chieftains to Pope John XXII to prove this point and to show that the ‘traditional’ Irish were in a state of opposition. The letter documented the failures of the English to adhere to the terms of *Laudabiliter* and the false foundations that *Laudabiliter* used as justification for invasion. The chieftains argued that the very act of inviting a foreign power into Ireland sowed the division and moral

⁷⁵ ‘Ireland and her miseries’, p. 13.

⁷⁶ ‘Ireland and her miseries’, pp 13-14.

⁷⁷ Ibid., p. 16.

corruption that the clergy and their English accomplices had falsely claimed the Irish lacked, and it left Ireland prostrate to further conquest.

The emphasis on the role of the clergy in this history of the removal of rights and property introduced themes of hypocrisy and cunning. The clergy, aligned with the English, seemingly undermined the Irish way of life. They did not think about the spiritual or moral welfare of their laity, rather the money and power of the foreigners. With papal sanction and a complicit clergy, the English pursued a course of land confiscation, political centralization, and social control. The natives of Ireland felt a relentless rising tide of oppression by these illegitimate overlords. The ‘tyranny of the strong’ prevailed.⁷⁸

The lessons of *Laudabiliter* and the subsequent history of Ireland served as warning to Southerners about the ramifications of current political actions being taken in the United States and the prospects of a long struggle against usurpers from a ‘foreign’ North. The author of ‘Ireland and her miseries’ summarized this argument and inserted direct terms of relevance for a Southern audience circa 1867:

‘Thus were wrongfully wrested from Ireland her own independent government, and her ancient laws, and hereditary rights; and thus passed into the hands of an adverse foreign people, the control of the country, the disposal of its lands and other property, and the exercise of irrepressible, arbitrary power over the lives, liberties, and happiness of the population originally endowed by the Almighty with that fair heritage. Of the wrongs since perpetrated, and the miseries resulting, during...the last seven hundred years, eloquent voices have from time to time told the tale in the ear of Christendom...but wholly unrelieved remains the all-comprehending evil of foreign, unsympathizing, anti-Irish, and iniquitous misrule, spoliation, and oppression. **And conspicuous as is the terrible lesson, a course of wrong precisely parallel, though incalculably less justifiable and more pernicious, has just been inaugurated by the aggressive and now dominant section of this country, and the government it has consolidated, toward the Southern and injured section** [emphasis added].’⁷⁹

⁷⁸ ‘Ireland and her miseries’, p. 18.

⁷⁹ Ibid., pp 16-17.

Identifying *Laudabiliter* as the foundation of Ireland's current political problems served a specific comparative purpose. *Laudabiliter* was a political pronouncement in history that proved how a 'despotic' or 'tyrannous' power became entrenched. 'Ireland and her miseries', then, identified several points of parallelism between the English presence in Ireland and the Northern presence in the South. The legitimacy of secession was presumed, thus the reference to an 'independent government' 'wrongfully wrested' by 'an adverse foreign people'. Land and property rights in both cases were ignored by the 'dominant' power. 'Liberties' and 'happiness' of the people were transgressed.

Timing was critical here. 'Ireland and her miseries' was published in July 1867. Various civil rights and reconstruction legislation had passed Congress in the immediate post-war period, including the Freedmen's Bureau bills that helped formulate political and legal protections for blacks, and the Civil Rights Act of 1866, a precursor to the Fourteenth Amendment, proposed in late 1865 but not ratified until July 1868. The failure of former Confederate states to even consider ratification of the Fourteenth Amendment, which protected citizenship rights on a federal level, followed by the landslide Radical Republican victory in the Congressional elections of 1866, led to the March 1867 passage of the Military Reconstruction Act, which gave black men suffrage in the South, a right not extended throughout the country until the states ratified the Fifteenth Amendment in 1870, and imposed federal military districts across the former Confederate states – effectively, martial law.⁸⁰

⁸⁰ Eric Foner, 'The Supreme Court and the history of Reconstruction – and vice-versa' in *Columbia Law Review*, cxii, no. 2 (2012), pp 1585-1606 at p. 1586; see also David P. Currie, 'The Reconstruction Congress' in *The University of Chicago Law Review*, lxxv, no. 1 (2008), pp 383-495 at pp 386-88.

Like the example of Irish history, though, in the Southern viewpoint, these immediate political measures fit within a larger historical narrative, as the latest elements of a long-emerging trend. For this trend Southern writers, particularly in *The Southern Review*, turned to the political history of the United States and deployed an argument well-used in the antebellum period. They argued that the illegitimacy of the US political system rested in the compromises made based on a series of false interpretations of the US Constitution. This argument was why the parallels of Ireland and *Laudabiliter* were so appealing.

These Southern writers had long told their readers that the Constitution was a contract. In and of itself, it did not constitute the government. The government was the people, who had agreed to this contract.⁸¹ The US Constitution, unlike most European government charters, had a firm, factual, and unquestionable origin. The publication of the proceedings of the Constitutional Convention in 1819 clearly and factually illustrated this beginning. There was, as Bledsoe himself wrote, ‘no resemblance to those imaginary transactions which certain European writers have invented to explain the origin of their governments, and to give stability to their political theories by fastening them, as with anchors, to past ages’.⁸²

It was a coordinate argument to the way *Laudabiliter* was used to explain Irish history. *Laudabiliter* was myth or fiction to the US Constitution’s fact. The Northern anti-slavery argument was myth to the pro-slavery argument’s fact. An accurate comprehension of history, based on recorded documentation of the Constitutional Convention and revelations of its miscomprehension by anti-Southern politicians and activists, meant the

⁸¹ See Albert Taylor Bledsoe, *Is Davis a traitor; or was secession a constitutional right previous to the war of 1861?* (Baltimore, 1866), pp 33-34.

⁸² *Ibid.*, p. 41.

disturbing forces that caused the rifts that erupted into outright war were clearly documented, which absolved the South of responsibility. Doubt was cast on what might pass as official history of the US sectional crisis and its results.

Laudabiliter and the US Constitution both began processes of disenfranchisement that led to despotism and tyranny. ‘Ireland and her miseries’, though, did not subscribe to what would have been a more consistently Southern explanation that the Puritans were to blame for Ireland and the South’s troubled histories. It was true that the Irish had aligned themselves in the great battle between Puritan and Cavalier, however, with the Cavalier.⁸³ *The Southern Review* characterized the 1641 Rebellion in Ireland as a ‘the great uprising of 1641, mainly directed against the misrepresenting Parliament, and the bitterly persecuting Puritans then in power. Seldom has human blood flowed more copiously...than in that tremendous contest between aggressive Puritan radicalism, then fresh in its career, and the defenders of their ancient faith, homes, and possessions.’⁸⁴ The contributor used a familiar trope and blamed ‘Puritan radicalism’ against defenders of an ‘ancient faith, homes, and possessions’ – an upstart disrupting traditionalism.

In this instance, though, Puritan radicalism was a newer, even if more aggressive, form of a bigger problem in Ireland: foreign despotism. Henry VIII’s repudiation of Catholicism, of which the 1641 Rebellion was a result, held greater significance as a parallel to the South’s more recent history. Henry’s tyranny introduced another type of religious rancor in Ireland, and religion became the engine of an ever-increasing tyranny from which Puritan radicalism resulted.⁸⁵ The contributor noticed in Henry and his Protestantism an

⁸³ See ‘Ireland and her miseries’, p. 23.

⁸⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 23.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 20.

earlier version of Northern religious radicalism and abolitionism. Henry used religion to increase political and monetary power, as evident in his treatment of the Irish. The implication was that Northern religion was a cover for the same desires for greater money and power – essentially the same argument about the ahistorical origins of the Constitution.

In both cases, the author placed emphasis on deceitful behavior that sought centralized control. Further, this shift away from the purely Puritan-Cavalier explanation signified that Southern intellectual thought had more clearly decoupled their Southern ‘race’ from its aristocratic Englishness, and it suggested a deeper connection with the Irish, because both Southerners and Irish were persecuted based on religion.⁸⁶ As Ireland in antebellum Southern thought had been aligned with the Cavalier against the Puritan, now, ‘Ireland and her miseries’ suggested, Irish Catholicism was aligned with Southern nationalism against despotic, centralized governments that masqueraded as faux religions.

This idiom of *The Southern Review*, by way of ‘Ireland and her miseries’ and its numerous articles about the US Constitution, the sectional crisis, and the philosophies of human rights, freedom, and religion, was, indeed, a diatribe against centralization – a critique of American power and expansionism from within the system. The mode of expression involved extensive documentation in an attempt at intellectual detachment. None other than former Confederate President Jefferson Davis, though, need be turned to to find what lay beneath when postbellum Southerners looked to Ireland. Davis, during his imprisonment in Fort Monroe in August 1865, noticed the Cromwellian era in Ireland

⁸⁶ See W. M. Burrell, ‘England in search of an ally’ in *Debow’s Review*, vi, no. iii (1869), pp 177-200, available at *Making of America Journal Articles* (<http://quod.lib.umich.edu/m/moajrnl/acg1336.2-06.003/179>) (15 January 2019), for his discussion of English identity in the United States, an article written in response to the publication of Dilke’s *Greater England*.

as the natural historical parallel to the current situation of the South, in conversations with John Joseph Craven, his prison-physician. Davis had spent time reading Bancroft's *History of the United States* and Macauley's *History of England*.⁸⁷ Craven paraphrased the conclusions Davis had reached:

'The system of settlement and confiscations under Cromwell, in Ireland, was precisely what his people were now threatened with. The cry then was, "To [hell] or Connaught!" whither an attempt was made to drive and herd together the whole people. Whole estates, and even counties, were confiscated by orders of the council, on no other plea than that the proprietors were either of the Irish race, or, being born on Irish soil, had Irish sympathies or habits. This history now threatened to repeat itself in the United States, the cry only varying to read, "To [hell] or Mexico!" and the locality changed from Ireland to the South. There was no excuse for it here; there had been some in Ireland. Between the conquering forces of Cromwell and the Irish there were essential differences of race, religion, habits, laws, and hopes. There had been war for centuries, and no promise of future tranquility on less rigorous terms. Were the races the same, though controlled by different ideas; their religion, habits, and laws almost identical, and with only a single internecine war to interrupt the harmony of their joint occupation of the continent—there was the further parallel that both countries suffered for loyalty to what each regarded as the rightful government; Ireland, for devotion to the Royal Family of the Stuarts; and the South, for its fidelity to the principles defined by the Constitution of 1787.'⁸⁸

Davis, like *The Southern Review*, argued that British actions in Ireland were more justifiable than the Northern treatment of the South. He did not conceive of racial distinctions separating Northerners and Southerners, as they did English and Irish. The Irish, despite so many parallels, were still a separate and, by implication, possibly an inferior race.

The Irish, though separate, were true to principles, like Southerners. Both Jefferson Davis and *The Southern Review* in the late 1860s expressed disillusionment, isolation, and fear. Their new reality meant an adjustment to defeat. When they invoked Irish history to narrate this reality, they defined an attitude of resistance. Before the war, Southern

⁸⁷ Craven, *Prison life of Jefferson*, p. 215.

⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

intellectuals defended their centrality to the historical growth and success of the American political establishment. ‘Ireland and her miseries’ – the lessons of Irish history – showed those stories must change. What was once pride of place within the establishment, must become pride of place in opposition, because Southerners must expect, if Irish history showed anything, a continual attack on their rights and property.

Stories

The doyen of the antebellum Southern literary world, William Gilmore Simms – like Bledsoe, his *Southern Review* contributors, and Jefferson Davis – struggled to come to terms with the collapse of a social order that he had defended for decades.⁸⁹ Simms lost his home and personal library in the destruction wrought by William Tecumseh Sherman’s march through South Carolina in the final stages of the war.⁹⁰ His postbellum catalogue was limited, and he edited and contributed to the Charleston *Courier* to support his family.⁹¹ Simms, in an article for the *Courier* in 1866, argued like Albert Taylor Bledsoe that constitutional questions caused the war.⁹² In his 1866 novel, *Joscelyn*, Simms used the American Revolution, a setting he had used much in the antebellum period, to explore the themes of responsibility for conflict and post-conflict vengeance.⁹³

⁸⁹ For studies of Simms, see Faust, *A sacred circle*; John R. Welsh, ‘William Gilmore Simms, critic of the South’ in *The Journal of Southern History*, xxvi, no. 2 (1960), pp 201-14; and John W. Higham, ‘The changing loyalties of William Gilmore Simms’ in *The Journal of Southern History*, ix, no. 2 (1943), pp 210-23.

⁹⁰ Nicholas G. Meriwether and David W. Newton, ‘Introduction’ in idem (eds) *Pirates and devils: William Gilmore Simms’s unfinished postbellum novels* (Columbia, SC, 2015), pp 1-8 at p. 1.

⁹¹ Ibid.

⁹² Charles S. Watson, ‘Simms and the Civil War: the revolutionary anthology’ in *The Southern Literary Journal*, xxiv, no. 2 (1992), pp 76-89 at p. 87; Watson cites Simms, Charleston *Courier* (13 November 1866).

⁹³ See Watson, ‘Simms and the Civil War’, pp 86-88.

An unpublished, unfinished novella from the postbellum period titled ‘Sir Will O’Wisp or the Irish baronet: a tale of its own day’ explored his personal reckoning with defeat.⁹⁴

‘Sir Will O’Wisp’ recalled, in tone and phraseology, Simms’s 1838 ‘Jack-O’-Lantern: a new-light story’.⁹⁵ ‘Jack-O’-Lantern’ told of a simple encounter between a writer, Mr. Silex, and the devil, his ‘familiar’.⁹⁶ The devil and Silex arranged for the devil to serve Silex in his work. The story was only four pages of text in *The Southern Literary Review*. Simms indicated it was the first ‘And, possibly, chapter last, since I cannot be certain that the reader will so highly approve of my devil as my own does’.⁹⁷ Only this first chapter appeared. ‘Sir Will O’Wisp’ again involved Mr. Silex and his ‘familiar’, who came to an agreement in much the same way as in the 1838 story. The devil in the later story offered his assistance in whatever way Silex desired: ‘I am an actor of all work, as the comedians call themselves. I can be a boon companion, a grave counsellor, a curious penman, and a dapper valet. Make me what you please, with a will, and rely on me to be the thing which you most desire. I will take no refusal; you must employ me.’⁹⁸ Silex employed him as a valet and editorial assistant. In private, he served Silex’s whims and improved his written work. In public, ‘Sir William’ took on a life of his own, beyond his association with Silex. Will assumed the persona of an Irish gentleman when he ventured into society with Mr. Silex:

‘At the Spread Eagle [hotel] I shall ostensibly remain, as Sir William O’Wisp, the Irish Baronet. I shall deliver my letters tomorrow to all your aristocratic and fashionable people. I have provided all necessary credentials, and have in memory all the Irish Chronicles, from the very hour, when St. Patrick first fixed

⁹⁴ William Gilmore Simms, ‘Sir Will O’Wisp or the Irish baronet; a tale of its own day’ in Meriwether and Newton (eds), *Pirates and devils: William Gilmore Simms’s unfinished postbellum novels* (Columbia, SC, 2015), pp 128-178.

⁹⁵ William Gilmore Simms, ‘Jack-O’-Lantern: a new-light story’ in *The Southern Literary Messenger*, iv, no. 5 (1838), pp 336-339; I owe this connection between the two stories to Meriwether and David W. Newton, ‘Introduction’ in idem (eds), *Pirates and devils*, pp 1-8 at p. 5.

⁹⁶ Simms, ‘Jack-O’-Lantern: a new-light story’, p. 336.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

⁹⁸ Simms, ‘Sir Will O’Wisp or the Irish baronet’, p. 134.

his eye on the snakes of the country making them skedaddle almost as fast as the Yankees at Bull Run.’⁹⁹

This assumption of Irish nationality involved, on one level, a simple play on the name of will-o’-the-wisp. On a deeper level, though, in Simms’s fictional Southern city circa 1868, Sir William proved equally appealing as an aristocrat and as an Irishman. Silex quoted a newspaper account of the excitement caused by the Irish gentleman’s arrival in the city:

‘Of the special objects of this important visitor, nothing is precisely known, but it is shrewdly conjectured that its purpose has reference to the cause of the Fenians. Sir William is known to carry a warm Irish heart in his noble bosom, and his patriotism has undergone no chill in consequence of the temporary reverses of the cause of Fenianism. It is rumored that several of the Head Centres have had secret interviews with him since his arrival in this country, and last night he was known to be closeted with several visitors, all unknown, but suspected, until a very late hour.’¹⁰⁰

William found this narrative that developed amusing: ‘You owe it all to the bold free inventive genius of your own people. Wonderful people! They save us all trouble in working out our problems and anticipating their own future uses in a realm, where their liberties shall be still larger, if not more elevated.’¹⁰¹ In a way this was a criticism of the whimsicality of the people, willing to accept narratives without searching for meaning.

Taking on an Irish persona, though, allowed the people to formulate a specific narrative, and the heightened reporting on Fenianism in the period placed Irish republicanism in the public sphere, so it was a ready narrative. Later, this inventiveness of the people led to a rumor that Sir William’s mission ‘was shrewdly suspected that under the auspices of the British Government, he was seeking to make up a colony of the discontented whites of Mongrelia [Simms’s fictional name for the South], for the resettlement and restoring of

⁹⁹ Simms, ‘Sir Will O’Wisp or the Irish baronet’, p. 146.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid., pp 147-48.

¹⁰¹ Ibid., p. 148.

the abandoned bogs of Ireland.’¹⁰² This reversed the Fenianism narrative and played on the conspiratorial nature of public rhetoric, in addition to its Cromwellian overtones of ‘to hell or Connaught’ language.

Simms’s short story was primarily a tale of an author in conversation with the devil. The Irish themes present in the story perhaps reflected no more than a familiarity and fascination with Ireland, though ‘Sir William’ was an Irish-inspired demon serving as confessor and guide. Simms’s notice of Ireland in ‘Sir Will O’Wisp’ revealed the more intimately developed connection postbellum Southern intellectuals made between Ireland and the South in comparison to the detachment of Irish imagery or metaphors in antebellum accounts. In this same period, Simms wrote in an 1867 letter, ‘Every thing in the social atmosphere is miserable...The whole South is in this condition, and is doomed to be the Ireland of the Union—a perpetual incubus.’¹⁰³ Ireland and the South occupied an otherworldly position, in narrative fiction and personal correspondence. Simms, in expressing his personal discomfort and loss after defeat, envisaged a connection to Ireland.

Others did the same, including the Virginian Mary Stuart Smith and Varina Anne ‘Winnie’ Davis, daughter of Jefferson Davis, who both looked to the story of Robert Emmet to find order out of destruction and loss. Robert Emmet was a relatively known figure among nineteenth-century Americans. His execution speech was celebrated as an exemplar of oratory and widely disseminated in the United States in the early-nineteenth century. Fourteen editions appeared of *Irish eloquence, the speeches of the celebrated*

¹⁰² Simms, ‘Sir Will O’Wisp or the Irish baronet’, p. 160.

¹⁰³ Mary C. Simms Oliphant *et al.* (eds), *The letters of William Gilmore Simms* (5 vols., Columbia, SC, 1956), v, p. 36.

Irish orators, Phillips, Curran, and Grattan, to which is added, the powerful appeal of Robert Emmet, at the close of his trial for high treason, selected by a member of the bar after its initial publication in Philadelphia in 1832.¹⁰⁴ His romance with Sarah Curran and the tragedy of his final days with her was told in print and on the stage. There was a serial newspaper narrative that appeared in papers across the country, especially at mid-century. Some, like the 12 April 1866 ‘The extraordinary speech of Robert Emmet—an historical episode’ from the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, published in *The Tri-Weekly Standard* (Raleigh, NC), referenced the recent Fenian agitations and sought to provide context to Irish revolutionary activity.¹⁰⁵

[Cincinnati Enquirer.]

The Extraordinary Speech of Robert Emmet—An Historical Episode.

In these times of Irish agitation and revolution, there is frequent reference made to young Robert Emmet, and his patriotic sentiment not to write his epitaph until the freedom of his native land was secured. The speech which has immortalized his name is not easily accessible, and is found in but few books of limited circulation.

When we consider the youth of Emmet—he being but twenty-two years of age—and the circumstances under which it was delivered, in reply to the question of the Court why sentence of death should not be pronounced upon him—it is a specimen of eloquence that has rarely been equalled and certainly never surpassed.

It was delivered in 1802, before the Court of which Lord Norbury was the Judge, after an abortive effort at insurrection upon the part of the Irish. No speech was ever made—nothing was ever done that has fired the hearts of Irishmen more than the reading of this extraordinary production of their greatest martyr. The British Government could have afforded better to have had him lived a thousand years than to have executed him after the delivery of this speech. It is a most capital illustration of the impolicy of capital executions for political offenses.

The youth of Emmet and his inexperience rendered him a most proper object for Government clemency, if it had taken reason and common sense as a guide, instead of blind passion and prejudice.

His brother, Thomas Addis Emmet, came to this country, and was one of the most eloquent members of the New York bar.

‘The extraordinary speech of Robert Emmet—an historical episode’ in *The Tri-Weekly Standard* (12 April 1866)

¹⁰⁴ Charles Fanning, ‘Robert Emmet and nineteenth-century Irish America’ in *New Hibernia Review/ Iris Éireannach Nua*, viii, no. 4 (2004), pp 53-83 at pp 56-57.

¹⁰⁵ ‘The extraordinary speech of Robert Emmet—an historical episode’ in *Tri-Weekly Standard* (12 April 1866), available at *Chronicling America: historic American newspapers*, Library of Congress, (<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042146/1866-04-12/ed-1/seq-1/>) (27 April 2018).

On 25 May 1866 the *Abbeville Press*, a South Carolina newspaper, published an article titled ‘Robert Emmet: his arrest, trial and execution’ as their page-one lead story.¹⁰⁶ The presence of Emmet in these two Southern newspapers in 1866 suggested both a familiarity and an endorsement of his position. Irish American immigrants throughout the country held Emmet in particularly high esteem, and his portrait often adorned their parlor room walls.¹⁰⁷

The most extensive Southern literary connections to Robert Emmet came from Mary Stuart Smith and Winnie Davis. Smith wrote ‘Robert Emmet’, an article published in the October 1876 issue of *The Southern Review*. Davis wrote an 1888 biography of Emmet, *An Irish knight of the 19th century*, published in New York. Both Smith and Davis emphasized this tragedy as a reminder that defeat did not mean a surrender of values and a condemnation of the leaders who most visibly defended those values.

Smith and Davis made the connections between Emmet and Southern leaders explicitly to honor the action of taking a principled stance and of not wavering from that stance regardless of the challenge, which, in Emmet’s case, involved facing death. Davis wrote in her conclusion, ‘Man dies, but the principles which animated him are in their very essence immortal; like the phoenix, they sink into their ashes only to rise again, doubly resplendent, upon the wings of hope’.¹⁰⁸ Similarly, Smith thought, ‘Seeing that to disinterestedness alone we must look to embalm the memory of defeated greatness, we do regard it as one of the many proofs of the divine origin and glorious destiny of man, that

¹⁰⁶ Lawrence Leslie, ‘Robert Emmet: his arrest, trial and execution’ in *Abbeville Press* (25 May 1866), available at *Chronicling America: historic American newspapers*, Library of Congress (<https://chroniclingamerica.loc.gov/lccn/sn85042527/1866-05-25/ed-1/seq-1/>) (27 April 2018).

¹⁰⁷ Fanning, ‘Robert Emmet and nineteenth-century Irish America’, p. 53.

¹⁰⁸ Varina Anne Davis, *An Irish knight of the nineteenth century: sketch of the life of Robert Emmet* (NY, 1888), p. 90.

noble and pure-minded actions are seldom allowed to pass unnoted by the pen of history, however disastrously they may have resulted'.¹⁰⁹ These narratives emphasized 'principles' and 'noble and pure-minded actions' – important components of the Lost Cause ideology that permeated Southern thought of the postbellum era.

