Cultures of Resistance in Pre-Famine Ireland

A thesis submitted by Terence Martin Dunne

In fulfilment of the requirements for the Degree of Doctor of Philosophy

The National University of Ireland, Maynooth

Department of Sociology, October 2014.

Head of Department: Prof Mary Corcoran.

Supervisor: Dr Laurence Cox.

Table of Contents

Acknowledgements

I'd like to thank my supervisor Dr. Laurence Cox for his unfailing support and advice — in matters personal and academic — during the long and often torturous journey to this point.

I'd like to acknowledge the work of the staff of the following archives and libraries, in no particular order: the National Folklore Collection at University College Dublin; the National Library of Ireland; the National Archives of Ireland; Kilkenny Local Studies Department; the Local Studies Section of the County Library of Laois, and Portlaoise public library; the University of Limerick library; the National University of Ireland - Maynooth library; the National University of Ireland - Galway library; the library of University College Dublin; the library and the archive of Trinity College Dublin; Limerick public library; Carlow public library. I would also like to acknowledge the permission of the Director of the National Archives of Ireland for permission to cite from, and to reproduce, documents held in the care of the National Archives.

I'd like to thank Dr. Maura Cronin for advice on voyaging through the labyrinth world of the Chief Secretary Office Registered Papers. Also worthy of thanks are lecturers who taught me during my under-graduate degree in the National University of Ireland - Galway and who encouraged me down the route of post-graduate research, especially Dr. John Cunningham in the History Department and Dr. Niall Ó Dochartaigh in the School of Political Science and Sociology.

A contribution to this thesis was made by many participants in many conferences, seminars, local history talks etc. I want to especially mention participants in the seminars in Strokestown Famine museum organised by Prof. Terrence McDonough and Dr. Eamonn Slater. I'd also like to thank Dr. Eamonn Slater for reading, and commenting on, a later draft

Publication Note:

Elements of this thesis have been contributed to the following forthcoming publications:

'Captain Rock: the mythical leader' in John Cunningham and Emmet O'Connor (eds), *Lives on the left: studies in radical leadership* (Manchester University Press, forthcoming). This contains parts of chapters eight and nine, specifically elements from pages 323-325, 330, and 360-63.

'The law of Captain Rock' in Kyle Hughes and Don MacRaild (eds), *Crime, violence and the Irish in the nineteenth-century* (Liverpool University Press, forthcoming). This draws on the same research as the thesis.

Summary of contents

So-called threatening letters were a form of media, frequently produced in agrarian social conflicts in eighteenth-and nineteenth-century Ireland. This thesis analyses a collection of such letters, or notices, as a means of accessing the subjectivities of some of the participants in those conflicts. The production of the notices is associated with a series of peasant-based social movements, generically known as whiteboys, which existed circa 1760 to 1850. The specific collection of notices examined in this thesis was amassed by the state authorities in the eastern province of Leinster in the year 1832.

The thesis is divided into three parts. The first section addresses the contexts within which the notices were generated. I argue that a central part of those contexts was, at least by the early-nineteenth-century, a stalled transition from the feudal to capitalist modes of production. In part then the threatening letters were part of a resistance to primitive accumulation and proletarianisation.

The main body of this study is concerned with analysing the content of a selection of notices using a methodology adapted from ground theory method. Through a process of inductive coding I identified two themes within the notices which are scrutinised sequentially in parts II and III. These themes I have called 'coercive regulation' and 'collective identity'. Coercive regulation refers to motifs the notices share with, on the one hand, customary rituals of punishment similar to the French *charivari*, and, on the other hand, the official legal system and other ruling class cultural uses.   The latter I consider through drawing on the work of Gramsci, Vološinov, and Bakhtin to better understand relationships between elite and popular cultures.

Collective identity principally refers to the use of a common set of symbols across many letters, especially when such symbols are particularly associated with another time and place, i.e. with an earlier movement or with a movement in another part of the country. This practise I interpret as a form of collective identity and I also relate it to debates on class formation. Finally, I ask why collective identity was important in the often very localised situations within which the notices were used. In answering this I advance a proposition linking collective identity and collective efficacy and argue that a sense of collective identity reinforces a sense of collective efficacy.

Introduction

The focus of this study is on the textual content of a body of documents produced in the province of Leinster (excluding Dublin) in the eastern part of Ireland in the year 1832. These documents were known to the state officials who recorded and preserved them as 'threatening letters' or 'threatening notices'.[1] This is problematic terminology, not so much because the letters in question were not threatening, they certainly were; but because other forms of threatening documents, e.g. state proclamations, are not given this prefix. Nonetheless for the sake of being understandable I will continue to use the usual term.

Threatening letters were a usually anonymous means of delivering demands, a technique which could be used in many different settings; however, the notices examined for this study are exclusively from conflicts pertaining to the renting of land and the hiring of labour. Such notices are frequently associated with movements known under the generic moniker of whiteboys, though the practice is in fact independent of such movements. Whiteboy movements are mostly simply thought of as consisting of local bands of youths from the subordinate classes of rural society who attempted to regulate socio-economic life through violent direct action. In the following I will use the lower-case 'whiteboys' as a generic term and the upper-case 'Whiteboys' to refer to the specific movement of the 1760s which lent its name as a collective term for subsequent similar movements.[2]

A note on periodisation: the context of this thesis is the early-nineteenth-century or pre-Famine period. More specifically, the material here is best understood as referring to the

---

[1] National Archives of Ireland, Chief Secretary's Office/Registered Papers/1832/2267 (hereafter N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267).

[2] Following the style suggested by Michael Huggins in *Social conflict in pre-famine Ireland: The case of County Roscommon* (Dublin, 2007), p 13;

years between 1815 and 1845. In 1815 began a long agricultural depression occasioned by the ending of the war between Britain and France, which had been ongoing, with brief interludes, since 1792. 1845 is the first year of the Great Famine which, at the very least, quickened already on-going processes of social change, and consequently it is frequently used as a dividing point between eras. In any case after this dramatic loss of population to hunger-related disease and mass migration the sort of collective action this thesis is concerned with tapers off. Questions as to whether or not it was already in decline prior to the Great Famine, and as to what cultural legacy it left to later agrarian social movements, await further study.

The period also sees the creation, in the mid-1820s, of a free trade zone between Britain and Ireland. This was subsequent to the Act of Union of 1801 which incorporated Ireland into the United Kingdom, ending the island's semi-autonomous status. The Union happened towards the end of a period of broad popular politicisation and mobilisation from 1791 to 1803, a period punctuated by insurrections in 1798 and 1803. The whiteboy tradition pre-dates this, and is independent of it, but was certainly inter-related with it in a number of ways (notably post-98 movements are considerably more violent than their eighteenth-century predecessors). A glossary in appendix d provides outline sketches of various events and bodies mentioned in passing in the main body and which are not of great direct relevance to the subject matter (and consequently not explained in the text of the main body).

This thesis is divided in three parts: in part one I will treat of social context within which the notices were produced and argue that the movements with which they were associated had a significant impact on the development of the nineteenth-century Irish agrarian economy;

in the second and third parts I will offer analyses of recurrent themes from within the textual content of the notices. In this introduction chapter I will summarise the main arguments of the thesis and briefly outline the content of its individual chapters; expain what a threatening notice is in more detail and provide an example of one; and, finally, discuss the ontological perspective informing the research behind this thesis.

Methodologically speaking, I'm following an adaptation of grounded theory method, and so the structure of this thesis does not follow the standard social science format. That is to say it does not start with a literature review/theory chapter from whence a research question is derived posed by the debates in that literature or alternatively the literatures' failings, before following that start with a series of findings chapters engaging that question with empirical data. Rather in parts II and III of this thesis I begin with findings chapters based on the results of inductive coding of the notices brought into dialogue with a mostly empirical (or empirical in my use of it) secondary literature. Each part culminates in a theoretical chapter where I bring the codes and the reflection on and analyses of the codes from the findings chapters into dialogue with bodies of theoretical literature. Partly the aim is to advance, deepen or modify the theories discussed in the light of their ability to account for the findings; or more simply to achieve, and propagate, a greater understanding of the theories. In another sense though, it is only in these culminating theory chapters that we get to the findings, as it is at this point, having established what is in the notices and offered some preliminary analyses, that we explore the underlying processes at a more abstract level. Research questions are emergent from the initial process of analysis of the content of the notices. This approach is not based on the supposition that the findings will be innocent of theory prior to being trundled along to meet the theory chapters. The overall theoretical

perspective informing this thesis is introduced in the next section. Rather, the point is to avoid the apriorism of determining what questions the primary source material is relevant to, or what questions are relevant to that material, before developing an acquaintance with that primary source material. While the initial coding, or descriptive coding, is tightly bound to the data subsequent coding is more analytically driven.