Emmet was such a ready muse because he was celebrated throughout America in the nineteenth century by Irish emigrants and 'native' Americans alike as the symbol of the romance and tragedy that was Ireland in American minds. For Smith and Davis, he was a suitable muse because he had been assigned so much honor despite what seemed to be failure and defeat. The Irish people still loved Robert Emmet. His vision still resounded for all who called for an end to British misrule in Ireland. Using Emmet as an example for Southerners did not necessarily equate to a renewed call for Southern independence. Rather, Smith and Davis wanted proper remembrance for the honorable men who had led the South into the necessary struggle but, ultimately, the lost cause.

Personal factors contributed to both authors' utilization of the Emmet narrative.

Biographers of Winnie Davis, for instance, have attributed her interest in Robert Emmet to her own family history.¹¹⁰ Chiles Clifton Ferrell, in his 1899 biography of Davis – she died aged thirty-four in 1898 – noted the importance of her family's personal connection to Emmet by way of her maternal great-grandfather, the Irish emigrant Colonel James Kempe. Kempe had, apparently, as Ferrell conveyed, 'been one of Emmet's men before he was sixteen'.¹¹¹ Ferrell based this assessment on personal interviews he conducted with Winnie's mother, who told him that Winnie had a long interest in Ireland's history

¹⁰⁹ Mary Stuart Smith, 'Robert Emmet' in *The Southern Review*, xx, no. 40 (1876), pp 370-95 at p. 370.

¹¹⁰ See Heath Hardage Lee, *Winnie Davis: daughter of the Lost Cause* (Lincoln, NE, 2014), pp 87-88.

¹¹¹ Chiles Clifton Ferrell, *'The daughter of the Confederacy': her life, character, and writings* (Oxford, MS, 1899), p. 74.

and had ‘read at least twenty books on Irish history or subjects relating to it’ in preparation for writing the Emmet biography.¹¹² In these circumstances, Winnie’s sympathy for Emmet was natural; it was genealogy mixed with rhetorical flourish.

Mary Stuart Smith, too, had personal connections to Robert Emmet. Her family was closely connected with the University of Virginia. Her father, Gessner Harrison, was long-serving professor of classical languages, and her mother was the daughter of Professor George Tucker. She was raised in a house in the center of its Charlottesville campus and continued living there after her marriage to Professor Francis H. Smith.

In April 1825, on behalf of the founding governing board of the University of Virginia, Thomas Jefferson hired Robert Emmet’s nephew, John Patten Emmet, a son of Thomas Addis Emmet, as professor of natural history.¹¹³ Two years after arriving in Charlottesville, John Emmet married Mary Tucker, the niece of Mary Stuart Smith’s grandfather, George Tucker.¹¹⁴ George Tucker was ‘especially fond of Dr. Emmet’ and wrote a memoir of John Emmet in 1845.¹¹⁵ John Emmet died when Mary Stuart Smith was young. Smith remained in touch with Emmet’s family, who continued to live in Charlottesville after his death, and exchanged correspondence with his son Addis Emmet over the course of her adult life.

These personal connections of both Winnie Davis and Mary Stuart Smith to the Robert Emmet narrative may only imply an underlying familiarity with the United-Irishmen

¹¹² Ferrell, *The daughter of the Confederacy*, pp 74-75.

¹¹³ Thomas Addis Emmet, *The Emmet family, with some incidents relating to Irish history and a biographical sketch of Prof. John Patten Emmet M.D. and other members* (NY, 1898), p. 283.

¹¹⁴ *Ibid.*, pp 286-90.

¹¹⁵ Douglass Sherley, *Our university: ii. George Tucker, professor of moral philosophy in the University of Virginia, 1825-1845* (Charlottesville, VA, 1880), p. 555; and, *ibid.*, p. 297.

version of Irish rebellion. It does, too, though, invite further speculation, especially so in Davis's case. Did her understanding of her own grandfather's history – his forced exile from Ireland amid the suppression of a quest for independence from misrule – give special weight to Ireland as a parallel to her defeated South and, especially, to seeming similarities between Emmet and her own father? Louise Manly, in her 1895 compendium *Southern literature from 1579-1895*, made this very connection that Jefferson Davis, as the fallen leader of a cause so significant, shouldered the burden in a way precisely parallel to the manner Winnie's Robert Emmet did.¹¹⁶ What was certain, at the least, was that the story of Robert Emmet celebrated a commitment to family, to country, and to duty that both Davis and Smith found relevant to the postbellum South.

Charles Fanning argues that the emphasis on the romantic nature of Emmet relates to a notion of 'American Celticism'. This theory proposes that Irish Americanism in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries devolved into two strata, because the unsavory elements of Irish America – like Fenianism, terrorism, poverty, and licentiousness – caused educated and more-settled Irish Americans to develop their own narratives of Ireland and the Irish presence in the United States that separated their family histories from and de-emphasized the negative narratives.¹¹⁷ Winnie Davis's Irish ancestry suggests she may have made such a distinction in her mind – that her Irishness was of the older, romantic type, not of the newer, terroristic or impoverished type – a sort of gentlemanly revolutionary spirit of the eighteenth century and early nineteenth century versus both the late nineteenth century violent revolutionary spirit and the defeated, downtrodden spirit.

¹¹⁶ Louise Manly, *Southern literature from 1579-1895* (Richmond, VA, 1895), p. 270.

¹¹⁷ Fanning, 'Robert Emmet and nineteenth-century Irish America', p. 60.

Mary Stuart Smith did not have the genealogical imperative to defend Irish honor in an age when the predominant intellectual opinion said Irish republicanism rash and reckless, but her Emmet narrative was analogous to Davis's narrative. Both placed Emmet at the frontlines of the uprising that led to his execution, both identified him as an exceptional leader of men, and both highlighted the tragic story of his romance with Sarah Curran. Louise Imogen Guiney's *Robert Emmet, a survey of his rebellion and of his romance* (1904), in contrast, separated Emmet from the rebellion and from association with the rabble-like insurgents.¹¹⁸ Guiney, a second-generation Irish American from Massachusetts, was closer to the rhetorical contestation about the value of the Irish in American society, and her narrative emphases indicated the importance of class – she personally a member of this higher class of Irish, as was Emmet.¹¹⁹

Southerners in this period, though, had the ideological priority to connect Emmet the leader with Emmet's followers to provide a further defense and justification of the war they had lost. The distinction Southern writers made was one of levels of adherence to principles – those who had 'a pure devotion to [higher] principle' of 'the right of every people to choose its own form of government' versus those whose principle 'was the more interested one of the good of Ireland', and who for practicality's sake fought in the Union Armies with the notion that a strong United States would help influence Irish freedom from British rule.¹²⁰ Emmet fit in this first level of principles.

¹¹⁸ Fanning, 'Robert Emmet and nineteenth-century Irish America', p. 62.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., pp 61-64.

¹²⁰ 'Ireland in 1870' in *The Southern Review*, viii, no. 15 (1870), pp 187-206 at pp 187-88.

Conclusion

The parallelism of Irish and Southern histories did not adhere to equal chronologies but that was argumentatively acceptable for Southern writers for two reasons: the importance was in the general similarities in these historical episodes – the narratives seemed roughly the same – and time was variable. This latter element served also as a rebuke of the Irish while it was a warning to Southerners. *The Southern Review* established its construct of the South and of Ireland, as an example for Southerners, in a deeply territorial conception. The nature of the supporting elements – the narrative histories of both, of origins, culture, and progress – rested within a defined geography. This construct was a natural result of the predominant Southern political philosophy in the antebellum period, that of states' rights. Sovereignty in this sense rested within states. Defeat broke these imagined or conceived boundaries, in addition to actual boundaries, as far as Southern writers and intellectuals were concerned, when the Federal Government established military districts under Congressional Reconstruction. Antebellum Southerners had created a functioning, hierarchical society based on paternalism, order, and social cohesion. Postbellum Southerners expressed reactions to changes, real or perceived, in their society based on this antebellum social framework.

The Confederate nationalism that emerged in the war years and the collective experiences of war and defeat allowed these territorial perceptions to persist. Like the Irish, many Southerners now waited for that imagined sovereignty they had lost. It was why *Debow's Review* could remark, 'We do not wish the epitaph of Southern liberties written until, like that of Emmet, the South shall again be free.'¹²¹

¹²¹ 'Exodus: part iii' in *Debow's Review*, v, no. 5 (1868), p. 896.

Michael O'Brien, the most prominent historian of antebellum Southern intellectual thought, has concluded, 'Ireland came to be viewed in Southern discourse as the convergence of things characteristically mistrusted: British power, the enervations of Catholicism, the Malthusian perils of Europe, and the calamity of famine.'¹²² As *The Southern Review* showed, in the postbellum era Ireland was no longer an example of the problems with centralization and with industrialism; that battle was lost. Ireland did not fundamentally change the way Southern writers and intellectuals viewed their world, but as a reflection of the pain and exile they felt within their own country after defeat, there was to them no better example. The Irish example reinforced the validity of these feelings, and it mentally prepared them for a renewal of the struggle against political power.

The new order ushered in at the conclusion of the Civil War and the institution of Congressional Reconstruction changed the tone, maybe only temporarily, of Southern intellectual engagement with Ireland: in most previous situations, statements by Southern politicians or writers that the South would be made into an Ireland of the Union served as an insult, because it implied suboptimal social conditions and an impoverished economy. Now, it accepted as fact that the North did indeed want to make the South into the Ireland of the Union. It was not a warning anymore; it was a reality. So, the example of Ireland became a call to embrace that reality, and all its connotations, namely, never-failing resistance.

¹²² Michael O'Brien, *Intellectual life and the American South, 1810-1860* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2010), p. 32.

Chapter 5. The Catholic Question in the United States and assessments of Ireland

The interpretation of Ireland by American writers and political commentators in the later decades of the nineteenth century necessitated an engagement with what had been in their minds, in a certain sense, the most troubling component of the Irish presence in the United States, the Roman Catholicism of the Irish immigrants. By the end of the century, Catholics had established a cultural permanence in the United States, resulting from a force of numbers due to the increased immigration from Ireland and other Catholic-majority countries, supported and strengthened by an expansive network of local parishes that provided community support for these immigrants.¹ Catholics were three percent of the population in the United States in 1830 but became the largest religious denomination by 1900 with eighteen percent of the population.² The Irish Catholics, among the earliest of the Catholic immigrants, were the vanguard. As such, they were the recipients of invective based on their religion and social class. They also, from another perspective, benefitted as participants in the economic and political development of the US system in the postbellum era that resulted in the increased prosperity and stronger democratic representation of the Irish Americans. Their Roman Catholicism, throughout the period and despite their relatively high levels of integration into the broader community, continued to be a complication for the Americans into the twentieth century.

¹ See Jay Dolan, *The American Catholic experience: a history from colonial times to the present* (NY, 1985); and John T. McGreevy, *Parish boundaries: the Catholic encounter with race in the twentieth-century urban North* (Chicago, 1996), chapter one, 'A Catholic world in America'. David Noel Doyle notes the efforts of the clergy in fostering 'concentration and communication' to retain the allegiance of Irish Catholic immigrants in the US. See David Noel Doyle, 'The Irish and the Christian churches in America' in idem and Owen Dudley Edwards (eds), *America and Ireland, 1776-1976: the American identity and the Irish connection* (Westport, CT, 1980), pp 177-91 at p. 186.

² John T. McGreevy, *American Jesuits and the world: how an embattled religious order made modern Catholicism global* (Princeton, 2016), p. 9.

Catholicism proved to be such a long-standing concern for American writers for two rather obvious reasons. First, the narrative of the Protestant origins and nature of the United States allowed for a very limited acceptance of Catholicism. Second, Catholicism's status as a topic of intellectual concern was present from the beginning of the US system's existence. Since the colonial period, the British settlers of America imported a certain knowledge of a Catholic question predicated on the presumption that Catholicism was not properly attuned to modern life. The Catholic question for the British, says Thomas Bartlett, was a 'political issue in Ireland and in Anglo-Irish relations'.³

The tone of the question in America diverged from the more legalistic, practical concerns of the question in the United Kingdom once the Americans achieved independence, because of the stated legal and social commitments to religious diversity of the new United States; however, it retained certain elements. Though of different qualities, both American and British writers articulated the concern that Roman Catholicism encouraged political detachment or, worse, active opposition to civil government. The argument of American writers regarding the Catholic question, especially as the nineteenth century progressed, was conditioned centrally by the Irish presence and experience. The debate, then, focused on the suitability of Irish American Catholics as American democrats.

³ See Thomas Bartlett, *The fall and rise of the Irish nation: the Catholic question, 1690-1830* (Dublin, 1992). The English 'Catholic question' at its base level meant the Irish question to participants in the debate. John Drabble quotes Sidney Smith, who defined it in this way in 1826. Drabble agreed that the Irish element to the Catholic question became the dominant element to the larger question. See John Drabble, 'Mary's Protestant martyrs and Elizabeth's Catholic traitors in the age of Catholic emancipation' in *Church History*, li, no ii (1982), pp 172-85 at pp 183-84. Holly Case also calls the Irish and the Catholic questions one and the same. See Holly Case, *The age of questions* (Princeton, 2018), p. 36.

By the end of the century, the common opinion was that the US system, as an all-encompassing and conquering force, would subsume or assimilate Roman Catholicism into its system, despite the seeming imperialism of the Roman Catholic Church and its apparent desires to oppose, in nature and in kind, America's expansion. Despite the increased numbers of Catholics in the United States and their attempts at forming their own community within the American polity – with a separate education system and strong parishes, for example – the ideas that sustained the US system also ostensibly informed the American Catholic religion at its conception and shaped the developmental path of the American Catholic community. The US system in this formulation was an omnipotent force. Thus, the Irish, despite their Catholicism, belonged as part of the American empire. In turn, the examination of Irish American Catholics enabled American writers and intellectuals to revise opinion on the place of Ireland within the British Empire.

The changing interactions between nativism and Catholicism in the nineteenth century United States

A. American nativism and Roman Catholicism

Since the founding of the United States, the presumptive idea of a 'wall of separation' between church and state has been notable.⁴ Separation, though, has not meant detachment or indifference. In the antebellum period religious toleration in the United States meant Christian denominations tolerating other Christian denominations. Americans generally disdained unbelievers and tolerated non-Christians in a most limited

⁴ See Thomas Jefferson's letter to the Danbury Baptists, 1 January 1802, available at Library of Congress Information Bulletin (<https://www.loc.gov/loc/lcib/9806/danpre.html>) (11 November 2019).

way.⁵ In this sense, says Michael O'Brien, American separation of state and religion is better framed as an evolution from early modern Europe than as a distinct New World change.⁶ The state religion was, effectively, Christianity. Boundaries between church and state were indeed slowly established, but the discussion was always among Christians and with Christianity guaranteed its central position in the American polity.⁷

Catholicism, as a Christian religion, stood above Judaism and Islam, even if considered beneath Protestant sects because of its supposedly obscurantist nature. Anti-Catholic American journalists, editors, and preachers of this era focused on arguments of the incompatibility of Catholicism with the US system, because of this obscurantism, especially given their belief that the US system had evolved away from the shortcomings of Europe. Acceptance of Catholicism as an American religion suggested a corruption of American advancement. There was then, from the start, a tension between the basic fact that Roman Catholicism was a Christian religion and, thus, part of the imagined American state religion, and the argument that Catholicism was un-American.

The interpretation of Irish Roman Catholicism by American writers, especially within the narrative of Catholicism's incompatibility with American society, was in large measure a continuation of debates over Catholic Emancipation present in the United Kingdom that came to a critical point in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries. British polemicists emphasized and sustained certain sectarian narratives, such as Queen Mary's attacks on Protestants and of the treason of Elizabethan Catholics.⁸ These and similar

⁵ Michael O'Brien, 'The American experience of secularisation' in Ira Katznelson and Gareth Stedman Jones (eds), *Religion and the political imagination* (Cambridge, 2010), pp 132-49 at p. 138.

⁶ Ibid., p. 140.

⁷ Ibid.

⁸ Drabble, 'Mary's Protestant martyrs'.

narratives had been a part of the British Protestant consciousness since the English Reformation but received renewed attention near the turn of the nineteenth century because of reasonable expectations that anti-Catholic legal restrictions would change. It seemed no longer acceptable, given the emphasis on personal freedoms espoused in the American and French revolutionary movements, to bind Roman Catholics to a lower social and political status.

In the United States there were parallels to this debate ongoing in the United Kingdom and, sometimes, a simple transference of the same debate to the American setting.⁹ American publishers, for instance, printed editions of Foxe's *Martyrs* throughout the period. The earliest editions came in New York in 1810 and Philadelphia in 1813.¹⁰ At least fifteen editions of the *Book of Martyrs* were published in the United States between 1830 and 1860, a confirmation that there was a certain market for this type of polemic. There is evidence that educators in the United States in the earlier nineteenth century used Foxe for instructional purposes.¹¹ In most cases these printings were reproductions of British editions with artistic embellishments or additional commentary. An 1830 edition by the Congregationalist minister Charles Augustus Goodrich of Connecticut included a warning for the Americans:

‘To the American people, this subject presents itself with peculiar interest. Within a short period, the attention of the Pope in Rome has been directed to North America, and systematic efforts are now making, under his immediate patronage, and at his expense, to introduce and establish this corrupt system, in various parts of our land...It may be said, indeed it is said, that the persecuting spirit of Popery

⁹ John Higham noted that the ‘anti-Catholic heritage’ was ‘carried across the Atlantic’. See John Higham, *Strangers in the land*, (2nd ed., Westport, CT, 1963), p. 6.

¹⁰ See *An abridgement of the Book of Martyrs* (NY, 1810), available at Hathi Trust Digital Library (<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nnc1.50177890>) (28 June 2019) and T. Pratt and John Malham (eds), *Fox's book of martyrs* (Philadelphia, 1813), available at Hathi Trust Digital Library (<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/inu.30000120160993>) (28 June 2019).

¹¹ Orestes Brownson hints at reading Foxe in school. See Orestes A. Brownson, *Conversations on liberalism and the Church* (NY, 1870), p. 117.

has passed away. But let it be remembered that persecution is inseparable from it—is its very essence. A Church, which pretends to be infallible, will always seek the destruction of those, who dissent from it.’¹²

Mathew Carey, discussed in chapter one of this thesis, developed the most advanced American response to this anti-Catholic polemicist strain in the first three decades of the nineteenth century, and he especially defended his own Irish Catholics.¹³

The nature of the debate was, of course, different in the United States than it had been in the United Kingdom, despite the obvious parallels in rhetoric. Equal rights for Roman Catholic citizens were seemingly ensured by the US Constitution. Freedom of religious practice was seemingly a fundamental principle. In literary and intellectual circles of the first half of the nineteenth century, the ‘Catholic question’ of the United Kingdom more closely resembled the slavery question of the United States than an American Catholic question. In the US, debates over Catholicism largely remained in the hands of partisans.

B. Mid-century nativism and Irish Catholicism

There have been, of course, various forms of nativism since the founding of the United States.¹⁴ Nativism of the late 1840s and 1850s was fastened to anti-Catholic sentiment, because the object of nativist anger of the period was the poor, Irish Catholic Famine emigrant. Nativists thought this immigration a threat to their reformed, Christian, New

¹² John Fox and Charles Augustus Goodrich, *Book of martyrs* (Hartford, CT, 1830), available at Hathi Trust Digital Library (<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.ah63v7>) (28 June 2019), p. iii.

¹³ Mathew Carey, *Vindiciae Hibernicae: or, Ireland vindicated* (Philadelphia, 1819), available at Hathi Trust Digital Library (<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/hvd.hxjuk6>) (25 May 2018).

¹⁴ For an example of nativism directed at the German American community, see Freiderike Baer, ‘German Americans, nativism, and the tragedy of Paul Scheoppe, 1869-1872’ in *Journal of the Civil War Era*, v, no. 1 (2015), pp 97-125. For the historiography on American nativism, see Tyler Anbinder, ‘Nativism and prejudice against immigrants’ in Reed Ueda (ed.), *A companion to American immigration* (Malden, MA, 2006), pp 177-201. See, among others, Elizabeth Fenton, *Religious liberties: anti-Catholicism and liberal democracy in nineteenth-century U.S. literature and culture* (Oxford, 2011); Susan M. Griffin, *Anti-Catholicism and nineteenth-century literature* (Cambridge, 2004); Higham, *Strangers in the land*; and John McGreevy, *Catholicism and American freedom: a history* (NY, 2003).

World republic. By 1900 American historians had noticed that this nativist period flourished because of the peculiar political situation of the 1850s, which left the Irish Catholic immigrant as a pawn in machinations of party politics.¹⁵ In the passion of the moment, however, the centrality of the Irish Catholic immigrant as an object of reproach meant an easy association of the problems experienced with mass immigration – labor competition, urban squalor, and urban crime – and readily-available anti-Catholic narratives that described a history of squalor, criminality, and violence against Protestants.

Three nativist texts discussed here are representative of the wider literature. They are briefly summarized, and their analyses of Ireland are detailed. They were chosen because of their greater emphasis on Ireland and its Catholic character than other texts from the period, which emphasized, for instance, intrigue in Rome. Conclusions are then presented about the general nativist treatment of Irish Roman Catholicism and its history to provide a background to certain postbellum arguments that addressed the position of Irish Catholics within the US system.

Rufus Wheelwright Clark wrote *Romanism in America* (1855), a nativist polemic that used common tropes and themes of Western anti-Catholicism, such as the backwardness of Catholic countries, namely Spain, Ireland, and Mexico; the Spanish Inquisition and Spain's decline in wealth and power; Catholics as perpetrators of great atrocities against Protestants; and, the regressive nature of Catholic religious practices.¹⁶ Clark was a Yale-

¹⁵ See, for instance, George H. Haynes, 'The causes of Know-Nothing success in Massachusetts' in *The American Historical Review*, iii, no 1 (1897), pp 67-82 at p. 70.

¹⁶ Rufus W. Clark, *Romanism in America* (Boston, 1855), available at Hathi Trust Digital Library (<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/had.32044019392158>) (12 June 2019).

educated, Massachusetts native, and at the time *Romanism* was published, he was pastor of a Congregationalist church in East Boston.¹⁷ Clark identified the reverence shown to Saint Patrick and the prevalence of holy wells in Ireland as symbolisms shared with paganism, describing the transition from paganism to Christianity as merely a switch in appearance only and emphasizing the notion that Catholics were myth-bound: ‘When the priest, in his discourse, alludes to the virtues of Saint Patrick and the Virgin Mary, instead of those of Jupiter and Venus, the pagan listener might become somewhat bewildered, and yet he might reasonably suppose that these were some new gods, of whom he had not before heard.’¹⁸ Clark also included the Irish Catholics among the persecutors of Protestants in a general sense, using language such as, ‘the spirit [of persecution] manifested towards Protestants in France and Ireland’.¹⁹ Finally, he used current news from Ireland to confirm that a persecutorial attitude remained, noting a recent terrorist attack perpetrated by Catholic dissidents on a railroad line between Dublin and Belfast that caused a crash and passenger injuries.²⁰ Clark positioned Irish Catholicism as having a supporting role in his larger argument against Rome – his more pointed arguments were against Spain – and he displayed a level of familiarity with current Irish politics and society, more so than other Catholic countries, which might have played a similar role in *Romanism*. His residence in Boston undoubtedly encouraged this warning of the need to arrest a tide of ‘Romanism’ given its position, along with New York City, as a primary settlement location for Irish immigrants.

¹⁷ *Obituary record of graduates of Yale University deceased during the academical year ending in June, 1887* (New Haven, CT, 1887), available at Yale Library online documents (http://mssa.library.yale.edu/obituary_record/1859_1924/1886-87.pdf) (16 October 2019), p. 374.

¹⁸ Clark, *Romanism in America*, pp 137-38.

¹⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 178.

²⁰ Clark, *Romanism in America*, pp 179-81.