Parts II and III are organised around themes derived from analytical codes based on the initial set of descriptive codes created through inductive coding. Through a process of inductive coding, coupled with contextualisation and analysis of emergent codes, I identified two main themes within the notices I have studied. I have described these themes as 'coercive regulation' and as 'collective identity'. With regard to the 'coercive regulation' theme what I seek to understand is the relationship between elite and subaltern cultures (or cultural uses). To do so I bring my findings into dialogue with theoretical literature from Gramsci, Subaltern Studies, and the Bakhtin circle. The main focus here will be on the resemblance between the forms of the state and of estate management on the one hand, and on the other hand some of the recurrent motifs of the notices. For example, demands within the notices are some times described as 'the law'. Specifically, the Bakhtinian concepts of addressivity and discursive genre will be employed as tools to understand this aspect of subaltern culture within the overall framework put forward by Vološinov in *Marxism and the philosophy of language.* Different approaches which interpret allusions to the law within popular protest as, in the first case, evidence of a radical separation between subaltern and dominant cultures or, in the second case, as evidence of an acceptance of a dominant ideology of the 'rule of law', will be considered and it will be argued that neither approach is applicable to early-nineteenth-century Ireland. The latter interpretation is

associated with social histories of eighteenth-century England influenced by Gramsci and the former by the Subaltern Studies school. I will argue that the authors of the notices were expressing themselves in the ways that authority was expressed in the society in which they lived because they wished to be seen as or understood as an authority, a conception which relates to Bakhtinian addressivity and, even more so, to Vološinov's writings on the sign and its lack of a fixed meaning.

This semiotic plasticity means that it is not necessary to interpret the use of particular signs as acceptance of the ideological terms of their previous users. In other words a subaltern appeal to 'the law' does not necessarily mean belief in the prospect of justice within the official legal system. There were set, but relatively flexible, ways for authority to be expressed, or in other words what Bakhtin calls a 'discursive genre'. At least two such discursive genres of authority are found within the notices — the more plebeian genre of *charivari* as well as what I am calling the discursive genre of sovereignty, the latter referring to the appropriation of ruling class iconography and terminology. Findings chapters are organised around each of the discursive genres; *charivari* and sovereignty and this section culminates in a more theoretically-centred chapter discussing Gramsci, Subaltern Studies and the Bakhtin circle.

I will then turn to look at the theme of 'collective identity' and here I am concerned with what role collective identity, a sense of *we* or an imagined community, played in the mobilisations within which the notices were generated. I precede full discussion of that question with a findings chapter where I demonstrate the appositeness of the concept of collective identity to the content of the notices and the contexts in which they were produced. In order to explore the role of collective identity I draw on a wide variety of

comparative and theoretical literatures. These include debates on class identity from within social history and, more obviously, the development of the concept of collective identity within social movement studies. Particularly relevant to this question is the conception of collective efficacy from within social psychology. Collective efficacy refers to the belief in the ability of oneself and one's cohort to achieve your collective goals. It should be noted some social psychologists make this a less cognitively-centred phenomena through the related concept of empowerment. I argue that social subordination results in an impaired sense of collective efficacy which can, at least in part, be alleviated through collective identity.

Part I takes a different format from the main body of the thesis in that it seeks to contextualise the notices, but, more than that, to make a case for their relevance. That case revolves around the role played by the movements associated with the notices (there is by no means a neat correlation) in delaying the transition between the feudal and capitalist modes of production. As a consequence of that role this thesis can be considered as a beginning to a study of the inter-relationship of social movements and economic development across a broader range of modern Irish history - a prospect which will be sketched out in the conclusion to this study.

Thesis outline

Part I — Context and Method

Chapter One: Understanding the Whiteboy Tradition

This chapter will introduce the contexts in which the notices were created by outlining the different modes of social conflict within which notices were generated, especially whiteboy movements, movements which arose, in this period, principally, but not exclusively, around the issue of land occupancy.

Chapter Two: Capitalist and Feudal Modes of Production in Leinster and East Munster

In this chapter I aim to relate that central element, land occupancy, within early-nineteenth-century whiteboyism to economic change — namely embryonic growth of capitalist social relations — a growth which necessitates programs of expropriation which are resisted through whiteboyism, thereby inflicting a fatal delay on the transition from the feudal to capitalist mode of production. This is an introductory chapter the function of which in this study is to make the case for the relevance of a work which is primarily focused on the textual content of the notices.

Chapter Three: Primitive Accumulation, Clearance and Resistance

The chapter further develops the argument advanced in chapter two by looking at the inhibition imposed on programs of establishing larger-farm units by the prospect of violent resistance. This inhibition is examined across both a broader territory of Leinster and East Munster and through a close-study of a sample of that area — the south-east of the Queen's County (present-day Laois).

Chapter Four: Methodology

The two main focuses of the methodology chapter are the utility of the notices as a source and the process of coding them through which the themes focused on in this study were developed. This chapter will introduce the analytical codes, or themes, of 'coercive regulation' and 'collective identity' around which the rest of thesis is structured.

Part II: Coercive Regulation, the Law of Captain Rock

Findings chapters five and six and the theory chapter seven all are concerned with different aspects of the coercive regulation theme within the notices.

Chapter Five: The Boys, Discursive Genre of *Charivari*

The focus in this chapter is on the relationship between folk festive life and whiteboyism as typified within the notices by recurrent pseudonyms featuring the title 'Captain'. It will be suggested that this relationship is made explicable by positing the existence of a customary regulatory mode within calendar customs and rites of passage — similar to the continental *charivari*. The 'Captain' trope was then an allusion to a symbolic representation of authority, that of a more popular form of authority — communal disapproval expressed through rituals of public shaming.

Chapter Six: The Law, Discursive Genre of Sovereignty

Discussed here are the parallels between the symbols and rhetoric of the authorities of state and estate on the one hand and some of those of the whiteboy tradition on the other. It will be argued that the crafters of threatening notices were appropriating the symbols of ruling class power to represent themselves as the *de facto* authorities in ways understandable to their audiences.

Chapter Seven: The Marks of Hegemony and the Struggle over Signs

This chapter will review a number of different ways of understanding the relationships between elite and subaltern cultures examining the theoretical perspectives of Gramsci, Subaltern Studies and the Bakhtin circle. This chapter contains arguments against seeing

18

the sort of alternative law described in the previous chapter either in terms of hegemony or in terms of subaltern cultural autonomy. Against the latter it argues for a common cross-class culture but one whose elements are contested and fought over, against the former it argues that hegemony is a historically specific concept which cannot be applied to feudal societies or feudal societies with primitive accumulation and nascent capitalist relations.

Part III: Collective Identity, Captain Rock and Terry Alt.

Part III consists of the findings chapter eight and the theory chapter nine which explore the collective identity theme within the notices.

Chapter Eight: Collective identities, Class, Creed, Country and Captain Rock.

This chapter will discuss the different forms of collective identity expressed and created within the notices. On the one hand, are the identities of country and confession and a language of class, on the other hand, it will be argued that the use of recurrent pseudonyms in notices outside of the times and places with which they are usually associated itself was a form of collective identity; e.g. use of the pseudonyms Captain Rock and Terry Alt within 1830s Leinster. Moreover, it will be claimed that the creation and expression of pan-regional identity enhanced movement participants' sense of collective efficacy.

Chapter Nine: Collective Identity and Collective Efficacy

Addressed in this chapter are writings on collective identity from within the literature of social movement studies as well as various literatures on collective efficacy — a concept from within social psychology. It will be argued that the form of collective identity identified in the previous chapter — which is principally bound up with the use of recurrent pseudonyms — can be considered a form of class identity. Class identity need not be

expressed in a language of class. A need for a construction of collective identity will be posited as an outcome of the objective class-location of movement participants; arising from that location's impact on their sense of collective efficacy.

A threatening letter

The following is the text of the threatening letter, or threatening notice, pictured on the right:

'You are here By Directed By the Captain of the whitefeet and number one to yield and Surrender and give up that part of the Lands of Huntingtown Lately held By Simon Cahill who Left this Country to seek for Bread and turn his family to the Callin of [unclear] as sure as the sun Shine at noone Day you will be visited with the severest punishment and [four unclear words] the least times you expected it Ploughman Do not come anymore or you will be burnted according the your master Given under my hand this Night by 500 men John Rock'.[3]
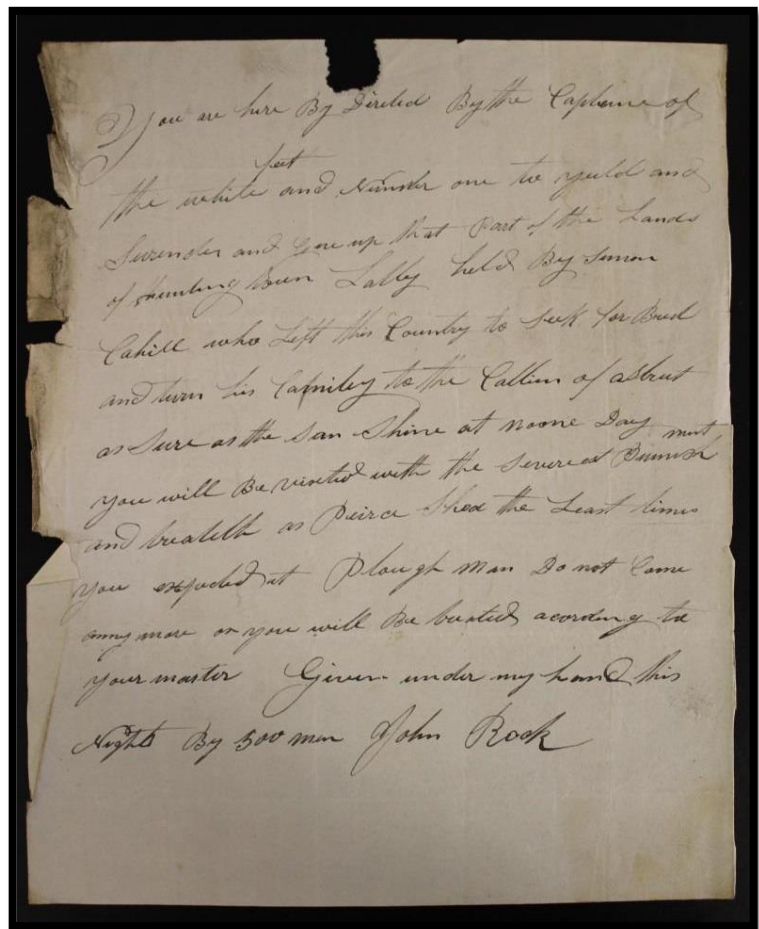
[3] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

This is one of the 135 notices examined for this thesis. The picture appears to be of the original notice — sometimes what survivies is not the original notice but a copy made by the police. The indecipherable parts and the at times incoherentness of the message give a sense of what is typical of these documents. I have aimed to faithfully reproduce the notice texts and consequently transcripts will contain verbatim idiosincracies. The most germane aspects of this particular notice to what follows is the fact that it puports to have been issued by a 'Captain' and is signed in the name 'John Rock'. Additionally some of the language has parallels with the language of notices used in estate management, specifically the phrase 'yield and Surrender and give up that part of the Lands of Huntingtown'. The notice is obviously about land occupancy — about who holds what particular piece of land — a very frequent object of these threatening letters. The reference to migration is not one that regularly occurs in the letters I examined, but it is something returned to later in this thesis.

Many of the notices from the collection I studied have a gloss recording details of the circumstances in which they were sent or discovered. The gloss on the reverse side of the above notice is pictured below. From this notation we can see the notice was directed at a Richard Rice – from near Gowran, Kilkenny, of which more shortly. Significantly we can see, though the wording is ambiguous, that the notice may have been openly presented to the target (or perhaps someone of his family or staff) — we read it was 'left by an armed party' — something which does not suggest a furtive guarding of anonymity.
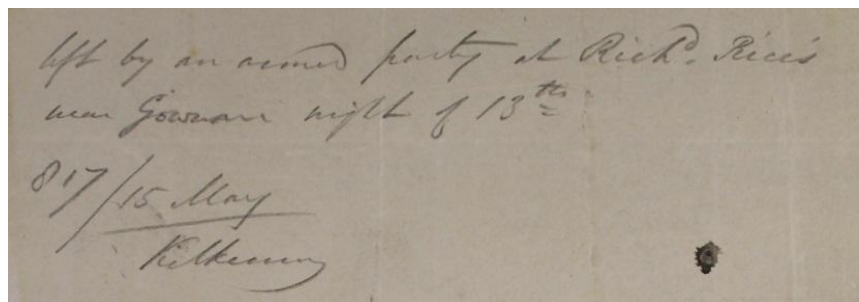
The focus of this thesis is analyses of the content of the notices. However, when we have a gloss like that above, or when persons and places are legibly mentioned in the notice text, some background information can be summoned up from two internet resources. Using the Placenames Database of Ireland the name and location of the townland of Huntingtown can be confirmed and what civil parish this townland was in can be ascertained (in this case the civil parish of Dungarvan).[4] Equiped with the names of the relevant civil parish and townland Richard Rice can be tracked down in the tithe applotment books; which are records of a valuation of land holdings for the purposes of setting the levy for the Church of Ireland. From the 1829 tithe applotment book for the townland of Huntingtown we can see Richard Rice held approximately sixteen acres there, and approximately ninety-three acres in the adjacent townland of Bodale (Bodal in modern spelling), that holding constituting nearly two-thirds of Bodale.[5]

With a farm size of over 100 acres, well above average, Rice was quite possibly the sort of capitalist farmer we are going to encounter across chapters one, two and three, especially given that he is identified as an employer in the notice (of a ploughman). It should not be assumed though that all the examined letters were addressed to such persons. More examples of notice texts are in appendix a and in chapter four.

---

[4] Placenames Database of Ireland, www.logainm.ie/27138.aspx, accessed 13/10/14.
[5] Tithe applotment book, townland of Huntington, parish of Dungarvan, diocese of Ossory, 1829, titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/reels/tab//004587436/004587436_00081.pdf, accessed 13/10/14; Tithe applotment book of the townland of Bodale, parish of Dungarvan, diocese of Ossory, 1829, titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/reels/tab//004587436/004587436_00077.pdf, accessed 13/10/14.

An ontological note

The ontological perspective informing this thesis is one which attempts an integration of structure, the system-like recurrent patterns of social relationships, with agency, the ability of members of a society to create and re-shape those relationships.

Following Marx and Touraine this structure-agency integration involves a view of agency not so much as the property of individuals so much as of collective actors, that is social classes, or better movements or other collectivies based on particular social classes and, crucially, these actors are in inter-relationship with each other. On the surface of it there are power disparities in the relative agentic capacities of different collective actors, however, we shouldn't forget, that, as pointed out by Touraine: 'the popular class . . . is not just a dominated class, it is also a class of producers'; one whose 'energy transforms nature and makes progress possible'.[6]

Ontologically speaking in the first instance I have been influenced by the political Marxism school associated with Brenner, Wood, Chibber, Post and Comninel.[7] This as I see it allows for the determining structural role of the reproductive logic of particular class positions in particular modes of production but at the same time allows for the agentic processes of class struggle in determining what outcomes of social change are produced through the clash of contending social groups with socially structurally given interests. Notably in Brenner's contribution to the transition debate the Europe-wide crisis of feudalism ends up with different outcomes in England, France and Prussia. I address the criticism of this school

---

[6] Alain Touraine, *The voice and the eye* (Cambridge, 1981), p. 63.

[7] Robert Brenner, 'The Agrarian Roots of European Capitalism' in *Past & Present*, 97 (1982), pp 16-113; Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The origin of capitalism: A longer view* (London, 2002); George C. Comninel, *Rethinking the French revolution: Marxism and the revisionist challenge* (London, 1987); Charles Post,'The agrarian origins of US capitalism: The transformation of the northern countryside before the civil war' in *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 22:3 (1995), pp 389-445; Vivek Chibber, 'What Is living and what Is dead in the Marxist theory of history' in *Historical Materialism*, 19.2 (2011), pp 60–91.

as being excessively focused on the relations of production to the detriment of the role of the forces of production below.

The formulation of agency derived from the work of the political Marxism school is quite a different conceptualisation of agency from that postulated by Anderson. Agency, in terms of political Marxism, includes intentional acts producing unintended consequences and frequently refers to class struggle of a fairly mundane nature. Anderson argues that agency can only really be conceived as having a role in social change in terms of 'a full popular agency desiring and creating new conditions of life for itself' something which he argues is only really seen in the modern labour movement, particularly the post-1917 labour movement.[8] To Anderson for most of history most people's agency is seen in the pursuit of 'private' goals 'cultivation of a plot, choice of a marriage, exercise of a skill, maintenance of a home' and these 'personal projects are inscribed within existing social relations, and typically reproduce them'.[9] On the contrary I argue that 'private' goals such as 'cultivation of a plot' and the 'maintenance of a home' embedded as they are in unstable and inherently conflictual relations of production do shape variations between different forms of the one mode of production and transitions between modes of production. For example, Marx writes of the development of machinery and to the move from absolute surplus value (e.g. lengthening the work period or intensifying work) to relative surplus value (e.g. technological innovation) partly in terms of the impetus given by the working-class movement:

> 'So soon as the gradually surging revolt of the working-class compelled Parliament to shorten compulsorily the hours of labour, and to begin by imposing a normal

---

[8] Perry Anderson, *Arguments within English Marxism* (London, 1980), p. 20.
[9] *Ibid.* p. 19.

working-day on factories proper, so soon consequently as an increased production of surplus-value by the prolongation of the working-day was once for all put a stop to, from that moment capital threw itself with all its might into the production of relative surplus-value, by hastening on the further improvement of machinery.'[10]

Similarly the whole of the final section of volume one of *Capital* is concerned with the creation of property-less masses — a necessary precondition for the development of capitalism — through long centuries of struggle.[11] That is struggle precisely around the quotidian cultivation of plots and maintenance of homes. Ironically this mundanity is as true of the late-nineteenth-century and twentieth-century labour movement as it is of anything.

This approach is an attempt to avoid either a volunataristic free-for-all or a structure-based puppet-show. From this starting point I have moved towards the more refined and explicit integration of structure and agency to be found in critical realist social theory. This, unlike other attempts at structure and agency integration which collapse them in together, is based on their actual and analytical distinctiveness. As Creaven puts it:

'the autonomy of structures from flesh-and-blood human agents and their social interaction is revealed by their pre-existence: every generation of individuals is born into an already functioning societal organisation which is constraining and enabling of its activity and ideas'.[12]

He adds that these:

---

[10] Karl Marx, *Capital: A critique of political economy*, *volume I* (New York, 1967), p. 386.
[11] *Ibid.* pp 667 – 724.
[12] Sean Creaven, *Marxism and realism: A materialistic application of realism in the social science* (London, 2000), p. 6.

'structural contradictions and compatibilities (conceived as emergent entities

constraining and facilitating action) operate to distribute differential life-chances,

vested interests and causal powers to differently situated collectivities of agents and

institutional functions, and by doing so exert a directional pressure upon agents to

act in ways which protect or further their interests'.[13]

Social interaction is then structurally conditioned but that social interaction gives rise to a new structural configuration which in turn preconditions future interaction.