William Gannaway Brownlow, later governor (1865-69) and senator (1869-75) from Tennessee, a prominent Methodist and a newspaper editor, wrote *Americanism contrasted with foreignism, Romanism, and bogus democracy, in the light of reason, history, and scripture* in 1856, a title which betrayed any suspense in the narrative. He noticed in his city of Knoxville, Tennessee, that efforts of the locals to prevent drunkenness among newly arrived Irish Catholics were thwarted by Catholic priests, because the ‘Protestant scriptures’ were read at gatherings of the Order of the Sons of Temperance.²¹ Such practice ‘[does not] suit the Church of Rome!’²² Brownlow noted the violence of Catholics against Protestants in Europe: ‘The blood of Protestants has fertilized the soil of England, Germany, and Ireland...enough of Protestant bloods has been shed to *enrich* all the poor lands of England, Germany, and Ireland, if it were properly distributed.’²³ This argument of Irish Catholic violence meant a notice of the 1641 ‘Catholic persecution’; of which Brownlow included an illustration in his text showing ‘Horrible cruelties inflicted by the Catholics on the Protestants in Ireland, in 1641’ and an excerpt from a letter from a fellow American Party member from East Tennessee that recalled ‘the instrumentality of Tyrconnel and Catholic and Irish Rapparees’ in the commencement of the 1641 violence.²⁴

²¹ William Gannaway Brownlow, *Americanism contrasted with foreignism, Romanism, and bogus democracy, in the light of reason, history, and scripture* (Nashville, TN, 1856), available at Hathi Trust Digital Library (<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/miun.abt7662.0001.001>) (13 June 2019), p. 36.

²² *Ibid.*, p. 36.

²³ *Ibid.*, p. 56.

²⁴ Brownlow, *Americanism contrasted*, illustration on p. 94, letter on p. 116.

CATHOLIC PERSECUTION.



HORRIBLE CRUELITIES INFLICTED BY THE CATHOLICS ON THE
PROTESTANTS IN IRELAND, IN 1641.

Image from William Gannaway Brownlow, *Americanism contrasted with foreignism, Romanism, and bogus democracy* (Nashville, TN, 1856). See footnote 24.

As a top operative of the American Party in Tennessee, Brownlow's narrative expressed his real concern: 'Romanism is rapidly leading Democracy to the Devil...The Irish Catholic vote is to be fused with the Black Republicans in the North, to prevent the success of the Fillmore ticket...the Archbishop [Hughes of New York] stipulating for special legislation for Rome'.²⁵ Election data proved that the foreign (namely, Catholic) vote had allowed the Democrat Franklin Pierce to defeat the Whig Winfield Scott in 1852.²⁶ American democracy had ostensibly been usurped by Rome. Rome was the enemy, its hierarchy in the US its emissaries, and Irish Catholic immigrants its foot soldiers.

²⁵ Ibid., p. 100.

²⁶ Brownlow, *Americanism contrasted*, p. 126.

This political argument received considerable attention in Anna Ella Carroll's *The great American battle; or, the contest between Christianity and political Romanism* (1856).²⁷

Anna Carroll was a descendant from the Carroll family from Ireland that settled Maryland. Her Catholic forebears famously defended the rights of Catholics in the United States and established the American Catholic Church.²⁸ In *The great American battle*, she created a dialogue between 'America' and her old 'mother', who at one stage discussed 'Erin'. The mother, a figure of wisdom and knowledge, emphasized that Ireland resisted Catholicism during Catholicism's early expansion throughout the western world.²⁹ Her argument centered on Roman rule, 'the accursed power of Popery', as responsible for Ireland's long decline and current state of degradation.³⁰ Ireland and the United States were of the same type as offspring of the English system. Ireland's decline began with Henry II and Pope Adrian. England progressed, because it saw the errors of Roman Catholicism, which 'healed her wounds'; but England's political and diplomatic ascendancy after the Reformation, and especially after the Glorious Revolution, created an atmosphere of arrogance.³¹ This arrogance caused England 'to gall and hamper your fathers [of colonial America]...to prescribe them a course and a goal, as she had done old Ireland, when they put her into a circuitous route, and taught her the fatal error! That brought to our aid these Protestant Irish spirits, who like St. Paul and his apostles, dwelt as political slaves'.³² In her dialogue between 'America' and her 'mother', Carroll

²⁷ Anna Ella Carroll, *The great American battle; or, the contest between Christianity and political Romanism* (NY, 1856), available at Hathi Trust Digital Library (<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/coo1.ark:/13960/t4pk0zq7b>) (13 June 2019).

²⁸ See Ronald Hoffman, *Princes of Ireland, Planters of Maryland: a Carroll saga, 1500-1782* (Chapel Hill, NC, 2000).

²⁹ Carroll, *The great American battle*, p. 166.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid., p. 167.

³² Carroll, *The great American battle*, p. 167.

documented the many contributions of Irish Protestants to the American Revolution, militarily and politically.³³

The United States had successfully broken from the modern ‘circuitous route’ of England, the power of the aristocracy. Ireland had been unable to break from the older ‘circuitous route’ that England introduced, the power of Rome. She questioned why the United States would risk allowing Rome to gain a foothold through Irish immigration, echoing others like Brownlow.³⁴ Her conclusion was telling: England would never have become ‘the great and haughty empire she is today, than your own country [the United States] would be a nation’ without its renouncing ‘the dominion of a Papal Hierarchy’ – a Papal Hierarchy that ‘has Ireland sunk to wretchedness, by its victory over her!’³⁵

These three examples demonstrate the sensationalist idiom of American anti-Catholic writing of the nineteenth century. The nature of their engagement with Ireland and its history was fragmentary. Their notice of Ireland and Irish Catholicism resulted from the seemingly pressing need to address the subject owing to the increased Irish immigration into the United States in the 1850s. The close ties in language and culture and transportation links shared between the two Anglo-Protestant societies meant a greater familiarity with Ireland, its politics, and its current affairs, especially after the Irish Famine and the resulting publicity.

Nativist writers defined the United States as a Protestant country that functioned properly because of the intentional separation of church and state but with Protestantism enshrined

³³ Ibid., pp 168-69.

³⁴ Ibid., p. 172.

³⁵ Ibid.

in a privileged place. Thus, the notion of Catholicism present in the United States and directed from Rome was anathema to the American system, fears that Elizabeth Fenton, Susan Griffin, and John McGreevy, among others, have described.³⁶ The message of these nativist texts – primarily, of a Protestant society being the basis for a true American society – and the common tropes used in these writings showed the remnants of long-established Reformation-era thought. Anna Carroll and others were still inherently justifying the legitimacy of Martin Luther and Henry VIII’s repudiations of Roman Catholicism. They were able to do so because they argued from a position of strength, given Protestantism’s attachment to British imperial ascendancy and owing to the decline of the Catholic Spanish and French monarchies. A strength, too, of American Protestantism: American society, including its religion, constituted in this idiom a second Reformation that advanced beyond certain shortcomings of the United Kingdom and Europe.³⁷ Ireland deserved to remain within Britain, because the US system was a developmental progression from and beyond Britain, and Irish Catholicism helped prove the systematic failure of the British system.

C. American histories of Saint Patrick

One attractive historical narrative for American writers who were determined to challenge the legitimacy of Roman ‘rule’ in Ireland was the life of Saint Patrick, which Rufus Clark’s *Romanism in America* addressed. American writers followed the example of British and Irish Protestants in a mission to effectively expose Irish Catholicism as a fraud

³⁶ See Fenton, *Religious liberties*; Susan Griffin, *Anti-Catholicism and nineteenth-century fiction* (Cambridge, 2004); McGreevy, *Catholicism and American freedom*.

³⁷ See John F. Wilson, *Religion and the American nation: historiography and history* (Athens, GA, 2003), especially chapter 3, ‘Religion(s) of America’, pp 53-74 for another discussion of the particular idiom of American religion.

by attacking its founding figure. Although adhering closely to standard anti-Catholic and nativist idioms, the Saint Patrick argument also existed separately to them, appealing to a wider array of writers, including the Unitarian minister Moncure Conway, who wrote ‘The Saint Patrick myth’ for *The North American Review* in 1883. These arguments attempted a tone of impartiality, of a scholarly or scientific approach.

By the last two decades of the nineteenth century, archivists and historians in the pursuit of empirical history had gathered new evidence on the existence of the writings of Saint Patrick. The previous factual evidences were two texts said to be written from his pen: the ‘Confession’ and the ‘Epistles to Coroticus’. Otherwise, much of the popular understanding of Patrick had developed from myth. New studies of Saint Patrick and Irish religion, such as James Henthorn Todd’s *St. Patrick, apostle of Ireland* (1864) and, earlier, John Lanigan’s *Ecclesiastical history of Ireland* (1822), served as guides to American writers on these topics.³⁸ In 1882 the Reverend Edmund Hogan, a Jesuit researcher in Brussels, had found an ancient manuscript of Muirchi Maccu Mactheni’s ‘Life of St. Patrick’³⁹, written at the direction of Aedh, Bishop of Sletty, in the late seventh century.⁴⁰

³⁸ William Craig Brownlee used Lanigan as a source in his *Saint Patrick and the western apostolic churches: or, the religion of the ancient Britains and Irish, not Roman Catholic; and the antiquity, tenets and sufferings of the Albigenses and Waldenses* (NY, 1857), available at Hathi Trust Digital Library (<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/nyp.33433068188477>) (17 June 2019); Moncure Conway used Todd extensively in his ‘The Saint Patrick myth’ in *The North American Review*, cxxxvii, no. 323 (1883), pp 358-71.

³⁹ The author was also known as Muirchú moccu Mochtene. See John Ryan, ‘St Patrick, apostle of Ireland’ in *Studies: an Irish quarterly review*, I, no 198 (1961), pp 113-51 at p. 118.

⁴⁰ Moncure Conway used this finding as the introduction to his article, ‘The Saint Patrick myth’, p. 358. An edition of Mactheni was published in 1895: Muirchu Maccu Mactheni, *Life of St. Patrick* (Dublin, 1895). See also, Thomas J. Shahan, *Saint Patrick in history* (NY, 1904), p. 3.

The general thrust of the Saint Patrick narrative that Protestants in both the United States and the United Kingdom developed in the later nineteenth century turned on distinguishing the evidentiary facts of these scientific studies from untestable or unbelievable fiction – ‘Patrick’ versus ‘Padraig’, as William Craig Brownlee put it.⁴¹ Conway questioned the very existence of Patrick, noting the prevalence in the ancient texts of Palladius as Christian missionary in Ireland and the absence of mention of Patrick, though he ultimately concluded that Patrick most likely did exist.⁴² The idea was to properly assess the history of Christianity in Ireland, with the goal of proving the ‘purity and faithfulness of the ancient faith in Ireland’ and, by implication, the hollowness of modern Irish Roman Catholicism.⁴³

Patrick’s ‘Confession’ proved useful in this regard, because it showed that he followed a religion distinct from Roman inspiration. He appealed to Scripture for his teachings, not to the Pope.⁴⁴ He never called upon a saint for guidance or intervention, only praying to God, and he never promoted the idea of celibacy for the clergy.⁴⁵ His mission to Ireland was not directed by Rome, but by God, a fact confirmed by the Brussels manuscript.⁴⁶ The more likely scenario was that Patrick was either not known to Rome or despised for his independence from them.⁴⁷

Others, like Thomas Guard, a Galway-born preacher in the Methodist-Episcopal Church, who lived and worked in the United States for most of his life, sought to place Patrick

⁴¹ Brownlee, *Saint Patrick and the western apostolic churches*, see especially p. 4.

⁴² Conway, ‘The Saint Patrick myth’, pp 359-60.

⁴³ Brownlee, *Saint Patrick and the western apostolic churches*, p. 28.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 45.

⁴⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 50.

⁴⁶ *Ibid.*, pp 51-52; Conway, ‘The Saint Patrick myth’, p. 358.

⁴⁷ Conway, ‘The Saint Patrick myth’, p. 362.

more appropriately in his fifth-century Irish setting, as an historical figure and a Catholic missionary. Doing so allowed Patrick to remain the image of the Irish nation. Evidence showed that Patrick served as mediator between rival chieftains, as symbolic heir to the ancient kings of Tara, ‘assisting in the reorganization of the ancient laws of the nation’.⁴⁸

With the proper separation of empirical fact from fiction, the history of Saint Patrick ostensibly proved only one thing: the Roman Church’s desire for dominion.⁴⁹ Brownlee, citing Sylvester O’Halloran, said that the most significant fiction of all was that Patrick brought Christianity to Ireland.⁵⁰ This argument implied that later Roman Catholic clergymen created a myth in associating Patrick with Rome. Stories of Patrick’s interactions with Rome and his missionary work on behalf of Rome were products of twelfth to fourteenth century efforts to shape him into ‘a fully-developed Papist’.⁵¹ The actual myths associated with Patrick – such as, driving the snakes from Ireland – were adaptations of pagan, Celtic mythology.⁵² With a note of irony, then, the acceptance and promotion of a mythical Patrick and the move away from the facts of his earthly existence, served little to confirm his status as father of Roman Catholicism and instead confirmed the existence of an Irish Christianity distinct from Rome.⁵³ Guard thought Patrick, like other historical figures of such lasting importance, belonged not to the Irish people but to humanity: ‘Broader than sect, broader than race, broader than nationality, as the ages roll on, the cathedral in which they shall find a shrine shall be not that built up of

⁴⁸ Thomas Guard, *Lectures and addresses* (NY, 1885), available at Hathi Trust Digital Library (<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uc2.ark:/13960/t2v40nj9v>) (13 September 2019), p. 198.

⁴⁹ Brownlee makes this point in *Saint Patrick and the western apostolic churches*, p. 54.

⁵⁰ Brownlee, *Saint Patrick and the western apostolic churches*, p. 55.

⁵¹ William M. Blackburn, *Saint Patrick, and the early church of Ireland* (Philadelphia, 1869), available at Hathi Trust Digital Library (<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/njp.32101041381565>) (17 September 2019), p. 8.

⁵² Conway, ‘The Saint Patrick myth’, p. 363.

⁵³ Conway makes this point; ‘The Saint Patrick myth’, pp 366-68, especially p. 368.

Celtic hearts, Romanism believers, alone, but built up of a love from all kindreds and peoples and nations and tongues.’⁵⁴ Such a position conveyed Patrick’s Christianity, not his Roman Catholicism.

The Saint Patrick narrative gave anti-Catholic nativists and other Protestant writers, who were less aggressive in their approach but still highly ambivalent about Catholics in the United States, a convenient basis to question Irish Catholic credentials for American citizenship. Patrick became ‘a figure which resembles a man only as the Trojan horse resembled a horse; he is full of armed men, a compendium of controversies’.⁵⁵

Patrick, as origin of the nineteenth-century conception of the Irish nation as a Catholic nation, also allowed American commentators a historical centering to their understanding of the Irish nation and Irish nationality in a broader sense. Partisans felt the need to separate Patrick from Irish Catholicism, to show that his presence suggested less of an adherence to Rome. Less-partial American writers thought the myth-narrative that had developed was evidence of the simplicity of the Irish people and a lack of advancement of Irish Catholic society.

For Irish Catholics themselves, Patrick meant something else entirely, said Moncure Conway:

‘Patrick is a name for the union of many clans, and their incarnation in a Celtic clan-Christianity. Twelve hundred years of consecrated clan-loyalty are behind Parnell in his conflict with the Roman Leo and the British Lion...The God of Ireland is not the God of England. The Irish are the Celtic Jews; with a Jewish faith, intensified by residence in their Land of Promise, they look back to their

⁵⁴ Guard, *Lectures and addresses*, pp 221-22.

⁵⁵ Conway, ‘The Saint Patrick myth’, p. 363.

Golden Age when their guardian deity walked with the patriarchs and prophets of Erin.’⁵⁶

Conway concluded that the Irish would never be reconciled with the British, since a tribal mindset still reigned in Ireland. This mindset was built on the image of a ‘Golden Age’, which itself never existed, but which the myth of Saint Patrick watching over his chosen land made seem a historical fact and a future possibility for Irish believers. This ‘spiritualization of a vendetta’ against Saxon conquerors of Ireland, based in tribal custom, had turned Saint Patrick into a ‘vindictive deity’.⁵⁷ Conway concluded that such an attitude precluded any logical, liberal means of compromise, and it explained incongruities in Irish political posturing.

Yet, the recognition or notice of Patrick’s Christianity as more important than his Catholicism meant ultimately a better tolerance for Ireland and Irish Catholics. In one sense it reminded them that Ireland was deeply and historically Christian. In another sense it reinforced a sense of pity or compassion needed to be shown for Irish Catholics – it was more evidence of their victimhood. Such a narrative, finally, proved the disappearance of the antebellum nativist idiom, because it proved that Patrick’s Protestant or Catholic identity did not matter: all Americans could accept Patrick.

In Conway’s firm denial of the Irish Church’s Roman-ness – ‘Ireland developed something like a Christianity of its own’⁵⁸ – here, too, might be found further ground for an American acceptance of Ireland, despite its implications about an Irish separatist

⁵⁶ Conway, ‘The Saint Patrick myth’, pp 370-71.

⁵⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 370.

⁵⁸ Conway, ‘The Saint Patrick myth’, p. 367.

nature. The Irish Catholics were proudly and loudly independent. And was that not a truly American quality?

Orestes Brownson: American Catholicism, Irish Catholics, and the postbellum order

What had emerged in American thought was a clearer recognition that anti-Catholicism belonged to previous generations, and this recognition helped soften perceptions of Ireland. In the postbellum era, the argument required a proper assessment of where Catholicism – and in particular Irish Catholicism – belonged in the US system. There was still a great deal of contention involved.

The primary figure from the Catholic perspective here was the publicist Orestes Brownson (1803-1876).⁵⁹ The breakdown of the US system, the victory of the Union, and the process of Reconstruction caused Brownson to revise his analysis of the place of Irish Catholics in American democracy.⁶⁰ A newfound value to Irish Catholicism in the

⁵⁹ For in-depth treatments of Brownson, see especially, Arthur M. Schlesinger, Jr., *Orestes A. Brownson: a pilgrim's progress* (Boston, 1939) and Henry F. Brownson, *Orestes Brownson* (3 vols., Detroit, MI, 1898-1900); Patrick W. Carey, *Orestes A. Brownson: American religious weathervane* (Grand Rapids, MI, 2004); idem, *Orestes A. Brownson: a bibliography, 1826-1876* (Milwaukee, WI, 1996); and Thomas T. McAvoy, 'Orestes A. Brownson and Archbishop John Hughes in 1860' in *The Review of Politics*, xxiv, no. 1 (1962), pp 19-47 at p. 19; see 'publicist, n.' in *Oxford English Dictionary* (Oxford, 2019), available at *OED Online* (<https://www.oed.com/view/Entry/154063>) (11 November 2019). See also, for instance, R. Laurence Moore, 'Insiders and outsiders in American historical narrative and American history' in *The American Historical Review*, lxxxvii, no. 2 (1982), pp 390-412; Mark A. Noll, 'The Catholic press, the Bible, and Protestant responsibility for the Civil War' in *Journal of the Civil War Era*, vii, no. 3 (2017), pp 355-76; and, Steven Conn, '"Political Romanism": re-evaluating American anti-Catholicism in the age of Italian revolution' in *Journal of the Early Republic*, xxxvi, no. 3 (2016), pp 521-48. For information on his *Review*, see F. L. Mott, *A history of American magazines*, vol. I, pp 685-91.

⁶⁰ Carl F. Krummel discussed Brownson and American democracy in 'Catholicism, Americanism, democracy, and Orestes Brownson' in *American Quarterly*, vi, no. 1 (1954), pp 19-31. See also Schlesinger, *Orestes A. Brownson*; and idem, 'Orestes Brownson: an American Marxist before Marx' in *The Sewanee Review*, xlvii, no. 3 (1939), pp 317-23.

United States in light of Brownson's complicated relationship with Irish Catholics will be addressed.⁶¹ First, though, to understand the context of his revision, Brownson's postbellum argument concerning the theoretical makeup of the US system is addressed.

A. The aftermath of the dislocation of war

Common with most American intellectuals of his generation, the Civil War, of course, profoundly affected Brownson's argument. There existed at the conclusion of the War an opportunity to recapture the American political destiny that Brownson had long argued for: a union of peoples based in democratic republicanism and rooted in geographic space, a harmony between unity and multiplicity.⁶² He borrowed this conception of oneness, encompassing the seemingly disparate principles of consolidation and devolution, from James Madison.⁶³ The importance of Madison's insight for Brownson was Madison's emphasis on the uniqueness of the US system, suited only for the time and place that brought the United States into creation, and which was not transferable or exportable to other countries.

Madison apparently erred, though, in supposing this oneness meant that the US political system was neither republican nor federal. His error rested in his ignoring of the 'unwritten constitution' of the American people that had preexisted the written Constitution, a fact confirmed by the language used in the convention. Brownson argued

⁶¹ Mark Burrows says that Brownson 'offered a distinctively American apology of Catholicism', a quest which 'brought Catholicism...into the mainstream of the developing ideology of the American nation'. His vision was 'an eccentric revision of the dominant myth which portrayed America as a Protestant nation'. See Mark S. Burrows, 'The Catholic revision of an American myth: the eschatology of Orestes Brownson as an apology of American Catholicism' in *The Catholic Historical Review*, lxxvi, no. 1 (1990), pp 18-43.

⁶² See, for instance, Orestes A. Brownson, *The American Republic: its constitution, tendencies, and destiny*, ed. Thomas E. Wood, Jr. (Washington, DC, 2003), p. 112.

⁶³ Brownson, *The American Republic*, pp 113-15.

that in using the phrase ‘a more perfect union’, the convention acknowledged this unwritten constitution with the recognition that the union was already in existence.⁶⁴ States in the sovereign sense did not pre-exist the Union.⁶⁵ For Brownson, then, the US political system was driven by an extra-governmental societal unity. He explained, ‘the people of the United States were always one people’, before the articulation of that reality in the written Constitution.⁶⁶

The Civil War had proven the significance of misunderstanding US constitutional origins, because secession had ostensibly resulted from a logical deduction of state sovereignty doctrine. It was incumbent on Americans in the postbellum environment to revise their understanding of the Constitution.⁶⁷ The War had resulted in the tendency towards a greater centralization of the federal government, evident within months of the armistice, but that did not vindicate the principles of federalism. It was, Brownson said, evidence of political change, not of an altered underlying doctrine.⁶⁸

Apparently, the only fact proven by both antebellum state sovereignty and postbellum centralism was that the US system meant neither. Both realities proved, according to Brownson, as the language of the constitution had proven, that the unwritten American constitution existed within the people, with God as the final arbiter.⁶⁹ The unwritten constitution of the American people was ‘as much the work of Providence as the existence in the human body of the living solidarity of its members. One law, one life,

⁶⁴ Brownson, *The American Republic*, p. 115.

⁶⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

⁶⁶ *Ibid.*, p. 118.

⁶⁷ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

⁶⁸ *Ibid.*, p. 120.

⁶⁹ Brownson, *The American Republic*, p. 120

circulates through all the members, constituting them a living organism, binding them in living union, all to each and each to all.⁷⁰ With its balanced system of general and particular government, the American Republic ‘is, for the present and future, the model republic’, a system ‘given us by Providence in the living constitution of the American people’.⁷¹

The Civil War also allowed Brownson to revise his notice of the narrative of the history of the conflict between civilization and barbarism. The Civil War itself was ‘a war between civilization and barbarism’ – of socialism versus individualism, of ‘territorial democracy’ versus ‘personal democracy’.⁷² Brownson believed slavery was only tangentially involved in causing the war.⁷³ Advocates of territorial democracy had accepted a coalition with socialistic elements in American society, led by the abolitionists, not as an endorsement of the socialist position but out of the expediency of winning a war against the personal democracy advocates of the South. The war ostensibly proved that extremism of any form found no shelter in the US system. With the conclusion of the Civil War the people of the United States had defeated ‘every species of barbarism in the New World, asserted victoriously the state, and placed the government definitively on the side of legitimate authority’.⁷⁴

Brownson recorded these sentiments in his 1865 *The American Republic*, fresh after the Confederate surrender. The progress of Southern Reconstruction, together with the perception of a continued condescension of liberals towards religion, particularly toward

⁷⁰ Ibid., p. 122.