With regard to the aforementioned criticism of political Marxism for its exclusive focus on the relations of production I am inclined to a different way of looking at the issue. I am influenced in this by Sayer's reading of Marx's ontology as involving 'a complex network of internal relations, within which any single element is what it is only by virtue of its relationship to others'.[14] It seems clear to me that various forms of organisation of labour are at the same time both forces of production and relations of production (e.g. the assembly line). Though it can be necessary to make analytical distinctions these involve looking at the same processes from different perspectives. On a similar note hard and fast distinctions between "the political" and "the economic" and so on seem less than useful.

From the appreciation of the role of agency discussed above follows a necessity to consider culture, understood as the meanings and interpretations actors place on their social world. In this I am defining culture, as, to quote Williams:

'the *signifying system* through which necessarily (though amongst other means) a

social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced and explored . . . . a

---

[13] *Ibid.* p.8.
[14] Derek Sayer, *The violence of abstraction: The analytic foundations of historical materialism* (Oxford, 1987), p. 19.

distinctive 'signifying system' is seen not only as essential but as essentially involved in *all* forms of social activity' (emphasis in original).' [15]

It follows this definition that I am not intending to see "culture" as in terms of the base/superstructure metaphor, culture is imbricated in the labour process rather than being a distant effect. It is cultural when a colliery manager writes to a colliery proprietor that the 'application of your anecdote of the Duke of Wellington enforcing a strict obedience to orders is indeed the only course that can make a concern prosperous',[16] when wage-labour discipline is avoided through observance of religious festivals, when a new sense of time is imposed and contested during industrialisation,[17] and when land clearances are justified on aesthetic grounds or through classical political economy or are resisted through notions of regulation and ownership. "Economy", "culture", "politics" must be seen as different moments in an organic totality.

However, for the purposes of research within a fixed time period one must make a narrower focus hence here my focus is primarily one upon the cultural aspects accessible through the "threatening notices", coupled with some broader contextualisation. Ultimately, I aim that my findings here will be one part of a wider research project which will see greater integration of the cultural with other slices of reality and will address a longer chronology. This is cultural studies as 'a branch more in the sense of a distinctive mode of entry into general sociological questions than in the sense of a reserved or specialized area.'[18] All this, in my opinion, makes not for a multiplicity of factors as in some historical sociology of the

---

[15] Raymond Williams, *Culture* (London, 1981), p. 13.
[16] Hewetson to Butler Clarke May 9 1829 (National Library of Ireland, Prior-Wandesforde Papers, MS 35, 567 (7))
[17] Edward P. Thompson, 'Time, work-discipline, and industrial capitalism' in *Past & Present*, 38 (1967), pp 56-97.
[18] Williams, *Culture*, p. 14.

Weberian tradition but rather a historical materialism with the determinant role played by

production but with a broader definition of what makes up production than was traditional

in much of late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century Marxism.

Part I: Context and Method

Families would separate, ancestral ties would be broken. Sons would forget fathers,

nephews their uncles. Rosa Blanca would cease to be the homeland of its people; and

the scattered, disinherited sons would remember it only as a ranch, one of the

hundreds that had been obliterated in the Republic.

B. Traven, *The White Rose*.

The next four chapters comprising the first part of this thesis constitute an introduction to the main body of research which is contained in parts II and III. The main objectives of part I are as follows: firstly, to contextualise the notices; secondly, to make a case for subaltern agency in social development as per the ontology outlined above — and hence to make a case for the relevance of the notices as an object of study; and, finally, to outline the importance of the notices as a source material and to detail the particular methodological approach I have taken to the notices. While these objectives run through the entirety of the next four chapters there are particular areas focused on in each chapter.

In the first chapter, *Understanding the Whiteboy Tradition* the focus will be on whiteboyism which is the main context within which notices were created. There will be a review of previous scholarship in the area and it will be argued that the most useful work has been that which conceived of early-nineteenth-century whiteboyism principally in terms of conflict over the possession of land relating to a transition from the feudal to capitalist modes of production. Moreover, the case will be made that research on whiteboyism has typically not had a focus on cultural aspects of this form of social conflict. This supports the case for concentrating research efforts on the notices – as they are the best sources for those cultural aspects.

The next two chapters build on the thesis introduced in chapter one which understands agrarian social conflict in terms of the transition between modes of production. Chapter two will look at labour relations and forms of agricultural production in Leinster and east Munster through the evidence of the Poor Law inquiry reports. It will argue that a nascent capitalist mode of production can be identified. Furthermore, the claim will be made that peasant resistance, in the context of the determining role of the colonial relationship with

the British industrial economy, stalled the further development of the capitalist mode. The

third chapter, *Primitive Accumulation, Clearance and Resistance,* will delve deeper into that

peasant resistance and seek to demonstrate, both through drawing on the Poor Law inquiry

report and through a close local study of the south-east of the Queen's County (present-day

Laois), that it constrained landlord control over their properties.

The final chapter in part I is the methodology chapter and in this chapter I discuss the

special relevance of threatening notices as a source material; a relevance which particularly

revolves around the fact that they are among the very few non-elite sources we have for the

period. I then outline my methodological approach. That approach involved an adaption of

grounded theory method. This consisted of bottom-up inductive coding of the notices,

seeking the most generic and thereby most representative elements; from analyses of this

initial coding I developed the two themes which parts II and III are focused on – namely

'coercive regulation' and 'collective identity'. These themes are explored in the findings

chapters of parts II and III and are brought fully into dialogue with theoretical literature in

the chapters with which parts II and III culminate.

Chapter One: Understanding the Whiteboy Tradition

The main form of subaltern contention in early-nineteenth-century Ireland appears to have been the whiteboy movements. However, these movements may have just left more of an imprint on the records than other forms; an escalation to more militant action being precisely the sort of activity likely to be recorded by the authorities.[1] Likewise, the production of illegal notices was a practice primarily associated with whiteboy movements but was in fact broader than those movements. Whiteboyism was certainly the most predominant form of subaltern contention that we know about in the context of conflicts over land occupancy. Moreover, it is conflict around the possession of land which, it is argued here, significantly shaped the social structure of early-nineteenth-century Ireland.

This chapter will introduce the whiteboy tradition arguing that the best way to understand it is in the first instance as a repertoire of contention nascent from within quotidian class conflict. Moving on to introduce what earlier scholarship had to say about the whiteboy phenomenon I'll argue that the analysis proffered by Jill Shankleman has offered the best insight to date as to what the central conflict animating whiteboyism was; namely, that whiteboy movements, at least in the nineteenth-century, were in large part constituted of a peasant resistance to an embryonic capitalist mode of production. This sets the scene for the next chapter which is concerned with building on the Shankleman thesis and making the case that this resistance inhibited the growth of capitalist social relations in the Irish southern midlands up to the mid-nineteenth-century. Finally, I'll review how culture has featured, and more commonly not featured, in the study of whiteboyism, thereby making

---

[1] Andrew Charlesworth, *An atlas of rural protest in Britain 1548 – 1900* (London, 1983), p. 5.

the case for the particular focus to be found in the main body of this study (i.e. parts II & III). In short this chapter aims to explain what whiteboyism is and to begin arguments as to its importance as a topic of research and as to why it is particularly appropriate to look at it through a cultural lens. A necessary qualification is that not all subaltern contention, nor all threatening notices, can be wrapped up in whiteboyism at least as conventionally understood.

Proto-sociologist Alexis de Tocqueville travelled in Ireland in July and August 1835. He took extensive notes on what he witnessed and the interviews he made and conversations he had with Irish people; principally with clergymen and legal professionals. De Tocqueville never developed a publication out of these notebooks — leaving publishing on Ireland to his companion Gustave de Beaumont — but the notes were later translated, edited and published in the closing decade of the twentieth-century.

De Tocqueville recorded a conversation with Edward Nolan, the Roman Catholic bishop of Kildare and Leighlin; who was resident in Carlow town. The conversation took place on 20 July 1835 a little less than a year after Nolan replaced as bishop the renowned liberal activist James Doyle (alias J.K.L.). De Tocqueville asked Nolan if there are 'in this county many "Whiteboys" or "Whitefeet" (as they commonly call themselves now)?'. Nolan related, according to De Tocqueville's notes, that there were:

> 'Few in this county. Many, two years ago, in the surrounding counties. I remember at that time Mr. X (I have forgotten his name), a neighbouring priest, found a gang of "Whitefeet." He met with them and he reproached them severely. Their leader, who was a very intelligent man, replied almost word for word as follows (which he repeated to me immediately): The law does nothing for us, we must save ourselves.

We are in possession of a little bit of land which is necessary to our and our families' survival. They chase us from it, to whom do you wish that we should address ourselves ? We ask for work at 8 pence a day, we are refused – to whom do you want us to address ourselves? Emancipation has done nothing for us. Mr. O'Connell and the rich Catholics go to Parliament. We are starving to death just the same.'

Nolan presented another vignette this time from his own experience:

'Two years ago, I was summoned to visit in prison a man who had killed the agent of a rich landlord. This agent wanted to change the method of cultivation and to achieve this he evicted the small farmers and destroyed their houses. One of them had a sick wife and asked for a respite. The agent had the sick woman brought outside the house in the open air and destroyed the house before her eyes. Some days after, he was murdered by the man who was speaking to me, [and] who was not personally interested in any way in the act that I relate, but who acted out of vengeance for that deed.'[2]

According to Nolan there was then conflict around land occupancy relating in part to a lack of employment and that this struggle about land occupancy at least sometimes involved particular programmes of agricultural development and concomitant expropriation of cultivators. This is a contestation very much within the day-to-day efforts of humans to win their material sustenance. Nolan also sees geographical and chronological variation in the incidence of the conflict, the Whitefeet were not particularly active in Carlow but were prevalent in some adjoining counties. There are other notable facets of Nolan's anecdotes. The reported words of the Whitefeet leader express an awareness of social division within

---

[2] *Alexis de Tocqueville's journey in Ireland July-August 1835*, ed. Emmet Larkin (Dublin, 1990), pp 41-2.

the ranks of the Catholic population. We also learn that apparently assassins might not be personally connected to whatever immediate grievance occasioned assassination. What Nolan has to say is an appropriate opening to this introduction for it neatly foreshadows much of what will be discussed in this and subsequent chapters.

The Whitefeet Nolan and De Tocqueville refer to were one of a succession of rural redresser movements active every decade between 1760 and 1850 with each movement encompassing a region or at least several counties. In terms of what we know about and what we know most about this is the main form of subaltern contention in Ireland at this time. It is necessary to be cognisant with the not always dissimilar urban combinations as well as other forms of conflict such as food rioting.[3] Likewise, it is necessary to bear mind the potential for geographical variation as can be seen above in what De Toqueville reports from Nolan.

The colourful names for these redresser movements included Whiteboys, Hearts of Oak, Hearts of Steel, Rightboys, Threshers, Caravats, Carders, Rockites, Tommy Downshires, Terry Alts and Molly Maguires. There are also periods and places where there are movements without any particular name.[4] A fact which underlines the porous and nebulous nature of what can be seemingly pinned down with a particular name but is in fact more mercurial, more a process than a thing. For convenience all these movements are sometimes

---

[3] Fergus A. D'Arcy, 'The Irish Trade Union Movement in the Nineteenth Century' in Donal Nevin (ed.), *Trade Union Century*, (Cork, 1994), pp 9 – 18; p. 13; Brian Henry, 'Industrial Violence, Combinations And The Law in Late Eighteenth Century Dublin' in *Saothar*, 18 (1992), pp 19-33; F.A. D'Arcy 'The Murder of Thomas Hanlon', *Dublin Historical Record*, 24:4 (1971), pp 89-100; Fintan Lane, *In Search of Thomas Sheahan: Radical politics in Cork 1824 – 1836*, (Dublin 2001), p. 55; John Cunningham, 'Popular protest and a "moral economy" in provincial Ireland in the early nineteenth century' in Francis Devine, Fintan Lane and Niamh Puirséil (eds), *Essays in Irish labour history: A festschrift for Elizabeth and John W. Boyle* (Dublin, 2008), pp 27-48; John Cunningham, '"Compelled to their bad acts by hunger": three Irish urban crowds, 1817-45,' *Éire-Ireland*, 45:1-2 (2010), pp 128-51.
[4] Michael Beames, *Peasants and power: The Whiteboy movements and their control in pre-famine Ireland* (Brighton, 1983), p. 43.

collectively and generically classed as whiteboys or as whiteboyism.[5] It is important to consider them not as formal organisations but, for the most part, as a common mode of social conflict particularly prevalent in particular times and places – with these particular moments sometimes given the aforementioned names.

The Whitefeet in Leinster in the early 1830s

In Leinster in the early 1830s whether under the Whitefeet moniker or not whiteboy-style activity was particularly to be found in the area around Portarlington and Monasterevan on the Queen's County/Kildare border, also in north-east Kilkenny and south-east Queen's county — particularly the coal-mining area, around Rosbercon in south-east Kilkenny, as well as in the barony of Garrycastle in the King's County and some parts of Westmeath. The barony of Garrycastle adjoins areas of Connaught and Munster also at this time conflict prone — with the Terry
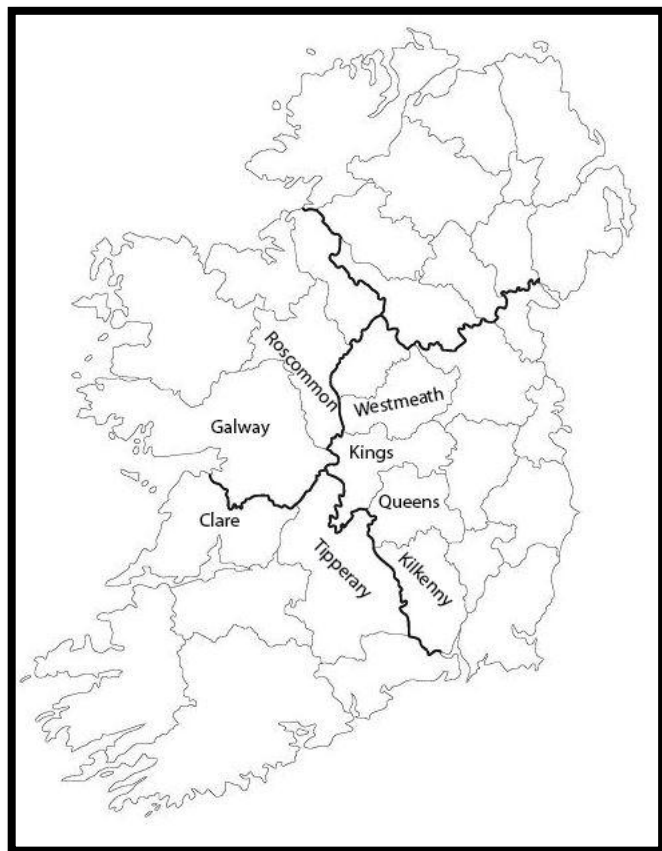
Figure 1.1 Counties with Whitefeet or Terry Alts

(After seomraranga.com)

Alt movement prevalent in Clare, east Galway and parts of southern Roscommon in 1831 and Tipperary home to one of the aforementioned 'nameless' movements.[6]   Again these

---

[5] Huggins, *Social conflict in pre-famine Ireland*, p 13; I am following the form here of using the lower-case whiteboys as a generic term and the upper-case Whiteboys to refer to the specific Whiteboys movement of Tipperary and adjacent counties in the 1760s.
[6] Beames, *Peasants and power*, p. 43; Testimony of Lieutenant General Sir Hussey Vivian, PP 1831-32 (677) Report from the Select Committee on the State of Ireland; with the minutes of evidence, appendix and index,

names are in part convenient tags placed upon particular places and periods of intense

contentious activity both by contemporaries and by historical researchers — tags usually

derived from some particular name or symbol found within the movement — but in no way

should this convenient naming be taken as indicating either local homogeneity or great

divergence from another time or place with a different tag. In this case leaving the Terry Alt

and Whitefeet names to one side it seems like a central band of conflict running west-east

from around Corofin in county Clare to around Castlecomer in county Kilkenny involving

areas of a number of different central counties — with comparatively more activity in the

west in 1831 and comparatively more activity in the east in 1832. As a rough indication of

the extent of the movement in 1832 around twenty per-cent of reported crime in Ireland

took place in the two counties of Kilkenny and Queens.[7] Indeed, forty of the 135 'illegal

notices' analysed in this thesis come from county Kilkenny, by far the largest proportion

accounted for by a single county.

Generally there was a west/east division within the province of Leinster with the more

westerly midland counties part of the wider area with a predilection for whiteboyism while

the eastern counties were not. Michael Beames, in the only book length general survey of

whiteboy movements, argues that the eastern counties had a relatively large number of

substantial farms, good access to markets and what he calls a high pauper population —

though we might better think of this as a farm labourer population — while the core

whiteboy territory was characterised by a predominance of farms in the five-to-fifteen acre

---

pp 82-3, (hereafter *State of Ireland* preceeded by the name of the person giving evidence); PP 1834 (459) *Papers relating to the state of Ireland*; Virginia Crossman, *Politics, law and order in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 1996) , pp 52-3, p. 58, pp 66-7.

[7] PP 1833 (80) *Offences, Ireland. A return of the number of offences against the law, which have been committed in Ireland, during the years 1831 and 1832, so far as returns of such offences have been made to the Irish government; specifying the general nature of the offences, and the counties or places in which they have occurred.*

category as revealed in the 1847 agricultural census.[8] Crudely these farms are small-holdings but by no means the smallest (details of, and a brief discussion of, farm size statistics are to be found in chapter two). To Beames this is a correlation between 'areas of high Whiteboy activity with areas where the poorer strata of the peasantry are entrenched and numerically dominant' with the exclusion of areas of particularly poor soil along the western seaboard.[9] However, other forms of contention reveal themselves in the primary source record as predominant in the eastern Leinster counties, such as extensive combinations among farm labourers.[10] We know much less about this both as it has been researched less and as there is less documentation.

The major impression made on the records was that made by violence and the major source of conflict leading to violence were disputes over land occupancy. This was the struggle of smallholders while in eastern counties with less of the glare of powder and shot more working-class concerns of employment and wages were to the fore, but paradoxically also the demand for land. This later demand eventually partially realised in the one-acre plots adjoining the late-nineteenth-century/early-twentieth-century labourers' cottages – which were the first public housing in Ireland.[11] The eastern form of social conflict is little known about and seems to fit more the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century mould. It is

---

[8] Beames, *Peasants and power*, p. 42.