⁷¹ Ibid., p. 133.

⁷² Ibid., p. 173.

⁷³ Ibid., pp 173-74.

⁷⁴ Ibid., p. 178.

Roman Catholicism, caused him to reconsider the optimistic tone used in *The American Republic*. It seemed that, though certain types of extremism failed with the Civil War, other types increased in political importance in the postbellum environment. In response, he defended the liberal credentials of a Christian-centered society, which, he said, provided a better guarantee of social harmony than certain Millian political philosophies, which were being promoted in this environment: ‘Little is to be hoped, and much is to be feared, for liberty, science, and civilization from European Liberalism, which has no real affinity with American territorial democracy and real civil and religious freedom.’⁷⁵

Social liberalism represented a breakdown of human development. Progress must be measured, he said, on a truer historical scale, and liberals, when they sought to minimize the role of Christianity in the creation of the modern western world, reverted to ‘the same career the ancient Gentile nations ran’.⁷⁶

Brownson’s concerns were not necessarily that the postbellum reconstruction process had amounted to a rejection of his understanding of the nature of the US system, rather, that this element of society with political influence had commandeered the political process. ‘[The] interest of the social or humanitarian democracy’ was determined to seize the victory resulting from their alliance with the territorial democracy, seen, for example, in its demands for black suffrage and women’s suffrage.⁷⁷ The progression of Reconstruction only enhanced these fears of an elitist strain of liberalism creating a rupture in a way like the fractures that had led to the Civil War. His concerns about

⁷⁵ Brownson, *The American Republic*, p. 206. See also Brownson draft, ‘Church and liberty [draft]’ (University of Notre Dame Archives, Orestes Augustus Brownson Papers, CBRO, drafts 1838-1875).

⁷⁶ Brownson, *Conversations on liberalism and the Church* (NY, 1870), p. 171.

⁷⁷ Brownson, *The American Republic*, p. 176.

aggressive liberalism required a reassessment of Irish Catholics in the United States, who were recognized as a large minority that stood in opposition to liberal politics.

B. Brownson's relationship with Irish Catholics

Brownson's postbellum argument regarding Irish Catholicism had a long period of gestation. He had direct connections to Ireland in the antebellum period, resulting from his associations with leading Catholic intellectuals in Europe, most significantly regarding Ireland, John Henry Newman, a fellow convert to Roman Catholicism. Newman, when hiring the faculty of the newly formed Catholic University of Ireland of which he served as rector, offered him a position of lecturer extraordinary for the academic year 1854-55.⁷⁸ It was not a permanent position and Newman envisaged the holder would give one or two courses of lectures on a schedule agreed to by both parties.⁷⁹ After some deliberation, Brownson accepted the position, only to have Newman essentially rescind the offer in August 1854.⁸⁰ As Thomas Ryan identified, Brownson had angered Irish Catholics in the United States owing to an article titled 'Native Americanism' that appeared in the July 1854 edition of his *Review*.⁸¹ His strong emphasis on the principles of American citizenship and his concerns that Irish Americans misunderstood the nature of that citizenship, primarily the essential need for individualism in political behavior, caused this rupture. The Irish immigrant community interpreted Brownson's criticism as his

⁷⁸ Thomas R. Ryan, 'Newman's invitation to Orestes A. Brownson to be lecturer extraordinary at the Catholic University of Ireland' in *Records of the American Catholic Historical Society of Philadelphia*, lxxxv, nos. 1/2 (1974), pp 29-47.

⁷⁹ See Newman's 15 December 1853 letter to Brownson, quoted in full in Ryan, 'Newman's invitation to Orestes A. Brownson', pp 30-31.

⁸⁰ See, for instance, John Henry Newman to Orestes Brownson, 23 August 1854 (University of Notre Dame Archive, Orestes Augustus Brownson Papers, CBRO, Correspondent-Newman); and Ryan, 'Newman's invitation to Orestes A. Brownson', pp 36-37.

⁸¹ Ryan, 'Newman's invitation to Orestes A. Brownson', p. 37.

desire to make the Irish into Anglo-Saxons.⁸² Brownson, in turn, interpreted the reaction of the Irish American Catholic community to his criticism as further evidence of a certain closed-mindedness and as confirmation of the merits of his concerns.

In 1855, as a result of the Brownson conflict with the Irish Americans, even moderate Irish American bishops in the United States, like Francis Patrick Kenrick of Philadelphia and later Baltimore (1796-1863) and Michael O'Connor of Pittsburgh (1810-1872), removed any elements of public support they had shown to Brownson or his *Review*.⁸³ Both expressed a vague concern that Brownson argued for positions that were not defensible to the hierarchy and that without their names associated with the *Review*, he might be freer to continue without any hindrance from them. The real reason was clear: Irish American Catholics were driving change in the American Catholic institutional structure and behavior towards a conservative, hierarchical, and collectivist nature, and Brownson was in a minority position. Brownson expressed regret and disappointment at the insularity of Irish American Catholics, and he determined to take a stand against it, writing to his son Henry in 1860, five years after the business over the Dublin lectureship: 'We are resolved to be no longer expatriated in our own country. We will be catholic, Roman catholic, but not European or Irish.'⁸⁴

This expression of religious identity articulated Brownson's intellectual quandary in the broader Civil War era. He had spent the previous decades on a quest in search of a

⁸² Ryan, 'Newman's invitation to Orestes A. Brownson', p. 39.

⁸³ Kenrick expressed his regret at disassociating himself with the *Review* in a letter to Brownson, 12 February 1855 (University of Notre Dame Archives, Orestes Augustus Brownson Papers, CBRO, Correspondent-Kenrick); O'Connor did the same in a letter to Brownson on 4 September 1855 (University of Notre Dame Archives, Orestes Augustus Brownson Papers, CBRO, Correspondent-O'Connor).

⁸⁴ Orestes A. Brownson to Henry F. Brownson, 14 October 1860 (University of Notre Dame Archives, Orestes Augustus Brownson Papers, CBRO, Correspondent-Brownson, Henry F.).

suitable religious tradition, meddling with Universalism and Unitarianism before his conversion to Catholicism – to a Catholicism infused with an American character. Catholicism’s structure and theology offered, in his view, a *via media*, centered in a long tradition of social reform.⁸⁵ Critically, too, its fundamental nature was an inherent universalism. Brownson, as Thomas McAvoy noted, sought to defend ‘liberty against liberalism and authority against Caesarism’.⁸⁶ His censorship by Irish Roman Catholics in the United States did not call to question his belief system, but it reinforced his perception that American Catholicism as an entity distinct from European Catholicism must be articulated, defended, and, by extension, strengthened conceptually.

Brownson’s vision of American Catholicism invoked a messianic tradition within a New World framework. The traditional nature of Catholic religious practice, its respect of authority and obedience, and its concern for addressing social ills, provided a foundational structure on top of which the civil realm might thrive. Given the progressive political arrangements of the US system, an increased presence of Catholicism would lead to greater social harmony and equality.

The Civil War had altered the American social balance. Reconstruction had provided an atmosphere that sustained and nurtured an ascendant, aggressive, and radical liberalism. A restoration of a catholic, universalist Americanism required a rebalancing of forces.

⁸⁵ Burrows, ‘The Catholic revision of an American myth’, p. 19.

⁸⁶ McAvoy, ‘Orestes A. Brownson and Archbishop John Hughes in 1860’, p. 23.

C. Resisting the socialist democracy

Brownson's notice of the problematic nature of the coalition between distinctive parties in the northern side of the Civil War divide provided a means for revising opinion on the Catholic clergy and laity – and by implication, Irish American Catholics – who had been criticized for opposing the war effort in the North. The clergy, rightly in his mind, opposed 'the interest of this terrible democracy', because it was fundamentally 'hostile alike to the Church and to civilization'.⁸⁷ The Catholic clergy adhered to the 'real American democracy' – territorial democracy – a middle way between socialism and individualism and the genius of the US system.⁸⁸

The socialistic democracy had its strongest presence in the American northeast. The significant and growing presence of Catholics in those states was an encouraging sign for the prospects of strengthening the positions of the territorial democracy there. The Catholic presence produced a moderating effect by virtue of their religious beliefs and practices:

'Catholics are better fitted by their religion to comprehend the real character of the American constitution than any other class of Americans, the moment they study it in the light of their own theology. The American constitution is based on that of natural society, on the solidarity of the race, and the difference between natural society and the church or Christian society is, that the one is initial and the other teleological. The law of both is the same; Catholics as such, must resist both extremes, because each is exclusive, and whatever is exclusive or one-sided is uncatholic...If the country has had reason to complain of some of them in the late war, it will have, in the future, far stronger reason to be grateful; not to them, indeed, for the citizen owes his life to his country, but to their religion, which has been and is the grand protectress of modern society and civilization.'⁸⁹

The very freedom of religious practice enshrined in the American political order allowed Catholicism an arena to realize its modern destiny because of the non-interference of the

⁸⁷ Brownson, *The American Republic*, p. 176.

⁸⁸ For his notion of 'the real American democracy', see *ibid.*, pp 180-81.

⁸⁹ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

civil authority.⁹⁰ The Catholic Church, then, both informed the US political system and came into its own because of that system.

This destiny, as realized in the New World, ostensibly called into question the accepted truths of the Reformation, namely, that it was a response to the desire of the Catholic Church for supreme control in spirituals and temporals. The American case proved that the Church merely wanted freedom and independence from the temporal realm.⁹¹

Brownson's arguments for the suitability of Roman Catholicism in the United States was thus consistent with his fears of extremism. Likewise, his concerns over the political behaviors of Irish Catholic immigrants themselves rested in his aversion to immoderation and to the corruption of the US system of territorial democracy.

The expression of a constrained Irish Catholic nationality within the United States was itself inimical to an adaptable American nationality.⁹² What it most certainly was not was an expression of Roman Catholicism. Like others, for instance Moncure Conway, Brownson thought Irish nationalism an outcome of a tribal mentality.⁹³ His first consideration in addressing the subject of Irish American Catholicism, then, was to separate Irish nationalism from Catholicism because of its separatist nature. As he said, 'No foreign patriotism has any right on American soil.'⁹⁴ The experience of the Civil War and Reconstruction, however, encouraged Brownson to reconsider his conclusions about the Irish Catholic community in the United States. Irish Catholics helped oppose

⁹⁰ See also Brownson, *Conversations on liberalism and the Church*, p. 84.

⁹¹ *Ibid.*, p. 87.

⁹² Orestes A. Brownson, 'Catholics [draft]' (University of Notre Dame Archives, Orestes Augustus Brownson Papers, CBRO, drafts 1838-1875).

⁹³ He makes this point in a broad sense in his article 'The riot of the twelfth' in *The Catholic World*, xiv (1871), pp 117-26.

⁹⁴ *Ibid.*, p. 119.

the seemingly unrelenting attack by socialistic elements within the US system. This position, more so than whether they were natural advocates of territorial democracy, proved their acceptance and place in the US system. Their allegiance to Ireland might be a benefit. A transplantable Irish nation, in this sense, belonged within the US system, because it helped in the American defense of supposedly core American political principles.

Catholicism and a liberal Americanism

Brownson's need to defend the US system against radicalism was in part a response to the changing nature of the interactions between the religious and secular elements of American society in the postbellum period.⁹⁵ Brownson addressed this adjustment by arguing for the inherent progressivism of Roman Catholicism. This argument still met much resistance; however, the otherness or distinction of Roman Catholicism and its problematic presence as a component in the US system was tempered by this broader concern of an intensifying conflict between Christianity and science. Catholicism might be the most regressive of Christian religions, but the existence of all varieties of ecclesiasticism within a modernizing system dedicated to scientific and technological progress and committed to the ideology of individualism elicited concern.⁹⁶ In theory, Irish Catholicism had a double problem for liberal writers: on the spectrum of ecclesiastical systems, it was deeply ecclesiastical, and its unreformed nature demonstrated a separation from proper evolutionary progress.

⁹⁵ O'Brien, 'The American experience of secularisation', p. 142.

⁹⁶ See R. Heber Newton, 'The decay of ecclesiasticism' in *The North American Review*, cxli, no. 346 (1885), pp 241-50 at pp 242, 247. See also James Turner, *Without God, without creed: the origins of unbelief in America* (Baltimore, 1985); and Wilson, *Religion and the American nation*, pp 53-74.

This section examines conceptions of a religious-like US system from two perspectives. First, the scientist perspective is assessed using the argument of John William Draper. Second, a perspective of the American Reformed tradition is analyzed using the argument of Lyman Abbott. Though Draper and Abbott represented two particular traditions, their arguments coincided in their opinions of US systematic progress. In this convergence, the place of Catholicism in a global US system was defined. This revision of attitudes and arguments about Catholicism enabled a necessary and firm adjustment of American liberal attitudes towards Ireland.

A. John Draper and a scientific US system

John William Draper, professor of chemistry and president of New York University, was among the foremost commentators on the seeming conflict between the systematic progress of and commitment to science and the continued strength of religion.⁹⁷ He did not comment directly on the Irish question or Irish politics in his published works. The Irish formed a part of the lower strata of the English social classes which he discussed, and he spoke of immigrants to the United States in a more general sense, with the Irish immigrant assumed to be part of this group.

⁹⁷ For information on Draper, see O'Brien, 'The American experience of secularisation', p. 132. Draper was born in England and emigrated to the US at age twenty-one; see Michael A. Sutton, 'Draper, John William (1811–1882), chemist and historian' in *Oxford Dictionary of National Biography*, online edition (<https://www.oxforddnb.com/view/10.1093/ref:odnb/9780198614128.001.0001/odnb-9780198614128-e-8038>) (22 February 2021); Donald Fleming, *John William Draper and the religion of science* (Philadelphia, 1950); and James C. Ungureanu, *Science, religion, and the Protestant tradition: retracing the origins of conflict* (Pittsburgh, 2019). See also the argument of Andrew Dickson White of Cornell University. For American secularization in the nineteenth century, see Turner, *Without God, without creed*, pp 232–47; and Edward A. White, 'The warfare of science and religion' in *The Historian*, xi, no. 1 (1948), pp 3–13.

Draper considered the history of the political organization of the US system as a progression towards a ‘coalescence of individuals’.⁹⁸ From his evolutionary perspective, he envisioned the US polity as an object in science. The polity as it existed in Draper’s time, thus, existed because of an explainable, documentable progression that began with ‘a restrained association of free individuals’, who, because they were of a like class and social status upon the settlement of America, voluntarily surrendered a portion of individual liberty for the security of the whole. Only a limited restraint of liberty, though, was permissible.⁹⁹ With Draper’s evolutionary perspective, the US system existed as a like structure to the European, ecclesiastically based system that it replaced.

Draper’s history affirmed the profound nature of the influence of the Roman Catholic Church in shaping European civilization. The Roman Catholic Church, however, when it refused to accept the advancement presented by science, had missed its opportunity to lead humanity on the path of societal evolution.¹⁰⁰ Europe, despite the Reformation, still suffered from this conservative legacy. The United States was ostensibly a political power capable of advancing beyond ecclesiastic shortcomings, a movement its clergy must lead:

‘In our national development it is for the American clergy to shun that great, that fatal mistake. It is for them to remember that the Reformation remains only half completed, until to the free reading of the Book of God there is added the free reading of the Book of Nature. It is for them to remember that there are two volumes of Revelation—the Word and the Works; and that it is the indefeasible right of every man to study and interpret them both, according to the light given him, without molestation or punishment.’¹⁰¹

⁹⁸ John William Draper, *Thoughts on the future civil policy of America* (3rd ed., NY, 1867), p. 263.

⁹⁹ Draper, *Thoughts on the future civil policy of America*, p. 264.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 279-80.

¹⁰¹ *Ibid.*, pp 280-81.

This equated to a belief in the equitable nature of American society – in an historical interpretation that class distinctions in the European sense were largely erased in the peopling of the United States, and in the idea that the United States’ current commitment to universal education ensured the maintenance of this immigration-fostered equity. Critically, universal education would allow Americans to firmly supplant the ‘dead weight’ of European ecclesiasticism.¹⁰² With this fundamental well-spring of equality in mind, Draper determined that manifest destiny, as a societally encapsulating idea, proved valuable. Each American might strive for intellectual and economic advancement with a reasonable degree of parity to their peers.

The combined effect of all these attempts at improvement ensured an American empire of ideas that accepted, defended, and promoted scientific progress. Manifest destiny, for Draper, meant the firm acceptance of evolutionary science and its implantation at the center of the American mind. England – and Europe generally – had historically adhered to a ‘moral method’ of addressing social progress, versus the ‘intellectual method’ seen in the burgeoning American case.¹⁰³ The US system became home to a new variety of miracles, with human endeavor and industry replacing the superstitions of Europe.¹⁰⁴ In sum, the results proved that the United States belonged ‘to a higher stage of social life’.¹⁰⁵ The US system was an empire of ideas, distinct from Europe by the universality of its appeal: ‘the sentiment of a manifest destiny to imperial greatness gives to every one a determinate direction and an energetic life.’¹⁰⁶

¹⁰² Draper, *Thoughts on the future civil policy of America*, p. 235.

¹⁰³ Ibid., p. 282.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid., p. 295.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid., p. 297.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid., p. 312.

B. Lyman Abbott and the US system as religion

Many American liberals, in contrast to Draper, attempted a reconciliation of science and religion, especially as it suited the US system. Most American liberals accepted the standard that Christian religions, even Roman Catholicism, despite their grave concerns, were positive for society when separated from politics and many, indeed, were themselves deeply religious. As Lyman Abbott, the prominent Congregationalist, said, the work of the churches was ‘to make men, and trust that out of right manhood will grow right systems’.¹⁰⁷ This systematic process – of Christianity shaping men, who then shaped their environments and formed a political community – was interpreted as an evolutionary cycle. Christianity ostensibly built modern society by establishing principles of moral and spiritual conduct.

In the postbellum era, what emerged was an effort to combine evolutionary science with Christian religious tradition. Lyman Abbott, for example, articulated a middle ground between Draper’s scientism and Christian fundamentalists – who denied science – similar, in a certain way, to Brownson’s efforts at conciliation between radical elements of the Roman Catholic Church and Christian, anti-Catholic activists. Abbott recognized Christianity as a fundamental component of the US system but one with a clear separation from the political sphere. Christianity sat in an elevated position as the first mover in shaping the actions and beliefs of the men who established the US system. This positioning amounted to, in Abbott’s case, a resolutely laissez-faire opinion on the role of religions in addressing social problems – that the churches should focus on ‘the reform of character’ as the means of effecting, for instance, sanitary reform.¹⁰⁸ Abbott framed this

¹⁰⁷ Lyman Abbott, ‘Christianity versus socialism’ in *The North American Review*, cxlviii, no. 389 (1889), pp 447-53 at p. 449.

¹⁰⁸ Abbott, ‘Christianity versus socialism’, p. 451.

within an argument against anti-religious socialism. His argument, then, responded to socialist calls for Christians to abandon their spirituality and instead focus on practical service-oriented works. The concerns about socialism called forth simultaneously a reminder of the brotherhood of all Christian religions and of the value of Christianity as a framework within which the American polity existed.

The Roman Catholic Church apparently suffered from a centuries-spanning affliction of imperial ambitions. Its redemption, in an historical sense, remained in the progressive mission established by Christ himself and followed by the faithful since. These opposing tendencies were ostensibly a story of paganism versus Christianity: ‘The glory of the Roman Catholic Church, the glory of self-sacrifice, is the glory of Christianity; its shame of pride, sensuality, and cruelty is the shame of paganism.’¹⁰⁹ The acceptance and assumption of an imperial role of the Church – effected initially by the actions of Constantine in making Christianity the official state religion and himself head of the Church, and, more pointedly in the coronation of Charlemagne in 800, which saw Leo III claim an ‘imperial authority’ that ‘has never been formally withdrawn or disavowed’ – created the conditions for the decline of the Church.¹¹⁰ This process effectively involved a re-paganization of the Church, because the Church created a hierarchy and organization that mirrored the former Roman Empire it now replaced.¹¹¹ Roman Catholicism encompassed a ‘strange amalgam’ of Judaism, with its ‘sacrificial and hierarchical system’, and, Roman paganism, with its iconography and absolutism.¹¹² Catholicism was, Abbott argued, ‘a specimen of arrested Christian development’.¹¹³

¹⁰⁹ Lyman Abbott, *The evolution of Christianity* (Cambridge, MA, 1892), p. 157.

¹¹⁰ Ibid., pp 159-60.

¹¹¹ Ibid., p. 160.

¹¹² Ibid., pp 168-69.

¹¹³ Ibid., p. 169.

The evolution of Christianity, thus, involved a separation from the paganism present within Roman Catholicism. This stage of development was, Abbott said, a story of democratic advance that ran parallel to the story of imperialism. First, a ‘great popular uprising’ of ‘a new-born democracy’ succeeded in establishing Christianity as the state religion of the Roman Empire.¹¹⁴ After the fall of Rome, papal power, though exercised in the person of the Pope, represented power vested in the people in the body of the faithful: ‘It was democracy which in the person of Leo III crowned Charlemagne’.¹¹⁵

The combination of evolutionary theory and the history of Christianity necessitated an evolutionary aspect to the democratic nature of the church. Evolution in this sense meant, effectively, increasing liberalism and was framed in triumphalist language. Thus, Abbott assessed the Reformation as ‘a further uprising of a more enlightened and a more free-spirited people’.¹¹⁶ Christian society, through these democratic advancements, driven in opposition to the paganist, Roman imperialists, succeeded in uprooting anti-democratic behaviors. Christian progress, then, resulted in the very existence of the US system:

‘This public opinion [of the democracy] created by Christianity, organized and solidified unconsciously by the Roman Catholic Church, inspired with a new spirit by the Teutonic incursion, and at once creating and re-created by Protestantism, laid here on this continent, in a Christian faith, the foundation of a new form of government. The Puritans in New England, the Dutch in New York, the Roman Catholics in Maryland, the Anglicans in Virginia, and the Huguenots in France, widely as they differed from one another in their denominational tenets, possessed a common faith in God as the All Father, and in man as his child. They derived from a common source – the Jewish and the Christian Scriptures – that faith in the capacity of man without which free institutions are impossible. They thus prepared this country for that government by public opinion which is the essence of a true democracy.’¹¹⁷

¹¹⁴ Abbott, *The evolution of Christianity*, p. 181.

¹¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 182.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Abbott, *The evolution of Christianity*, pp 182-83.

In this conception of societal development, the US system existed both informed by Roman Catholicism and other Christian religions, and as a sort of evolutionary advancement of Christianity. Further, Abbott's inclusion of Roman Catholicism on the list of, effectively, founding members of the US democratic system suggested a distinction in American Catholicism from its Roman center. Christianity continued to evolve, and it would do so unceasingly 'until the world is right-side up' and a truly equitable system of 'human brotherhood' existed.¹¹⁸ His endpoint in this conception of an evolutionary Christianity was an idealistic 'church unity'.¹¹⁹ Seemingly, because of its reconception of the relationship between Christian sects, the US system provided the structure to realize this unity.

American reactions to a revival of Romanism

In such a conception of the US system as a religion unto itself, a Roman ecclesiastical empire existed as one antithesis to it in narratives of western stadial development. In the postbellum era, the idea that the Roman Catholic Church desired a strengthened imperial form was reinforced with the First Vatican Council (1869-70).¹²⁰ The Council raised particular warnings for American liberals and their European peers because of the concept of papal infallibility that emerged as a central proposition.¹²¹ Prior to the Council, the words of Pope Pius IX in his *Syllabus of errors* (1864) had presented Catholicism as unwilling to reconcile itself with liberal ideas of progress and modern civilization.¹²²

¹¹⁸ Ibid., pp 201-02.

¹¹⁹ Ibid., see especially pp 168-72.

¹²⁰ Elizabeth Fenton notes the First Vatican Council as an inflection point; see Fenton, *Religious liberties*, p. 124.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² McGreevy, *American Jesuits and the world*, p. 17.

Papal infallibility, the strengthening of the hierarchical nature of the worldwide Roman Catholic Church, and the stated conservative positions on science and society changed the nature of American criticisms of the Catholic Church. The images of the Pope as monarch and Rome as the seat of monarchy increased in rhetorical weight relative to the presence of criticisms of the French and Spanish Catholic monarchies.¹²³ These circumstances confirmed long held suspicions of Roman Catholicism and its hierarchy, including concerns that its American laity would offer allegiance to Rome first and the United States second; and they suggested that the papacy and the hierarchy of the church had strong imperial ambitions.

In the midst of this heightened concern about a renewed imperial nature to Roman Catholicism, the English controversialist James Anthony Froude (1818-1894) travelled to the United States in 1872 to deliver addresses warning Americans of the perils facing their country due to Irish Catholicism, a theme he continued in publications aimed at an American audience.¹²⁴ He told the Americans that Catholicism had kept Irish society from advancing along with English society and that it would have the same effect in the US and keep the Irish as a separate and oppositional community. The Irish Catholics were ‘a substance which they [the Americans] have been unable to assimilate’.¹²⁵ They were ‘the rank and file of the Catholic army which is to conquer the United States’.¹²⁶

¹²³ Borja Villalonga, ‘The theoretical origins of Catholic nationalism in nineteenth-century Europe’ in *Modern Intellectual History*, xi, no. 2 (2014), pp 307-41 at pp 308-12.

¹²⁴ See Ciaran Brady, *James Anthony Froude: an intellectual biography* (Oxford, 2013), pp 293-96, for Froude’s lecture tour of the US. The primary publication was a two-part article, ‘Romanism and the Irish race in the United States’ in *The North American Review*, cxxix, no. 277 (1879), pp 519-36 and cxxx, no. 278, pp 31-50. See the publication, *Froude’s crusade – both sides. Lectures by Very Rev. T. N. Burke, O. P., John Mitchel, Wendell Phillips, and Mr. James Anthony Froude, in summing up the controversy, with the life and labors of Father Burke by James W. O’Brien* (NY, 1872).

¹²⁵ Froude, ‘Romanism and the Irish race in the United States, i’, p. 525.

¹²⁶ Froude, ‘Romanism and the Irish race in the United States, ii’, p. 41.

Froude's argument existed within his broader conception that a reinvigorated Roman Catholicism was winning a battle against an uninspired Protestantism in the late nineteenth century in its drive to 'rival' civil government.¹²⁷

The Nation said that Froude's historical narrative was suspect, calling his work advocacy, not history.¹²⁸ American liberal writers essentially criticized Froude because of the sensationalism of his narrative approach.¹²⁹ In the American criticisms of Froude's treatment of Irish Catholics, the critics' primary end-point became that in attempting to prove that the Irish Catholics had required English rule for its civilizing effect, Froude contrarily proved that English governance of Ireland was itself the cause of the lack of progress.¹³⁰ Wendell Phillips remarked in 1872 in response to Froude that rather than England conquering Ireland, Ireland had in fact conquered England, because of the visible damage English legislation had caused.¹³¹

Like Phillips, many American liberals in the postbellum era addressed Ireland's impoverished condition from the perspective of governance, not as an outcome of the Irish people's religious beliefs. In his attempts at proving inherent or hereditary Irish Catholic traits as responsible for Irish poverty, and in the perception that his argument turned on invective rather than fact, Froude failed to influence American minds against Irish nationalistic sentiments, a failure which reinforced the wisdom of the American

¹²⁷ See Brady, *James Anthony Froude*, pp 293-96.

¹²⁸ See 'Froude's English in Ireland' in *The Nation*, 22 May 1873.

¹²⁹ See, for instance, 'Mr. Froude's short studies' in *The Nation*, 31 October 1867.

¹³⁰ See Wendell Phillips, 'Review of Mr. Froude: lecture at Tremont Temple, Boston, December 3, 1872' in *Froude's crusade—both sides* (NY, 1873), pp 75-80 at p. 75; also, 'Froude's English in Ireland' in *The Nation*, 22 May 1873 and 23 July 1874. For two Catholic responses to Froude, see John Lancaster Spalding, 'Mr. Froude's historical method' in *The North American Review*, cxxx, no. 280 (1880), pp 280-99; and John Gilmary Shea, 'Is Froude a historian' in *The American Catholic Quarterly Review*, v (1880), pp 113-37.

¹³¹ Phillips, 'Review of Mr. Froude', p. 77.

liberal intellectual approach to the Irish question demonstrated by Phillips. Phillips said, in a further derivation, that Froude's arguments proved what 'Every thoughtful Englishman knows', 'that England to-day is occupying but a second rate place on the chess board of Europe; that she has gradually sunk from the position of a first class power' – and this condemnation resulted in no small part from its governance of Ireland, given the practicalities of managing a large, unrestful population that was its geographic neighbor.¹³²

Whereas Froude argued that 'The Irish nationality, like the Jewish, is bound up with religion, and stands or falls with it', Phillips argued that the Irish nationality was defined by its experience with and resistance to English oppression.¹³³ Emphasizing the Catholicism of the Irish as a criticism of the Irish was, in this way, yet another sign of the decay of the English system. In seeking to justify the problematic position of Ireland within the United Kingdom, Froude confirmed for many Americans the accuracy of their conclusions that English political policies, not the Roman Catholic religion, held responsibility for Ireland's social problems and illiberal behaviors. Further, this confirmation confirmed the ability of the United States to appropriately assimilate Roman Catholicism into its system, because the US system was established as a response to the same oppressive English system.

¹³² Wendell Phillips, *Daniel O'Connell, a lecture* (NY, 1873), p. 82.

¹³³ For quoted text, see Froude, 'Romanism and the Irish race in the United States, i', p. 520.

Conclusion

Though John Draper was deeply skeptical of religion, and Lyman Abbott equally skeptical of irreligion, their arguments were of a similar underlying type. Both Draper and Abbott conceived of the US system as a result of general human evolution. Orestes Brownson, too, can be considered in this same milieu with his articulation of the catholic, universal ideology of US social and political advance. In doing so, Brownson, Draper, and Abbott neutralized any distinctiveness of religious institutions and hierarchies. They assigned the US system with the responsibility to, as Draper said, ‘perform the duty that was declined by Rome’ and to promote continued societal advance through an openness to intellectual development and a community of ideas.¹³⁴ Abbott, though he argued for the centrality of Christian principles within this vision of the US system, did so on the basis of an appeal to first principles, because of the Roman perversion of Christianity that had emerged in history as a distinct imperialism. In their arguments, the US system existed as an endpoint of development, as a system defined more by theories and ideas than by politics. Western society, by progressing to this point in history with the distinctive US system as the result, had attained a universalistic state of existence. The continued commitment to its fundamental characteristics, despite political and economic change, allowed for the incorporation of the Irish Catholics into the US system, because the system had proven its ability to integrate disparate components throughout its history.

The postbellum adjustment to the American argument about Irish Catholics documented two trends in the process of defining the US system in the late nineteenth century. First, a

¹³⁴ Draper, *Thoughts on the future civil policy of America*, the quoted text is from p. 235; see also pp 252-313.

compassion for the Irish as Catholics, because of the history of oppression by the English on account of their religion, was strengthened as the Irish Catholic experience became more familiar through their presence in the United States and the increased knowledge of Irish history and politics made available through the popular press – both, it might be said, an acknowledgment of the centrality of the Irish Famine to American perceptions of the Irish in the latter half of the nineteenth century. The presence and tacit acceptance of Irish Catholics, despite the persistence of nativism, was a reminder of the more noble mission of the US system in comparison to the English system. Second, the apparent threat of Roman Catholicism to the sustainability of the US system was an inheritance of European and English anti-Catholicism. The presence and awareness of the threat, especially in the middle of the nineteenth century, served as a means to confirm the superiority of the ideas that sustained the US system, because the threat was revealed to itself be as much a product of the Old World as the Roman Catholicism that it feared. Such a recognition of the obsolete or anachronistic nature of anti-papery imparted a distinct confidence in American political and social ideologies at the end of the nineteenth century and served to support its seemingly missionary nature. Irish Catholicism belonged within the theoretical, liberal, and imperial US system, simply because Americanism was, conceptually, evidence of a higher stage of social evolution than Catholicism. The Catholicism of the Irish Americans was subordinate to their identity as Americans, regardless of any professed or unprofessed loyalty to Rome by them.

Chapter 6. American positivist histories of the Anglo-Irish relationship: a historiography of conquest

This chapter assesses how American historians at the turn of the twentieth century understood the relationship between England and Ireland in an historical sense. Emphasis is placed on writings from 1884 to 1914, the two decades from the founding of the American Historical Association to the start of the First World War. These two decades saw an increased volume of historical writings produced and higher numbers of academic practitioners in the craft.¹ American historians had a burgeoning, though still limited, interest in Irish history. The assessments of Ireland occurred mostly within colonial, imperial, and conquest histories. Amidst this burgeoning interest in Ireland, two strains of thought were seen, the first more obvious than the next. First, they assigned Ireland and America a place within the history of the English imperial system, driven by the imperial school historians. Second, they assigned Ireland a place within the origins of the US system. The latter strain of thought enabled American historians to create an extended critique of English governance of Ireland.

Three American phenomena underpinned the Irish-centered criticism of the United Kingdom. First, the United States surpassed the United Kingdom in economic output, powered by increased agricultural and industrial production, along with secure and

¹ For assessments of the professionalization of history in the United States, see Peter Novick, *That noble dream: the 'objectivity question' and the American historical profession* (Cambridge, 1988), pp 21-108; and James Turner, *Philology: the forgotten origins of the modern humanities* (Princeton, 2004), pp 305-10.

efficient transport and trading systems.² The US had overcome its Civil War, unified its people, tamed its vast wilderness, and put its lands and growing population to work. Second, the US defeated Spain in a three-month war in 1898, gaining possession of Puerto Rico, Guam, and the Philippines from Spain. Defeating Spain proved the strength of the US compared to European powers and its ability to militarily assert its interests. It reinforced the strength and value of the New World and the decline and retreat of the Old World. Third, the US and the UK signed the Hay-Pauncefote Treaty in 1901, allowing the US to build the Panama Canal by renouncing British claims to a Central American isthmian canal, ending decades of contention on the issue. The US and the UK were now partners, not adversaries. The meanings expressed by these three phenomena permeated the American historiography of the Anglo-Irish relationship.

This chapter follows these developments in five sections: first, an overview of the late nineteenth century American historiography of Ireland, to assess the stated burgeoning interest; second, an analysis of American revisions of the origins of the English system, with the emphasis placed on where Ireland and America fit within the expanding English system; third, the arguments of American historians that documented the differentiation of the American system from its English origins and the role that Ireland assumed within this narrative; fourth, assessments of the nineteenth century results for Ireland of the long development of the English system, with the underlying presumption that because of Britain's failure and because of the specific ways that the United States had disrupted the British imperial system, Ireland must be brought within the orbit of the American system;

² See Vaclav Smil, *Still the iron age: iron and steel in the modern world* (Oxford, 2016); and Sven Beckert, *et al.*, 'Interchange: the history of capitalism' in *The Journal of American History*, ci, no. 2 (2014), pp 503-36.

and fifth a discussion of the changing nature of American historians' engagement with the narrative of Irish history in the early twentieth century based on developments in the American historiographies of the English system and of the British colonial system.

The American historical profession and the history of Ireland in the late nineteenth century

The closing decades of the nineteenth century experienced a significant expansion of higher education in the United States, stemming from the rising numbers - and ambitions of - the American upper and middle classes and from a general, increased national prosperity, which funded the establishment of new land-grant and private universities.³ This expansion caused a continued specialization in academic disciplines, including the study of history. During this era the discipline of history gradually moved from romantic, popular emphases towards the systematic, granular emphases already seen by this time in, primarily, Germany and starting to appear in the United Kingdom. It was suited for the academic training and rigor required in university settings – settings on which, indeed, the American universities were modelled.⁴

As the academic study of history in the United States grew in the postbellum era, assessments of the history of Ireland might have been expected from American historians,

³ See Jurgen Osterhammel, *The transformation of the world: a global history of the nineteenth century* (Princeton, 2014), pp 806-07; and Burton J. Bledstein, *The culture of professionalism: the middle class and the development of higher education in America* (NY, 1976).

⁴ See Turner, *Philology*, pp 305-10, for a discussion of the professionalization of the discipline of history in the US during the nineteenth century; and Novick, *That noble dream*, pp 47-60 for his discussion of 'The professionalization project' of American historians at the end of the nineteenth century.

especially given the presence of the Irish in the United States and the significant public commentary on Irish politics and society since the Irish famine at mid-century. Studies of Ireland, however, were largely absent. In the *American Historical Review*, for example, from its first issue in 1895 through the First World War, few articles addressed Irish history. Mostly, notice of Irish history existed within the book reviews section, a reality which hinted at the limited treatment of the history of Ireland by American historians. The first article to feature Irish history came in 1914, written by the Irish historian Goddard H. Orpen (1852-1932) and titled, 'The effects of Norman rule in Ireland, 1169-1333'.⁵ Earlier, in 1907 Edward P. Cheyney noted the parallelism of British colonization of Ireland and that of Virginia in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries.⁶ The Norwegian historian Alexander Bugge noticed Irish myth and poetry in his assessment of the Icelandic saga published in 1909.⁷ Engagement by American historians with Ireland as the central topic of analysis came later in the *AHR*.⁸

Other academic publications at the end of the nineteenth century engaged with Irish history in a similar fashion. William Archibald Dunning's 'Daniel O'Connell' appeared in the third volume (1895) of *The Sewanee Review*, the literary journal published by the University of the South (Sewanee, Tennessee). Discussions of Celtic literature and

⁵ Goddard H. Orpen, 'The effects of Norman rule in Ireland, 1169-1333' in *The American Historical Review*, xix, no. 2 (1914), pp 245-56. Orpen's article in the *AHR*, like his four-volume study on the same subject, concluded that the Anglo-Norman influence on Irish civilization was positive to the negative influence of Celtic tribalism. See idem, *Ireland under the Normans* (4 vols., London, 1911-20).

⁶ Edward P. Cheyney, 'Some English conditions surrounding the settlement of Virginia' in *The American Historical Review*, xii, no. 3 (1907), pp 507-28.

⁷ Alexander Bugge, 'The origin and credibility of the Icelandic saga' in *The American Historical Review*, xiv, no. 2 (1909), pp 249-61.

⁸ See Frances Morehouse, 'The Irish migration of the 'forties' in *The American Historical Review*, xxxiii, no. 3 (1928), pp 579-92; Gilbert Tucker, 'The famine immigration to Canada, 1847' in *The American Historical Review*, xxxvi, no. 3 (1931), pp 533-49; and, Giovanni Costigan, 'The tragedy of Charles O'Connor: an episode in Anglo-Irish relations' in *The American Historical Review*, xlix, no. 1 (1943), pp 32-54.

history and Irish poetry and fiction also appeared sporadically in *The Sewanee Review*, with an emphasis on the Irish literary revival.⁹ The publications of Catholic and Irish American historical associations in this period featured Irish history to a much greater extent than either the *AHR* or *The Sewanee Review*.

As a result of the limited direct thematic assessments of the history of Ireland, American historians used the history of Ireland in particular types of arguments, and when they referenced Ireland, they used known data points that appeared, in a relative sense, argumentatively settled. The data points included Ireland's subject status as a geographic area within the United Kingdom, as an island within the British Isles; the predominance of its rural life and a lack of industry; its poverty; its Catholic religion; and its widespread emigration, especially following the famine. The public narratives identified Irish America negatively with urban squalor, machine politics, labor unrest, and obeisance to Rome, and positively with an honorable record of service in the American Civil War and conservative family values.¹⁰ Themes of subjection, oppression, poverty, and herd mentality permeated these narratives. American historians responded to these public narratives, and when Ireland entered their histories, these prejudices unavoidably informed their assessments.

First, then, the manner in which historians understood Ireland was in its English context, as a component of English politics and society, and with English politics and society in

⁹ See B. W. Wells, 'Celtic saints and romantic fiction' in *The Sewanee Review*, ii, no. 1 (1893), pp 17-32; Frazer Hood, 'Roscommon: his life and works' in *The Sewanee Review*, ix, no. iii (1901), pp 257-74; Cornelius Weygandt, 'The Irish literary revival' in *The Sewanee Review*, xii, no. 4 (1904), pp 420-31; and Moira L. Ray, 'The Irish literary revival and its Gaelic writers' in *The Sewanee Review*, xiv, no. 1 (1906), pp 20-27.

¹⁰ See especially chapters four and five of this thesis for these characterizations.

mind when thinking and writing about Ireland. This resulted at times in limited nuance when distinguishing between English or Irish matters. They classified English and Irish matters in an historical sense as one and the same when assessing politics or society in stadial histories.¹¹ Enveloping Ireland within English history was methodologically appropriate.

Second, many American historians in this era erred on the side of caution and avoided Ireland as topically distinct from Britain because of its toxicity. Ireland belonged to partisans in both the United States and the United Kingdom, a status reinforced by the anti-British tendencies and the displays of Irish nationalism of the Irish American community. Repeated references by American historians to partisanship among British historians reflected this reality.

Lastly, the available source material reinforced these mindsets. British State Papers and British histories served as guides to American historians. A relative absence of Irish comparatives meant fewer counterpoints against these authorities. The primary data for empirical histories of Ireland were found in English legislative texts, the correspondence of English ministers and government officials, and English legal records. Irish historians of the period, despite displays of sympathy for the Catholic Irish community, were invariably educated in British institutions and most were members of the Anglo-Irish community. American historians viewed these historians' arguments on Ireland favorably

¹¹ See, for one example of many, Albert Bushnell Hart, 'Editor's introduction' in Edward Potts Cheyney, *The American nation: a history, volume 1: European background of American history, 1300-1600* (NY, 1904), p. xxi.

and generally gave them greater attention than the arguments of English historians who wrote Irish history.

The argumentative engagement with British historians and their works in this period, however, may have served to further discourage the study of Ireland. It certainly contributed to the discussion being kept in large part in the book review section of the *AHR*. This situation resulted from two issues: the slowness of the British in moving the study of history into a professional environment, relative to the Germans and even the Americans; and the legacies of the partisanship of certain British historians, namely Carlyle and Froude.¹² The appearance of Ireland in the Anglo-American canon of history at this time came in the form of partisan history, for instance Froude's *The English in Ireland in the eighteenth century* (1873), and as limited narratives within stadial histories of English development.

In a sense, then, American historians might have noticed an opportunity to engage with a history that needed desperate academic attention, given its problematic and biased treatment in the popular historiography. Their inquiries, though, were focused elsewhere, mostly inward. It was only after the period being considered here that a concerted interest in the history of Ireland fully emerged.

In their inwardness American historians awkwardly, but surely, developed a concern with the prevailing narratives of Irish history. The particular need to revise the history of

¹² See Turner, *Philology*, pp 308-09, for a discussion on the different paces of the academization of history in the US and the UK in the late nineteenth century.

English development nurtured a burgeoning, though sometimes hidden, engagement with Ireland. There were signs that American historians were examining Ireland in innovative and unique ways, especially in comparison to their British peers.

Assigning Ireland and America a place within the history of the English imperial system

As Ireland was a constituent part of the English system, accounts of Irish history existed as a sub-plot in the historiography of England and especially of English advance and imperialism. In examining histories of English imperialism, American historians identified Oliver Cromwell and his era as critical to the English path of securing imperial hegemony above its European rivals. The Cromwellian era provided an example from history of how a sustained process of economic advance could begin, and the Americans sought such a history to explain processes underway in the US system.¹³ The American connection to Cromwell came easily. The New England founders belonged to the same religious and social movements and were of the same type of Englishman. Additionally, the English Civil War evoked thematic interest due to the recent conclusion of the US's own civil war.¹⁴

¹³ For relevant studies of Cromwell, see George Louis Beer, 'Cromwell's policy in its economic aspects. I' in *Political Science Quarterly*, xvi, no. 4 (1901), pp 582-611; idem, 'Cromwell's policy in its economic aspects. II' in *Political Science Quarterly*, xvii, no. 1 (1902), pp 46-70; and Frank Strong, 'The causes of Cromwell's West Indian expedition' in *The American Historical Review*, iv, no. 2 (1899), pp 228-45.

¹⁴ See, for an example of the narrative association of English and American civil wars, Wilbur C. Abbott, 'English conspiracy and dissent, 1660-1674, I' in *The American Historical Review*, xiv, no. 3 (1909), pp 503-28 at pp 503-04.

The manner in which American historians addressed the American Civil War affected these inquiries into English imperial origins. Dorothy Ross has stated that the Civil War proved to ‘the new scientific secularists’ ‘that the American republic had not been perfectly formed at the moment of its inception but was still in the process of historical creation’.¹⁵ In the early nineteenth century, James Bryce said that, in a general sense, the Civil War changed American sentiment towards the UK by giving Americans a new narrative, new ‘deeds of valor’ to replace ones ‘directed against the old country’.¹⁶ Both the late twentieth century assessment of Ross and the early twentieth century assessment of Bryce identified the changing interpretive agenda of American historians in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, which amounted to an emphasis on both federal unity and the notion of a relationship of peers with Britain. The American Civil War itself became an origin narrative, because of its distinct disruption to the previous conception of the US system.

The more apt historical comparison for the Cromwellian moment from the American perspective, however, might have been to Revolutionary America. The rise of Cromwell and the American Revolution were occurrences along the same spectrum of historical change, yet incomplete versions of the change they came to represent. Recognizing an imperative to properly celebrate such a relevant historical process, American historians revised pre-Cromwellian English history in order to emphasize the Cromwellian point of departure from the old system, while remaining cognizant of the multi-generational nature of the change that occurred. Cromwell and the general movement he represented stood at

¹⁵ Dorothy Ross, ‘Historical consciousness in nineteenth-century America’ in *The American Historical Review*, lxxxix, no. iv (1984), pp 909-28 at p. 925.

¹⁶ James Bryce, ‘Introduction’ in William A. Dunning, *The British Empire and the United States*, p. xxiii.

the end of a certain line of English development and the beginning of the modern era.¹⁷

The image of Cromwell as a founding figure of the modern English system and the modern US system was preserved because of his existence within an era of historical creation.

Certain eras and individuals exemplified the development that resulted in this Cromwell-initiated, English modernity. American historians used accounts of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries and the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries to discuss the beginnings and ends of a defined stage of English development. Despite calling attention to Cromwell as the turn to a liberal modernity, a longer genealogy of liberalism remained valid. When documenting stadial history, American historians could not, of course, identify New World characteristics, like the American frontier, as formative elements in the US system before the wider Cromwellian era and the European settlement of North America. Their emphasis, therefore, was on the progression of ideas within the English system, ideas which resulted first in Cromwell and then in the United States.¹⁸

These formative ideas emerged from a narrative of English expansion that began with the Norman Conquest and the establishment of a modernized system of governance. Anglo-

¹⁷ Theodore Roosevelt made the point that Cromwell was the first modern leader repeatedly in *Oliver Cromwell* (NY, 1900).

¹⁸ See, for example, George Burton Adams, 'The critical period of English constitutional history' in *The American Historical Review*, v, no. 4 (1900), pp 643-58; idem, 'Anglo-Saxon feudalism' in *The American Historical Review*, vii, no. 1 (1901), pp 11-35; idem, 'The origin of the English Constitution, i' in *The American Historical Review*, xiii, no. 2 (1908), pp 229-45; idem, 'The origin of the English Constitution, ii' in *The American Historical Review*, xiii, no. 4 (1908), pp 713-30; idem, 'Magna Carta and the responsible ministry' in *The American Historical Review*, xx, no. 4 (1915), pp 744-60; and, idem, 'The origin of English equity' in *Columbia Law Review*, xvi, no. 2 (1916), pp 87-98.