[9] *Ibid.* p. 49.

[10] See figures 4.5 and 4.6 for some indication of the content with regard to economic issues and the geographic spread of the notices examined in this study. 'Combinations' to a modern reader is more associated with urban skilled trades and a higher degree of formal organisation, it was the contemporary term used for what might be better understood as strikes or 'turn outs', see - unknown author to Sir William Gosset 4 Aug. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/1491). Farm labourers' strikes in this period have received very little scholarly attention but see Desmond Mooney, 'A society in crisis: Agrarian violence in Meath, 1828 –1835', *Ríocht na Midhe*, 8:2 (1988–89), pp 102–28; pp 106–8; Peter Connell, *The land and people of County Meath 1750 – 1850* (Dublin, 2004), p. 155; and, more generally, Adrian Grant, 'Landed estate records as a resource for the study of the rural Irish worker' in *Saothar*, 38 (2013), pp 169-73.

[11] Jonathan Bell and Mervyn Watson, *Rooted in the soil: A history of cottage gardens and allotments in Ireland since 1750* (Dublin, 2012), p. 29.

similar in this respect to the simultaneous Tithe War as a presage of post-Famine conflicts. The Tithe War was a pan-class and largely Catholic opposition to the payment of tithe, a tribute to the Church of Ireland. In social composition, particularly in terms of its middle-class leadership, and tactical range, combining methods constitutional and highly illegal, it resembles late-nineteenth-century tenant movements. These are great generalisations as whiteboyism encompassed a greater range of concerns than land occupancy – and these included employment-related issues.

The important point is that while there was a pole of farm labourers' strikes at one side of Leinster and a pole of whiteboyism at the other the main source material for this study comes from both areas and both types of conflict. That source material was also generated in more prosaic quotidian conflicts which are now even more obscured by the paucity of records.

It should be stressed that despite these different contexts the focus of these introductory chapters is very much on whiteboys, peasants and land occupancy. In any case there doesn't appear to be a major difference in the style of threatening letter across these different contexts. In terms of an identifiably significant contribution to social development, along the lines of the ontological discussion in the introduction, it is peasant resistance in disputes over land possession which deserves attention. The argument in the next two chapters will be that this resistance stunted the growth of capitalist social relations. Hence the importance of the wage relation is more in identifying its existence as part of a diagnostics of incipient capitalist relations than in there being any particular significance to the wage conflicts themselves. That said employment-related disputes will specifically feature in subsequent discussions about the function of notices and about collective identity. These

discussions are in the later parts of the thesis when the focus is on the content of the notices. These introductory chapters are focused on land occupancy conflicts, it being these conflicts which, as far as we can tell, significantly shaped social structure.

Whiteboyism as a repertoire of contention

One way to understand whiteboyism is as a tactical repertoire or as Charles Tilly would put it a repertoire of contention. The basic format, at least as it appears in the archives, was a range of clandestine violent direct action carried out by small groups of youths seeking to compel their targets to accede to their demands. These actions included threatening letters, destruction of property, punishment beatings, and, more rarely, assassination. The requisition of firearms was also a frequent activity. The demands usually revolved around regulating local socio-economic life, e.g. preventing people from taking land from which other people had been evicted or which had gone out of lease or setting rates for conacre – the small fertilised plots held for a single season and typically used for subsistence. Various ritual practices are associated with the whiteboy tradition, which show up in the documentary record with varying frequency and these include cross-dressing, particular costumes, and the use of recurrent pseudonyms.

It is worth bearing in mind that the emphasis on violence in this typology of the repertoire could well be an artefact of the nature of the record formed by the state and by elites. Put simply we know little of what these bands of youths were doing when they were not doing the sort of things that show up in police files and newspaper 'outrage' reports. Nor do we know much about how they related to the wider community. It is possible what we see in the archives is the violent tip of a very large iceberg, a tip which provided the enforcing discipline behind a broader refusal to pay tithe (the tribute to the Church of Ireland) above a certain level, or to work for a wage set below a certain level. Likewise, with regard to

clandestinely, whiteboy groups placed considerable emphasis on being clandestine to the

authorities, for obvious reasons; but, paradoxically, they were often quite open and exposed

to the general populace. For instance, some reports tell of assassinations carried out in

broad daylight before numbers of witnesses, or of assaults administered by undisguised

parties.[12]

Repertoire means a common way of doing something which can be used by different groups

with local adaptations to the basic format. Importantly repertoire of contention is conceived

by Tilly as something formed in dialogical fashion through processes of conflict between

different bodies, attempts to appeal to different audiences, to negotiate and so on.

As Tilly outlines:

> 'The word repertoire helps describe what happens by identifying a limited set of
>
> routines that are learned, shared, and acted out through a relatively deliberate
>
> process of choice. Repertoires are learned cultural creations, but they do not
>
> descend from abstract philosophy or take shape as a result of political propaganda;
>
> they emerge from struggle. People learn to break windows in protest, attack
>
> pilloried prisoners, tear down dishonoured houses, stage public marches, petition,
>
> hold formal meetings, organise special-interest associations. At any particular point
>
> in history, however, they learn only a rather small number of alternative ways to act
>
> collectively.
>
> By analogy with the various improvisations known to a jazz band or a troupe of
>
> strolling players (rather than, say, the more confining music read by a string quartet),

---

[12] Edge, *State of Ireland,* p. 167; Stapleton, *State of Ireland*, p. 107; Smyth, July 14 1834 (N.L.I., Prior-Wandesforde Papers, MS 35, 675 (3)).

people in a given place and time know how to carry out a limited number of alternative collective-action routines, adapting each one to the immediate circumstances and to the reactions of antagonists, authorities, allies, observers, objects of their action, and other persons somehow involved in the struggle.'[13]

This conception of common culture and common tactics is not to say that methods do not change over time or experience modifications, adaptions, innovations and evolutionary dead-ends:

'While contenders are constantly innovating, furthermore, they generally innovate at the perimeter of the existing repertoire rather than by breaking entirely with old ways. Most innovations fail and disappear; only a rare few fashion long-term changes in a form of contention. Only very rarely does one whole repertoire give way to another' [14]

For example, it is worth bearing in mind that, as we shall turn to shortly a number of whiteboy movements also featured large-scale mass actions, somewhat different to the violent small group direct action described above. Similarly we can see post-Famine, and right into the twentieth-century, echoes of the whiteboy repertoire within repertoires of contention which had been largely transformed from the earlier models.

The bulk of whiteboy activity was both local and informal, with common conditions, the strength of example, and occasional emissaries, all conspiring together to form large nebulous movements on a regional basis, conglomerated mosaics formed from a parochial patchwork.

---

[13] Charles Tilly, *Popular contention in Great Britain 1758 - 1834*, (Cambridge, Mass., 1995), pp 41-2.
[14] *Ibid.* p. 44.

What pre-existing extra-local networks were involved has yet to be fully explored, but connections across an individual estate,[15] along communication routes such as navigations, through market towns, or within fighting factions all may have played part.[16] This needs to be borne in mind with regard to larger mobilisations.

There is some fluctuation in the numbers involved in particular actions but the small group seems more prevalent than the mass gathering. This is probably due to the latter's susceptibility to a repressive state response. Certainly by the time of the Whitefeet nearly all the recorded actions required only small informally organised groups – essentially bands of local youths.

Some incidents give us firm evidence as to the numbers usually participating in Whitefeet groups. For instance, twenty-six persons were arrested at a public house in Dunmore, county Kilkenny, on 19 February 1832. Six of those men were equipped with firearms and hence likely to have actually been involved in Whitefeet activities. In April 1833 police in the district of Gowran, county Kilkenny, took into custody a young man who eventually gave them information on his involvement in a group numbering ten. From negotiations relating to an arms surrender it appears that Old Leighlin, county Carlow, had three distinct groups of Whitefeet numbering twenty-five in total.[17]

---

[15] Terence, Dooley, *The murders at Wildgoose Lodge: Agrarian crime and punishment in pre-Famine Ireland* (Dublin, 2007), pp 121-22.

[16] James S. Donnelly Jr., 'Factions in pre-Famine Ireland' in Audrey S. Eyler and Robert F. Garratt (eds), *The uses of the past: essays on Irish culture* (Newark & London, 1988), pp 113-30; Lochlainn Ó Tuairisg, 'Whiteboys and faction fighters in pre-famine Ireland' in Michael S. O'Neill, Clara Cullen, Coleman A. Dennehy (eds) *History matters: Selected papers from the school of history postgraduate conferences, 2001-3,* (Dublin 2004), pp 97 – 106.

[17] Joseph Greene to Sir William Gosset, 20 Feb. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/394); C.H. Tuckey to Sir John Harvey, 21 Feb. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O.R.P. 1832/255/1); Walter Moloney to Sir William Gosset, 21 Apr. 1833 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1833/445).

There are exceptions to this; Rockism in the early 1820s went through a brief period of

massing large numbers for insurrectionary anti-state violence,[18] the Terry Alt movement

involved the mass digging-up of grazing land to compel its owners or leasers to let it for

conacre,[19] the Rightboys, at least for a time, mobilised whole parishes to swear oaths,[20] and

the Oakboys, fairly singularly, adopted the practice of a public perambulating protest quite

unlike that of most of these movements.[21] An evolution away from this Oakboy repertoire

can be seen in the practice of the subsequent Ulster movement the Steelboys.[22]

Whiteboys and the everyday

The whiteboy tradition most likely grew out of the everyday forms of peasant resistance

conceptualised by James C. Scott - covert insubordination, re-appropriation of resources,

relatively isolated anonymous threats or relatively isolated covert destruction of crops,

animals or other property.