Saxon England was demoted, and the benefits of the Norman Conquest were accepted.¹⁹

The intermixing of Anglo-Saxons with the invading Normans occurred in both a physical and structural way: it allowed for a more sustainable and adaptable bloodline for the English race and a more stable political foundation.²⁰

Edward Cheyney from the University of Pennsylvania spoke of the ‘foundations of national unity’ laid during Henry II’s reign.²¹ The system progressed domestically with advances in the common law system, which transformed, to use Cheyney’s words, ‘all feudal relations into the shape of money payments’ and modernized the military regime.²² It took an external force to bring together disparate elements and ideas that, when combined, promised substantive reform and change. The consolidation of Angevin power that occurred over the twelfth and thirteenth centuries indicated a change in historical systems, resulting in the establishment of a strong monarchy combined with strong limits to that power. These two characteristics initiated a stable political order that allowed for external, colonial, and proselytizing ambition.²³

In the history of the effects of the Norman Conquest, American historians noticed a history of imperial formation. The promise of empire seemed tangible under Henry II, after his conquest of Ireland and the solidification of his rule in Britain and in northern France. The Angevin dynasty established a system based on the sharing of power

¹⁹ See Charles Gross, ‘Review. Reviewed work: *Feudal England: historical studies on the XIth and XIIth centuries* by J. H. Round’ in *The American Historical Review*, i, no. 2 (1896), pp 323-26.

²⁰ See, for example, Charles M. Andrews, *A history of England* (Boston, 1903), p. 81.

²¹ Edward P. Cheyney, *A short history of England* (Boston, 1904), p. 147; idem, *An introduction to the industrial and social history of England* (Chautauqua, NY, 1910), p. 16.

²² Cheyney, *A short history of England*, pp 147-48, 156.

²³ See the work of George Burton Adams, especially ‘The critical period of English constitutional history’ and ‘Anglo-Saxon feudalism’.

between monarch and subjects, dependent on a legal order that emerged from the singular circumstances involved in the confrontation, settlement, and integration between the invading Normans and the resident populations. The Norman centers within the British Isles, especially southern England, bore the fruits of this intermingling and centralization, and the system expanded as a result of the political and economic success of these regions.

The limited nature of the conquest of Ireland, however, in reality marked an historical separation between England and Ireland. Ireland remained mostly unconquered, as did most of Wales and Scotland. Despite signs of Norman modernization within Ireland – in the Dublin Pale, primarily – the picture of Ireland that emerged was of a land that stood on the outside of this expanding system. George Burton Adams wrote in *The history of England from the Norman Conquest to the death of John (1066-1216)*, his contribution to William Hunt and Reginald Poole's series, *The political history of England*:

‘Plainly the part of Ireland which was actually occupied was not treated in practice as a separate kingdom, whatever may have been the theory, but as a transplanted part of England under a very vague relationship. As a matter of fact, it was a purely feudal colony, under but the slightest control by a distant overlord, and doomed both from its situation in the midst of an alien, only partly civilized, and largely unconquered race, and from its own organization or lack of organization, to speedy troubles.’²⁴

As England continued its progression towards modernity, Ireland remained in this position.²⁵ Ireland was distinguished for its partial separation from the progressive influences of the newly established system, which gave it a certain untamed quality, and

²⁴ George Burton Adams, *The history of England from the Norman Conquest to the death of John (1066-1216)* (London, 1905), p. 299.

²⁵ See Charles Gross, *The gild merchant: a contribution to British municipal history* (2 vols, Oxford, 1890), i, pp 241-57 for a conception of the modernization of certain centers of Ireland along a Norman/English model.

which introduced instability into the broader system.²⁶ For American historians the narrative of a divergent path played out over a long evolutionary history to the nineteenth century, with emphasis placed on distinguishing characteristics that further emphasized the divergence, such as the refusal of the majority of the Irish to participate in the English Reformation.

The Norman/English system within the properly centralized regions, though, apparently expanded too successfully in the sense that its rulers began to display despotic tendencies. Projected forward to the Tudor era, the system became unbalanced, having veered towards a favoring or enabling of the will of the monarchy over the rights of subjects, a trend which the historians said continued into the Stuart era.²⁷ Religious conflict existed as a product of and was encouraged by despotic tendencies, seen most strongly in the person of Henry VIII.²⁸

The Tudor dynasty's interactions with Ireland highlighted these complications within the account of systematic English progress. Religious differences heightened the difficulties present within the Anglo-Irish relationship in the sixteenth century. The continued practice of Catholicism in Ireland after the English reformation reflected its peripherality in developmental terms (partially in, partially out of the English system), and it presented a continued complication in the equilibrium between the monarch and Parliament because of the ways that Ireland could be used as a pawn domestically and internationally.

²⁶ Cheyney, *A short history of England*, pp 167-68; idem, *An introduction to the industrial and social history of England*, p. 24.

²⁷ See George Burton Adams, 'The critical period of English constitutional history'.

²⁸ See, for example, Andrews, *A history of England*, pp 256-68.

In the seventeenth century this Irish religious difficulty existed as one strain of the broader religious conflicts of the Stuarts and Parliament based within the European political environment. Edward Cheyney justified the anti-Catholic nature of British governance in Ireland in terms of political expediency, arguing that Catholicism was politically opposed to the English system in theory and direction: 'the only conception of orderly government which English statesmen of the time could form' was based on a developed system whose existence 'could only be counted on to act in accordance with the desires of the administration if they were made up of Englishmen and Protestants'.²⁹ American historians saw the change that occurred within England during the Tudor Era as flawed progressivism and the lack of change within Ireland (among the Catholic class) in sympathetic, yet judgmental, evolutionary terms.³⁰ Both conclusions were shaped by the knowledge that the Tudor Era was a transitional period, in which England struggled with Spain for economic and political influence.³¹

In this historiography the responses to Irish differences that arose over a period of centuries from the Norman through the Stuart periods were reactionary and, ultimately, expressions or attempted expressions of despotic, absolute power. Cromwell, it was said, owed his despotic activity in Ireland to an inheritance of monarchical despotism that existed as a facet of the English system. The expressions of prejudice, othering, and violence were said to have occurred in racial and religious terms. American historians

²⁹ Cheyney, 'Some English conditions surrounding the settlement of Virginia', p. 514.

³⁰ See Andrews, *A history of England*, pp 324-25.

³¹ See George Louis Beer, *The origins of the British colonial system, 1578-1660* (NY, 1908), pp 1-31; Edward P. Cheyney, 'International law under Queen Elizabeth' in *The American Historical Review*, xx, no. 80 (1905), pp 659-72.

explained this environment of despotic behavior in Ireland and elsewhere in the English system as a product of time and place, an interpretation which emphasized stadial, systematic development and reduced the responsibility of individual actors.³² The Norman background to the modern US system, because it led to these Tudor/Stuart outcomes, thus, involved an understandable degree of ambivalence for American historians, because it was so different from the United States and so long ago.

American historians looked elsewhere for a unifying thread to connect this pre-history of the US system to its illustrious modern state, in order to avoid an inheritance from despotism. At the turn of the twentieth century, historians of England and empire identified commercial activity as a proper narrative pathway. Merchant networks in the late medieval period established charter and trade agreements between towns in England, Ireland, Wales, and Scotland, which, said Charles Gross of Harvard University, united the peoples ‘by a tie closer and more organic than any that binds together such communities in our age of rapid transit and great commercial activity’.³³

In the merchant system, Bristol was the ‘mother’ city of Ireland, according to Gross’s investigations.³⁴ This evidence showed that the Norman system expanded in a commercially viable and sustainable fashion. English towns appeared in Ireland, despite the incompleteness of the Norman political conquest – albeit as islands within an otherwise untamed, barbarous Ireland. That the merchant class was leading the

³² See, for example, Andrews, *A history of England*, pp 370-71.

³³ Gross, *The gild merchant*, i, p. 241. See Joseph Jacobs, ‘Charles Gross’ in *Publications of the American Jewish Historical Society*, xix (1910), pp 189-93 for biographical information on Gross.

³⁴ Gross, *The gild merchant*, i, p. 257.

expansion, rather than the aristocracy and monarchy, acknowledged a ‘weakness of central authority’, which could be construed as a positive weakness in the mindset of one’s seeking the nascent development of an American system.³⁵ Such a treatment justified the modern endpoint of Ireland in its Anglo-Irish administrative form as fundamentally inside the English realm; however, the weakness of the central authority implied an inherent otherness to the structure.

Mercantile development eventually encouraged democracy, because it created institutions and layers of economic and political power separate from the monarchy and aristocracy.³⁶ The merchant class defended its rights and asserted its power in the face of the increasingly despotic nature of the monarchy over this long stage of English development from Plantagenets to Stuarts, in a manner similar to the assertion of rights by feudal lords in the era of Magna Carta at the beginning of this systematic development.³⁷ Oliver Cromwell emerged as the outcome and figurehead of this process of alternative development, and the merchant class, who supported Cromwell and the Independents in their noble aims, was the guardian of modern English and American political ideals.

Cromwell’s rise in the English system was a prime representation in historical narrative of a critique of the monarchy and of a fundamental, stadial change. The explanations given by American historians for the failure of the Cromwellians to introduce a more universal freedom of religion demonstrated this analysis. Cromwell and a select, enlightened elite

³⁵ See *ibid.*, i, p. 241, for quoted text.

³⁶ See Beer, *The old colonial system, 1660-1754*, i, especially pp 224-315 for the expansion of administrative departments and the dispersion of responsibilities away from the central authority.

³⁷ See George Burton Adams, ‘Magna Carta and the responsible ministry’ and ‘The critical period in English constitutional history’ for the Magna Carta era.

believed in such freedom but were required to abandon this ideal in order to end internal strife and preserve the gains they had made against the pre-existent base of political power. This compromise led to unintended consequences, like the intense restrictions on Catholic participation in political life, seen prominently in Ireland. Ireland had, of course, long presented as an interruption in the English quest towards liberal modernity, a role it assumed from the time of the Norman Conquest. Repeated interruptions required pragmatic solutions, said the historians. The Cromwellian conquest and land settlement and, later, the Treaty of Limerick, emerged because of this need for practicality and final settlement.³⁸ The colonization of Ireland throughout this period, made permanent by Cromwell's success, was a 'political policy' of the government, built on these practical concerns of ensuring a quietude in the Irish population and as the most expedient and cost-effective means of funding the English military presence needed in Ireland to accomplish that task.³⁹ Through colonization, land settlements, and forced or encouraged emigration, the English people and the merchant class ostensibly achieved a separation of Irish elites from the commoners and a lasting solution, which the old monarchical system had failed to do.⁴⁰

In this historiography, Cromwell's despotic tendencies came from a position of honesty in contrast to the self-centered despotism of past monarchs, seen prominently in Henry VIII's repudiation of Catholicism. American historians placed an emphasis on Cromwell being 'an epitome of the history of his time [who] cannot be understood apart from it', in

³⁸ Cheyney, *A short history of England*, pp 455, 517-18. See also Roosevelt, *Oliver Cromwell*.

³⁹ Cheyney, 'Some English conditions surrounding the settlement of Virginia', p. 514.

⁴⁰ See, for a brief comment on the subordination of Ireland to the 'interests of England', idem, *A short history of England*, p. 573. See also idem, *An introduction to the industrial and social history of England*, p. 24.

the words of Guernsey Jones of the University of Nebraska.⁴¹ Cromwell was, despite the progressiveness of his movement, still an Elizabethan, said Frank Strong of the University of Oregon.⁴² Strong also noted his being a ‘practical man’.⁴³ George Beer assessed his persona thus: ‘Cromwell was essentially the child of his times—the product of a curious blending of commercial shrewdness and religious zeal. [Samuel Rawson] Gardiner has aptly called him the most typical Englishman; yet he is, perhaps in a truer sense, the most typical Yankee.’⁴⁴ This deference to the times implied a forgiveness of his misdeeds and a nod to his ‘great man’ status in the history of the origins of the American system. Cromwell’s despotism was a necessary evil to bring forth a liberal world.

Ireland seemed to receive relatively less attention in the post-Cromwellian English system, because the system’s energies were focused on mercantile development and, thus, overseas expansion.⁴⁵ Though Ireland was initially a more central component of mercantile development and of the plantation systems, this process favored the American colonies and disfavored Ireland. Ireland’s proximity to England proved disadvantageous to politically progressive colonization by the middle decades of the seventeenth century, when emigrants from England seeking religious liberty sought refuge at a geographic distance from ‘the hostility of the dominant party in England’.⁴⁶ Irish developments after

⁴¹ Guernsey Jones, ‘Review. Reviewed work(s): *Oliver Cromwell and the rule of the Puritans in England* by Charles Firth’ in *The American Historical Review*, vii, no. 1 (1901), pp 130-31 at p. 130.

⁴² Frank Strong, ‘The causes of Cromwell’s West Indian expedition’, p. 233.

⁴³ See, for example, *ibid.*, p. 231.

⁴⁴ Beer, ‘Cromwell’s policy in its economic aspects. II’, p. 66.

⁴⁵ See Beer, ‘Cromwell’s policy in its economic aspects. I’; *idem*, ‘Cromwell’s policy in its economic aspects. II’; and Strong, ‘The causes of Cromwell’s West Indian expedition’.

⁴⁶ Cheyney, ‘Some English conditions surrounding the settlement of Virginia’, p. 520.

the Treaty of Limerick and into the eighteenth century became a subset of England's expansion 'to a world-wide empire'.⁴⁷

Expansionary concerns emerged unrelated to Ireland, like discord in the American colonies. These concerns had the effect of reinforcing the value of the policy of harsh treatment of Ireland out of the necessity for ensuring order in the British Isles. In the American historiography of this process, the Irish settlement proved the shrewdness of the English system. The establishment of this order allowed for economic advancement.⁴⁸ The process involved a growing centralization of economic functionalities: the England that Henry II had centralized politically, with its functional tension between monarch and Commons, now centralized its colonial possessions (like Ireland), into a coherent, connected system. The advancements of the English political system had produced stability and an ability to expand, both socially and economically; indeed, it had been required to expand, because of its missionary qualities.

Locating the American disruption to the English system

The colonial ventures of the seventeenth century allowed for interpretation within the same theoretical framework of merchant-led growth defined by Charles Gross and others and discussed above. The merchants of the early modern period were replaced by the mercantilist adventurers of the seventeenth century, and the merchant towns by plantations. For American historians of the late nineteenth century, if America and

⁴⁷ Cheyney, *A short history of England*, p. 573.

⁴⁸ See, especially, Beer, *The origins of the British colonial system, 1578-1660*, pp 1-52.

Ireland had ever existed on the same political and social spectrum, it occurred during the Colonial and Revolutionary Eras. George Louis Beer, Edward Cheyney, and others assessed early modern Ireland through the theme of colonization, encouraged by the direct thematic connection to America.⁴⁹

Cheyney articulated an argument in 1907 that has connections to Nicholas Canny's 'Ideology of English colonization' from 1973 and especially to David B. Quinn's 'Ireland and America intertwined' in *The Elizabethans and the Irish* (1966): the colonization of Ireland and Virginia were parallel developments and part of the same process of systematic expansion, connected by more than contemporaneity. Canny focused on the parallel ideological justification for suppression of native communities in Ireland and the Americas, resulting in no small part from the presence of familiar faces involved in English colonization from both geographies.⁵⁰ Humphrey Gilbert, Henry Sidney, and Walter Raleigh were involved in colonizing enterprises in both Ireland and Virginia. Cheyney identified that the same patterns in establishing settlement companies or organizations were followed in Ireland and Virginia.⁵¹ These colonial settlement patterns meant that, said Quinn, 'There was now a sense of geographical contiguity between the western island [Ireland] and the lands of America'.⁵²

⁴⁹ See Beer, *The origins of the British colonial system, 1578-1660*; idem, *The old colonial system, 1660-1754*; and Cheyney, 'Some English conditions surrounding the settlement of Virginia'. For another brief example, see Guernsey Jones, 'Review. Reviewed work(s): *History of the commonwealth and protectorate, 1649-1660*; vol. iii, 1654-1656, by Samuel Rawson Gardiner' in *The American Historical Review*, vii, no. 1 (1901), pp 131-35.

⁵⁰ See Nicholas Canny, 'The ideology of English colonization: from Ireland to America' in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, xxx, no. 4 (1973), pp 575-98.

⁵¹ See Cheyney, 'Some English conditions surrounding the settlement of Virginia'; see also, Herbert L. Osgood, *The American colonies in the seventeenth century; volume I: the chartered colonies. Beginnings of self government* (NY, 1904), pp 5-15.

⁵² David Beers Quinn, 'Ireland and America intertwined' in idem, *The Elizabethans and the Irish* (Ithaca, NY, 1966), pp 106-22 at p. 121. Quinn cited Cheyney's article ('Some English conditions') in his first footnote of 'Ireland and America intertwined'. See also Patrick Griffin, 'The people with no name: Ulster's

While articulating the similarities in the colonization of Ireland and Virginia, Cheyney defined a partial American difference. The success of the American and northeastern Ulster ventures compared to the failure of the Munster and Connaught ventures resulted from external conditions, not from shortcomings in the system. Plague curtailed growth of immigration to the colonies in the early seventeenth century. Even plague might be given a positive connotation: the Virginia plantation endured despite plague and the intense hardships faced by the earliest settlers, including attacks by native populations and famine. This data confirmed for Cheyney the Providential nature of the English settlement of Virginia:

‘The more closely conditions in England in the years just preceding and contemporary with the foundation of Virginia are studied, the more natural does it seem that such a settlement should have been made, that it should have taken some such form as it did and suffered the difficulties it actually experienced. The whole movement was a natural, almost an inevitable one. But this naturalness does not diminish its significance...The subject of colonization was now for the first, and for all subsequent time, made one of popular interest.’⁵³

This movement involved a shift from the Spanish and Portuguese model, the assumption of a merchant-centered approach more similar to Dutch colonization, and the embrace of the common, industrious, pioneering man at the helm, rather than the aristocracy/monarchy. The devolved and ‘popular’ nature of the schemes ensured a practicality in approach, in contrast to the Spanish and Portuguese approach. This resulted in a social levelling in the American colonies, a break from the social traditions of the English system. The English institutional approach to colonies also ensured a

migrants and identity formation in eighteenth-century Pennsylvania’ in *The William and Mary Quarterly*, liii, no. 3 (2001), pp 587-614, especially pp 591-93. Others who note the connections in colonial schemes between Ireland and America include Wesley Frank Craven, *New Jersey and the English colonization of North America* (Princeton, 1964), pp 6-7.

⁵³ Cheyney, ‘Some English conditions’, p. 527.

defined separation between the American colonies and the center of the system, a separation strengthened by geographic distance. The possibility of such a separation for Ireland was precluded by its proximity to the center.⁵⁴

Their belief in their commitment to objectivity meant the American historians, especially those within the imperial school, like Charles Andrews and George Beer, demarcated the start of the US system from the Declaration of Independence and the Revolutionary War, because of their emphases on constitutional and institutional histories. This demarcation, however, also had a pre-history, which allowed for a fluidity in the way that they defined the system's origins. Thus, despite an intellectual and professional imperative to avoid doing so, American historians often interpreted the development of the US system in a teleological manner, because of the necessity for identifying the special destiny of the United States in this narrative.

The Cromwellians existed in the first origins iteration, discussed in the section above, as Americans transposed in time and space. They were also, of course, of the same type of Englishman as the original settlers of New England. These settlers, together with English settlers of the middle and southern colonies, imported English constitutionalism into North America. More so, they were more fully mentally and physically imbued with the Anglo-Saxon principles of liberty and individualism than their English brethren who remained in Britain and Ireland. The inclusion of the physical environment as a formative influence into the account of American systematic history provided the historians with a

⁵⁴ See especially Beer, *The origins of the British colonial system, 1578-1660* and *The old colonial system, 1660-1754*.

means to make this distinction between New World and Old-World Englishmen.

Unhindered by the monarchy, the aristocracy, and the merchant lords of Britain, Anglo-Saxonism progressed in a self-contained manner in America. This interpretive process was why in 1910 Thomas Wertenbaker, for example, argued that the aristocracy of the US South from the colonial period through the Civil War was a product of the American environment and that it was not imported from Britain.⁵⁵

The American natural environment thus emerged as the precipitating factor that disrupted the British system. England during the period of the establishment of the American colonies ‘was not a seed ground for democracy’, said Charles Andrews. ‘After 1660, therefore, New England and old England had little in common as far as political ideas and institutions were concerned.’⁵⁶ The narrative of the interactions of the Anglo-Saxon settlers with the American environment ostensibly allowed for a proper historical accounting of the disruptive character of the coming US system.

The American Revolution, however, said Andrews, was in a first sense a ‘colonial problem’ of the British imperial system, not an ‘American problem’.⁵⁷ George Beer concurred with Andrews’s dichotomy:

‘The tendency toward independence was present at the outset. It was in part due to the extreme individualism of the settlers, a characteristic which, while possessing distinct advantages, is not conducive to the creation of large political entities. In part also this tendency was due to the fact that the movement of colonization was largely the result of private enterprise. The mother country sanctioned the movement, supervised and aided it, and thus incurred definite

⁵⁵ See Thomas J. Wertenbaker, *Patrician and plebeian Virginia; or the origin and development of the social classes of the Old Dominion* (Charlottesville, VA, 1910), p. 1, for his argument that the Virginian aristocracy that developed was a creation of the American environment.

⁵⁶ Charles M. Andrews, *The colonial period* (NY, 1912), p. 68.

⁵⁷ Charles M. Andrews, *Colonial background of the American Revolution* (New Haven, CT, 1924), p. ix.

responsibilities...Each colony had its own historical traditions and institutions, its own peculiar customs and usages, to which the home government adapted itself, thus giving to the British imperial administrative system a typically flexible character, though an unsymmetrical aspect...Thus the Empire was a loosely organized political structure, composed of a number of heterogenous colonies with different economic institutions and with varying degrees of self-government, all tending, however, toward virtual autonomy.⁵⁸

While acknowledging the uniqueness of the American environment, Andrews and Beer attempted to counter an inevitable teleology in the historiography by recentring the pre-history of the US system into its proper colonial state within the British Empire, as one of many component parts to a multifaceted system.⁵⁹

The histories of Ireland and the US system achieved a semblance of parity in the Colonial and Revolutionary eras through this colonial/imperial interpretation, as seen in Edward Cheyney's analysis of English colonization of Ireland and America; however, it was not a universal conception for American historians. George Beer, for example did not make comparisons between colonial Ireland and colonial America, because he did not reference Ireland as a colonial entity. Ireland, for him, was very much part of the central kingdom of the British system. Nonetheless, Cheyney noticed the American independence movement and Grattan's 'home rule' movement as parallel developments within the English political framework, and as signs of the prior ruling norm – the royal power – grasping for its powers of old in a society that had determined to move on.⁶⁰ The American Revolution marked for Cheyney a divergence in the paths of the United States and Ireland. The American Revolution, contemporaneous to the Act of Union, had the

⁵⁸ George Louis Beer, *British colonial policy, 1754-1765* (NY, 1907), pp 2-3.

⁵⁹ See also Wesley Frank Craven, 'Historical study of the British Empire' in *The Journal of Modern History*, vi, no. 1 (1934), pp 40-69 at pp 53-54.

⁶⁰ Cheyney, *A short history of England*, pp 593-95. George Burton Adams said George III's actions attacked 'the results achieved since the death of William III'. See George Burton Adams, 'Magna Carta and the responsible ministry', p. 757.

effect of diminishing within England ‘the personal management of parliament by the king and the ministry’, which increased the level of freedom enjoyed by the English people.⁶¹ The Act of Union and the further subjugation of Ireland, meanwhile, seemed to mark a setback to the progressive political reforms of the English system.

The American frontier ostensibly enabled the emergence of an American system from its colonial dependency. American democracy was born in this frontier, not in England or Europe.⁶² Andrews thought the frontier a crucial element that projected both forward and backward in the history of the system: ‘From the beginning of our history the struggle between the conservatism of the settled areas and the democracy of the frontier has been a factor of tremendous significance, and in its widest influence has been characteristic of New England as well as the south’.⁶³ These notions of the frontier birth and of the frontier’s continuously regenerative qualities were present in conceptions of American systematic origins long before historians analyzed those origins at the turn of the twentieth century, and they were not always praised by the intellectual elite. Charles Eliot Norton, for example, in 1874 noted the ‘decline of the old New England type’ and the rise of the Western or frontier type as a negative trend for the United States, because of the importance of New Englanders in the past American ‘resistance to England and resistance to slavery’.⁶⁴ When seen with a discussion of Ireland and America within an atmosphere of changing or new systems, the message became, in a general sense, that the American

⁶¹ Cheyney, *A short history of England*, p. 615.

⁶² Jay B. Hubbell, ‘The frontier in American literature’ in *Southwest Review*, x, no. 2 (1925), pp 84-92, see especially p. 88.

⁶³ Andrews, *The colonial period*, p. 100.

⁶⁴ For this assessment and for the quote from Charles Eliot Norton, see Marilyn Lake, *Progressive new world: how settler colonialism and transatlantic Pacific exchange shaped American reform* (Cambridge, MA, 2019), pp 39-40.

environment preserved a necessary level of decentralization, while the English system continued towards further centralization. The late nineteenth century outcomes proved the validity of the assessment: Ireland was economically and politically marginalized, whereas US growth was driven by an increasing economic and political power distributed throughout the country.⁶⁵

When Cheyney characterized the colonial settlement of Virginia as a ‘natural’ and ‘inevitable’ movement in contrast to the failure of the colonial schemes in Ireland, his narration implied Ireland’s unnaturalness. This difference between America and Ireland was confirmed evidentially by citing the Act of Union of Great Britain and Ireland in 1801, which, given the late nineteenth century state of Ireland could only be characterized as unnatural, yet perhaps inevitable, too. The Act of Union ostensibly existed within the same cycle of action and reaction that had informed the relationship between England and Ireland since the Norman Conquest and especially since the English Reformation. The action was the response of Ireland’s ‘vast unrepresented and unhappy population and its various classes with their different interests’ to the French Revolution – the Irish desiring a republic, led by the United Irishmen.⁶⁶ The reaction was the swift suppression of the revolutionaries and the Act of Union, since ‘the English ministers decided that the only hope for peace and order in Ireland was to unite her parliament with that of England and rule the two countries as one’.⁶⁷ Every act of rebellion by the Irish confirmed for English political leaders the need to control Ireland more closely, and the heavier hand of English

⁶⁵ See, for an assessment of US growth in this regard: Theodore Dwight Woolsey *et al.*, *The first century of the republic: a review of American progress* (NY, 1876).

⁶⁶ Cheyney, *A short history of England*, p. 606.

⁶⁷ Cheyney, *A short history of England*, p. 606.

governance encouraged greater Irish dissent. The limitation of freedom, in this narrative, was a natural outcome of the English system.

The Irish Famine in the middle of the nineteenth century further validated the analyses of both the extreme divergence in the paths of Ireland and the United States and of the view that the American system was a clear, positive progression away from English system.

The English system was unable to prevent the Famine, because its centralized institutional structure discouraged progress and removed resources from Ireland. The problem of the US South and the notion that the federal government in the US had become more centralized after the conclusion of the Civil War might have raised suspicions about these lines of inquiry; however, it was in the effort to legitimize the story of the dispersed federal system of the United States, in spite of this moment of questioning or reckoning, that called forth a more robust historical defense of that system.

The British imperial system's effects on Ireland

A primary method of critiquing the effects of English centralization was using the example of the nineteenth century condition of Ireland. This critique existed in non-historical works, as seen in the examples of Henry Carey and Henry George from chapters one and three, respectively, of this thesis. American historians emphasized political oppression in their particular iteration of this critique, explained through analyses of Irish land policies and legislation. Without a frontier and amidst the tendency towards greater centralization displayed by the English system, Ireland was entrapped within the system. The problem for the English system regarding Ireland was that, despite reaching a high

level of centralization in imperial governance of its colonies and dependencies across the world, Ireland was never truly integrated into the system, a failure that went back to the Norman Conquest. Cromwell approached integration, but the events and progress of the nineteenth century showed a lack of proper integration. In light of the situation presented by the example of Ireland, American historians revised their assessments of the English system in a manner that remained consistent with their acknowledgments of their own inheritances from that system.

The American historiography in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries addressed the land question of Ireland by comparison to the American experience. The accounts of the Irish question focused more centrally on land from 1880 to 1900, because of the Irish political leaders who articulated the less antagonistic form of activism known as the ‘New Departure’, a move away from overtly terroristic approaches that predominated in the immediate postbellum years.⁶⁸ The appeal of Irish history for American historians rested within this same spectrum of respectability. Gladstone’s ownership of the Irish question in Parliament and Parnell’s non-denominational approach to dissent encouraged American intellectuals, especially liberals, to engage with the question.⁶⁹ The appeal also resulted from a sense that Ireland and its land history helped explain uncertainties present in certain societal shifts that were ongoing at the end of the nineteenth century, resulting in another critique of the English system, and, in a broader sense, in a critique of political management of property ownership, a management that had resulted in oppression.

⁶⁸ See Eric Foner, *Politics and ideology in the age of the Civil War* (NY, 1980), pp 150-200.

⁶⁹ See E. L. Godkin and chapter two of this thesis for more on this liberal engagement with the Irish question.

Yet, behind the community of liberalism and progressivism that fostered a programmatic, reformers' interest in Ireland sat the Famine. William Dunning of Columbia University said it had 'attracted general attention to the condition of Ireland'.⁷⁰ Dunning, hardly remembered as a social reformer or advocate, articulated an advanced argument regarding British governance in Ireland with an emphasis on post-Famine policies.

Columbia University hired Dunning as a prize-lecturer, after he had submitted his doctoral dissertation on the history of the US Constitution during the Civil War and Reconstruction periods, for a term of three years (1887-90). The prize-lecturer role was awarded to exemplary young academics. His lecture course for first-year undergraduates in the School of Political Science was on the relations between England and Ireland.⁷¹ His prize-lectureship ended in 1890, when Columbia named him an assistant professor, and Dunning continued to offer the course through the 1893-1894 academic year.⁷² Historians have little reported on his early and persistent interest in Ireland, because it was soon overshadowed by his continued study of Reconstruction and the historiographical controversy that ensued from his interpretations of Reconstruction.⁷³

⁷⁰ William A. Dunning 'Irish land legislation since 1845. I.' in *Political Science Quarterly*, vii, no. 1 (1892), pp 57-79 at p. 63.

⁷¹ See *Columbia College: handbook of information as to the several schools and courses of instruction, 1889-1890* (NY, 1889), available at Hathi Trust Digital Library (<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiug.30112111489842>) (1 July 2018), p. 197.

⁷² The course ran until at least the 1893-94 academic year. See *Columbia College: handbook of information as to the School of Arts and as to the university faculties and the schools under their charge, 1893-94* (NY, 1893), available at Hathi Trust Digital Library (<https://hdl.handle.net/2027/uiug.30112111489800>) (12 February 2020), pp 6-7.

⁷³ For the controversy in the historiography, see Eric Foner, 'Preface' in idem., *Reconstruction: America's unfinished revolution, 1863-1877* (NY, 1989), pp xvii-xxv; idem., 'The Supreme Court and the history of Reconstruction—and vice-versa' in *Columbia Law Review*, cxii, no. 7 (2012), pp 1585-1606, especially p. 1590; Philip R. Muller, 'Look back without anger: a reappraisal of William A. Dunning' in *The Journal of American History*, lxi, no. 2 (1974), pp 325-38; see also, W. E. B. Du Bois, *Black reconstruction: an essay*

As an historian and political scientist, Dunning built his legacy on the analysis of politics, political thought, and legislative history. Dunning's skillset as an historian particularly suited the history of political theory and the development of political organization from antiquity to modernity. He proved adept at moving from the distant to the near past and explaining the progression of ideas.⁷⁴ Such perspective allowed for a reasoned and considered approach to the peculiar political circumstances of middle to late nineteenth century Britain and Ireland.

His commentary about Ireland was almost exclusively published in the pages of *Political Science Quarterly*, the academic journal published by the faculty of the Department of Political Science at Columbia University, with the exceptions of 'Daniel O'Connell' – published in the *Sewanee Review* – and one review published in *The American Historical Review*.⁷⁵ The majority of this content came in the form of book reviews, and all reviews were of British publications. The most important of his writings on Ireland in *Political Science Quarterly* was a two-part article, titled 'Irish land legislation since 1845' (1892), reprinted in book form by the New York publisher Gill and Company that same year. Separate from this article and the book reviews, Dunning wrote a bi-annual column from 1889 to 1898 for the *Quarterly*, 'Record of political events', in which items of Irish-political interest appeared.

toward a history of the part which black folk played in the attempt to reconstruct democracy in America, 1860-1880 (NY, 1935).

⁷⁴ See William A. Dunning, *History of political theories, ancient and medieval* (3 vols., London, 1902-1920).

⁷⁵ William A. Dunning, 'Daniel O'Connell' in *Sewanee Review*, iii, no. 3 (1895), pp 257-77; idem, 'Review. Reviewed work(s): *Ireland, 1494-1868*, by William O'Connor Morris' in *The American Historical Review*, ii, no. 3 (1897), pp 515-16.

Dunning's extended analysis of the British legislative approach to Ireland in the nineteenth century was somewhat unique in the United States for its attempt at synthesis. Most commentators focused on particular elements of the various Irish land crises and many of these commentators in American periodicals were British. H. O. Arnold-Forster, for example, wrote 'The Gladstone government and Ireland' for *The North American Review* in 1881. James Bryce (from Ulster) and Goldwin Smith (from Berkshire) also featured as expert voices on Ireland. The exception might be Henry George, discussed in chapter three of this thesis. The study closest in theme to Dunning's article was Walter James Shepard's 'The government of Ireland (Home Rule) Bill' from *The American Political Science Review* in 1912, though Shepard took a more journalistic than historical approach.

In the Columbia College handbook for 1889-1890, Dunning's lecture course, 'The relations of England and Ireland', was abstracted as follows, in which Dunning recognized a universalism present within the Irish question:

'In a general way the Irish question has been the question of imposing upon the last and most persistent remnant of the old Celtic race the Teutonic ideas and institutions that have been developed in England. Three phases of the process are clearly distinguishable in history—the political, the religious, and the economical. It is designed in the lectures to follow out in some detail the modifications in the relations of the two islands affected by the varying prominence of these different phases. The long struggle for English political supremacy over all Ireland, from the twelfth to the seventeenth century, the religious wars, and the ruthless suppression of the Catholic population during the two succeeding centuries, and the origin and development of the land question out of the circumstances of both these periods, are described with special reference to their influence on the modern state of Irish affairs. Incidentally to these leading topics, the questions of governmental organization that have been prominent from time to time since the conquest are discussed, and the history of the Irish parliament is followed out in

such a way as to illustrate the nature and importance of the agitation for home rule.⁷⁶

In his review of William Ernest Montgomery's *The history of land tenure in Ireland* (Cambridge, 1889), Dunning said his fundamental beliefs related to the Irish land question were contained in an excerpt Montgomery took from the report of the Bessborough Commission (1880), which read: 'There has in general survived to the Irish farmer, through all vicissitudes, in despite of the seeming or real veto of the law, in apparent defiance of political economy, a living tradition of possessory right such as belonged to the more primitive ages of society to the status of the man who tilled the soil.'⁷⁷ This pointed to a recognition of a certain stubbornness in the Irish that attached them to an outdated social and economic order. While race and religion separated the Irish from the English, Dunning's conception of the relationship between the Irish and the English focused on a broader stadial process rooted in the development of Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon institutions and of the failure of the Irish to fully participate in that development. Dunning implied here that the political history of Ireland presented a warning for the imperial power: no amount of wishful thinking could alter tradition and cultural inheritance.

For Dunning a key to understanding the state of nineteenth-century Ireland and the Irish political situation at the turn of the twentieth century was to examine the life of Daniel O'Connell. He wrote in his biographical article about O'Connell, 'The entire Roman Catholic population, and no small number of liberal Protestants, were consolidated into a

⁷⁶ *Columbia College: handbook of information, 1889-1890*, p. 197.

⁷⁷ Bessborough Commission report quoted in William A. Dunning, 'Review of *The history of land tenure in Ireland* by William Ernest Montgomery' in *Political Science Quarterly*, iv, no. 4 (1889), pp 673-75 at p. 673.

single effective machine, and at the lever that controlled the whole stood O'Connell.'⁷⁸

O'Connell, said Dunning, had made the agitator (in his person first) and the nationalist movement the 'real government of Ireland' and 'in evoking the spirit of nationality in the cause of Repeal [O'Connell] aroused a power which he himself could scarcely control.'⁷⁹

The British had reverted to 'arbitrary brute force' in suppressing O'Connell, which caused the democracy that O'Connell had awakened/ formed to be 'dazed by the cruel

undeceiving' and ostensibly confirmed the need to work outside of the political system.⁸⁰

The system refused to acknowledge democratic advance in Ireland and chose to address O'Connell in the same manner it had addressed past dissent in Ireland.

Dunning examined legislative developments and parliamentary initiatives that addressed the Irish situation in the nineteenth century for insights into the interactions between government policies and a nationalistic democracy in the spirit of and descent from O'Connellism. The Devon Commission (1845) proved worthwhile, he thought, by showing the British public that the Irish were victims of injustice in property rights, a change from past characterizations that blamed the Irish as victims of their own incompetence and that accused the Irish of having a 'shiftless neglect of the Malthusian law'.⁸¹ The Commission's impartial attitude and its recommendations for change demonstrated progressivism in British thought.⁸²

⁷⁸ Dunning, 'Daniel O'Connell', p. 267.

⁷⁹ Ibid., p. 273.

⁸⁰ Ibid., p. 276.

⁸¹ Dunning, 'Irish land legislation. I.', p. 58.

⁸² Ibid., p. 62.

The strength of British property rights and the entrenchment of landholders' interests, however, prevented proposed changes to Irish landlord and tenant arrangements at mid-century. Radical and confrontational opposition to the landlord interest naturally continued:

‘Not till 1860 was the idea of compensation for tenants’ improvements again taken up by the government...Such was the result of twenty-five years of struggle for tenants’ compensation. The landlord’s conception of his interest in the soil remained intact. His consent must be obtained for any alteration on his estate, his power of arbitrary eviction remained unaffected, his liability to the tenant ceased with a fixed term, and all past improvements were left absolutely his. Against each of these principles the friends of the tenants’ cause had for years been committed to uncompromising hostility.’⁸³

The evolution away from the landlord interest was slow, but it was apparently a noticeable progression, which legislation in 1870 showed in its aid to tenants in preventing evictions; however, this legislation still retained provisions that allowed for evictions in certain situations.⁸⁴ Despite the frustratingly slow process, Dunning summarized Gladstone’s 1870 legislative agenda as ‘an enormous revolution in the relations of landowners and their tenants’, with a caveat: ‘That the new relations would insure tranquility to Ireland was not so clear’.⁸⁵

Dunning thought, however, legislation in the 1870s and 1880s proved that the government retained anti-progressive tendencies regarding the Irish question, despite a relative advance in its approach to Ireland. The government still reacted or responded because of the political necessity of taking action, but it failed to take the sufficiently advanced actions needed for settlement of the question. Parliament had shown a degree of

⁸³ Ibid., see pp 65-67; the quote is from p. 67.

⁸⁴ Dunning, ‘Irish land legislation. I.’, pp 76-78.

⁸⁵ Ibid., p. 79.

progressivism. Government commissions and public opinion recommended the same remedies as had been recommended since O'Connell's rise but without a desire to change the underlying system.

The inability of the British government to go further in reducing the landlord interest created space for Isaac Butt's Irish Home Rule League and for a necessary re-evaluation of the land question.⁸⁶ The Land League, the Home Rule League's successor in fomenting Irish parliamentary opposition, promoted the more radical solution of removing the landlord from Ireland. The pattern was revealed once again here. British political solutions to the Irish situation were fundamentally flawed because of an inability to address the underlying stimulus to Ireland's nationalism: an imposition from an external power that displaced the natural development of the relationship between the Irish people and the land of Ireland.

Despite recognition of the shortcomings of the legislative process, Dunning argued that in 1891 the British government was doing everything in its power to address the peculiar Irish land issues, proven by the fact that both liberal and conservative governments had encouraged compromise and progressivism. It was possible, however, that good intentions might amount to little or no change: 'That the act of 1891 will create peasant proprietorship throughout Ireland, or that such a system, if created, will settle the Irish land question, no one familiar with the history of that question will venture to predict.'⁸⁷ The pattern of participation in the government lending schemes proved worrisome for the

⁸⁶ Ibid.

⁸⁷ Dunning, 'Irish land legislation. II.', p. 520.

prospects of lasting change.⁸⁸ Farmers in Ulster participated in the scheme at a rate not seen elsewhere in Ireland. He anticipated that the remainder of the Irish populace would not accept Balfour's 1891 land purchase act. With this data, he revised his assessment. Only uncertainty was guaranteed: 'The mortgaging of local revenues without the taxpayers' consent opens a tempting issue to the politician. It was questionable policy to offer such an issue to the emotional, undisciplined democracy which the agitations of O'Connell and Parnell have called into conscious existence in Ireland'.⁸⁹

Ad hoc parliamentary advances were, ostensibly, insufficient. Rather than denying the inheritance of the Irish 'living tradition of possessory right', that inheritance must be accepted, Dunning argued, because it was the believed reality of the Irish people. This nationalistic approach to land ownership was what made O'Connell so effective, because of the 'appeal to history' present in his argument.⁹⁰ O'Connell had the advantage of being of the same race, so he knew this history and the emotional connections to that history held by the Irish 'democracy'. The attempts to replace the system were the causes of the failures. Thus, both liberal and conservative governments showed progressiveness in legislative approach and neither came to a solution. Liberalism could not impose a systematic order onto an existing economic and social system that had progressed along a certain developmental path, no matter how 'primitive' that system might be deemed. The British system had created the very conditions in Ireland that it was now trying to eradicate, a process doomed to failure, because of its inherent limitations that had developed and been defined over its long history.

⁸⁸ Ibid., pp 520-21.

⁸⁹ Ibid., p. 521.

⁹⁰ Dunning, 'Daniel O'Connell', p. 272.

O'Connell's movement was also an example of an equalizing that was occurring between the social and political systems of the US and the UK. Dunning explained the trend:

‘The Parliamentary reform of 1832 did not make Great Britain a democracy, but it put in a very clear light a trend of social and political progress that must narrow the distance between the British and the American systems. All the reforming movements [of the early nineteenth century]...promoted liberty, in the sense of removing from some class of the population restrictions which, however valuable at one time, had lost their utility. In the United States the restrictions had never existed, because they had never been useful; and for that reason and in the sense suggested America had led Great Britain in respect of liberty.’⁹¹

This conception left relative military and economic power to the side, with the assumption that an inherent validity in the social and political aims of the US system proved its growing force relative to the British system. Conversely, Dunning recognized a backwards movement of the Americans in their penchant for favoring politically entrenched economic interests. He noted the examples of protectionism and, separately, of the slaveholding interest, which had contributed to the alignment of the English and US systems by mid-century, simply in the sense that they created privileged classes.⁹² In general terms, democratic movements in Britain were seen as an Americanization of the English system, and moneyed interests in the US as a Briticising of the US system.

Ireland's role here was three-fold. First, it helped in the equalization movement of the two systems. O'Connell and the Catholic Association expanded the democracy of Britain and set a certain standard. In the movement to repeal the Corn Laws, the Cobdenites had used the model provided by O'Connell in their appeal to 'the working classes of the

⁹¹ William A. Dunning, *The British Empire and the United States* (NY, 1914), p. 69.

⁹² *Ibid.*, pp 69-70.

towns'; however, their aims seemed ignoble compared to O'Connell.⁹³ Second, Ireland acted as an interrupter in the diplomatic and political progress towards amity between the two countries. This role has been explained by commentators then and now and Dunning was no exception in recognizing it. He wrote in 1914, 'It was through the Irish...that a new and most important element was introduced into the relations among the English-speaking peoples...Full half a century was destined to elapse before the impulse first given by the famine in Ireland ceased to be easily distinguishable among the factors determining Anglo-American relations.'⁹⁴ Third, it demonstrated slowness of and resistance to stadial change, characteristics that Dunning defined at great length. The finality of the suppression of O'Connell's movement was a remark on the staying power of the aristocratic and landowning class. As Dunning phrased it, 'the hated forces of aristocratic tyranny were still clearly in the ascendant'.⁹⁵

The slowness of systematic change was a rather obvious phenomenon. The coming together of the British and US systems was a multi-generational process, and a certain equilibrium had been reached in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. The repeal of the Navigation Acts and the Corn Laws by the British Parliament at mid-century modernized the British system and with it the American system by changing the structures of transoceanic trade.⁹⁶ The replacement of the old British system was, however, a change in type but not kind: 'What Cobden and Bright did not say...was that the result of free trade would be to substitute an industrial and commercial for the old agricultural

⁹³ Dunning, *The British Empire and the United States*, pp 145-46.

⁹⁴ Ibid., p. 148.

⁹⁵ Ibid., p. 143.

⁹⁶ Ibid., pp 63-64.

aristocracy in dominion over the nation.’⁹⁷ This meant a maintenance of the status quo in Ireland, regardless of new economic policies within the British system. In the case of Ireland, the process of systematic change had been ongoing for centuries, as Dunning remarked in his lecture course overview: ‘In a general way the Irish question has been the question of imposing upon the last and most persistent remnant of the old Celtic race the Teutonic ideas and institutions that have been developed in England.’⁹⁸ The US system offered a means of removal from this developmental process, while still preserving a participation in liberal advance.

Finally, the narration of Irish history, especially of its recent nineteenth century history, provided another means for Dunning to confirm his assessment of political development within the United States in the same period. His examination of postbellum Reconstruction affirmed US political success, by allowing for an appropriate framework for integrating Southerners with their particular political demands back into the system, whereas England had failed at integration with Irish Catholics, though only up to this point in time. The coming together of the political systems that was seen later in the century foretold of an eventuality in reaching the appropriate solution for Ireland.

Dunning’s defined connections between the Irish and the US South

Dunning, though he did not define it explicitly, considered white Southerners in the United States in a parallel manner to the way he considered the Catholic Irish in Ireland.

⁹⁷ Dunning, *The British Empire and the United States*, pp 145-46.

⁹⁸ *Columbia College: handbook of information, 1889-1890* (NY, 1889), p. 197.

Political imposition from the external force in both cases proved unsustainable. Local politics regained its supremacy of opinion, he said, in the United States in 1877 with the realization that Reconstruction had failed. The external qualities of Reconstruction were, apparently, unnatural. With the failure of centrally governed Reconstruction, a more natural progression returned. The externally imposed directives on the South during Reconstruction had been supported by changes to the Constitution, which may or may not have been done according to proper constitutional procedure. Regardless, the changes would only have achieved their desired results, if they had been politically appropriate. The sweeping type of change conceived by Radicals during Reconstruction never received the political support of white southerners, and their failure was foretold because of absence of this support, in Dunning's opinion. In his words, 'the government was paralyzed at the foundation of its authority'.⁹⁹

It might have seemed that comparisons should have existed between emancipated African Americans and Irish Catholics. For instance, Dunning wrote, 'the ultimate root of the trouble in the South had been, not the institution of slavery, but the coexistence in one society of two races so distinct in characteristics as to render coalescence impossible; that slavery had been a *modus vivendi* through which social life was possible'.¹⁰⁰ He recognized the problems that emanated from the racial differences between the Irish and the English, so this might have suggested a similar treatment. Unfortunately, it did nothing of the sort, and the only explanation for this absence was an underlying racism. The quote above continued, 'and that, after [slavery's] disappearance, its place must be

⁹⁹ See William A. Dunning, 'The undoing of Reconstruction' in *Essays on the Civil War and Reconstruction* (2nd ed., NY, 1904), pp 353-85, the quoted text is at p. 357.