In the words of Scott:

> 'the prosaic but constant struggle between the peasantry and those who seek to
>
> extract labour, food, taxes, rents, and interest from them. Most of the forms this
>
> struggle takes stop well short of collective outright defiance. Here I have in mind the
>
> ordinary weapons of relatively powerless groups: footdragging, dissimulation, false-
>
> compliance, pilfering, feigned ignorance, slander, arson, sabotage, and so forth.
>
> These Brechtian forms of class struggle have certain features in common. They

---

[18] James S. Donnelly Jr., *Captain Rock: The Irish agrarian rebellion of 1821 – 1824* (Cork, 2009), pp 105-8.

[19] James S. Donnelly Jr., 'The Terry Alt movement 1829 – 31' in *History Ireland*, 2:4 (1994), pp 30-5.

[20] James S. Donnelly Jr., 'The Rightboy Movement 1785 – 8'in *Studia Hibernica*, 17 – 18 (1977 – 78), pp 120 – 202.

[21] James S. Donnelly Jr., 'Hearts of Oak, Hearts of Steel' in *Studia Hibernica*, 21 (1981), pp 7 – 73.

[22] Eoin Magennis, 'The Hearts of Steel and agrarian crowds in the Armagh/Down borderlands in 1772' in Allan Blackstock and Eoin Magennis (eds), *Politics and political culture in Britain and Ireland, 1750-1850: Essays in tribute to Peter Jupp* (Belfast, 2007), pp 242-61; p. 258.

require little or no co-ordination or planning: they often represent a form of individual self-help: and they typically avoid any direct symbolic confrontation with authority or with elite norms. To understand these commonplace forms of resistance is to understand what much of the peasantry does 'between revolts' to defend its interests as best it can.' [23]

What Scott calls everyday resistance was identified by Bloch as 'the patient, silent struggles stubbornly carried on by rural communities for years'.[24] The whiteboy movements we know about could be conceived as peaks in collective contentious activity, those moments when a continual small-scale struggle is intensified to a far higher level and when it becomes less typical to 'avoid any direct symbolic confrontation with authority or with elite norms'. We know little of everyday conflicts, in part this is due to the "if it bleeds it leads"phenomenon, that is to say the far greater likelihood of more spectacularly violent actions ending up being recorded in newspapers or police files.

Although the term "secret societies" sometimes applied to whiteboy movements suggests a degree of formal organisation, indeed a high degree of formal organisation, for the most part this was not the case. Though there are possibly exceptions to that in Rockism and possibly with some cross-over with Ribbonism. Donnelly did identify some shadowy committees organising part of the Rockite movement, though that movement was exceptional in many ways.[25] Ribbonism was a more urban phenomenon, though also found in rural Ulster, combining a sectarian nationalism with a self-help/mutual-aid element. It may, or may not, have had some inter-relationship with some of the more rural, more

---

[23] James C. Scott, 'Everyday forms of peasant resistance' in *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 13:2 (1986), pp 5-35; p. 6

[24] Quoted in Harvey J. Kaye, *The British Marxist historians: An Introductory analysis* (New York, 1995), p. 76.

[25] Donnelly, *Captain Rock: Irish agrarian rebellion*, pp 103-5.

agrarian, and more informal, whiteboy movements.[26] The name "Ribbonism" was certainly

sometimes applied to some of the later and there was some use of Ribbon iconography,

including the name itself and similar oaths, by whiteboy groups.

The whiteboy tradition is best thought of not as a series of popular protests but as a system

of coercive regulation — punishing offenders against customary communal norms, with the

provisos that custom is it not a timeless sense of fairness but the results of earlier

struggles,[27] and that "community" does not mean a shared consensus so much as a totem

raised amidst conflict.[28] The evidence examined in this study suggests that whiteboy bands

perhaps thought of themselves as, but certainly presented themselves as, regulators

administering the law. This is quite different from the connotations carried by the word

protest, as that term implies more of an appeal, or petition, or entreaty, as opposed to the

coercive violence practiced by whiteboys.

Articulated with the aforementioned common tactical repertoire was a common set of

symbols including cross-dressing and various others costumes including coloured sashes,

straw hats, blackened faces, as well as the recurrent symbolic themes found within so-called

threatening letters or threatening notices. The symbolic forms within notices are the

central topic to be examined in this study. It should be stressed these notices were

---

[26] Tom Garvin, Defenders, 'Ribbonmen and others: Underground political networks in pre-Famine Ireland' in *Past & Present*, 96 (1982), pp 133-55; M.R. Beames*, '*The Ribbon societies: Lower class nationalism in pre-Famine Ireland' in *Past & Present*, 97 (1982), pp 128-43; Jennifer Kelly, *'The Downfall of Hagan' Sligo Ribbonism in 1842* (Dublin, 2008).

[27] Eric Hobsbawm and Terence Ranger (eds), *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge, 1983), pp 2-3.

[28] Ciara Kierans and Philip McCormack, 'Elmdale: a search for an understanding of community through protest and resistance' in *Irish Journal of Anthropology*, VI (2002), pp 113-29; Eoin Devereux, 'Negotiating community: The Case of a Limerick Community Development group' in Chris Curtin, Hastings Donnan, and Thomas M. Wilson (eds), *Irish Urban Cultures* (Belfast, 1993), pp 63 – 77; Lorelei Harris, 'Class, Community and Sexual Divisions in North Mayo' in Chris Curtin, Mary Kelly, Liam O'Dowd (eds), *Culture and Ideology in Ireland* (Galway, 1984), pp 154-71.

generated within whiteboy movements, within farm labourers' combinations and within more small-scale everyday conflicts. Consequently this study will be exploring a common culture across these different conflicts. Close examination of a collection of notices for this thesis has revealed a number of recurrent themes within the notices, including forms of collective identity and notions of coercive regulation. The meaning particular motifs which make up these themes within the notices had or may have had within the wider society is explored in the findings chapters. Finally these empirical findings are brought into dialogue with a range of theoretical literature.

Agricultural change and rural conflict

Jill Shankleman's unpublished Phd. thesis 'Agricultural Change and Rural Conflict in Co. Tipperary, 1800 to 1845' accounts for land occupancy conflicts as part of a transition between a feudal mode of production and a capitalist mode of production.

Shankleman's study is of the two baronies of Iffa and Offa West and Iffa and Offa East in south county Tipperary.[29] These baronies were part of the rich, fertile, Suir river valley, which had, as its main trading hub and processing centre, the inland port of Clonmel. Cahir, Clogheen and Carrick-on-Suir were the baronies' other principal urban centres – towns and their markets being an important feature of tillage territories.[30] The south Tipperary area was a major producer of cereal crops, potatoes, pigs and dairy goods in the late-eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-centuries. South Tipperary was also the original home of the Whiteboys, with the first movement bearing that name having its origins there in the early 1760s.

---

[29] Jill Shankleman, 'Agricultural Change and Rural Conflict in Co. Tipperary, 1800 to 1845' (Ph.D. thesis, Essex University, 1978/79); the depiction of the study area in the map on the following page is after Liam Kennedy and Paul S. Ell, E.M. Crawford and L.A. Clarkson, *Mapping the Great Irish Famine: A survey of the Famine decades* (Dublin, 1999), p. 23.

[30] T. Jones Hughes, 'The large farm in nineteenth century Ireland' in Kevin Danaher and Alan Gailey (eds), *Gold under the furze: studies in folk tradition presented to Caoimhín Ó Danachair* (Dublin, 1982), pp 93-100.
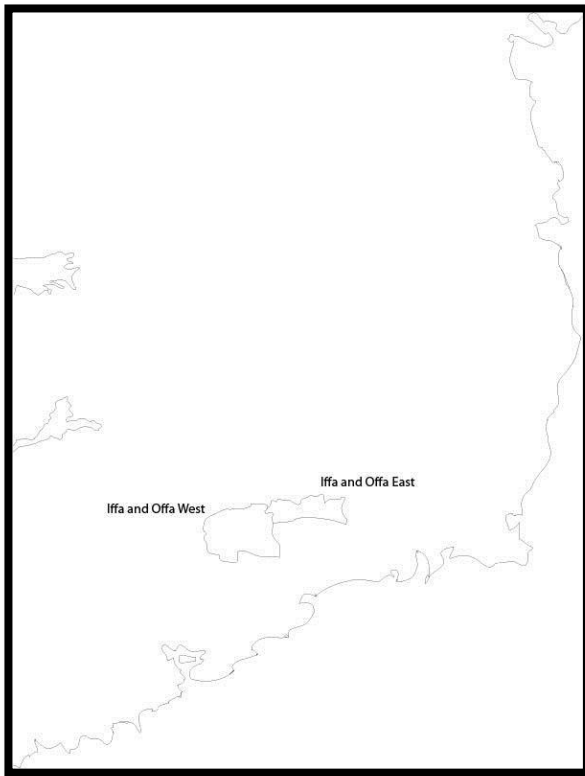
Location of Shankleman's study.

(after Kennedy et al. *Mapping the Great Irish Famine,* p. 23)

The central pivot of Shankleman's thesis is the Marxist concept of the mode of production. Consequently it is necessary to briefly explore this concept before turning to Shankleman's application of it to pre-Famine Ireland.