¹⁰⁰ *Ibid.*, pp 384-85.

taken by some set of conditions which, if more humane and beneficent in accidents, must in essence express the same fact of racial inequality.’ Dunning’s argument thus far suggested three conclusions: the Irish, though they were imperfect because they were Celts, continued to be compared to white Southerners, as victims of aggression by a more powerful neighbor or centralized power; the federal government of the United States was of the same type of political power as the British Parliament; and Southern African Americans were considered anathema to American democracy.

Dunning’s argument suggested that the narrative of Irish history, though not directly translatable into the American political environment, provided clues to the sustainability of American imperial advance. The first problem was one of nationalism, which had affected the United Kingdom and the United States differently, and which showed English duplicitousness and American fickleness:

‘England, with Ireland on her hands, was necessarily cold toward the doctrine of nationality *per se*. Her philosophy easily conceded that the Poles were not Russians because they said they were not, and that the South-Carolinians were entitled to independence of the United States because they believed they were; but it could not admit that Irishmen were not Englishmen or were entitled to independent government for any such reasons.’¹⁰¹

A change of nationalism as a driving force to help oppressed peoples gain political rights to one of aggression – ‘Its chief end came to be...the subjection of every people to its appropriate domestic rule’ – reduced the heterogeneity of the United States: ‘in the name of the nation, eleven million Southerners were harried into subjection to the Government at Washington’.¹⁰² This implied that the nationalism of the United States eventually

¹⁰¹ William A. Dunning, ‘A century of politics’ in *The North American Review*, clxxix, no. 577 (1904), pp 801-814 at p. 809.

¹⁰² *Ibid.*, p. 810.

recognized the error in excluding white southerners within their conceptions of the nation, and that the ending of Reconstruction corrected that error.

The second problem was the imperilled nature of federalism. Dunning argued that federalism:

‘experienced serious if not irreparable disaster through the Nationalistic movement...The partition of power between central and state organizations was treated, not merely as an essential to the union of distinct sovereignties, but as a guarantee of individual liberty against all sovereignty. But the sweep of nationalizing sentiment obliterated this beneficent conception. In realizing the ends and aspirations of the nation, the autonomy of states received as little consideration as the rights of individuals. Centralization of power, in the name and for the purposes of national unity, accompanied the progress of every body politic in which federalism had for any reason obtained a hold.’¹⁰³

Since federalism was as good as dead, it was not owing to a return to the true principles of federalism that the United States accepted the failure of Reconstruction but to a plea to a certain type of national unity that accepted the racist viewpoint of political participation as fundamentally acceptable. This acceptance of the white Southern viewpoint into the conception of American nationalism provided the unity needed for the Americans to participate in imperialism. By implication and in contrast, the inability of the English to address the problem of Irish nationalism in a lasting manner suggested an unstable foundation to its own imperialism. Dunning’s argument also hinted at a certain simplicity in a proper solution to Ireland: everything demanded by Irish nationalists must be conceded.

¹⁰³ Dunning, ‘A century of politics’, p. 812.

American historians discover Ireland

Through William Dunning, a burgeoning interest in Irish history by American historians was seen. He undertook his study of Ireland in the 1880s and 1890s alongside his study of American Reconstruction, and his assessments of each were of a like kind to the other. Again, this likeness was partially attributable to the popular interest in Irish republicanism and Irish nationalism throughout the United States and western Europe in those decades. Still, Dunning represented a professionalization of American perceptions of the history of the English treatment of Ireland. The American critique of the British system, strengthened by its academically rigorous evidence developed in the final decades of the nineteenth century, which included a growing evidentiary base of systematic failures in Ireland, became that much more potent of a means to defend and then promote the US system as its necessary replacement.

American historians slowly followed Dunning's lead in the early twentieth century and emphasized the narrative of Irish history more centrally, beyond the notice they had previously reserved for Ireland within the critique of the long development of the British system. In a 1914 review for *The American Historical Review*, the historian Wilbur Abbott of Yale University proclaimed, 'Not many phenomena in the world of history are more remarkable than the relatively recent discovery of Ireland by the historians.'¹⁰⁴

¹⁰⁴ Wilbur C. Abbott, 'Review. Reviewed work(s): *Ireland under the commonwealth: being a selection of documents relating to the government of Ireland from 1651 to 1659*, by Robert Dunlop' in *The American Historical Review*, xix, no. 3 (1914), pp 610-12.

Analyses of political history proved a fruitful area for discussions of Ireland in this period, a movement in which, again, Dunning can be said to be a forerunner. In this era history and political science were entwined.¹⁰⁵ Dunning, for instance, was professor of history and political science at Columbia University, and many of his American historian colleagues, including John W. Burgess, Albert Bushnell Hart, James T. Shotwell, and Charles Beard considered themselves political scientists, as well.¹⁰⁶ In this latter space *The Political Science Quarterly*, of which Dunning served as managing editor from 1894 to 1903, published three articles of consequence on Irish politics: Dunning's 'Irish land legislation', the British politician H. O. Arnold-Foster's 'An English view of Irish secession' (1889), and Annie G. Porritt's 'The Irish Home Rule Bill' (1913).¹⁰⁷ Articles on immigration in *The Political Science Quarterly* discussed Ireland.¹⁰⁸ Susan M. Lough assessed early modern Irish economic activity and its development distinct from and then in parallel with English trade in an article for the *Journal of Political Economy* (1916).¹⁰⁹

Doctoral students demonstrated some interest in Irish history in these years, too. Wilson Lloyd Bevan, a student of Dunning's in Columbia University, later completed a dissertation on Sir William Petty for the Ph.D. degree in the University of Munich in

¹⁰⁵ See James Farr, 'The historical science(s) of politics: the principles, association, and fate of an American discipline' in Robert Adcock *et al.*, *Modern political science: Anglo-American exchanges since 1880* (Princeton, 2007), pp 66-96.

¹⁰⁶ Novick, *That noble dream*, p. 69.

¹⁰⁷ H. O. Arnold-Foster, 'An English view of Irish secession' in *Political Science Quarterly*, iv, no. 1 (1889), pp 66-103; Annie G. Porritt, 'The Irish Home Rule Bill' in *Political Science Quarterly*, xxviii, no. 2 (1913), pp 298-319. The faculty of political science at Columbia University founded and edited *The Political Science Quarterly*; Dunning served as managing editor from 1894 to 1903.

¹⁰⁸ For immigration-related articles see, for example, Richmond Mayo Smith, 'Control of immigration' in *Political Science Quarterly*, iii, no. 1 (1888), pp 46-77 and iii, no. 2 (1888), pp 197-225.

¹⁰⁹ See Susan M. Lough, 'Trade and industry in Ireland in the sixteenth century' in *Journal of Political Economy*, xxiv, no. 7 (1916), pp 713-30.

1893, under the direction of Professor Lujo Brentano.¹¹⁰ Three dissertations focused on Ireland were noted as in progress in 1914 out of a total of thirty-six under the category ‘Great Britain and Ireland’, as catalogued by *The American Historical Review*: (1) F. A. Cleveland, Harvard University, ‘Lord Broghill and the rebellion in Ireland, 1641-48; (2) James Kenney, Columbia University, ‘An introduction to the sources for the early history of Ireland’; and (3) the aforementioned Susan M. Lough, University of Chicago, ‘Administration of Ireland in the time of Elizabeth’.¹¹¹ Cleveland studied with Ralph C. H. Catterall in Cornell University and for at least one year in Harvard University, before serving as professor of modern history at Bryn Mawr College.¹¹² Kenney’s dissertation, supervised by John L. Gerig, was published in amended and expanded format in 1929, an occasion that Ludwig Bieler of University College Dublin in 1966 said ‘stimulated research on such a wide front as few books of this kind have ever done’.¹¹³ Susan Lough was later professor of history at Westhampton College in the University of Richmond.¹¹⁴

¹¹⁰ Brentano studied for a period of time in Trinity College Dublin. He became known as ‘the father of modern industrial relations research’. See Mark Perlman, ‘Review of *The career of Lujo Brentano: a study of liberalism and social reform in imperial Germany* by James J. Sheehan’ in *Industrial and Labor Relations Review*, xxi, no. 2 (1968), pp 300-02.

¹¹¹ ‘List of doctoral dissertations in history now in progress at the chief American universities’ in *The American Historical Review*, xix, no. 2 (1914), pp 450-66.

¹¹² Ralph C. H. Catterall was born in England and emigrated to the US as a child, later receiving a PhD in history from the University of Chicago. He taught at Cornell University from 1902 until his death in 1914. See ‘Guide to the Helen Tunnicliff Catterall and Ralph C. H. Catterall family papers circa 1840s-1956’ (<https://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/scr/findingaids/view.php?eadid=ICU.SPCL.CATTERALL>) (30 December 2020). Frederick Aldrich Cleveland died in 1914 while serving as professor of history in Bryn Mawr College (Pennsylvania) after suffering with a long illness. See *Cornell Alumni News*, xvii, no. 5 (1914), p. 53, Cornell University eCommons (<https://ecommons.cornell.edu/handle/1813/26338>) (21 December 2020); and, ‘In memoriam’ in *The Phi Beta Kappa Key*, ii, no. 6 (1915), pp 302-06 at p. 305. See also: *The Bryn Mawr Alumnae Quarterly*, v, no. iii (1911), p. 128, Bryn Mawr College (https://repository.brynmawr.edu/bmc_alumnae/28/) (21 December 2020).

¹¹³ See Ludwig Bieler, ‘Preface to 1966 reprint’ in James F. Kenney, *The sources for the early history of Ireland: ecclesiastical. An introduction and guide* (2nd ed., NY, 1966), pp ix-x at p. ix; and, See James F. Kenney, *The sources for the early history of Ireland: ecclesiastical*, p. xii; and, Roland Blenner-Hassett, ‘A brief history of Celtic studies in North America’ in *PMLA*, lxix, no. 4 (1954), pp 3-21 at p. 17.

¹¹⁴ There is some evidence that Lough was an Irish emigrant to the US. See Christina Looper Baker and Myra Page, *In a generous spirit: a first-person biography of Myra Page* (Urbana, IL, 1996), p. 35; and, ‘Dedication to Miss Susan M. Lough’, ‘Race and racism at the University of Virginia’ website (<https://memory.richmond.edu/items/show/76>) (30 December 2020).

Higher education institutions in the United States began more formalized programs of study for Irish history in the early twentieth century. Fordham University in New York has said that it created the first Irish studies program in the United States in 1927.¹¹⁵ The study of Celtic history sustained a certain level of interest in Ireland, too. Harvard's Department of Celtic Languages and Literature was established in 1940, though Fred Norris Robinson had lectured on those subjects since 1896.¹¹⁶ With Robinson's guidance, says Roland Blenner-Hassett, 'the first serious and sustained interest in Celtic studies was initiated' in the United States.¹¹⁷

These developments, though still relatively limited compared to the American historiographical output on Ireland in the middle and late twentieth century, demonstrated a willingness to engage more systematically with the challenging subject of Ireland's place within the United Kingdom. The engagement was driven by the seeming comparisons of the stadial development of the British system with the US system. These comparisons were driven by two emphases. First, the position of Ireland, no matter what the specific topic of investigation or the means of interpretation, ostensibly required a fundamental reset – effectively, a new start, much like the US South. Second, in order to avoid the violent process of resettlement seen in the US with the Civil War, the United Kingdom required a commitment to a federal style of governance. Using Ireland in this way, however, was not necessarily a result of the efforts of deep research into Irish

¹¹⁵ 'History', Irish Studies website, Fordham University (<https://www.fordham.edu/info/24590/history>) (accessed on 30 March 2020).

¹¹⁶ 'History of Celtic studies at Harvard', Department of Celtic Languages and Literatures website, Harvard University (<https://celtic.fas.harvard.edu/history-celtic-studies-harvard>) (30 March 2020).

¹¹⁷ Blenner-Hassett, 'A brief history of Celtic studies in North America', p. 8.

archival materials, the professional standard that American historians had committed themselves to following in this era. Rather, years of clearly observable evidence of the problematic political and social status of Ireland qualified as the necessary proof needed to illustrate the trajectory of differences between the United Kingdom and the United States.

The role of Ireland in the historiography of the US system

American historians thought their evidence of the political and social superiority of the United States was clear by the start of the twentieth century. The British Empire was, they said, in a process of decay, and the US system, though perhaps not overtly imperial in the same way as the British system, was its replacement on the world stage. The historians were not alone in arguing for the hegemonic status of the US system, though they used a particular skill set and approach. A unique argument thus developed.

The rise of the US system appeared to be a rather obvious phenomenon. From the earliest days of British settlement of North America, commentators had noted its economic and social potential. Data of the economic and population growth of the United States from the seventeenth to the nineteenth centuries seemed to prove a realization of that potential. With this data American historians were given a means to attempt to prove the hypothesis of the special and manifest destiny of the system. Without fully addressing it, they aimed to provide granularity to the rather abstract hypothesis of a destined advance. A fundamental underlying narrative, such as this, despite their stated commitments to a rigorous, neo-Rankean objectivity, informed their research in the late nineteenth and early

twentieth centuries. Despite the depth of their research, their discoveries never questioned the teleological character of the underlying narrative.

Claims of systematic change and the accompanying defense of US superiority over a decaying British system were rife with complications, most centrally the long shadow of the Southern slave system and its racist aftermath. At the end of the nineteenth century, the American Civil War proved to be the critical interpretive event for American historians in their assessments of American progress, like it was for social scientists, economists, and publicists of the period. Linda Colley and Eric Foner argue that when the British Parliament abolished slavery in 1833, it allowed the British to reclaim a sense of moral authority above the United States. The conclusion of the Civil War and Emancipation three decades later, says Foner, ‘reinforced the identification of the United States with the progress of freedom, linking this mission as never before with the power of the national state’.¹¹⁸ Despite seeming to follow the British here, at the very least chronologically, because of the presence of the idea that the US system had from its beginning served as a haven of freedom from an oppressive British system, the Civil War became a positive reinforcement of the US system’s character and a reminder of the inevitability of its march to surpass the British system in hegemonic standing.

The historians addressed the challenges of secession, war, and sectional reconstruction. As the influence of George Burton Adams, George Louis Beer, and William Dunning made clear, the most obvious avenues where this research took place was within

¹¹⁸ Eric Foner, ‘American freedom in a global age’ in *The American Historical Review*, cvi, no. 1 (2001), pp 1-16 at pp 9-10. Foner discusses Linda Colley’s argument in his article.

institutional and constitutional histories. They developed their argument with reference to two general facts. First, they asserted that the institutions of the United States were inspired by the institutions of the British system. Second, they asserted that these institutions were shaped distinctly within the American environment in the interactions of the American people with the frontier.

A problem that lay at the core of this narrative was the accompanying assumption that the British Empire was, as they generally assumed, in a process of irreversible decline, which might cause concern about the viability and worth of American institutions that were inherited from the British. The second fact, the frontier birth of the US system, offered a way around the problem of British institutions, by allowing American historians a means of articulating an alternative origin story and a means for the continuous regeneration of their institutions. This interpretation was usually predicated on notions of an American Anglo-Saxonism – of hardy Englishmen interacting with the American natural environment – and it allowed American historians a means of reemphasizing a supposed inherent universalism of the US system. George B. Adams, for instance, examined the gestation and critical periods of the unwritten English Constitution, and he defined the unbreakable force of its ideas, which had met considerable roadblocks within the British system, and which later found its ultimate expression in the written US Constitution. It seemed that only in the United States could the promise of the British system be properly realized, because of the processes of transplantation and reinvention allowed by the frontier. Further, the existence of the American replacement to British institutions foretold the final end of the systematic British advance ongoing since, by most accounts, the twelfth century.

It was in this context that the narrative of Irish history assumed a position of particular importance. The condition of Ireland offered clear evidence of the British decay that the American historians had noticed. When Dunning, for example, examined the evidence of Irish political history, he found that the institutions of the British system were responsible. The British were fundamentally unable to change the situation in Ireland, unless they abandoned their attempts to change Ireland along the terms of the British system. Ireland had lacked proper political development since the Norman Conquest precisely because of the English presence, which had interrupted natural progress. The implication of this observation in the American context was a sense that the Americans would never have behaved like the English had in Ireland from the twelfth to the twentieth centuries. Irish history thus confirmed the failure of the British system, and it was left to the Americans to make sense of the results of this failure.

American historians did so firstly by affirming that the example of Irish history warned against rather particular concerns: an entrenchment of economic interests within centralized government, which prevented meaningful and necessary institutional change; entrenched classes within systems (in the case of Ireland this role was filled by the landlord), which facilitated disinvestment; and the presence of a separatist cultural identity within the larger system, regardless of the validity of the identity, created a burden on the system. That these same or similar concerns were visible in the United States in the late nineteenth century proved to American historians the urgency of properly addressing Irish history from an American perspective. Secondly, the narrative of Irish history provided cover for the emerging flaws of the US system, because of the

identification of the United States, through its promotion of nationalistic freedom and through its acceptance of Irish exiles and outcasts, as critical to Ireland's growing strength as an oppositional force to its British overseers. Essentially, the US system, by absorbing Ireland within its new type of imperialism, protected Ireland from the late-stage decay of the British system.

Externally, then, the narrative of Irish history allowed for a critique of the British imperial system and for a promotion of an American imperial system, though the conceptions of this latter system were still relatively ephemeral. Looking internally at the United States, the narrative of Irish history allowed for conclusions that validated American political advance. The timing of the heightened awareness of the Irish question in the postbellum years was critical, then, because it presented a particular means of justifying the newfound confidence of a robust, unified, national system based centrally in the universal concept of freedom, to counter the renewed nineteenth century claims of British superiority over the Americans.

Equally, though, the timing exposed the contradictions of the argument. As much as Irish history provided affirmation for American historians about the trajectory of the United States, it retained a separateness. American historians were deeply ambivalent about the assimilation of the Irish within the US system. Dunning, for example, in his research into Irish political history, confirmed the requirement of the Irish to work outside of the existing political system in order to institute lasting change. His observations of the Irish as participants in American democracy, however, led him to conclude that they would fail to realize the benefits of self-government if given the opportunity, though he did think

they should be given the opportunity. Given Ireland's anti-progressiveness politically, economically, and socially, American historians determined that Ireland was, conceptually at least, antithetical to the US system.

Conclusion

Conceptions of Ireland, its history and its present condition, simultaneously clarified and complicated the interpretation of the social and political development of the United States by American writers and intellectuals. Ireland provided proof that American nationalistic sentiments were not inherently compromised, since the United States provided haven to Irish revolutionaries from the oppression of the British system ever since its establishment of independent government in the late eighteenth century. American ideals were often considered compromised, though, in the contradictions presented by the interaction of capitalism and democracy and, separately, of federalism and republicanism. The defenders of the US South and E. L. Godkin identified seemingly glaring deficiencies in the system based on such contradictions, though the logic of their conclusions – especially those of the Southerners – proved questionable. For American writers who, even in their criticisms of US development, remained ultimately optimistic in the system's ability to reform itself, the narration of Irish history provided a layer of camouflage to conceal the foundational inequalities of the US system. The camouflage enabled them to formulate a revisionist historiography to acknowledge the inherent imperialism of the system in its development.¹

Acknowledgment did not imply endorsement. Most, if not all, of the journalists, critics, and academics discussed in this thesis were critical of the developmental path of the United States at the turn of the twentieth century. Despite the critical nature of the discussion, the way that Ireland was addressed as a point of comparison or departure

¹ The argument of a revisionist historiography in this conception of American imperialism is similar to what Julian Go calls the American habit of 'denying empire'. See Julian Go, *Patterns of empire: the British and American empires, 1688 to the present* (Cambridge, 2011), p. 2.

revealed a generally tacit acceptance of the system writ large.² A certain American idiom can be defined from the themes that emerged.

The first theme was that the United States, even after the triumph of the apparently centralizing Northern power in the Civil War, was still a relatively decentralized system in comparison to other powers.³ Ireland had been subject to the aggressively centralized British system for centuries, and the United States in its federalized political structure was defined in opposition to it. This involved recalling the revolutionary environment of the American colonies and the histories that documented an aversion to the centralization of power and resources.

Second, the American people as a nation or race were distinct from the Europeans. The removal from Europe and the placement into the unique American natural environment effectively created a new person. The Irish were one example of this phenomenon. They often became less Catholic, for example, after living in the United States. As the nineteenth century progressed and especially in the twentieth century, the sense that the Irish were appropriately assimilating into the US system increased the confidence in the American racial distinction. The Irish – despite their ostensibly troublesome character at home within the British system, which was noticed and documented by American writers and intellectuals throughout the period – became Americans. The American environment proved its power once again.

² The tacit acceptance of American imperialism is, of course, a characteristic of American exceptionalist thought. See Go, *Patterns of empire*, especially pp ix, 17-20, 36, 44-45.

³ The idea of decentralization was, of course, a theory – in practice, especially when administering a colonial administration after the Spanish-American War, the Americans used a highly centralized system. See *ibid.*, pp 46-47. See also Thomas Bender, *A nation among nations: America's place in world history* (NY, 2006), especially p. 136.

Third, this notion of the effect of a geographic setting as a transformative power was infused with a missionary quality. This affirmed that the US system, which itself was defined by the interactions of its people with the American natural environment, was a transportable force. These two concepts had been present from the moment of independence. The increased importance assigned to the frontier and natural environment strengthened the missionary sense of Americanism. Since the Americans effectively conquered the continent, their system accepted and thrived in the challenge of social and developmental expansion.

In more than one sense, American writers could only have used Ireland to help define the rise of the US system into its imperial status at the end of the nineteenth and start of the twentieth centuries. The object of comparison for the Americans was, of course, the United Kingdom, because of British economic and military hegemony in the nineteenth century. In the way the Americans defined their placement in historical and cultural terms, then, Ireland was of critical help in their explanations of the already present sense of predestined ascent. The American intellectual engagement with and use of the narrative of Irish history and politics in the late nineteenth century, though, exhibited an inherent paradox within their argument. In their definition of what was, effectively, the principles of the US imperial system, they emphasized anticolonialism and criticized the imperialism of others, primarily the British – all while the US system was in the process of imperial expansion.⁴ The simultaneously anticolonial and imperial posture of the

⁴ Edward Said noticed this paradoxical argument in *Culture and imperialism* (London, 1994), pp 78-79. Martin Sklar makes similar observations in his articulation of the neo-imperial principles of the United States at the start of the twentieth century. See Martin J. Sklar, *Creating the American century: the ideas and legacies of America's twentieth-century foreign policy founders* (Cambridge, 2017), pp xv-xxiii.

system counterintuitively signified, for the Americans, the advanced stage of the US system in developmental terms.

In the end, the tacit or open acceptance of imperialism revealed the changeable nature of the American narration of Irish history. Discussions of Irish history and politics were a useful means to further the argument of United States systematic superiority above the British; however, that was as far as they were willing to go before abandoning their consideration of Ireland and especially the desires of its republican leaders for independence. The implication was that the US system, in its universalism and its imperialism, required peoples, like the Irish, who desired a place in this new world system, to create their own pathway to it. The failure was that this conception was wrong at the turn of the century, just as it was wrong on the eve of the Civil War, because the US system was not an abstract or passive agent but an active participant in imperialist expansion.⁵ Ireland was used figuratively like the ‘virgin land’ or ‘frontier’ of the West was, too, as a means to conceal the obvious similarities of the United States to the imperial powers of the past, especially the British, whom, whether they celebrated it or not, they were about to replace.

⁵ See Bender, *A nation among nations*, chapter four, ‘An empire among empires’, pp 182-245, especially pp 190-91.

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