A mode of production is most simply thought of as a combination of productive forces (the relationship of humans with nature) and relations of production (inter-human relationships controlling production and appropriation of surplus) and the relations between these two sets of relations. As outlined by Marx:

'The specific economic form, in which unpaid surplus-labour is pumped out of direct producers, determines the relationship of rulers and ruled, as it grows directly out of production itself and, in turn, reacts upon it as a determining element. Upon this, however, is founded the entire formation of the economic community which grows up out of the production relations themselves, thereby simultaneously its specific political form. It is always the direct relationship of the owners of the conditions of production to the direct producers — a relation always naturally corresponding to a definite stage in the development of the methods of labour and thereby its social productivity — which reveals the innermost secret, the hidden basis of the entire social structure and with it the political form of the relation of sovereignty and

dependence, in short, the corresponding specific form of the state. This does not

prevent the same economic basis — the same from the standpoint of its main

conditions — due to innumerable different empirical circumstances, natural

environment, racial relations, external historical influences, etc. from showing

infinite variations and gradations in appearance, which can be ascertained only by

analysis of the empirically given circumstances.' [31]

While not disregarding other forms of social conflict, such as that over tithe, or that over

conacre, or conflicts between employers and employees, Shankleman's main focus and

most fruitful insights concern conflicts over land occupancy. This she sees as revolving

around competition for land between a peasant farmer agricultural sector within a feudal

mode of production and a capitalist farmer agricultural sector within a capitalist mode of

production. While recognising Ireland circa 1800 – 1850 as a social formation dominated by

a feudal mode of production Shankleman identifies an 'uneven and localised' development

of a capitalist mode of production in the pre-Famine decades.[32]

Shankleman uses the admittedly crude and imprecise data and categories of the censuses

and the tithe applotment books to identify the size of the capitalist sector. The 1831 census

divides the adult male population 'employed in agriculture' into employing occupiers, non-

employing occupiers, and labourers. The census category of 'employing occupiers', which is

to say farmers employing labourers, gives us a figure of 26% of occupiers being employers.[33]

---

[31] Karl Marx, *Capital: A critique of political economy, volume III* (London, 1959), p. 791.
[32] Shankleman, 'Agricultural Change and Rural Conflict in Co. Tipperary', p. 86.
[33] *Ibid.* p. 77, p. 86.

This is by no means clear-cut:

> 'since some peasant households with a small labour force or with landless relatives were augmented by resident labourers, although the scale and orientation of their agriculture remained that of peasant farmers'.[34]

A wide range of different employment practices also makes it impossible to simply read the census figures as indicating the extent of the capitalist sector.[35] However, almost 40% of the 'employed in agriculture' category are recorded as labourers.[36] The size of holdings as revealed in the tithe applotment books is another crude indicator.[37] Based on the premise that farms of over twenty Irish acres, or thirty-two statute (a.k.a. English) acres, would necessitate more than family labour and this would then give us some idea of the spread of capitalist agriculture, Shankleman finds that 19% of holdings within the parishes she examines fall into this category of holding size.[38] This again can only be a blurry picture as size of holding and value of holding does not of course necessarily correspond. Also instances of sub-letting may not be recorded and consequently we can be left with a distorted picture of the actual farm size. That is to say there can be a discrepancy between the amount of land someone leases and the amount of land they farm — a discrepancy obscured if their sub-tenants go unrecorded. It should be noted that she does find a corelation between areas with larger than average farms and areas with a greater proportion of employing occupiers. The barony of Iffa and Offa West having 18% of occupiers being employers, while in the barony of Iffa and Offa East 47% of occupiers were

---

[34] *Ibid.* p. 77.
[35] *Ibid.* p. 85.
[36] *Ibid.* p. 89.
[37] *Ibid.* p. 87.
[38] *Ibid.* p. 87.

employers, and there was likewise a greater proportion of larger sized holdings in the eastern barony.[39]

Shankleman argues that although farmers holding more than 20 Irish acres (or 32 statute acres) constituted a minority of farmers in the south Tipperary area - less than 30% - none the less the size of their holdings meant that they controlled 80% of land, and even with sub-letting this would have accounted for the majority of market output.[40] This greater output holds true even with the assumption that peasant and capitalist farms had similar yields,[41] though the later had access to more advanced technology. There were some differences in the type of farming conducted by the respective groups of farmers: large farms tended to have a greater proportion of their land in pasture, probably indicating a greater ability to adjust to shifting market demands,[42] while small farms maximised their use of the land — with relatively less left uncultivated — probably reflecting the fact they were labour rich and land poor.[43] I might add the later would have greater need to maximise their output both to meet subsistence needs and to pay the rent.

Given that for the aforementioned reasons the statistical evidence is problematic Shankleman points to additional sources such as the testimony of witnesses to the Devon Commission, a 1840s government inquiry into Irish agriculture, as to the salience of the distinction between large and small farmers.[44]

The slice of wage-related notices compiled for this study amply demonstrate the existence of the wage relation in pre-Famine Irish agriculture (see figure 4.3). Shankleman's statistical

---

[39] *Ibid.* p. 86.
[40] *Ibid.* p. 148.
[41] *Ibid.* p. 148.
[42] *Ibid.* p. 140.
[43] *Ibid.* p. 143.
[44] *Ibid.* p. 76.

approach is more problematic as persons in a variety of different labour relations, which will be more fully explored in the next chapter, could end up being recorded as labourers in the census. It is not necessarily apparent whether a cottier — that is to say a person who pays a labour rent — would be recorded as a labourer or as a land holder. Moreover, the possibility that cottiers were recorded as labourers means that census statistics can not tell us of the extent of wage labour. Likewise farms of more than twenty acres may have required more than family labour, but statistics do not tell us whether that extra-labour came from hired hands or from labour service provided by sub-tenants.

Another issue is the inter-generational reproduction of the capitalist farm, which is to say that sub-dividing such a hypothetical farm of say 50 acres between, for example, four sons, would surely put the next generation back into the ranks of peasant farming. Thus it could be argued that the mean size of the capitalist farm category would have to be of such to allow sufficient accumulation for parts, or all, of the next generation to continue as holders of capitalist farms. Therfore we might consider that Shankleman overestimates the size of the capitalist sector. I have not pursued this line of inquiry futher, but it is worth bearing in mind.

Another question is the sufficiency of the wage relation alone as a determinant in considering the presence or absence of a capitalist mode of production (a relevant question would be how generalised that relation is).

Are what Wood calls capitalist laws of motion present? That is to say are present:

'the imperatives of competition and profit-maximization, a compulsion to reinvest

surpluses, and a systematic and relentless need to improve labour-productivity and

develop the forces of production?'[45]

Shankleman does to a degree identify some of the sort of technological development that

one would expect to see as a capitalist mode of production develops. Identifying a switch to

plough cultivation rather than spade, the introduction of the iron swing, or Scots, plough,

and, to a lesser degree, the use of scythes rather than reaping hooks in corn harvesting.[46]

Likewise she claims that: 'Irish farmers had access to an increasing range of seeds and cattle

stock'.[47] It is fair to say this is not a major focus of her study.

Arguably the differentiation of the peasantry plus the existence of *some* wage labour might

be considered necessary but not sufficient conditions of the capitalist mode. As Rodney

Hilton points out of west European feudalism:

'The peasant community was not a community of equals. The stratification of

peasant communities, moreover, was at least as old as the earliest records we have

of them. This suggests that such polarization of fortunes as there was between the

village rich and the village poor could not simply have resulted from competition in

production for the market, important though this factor was from time to time in

generating social differentiation. . . . . . The social stratification of the peasant

communities, already marked in the ninth and tenth centuries, did not diminish in

later centuries. It probably continued to reflect the same basic factors, which were

---

[45] Ellen Meiksins Wood, *The origin of capitalism: A longer view* (London, 2002), pp 36-7.
[46] Shankleman, 'Agricultural Change and Rural Conflict in Co. Tipperary', pp 144-45.
[47] *Ibid.* p. 146

the possession by some peasant families of one or even two plough teams, a full

holding in the village arable and full grazing and usage rights in the commons, and by

others, the smallholders, the possession of little more than the power of their own

arms with which to work their inadequate plots, and to earn the rest of their keep by

working on the lands of the rich. We can see this stratification right across the

English counties in Domesday Book of 1086, where at least one third of the peasant

population were smallholders.'[48]

Moreover, Roseberry argues for an inherent process of differentiation among peasants

subject to a feudal money rent.[49]

It should be possible to see an ensemble of relations including re-investment of surpluses to

improve productivity as well as wage labour – and wage labour on a significant scale – and,

more obviously, commodity production, before we can start to speak of the development of

the capitalist mode of production. With the important proviso as advanced by Utsa Patnaik

that we should not expect a 'pure' form of capitalist production to sprout up overnight like a

mushroom. As Patnaik puts it:

 'The development of the capitalist form of organisation must be looked at as a

historical process, not as a once for-all event. The capitalist does not suddenly

appear out of the blue as a clearly-defined 'pure' socio-economic type: he develops

within the pre-existing, non-capitalist economic structure.'[50]

---

[48] Rodney Hilton, *Bond men made free: Medieval peasant movements and the English rising of 1381*, (London. 1973), pp 32-3.
[49] William Roseberry, 'Rent, differentiation, and the development of capitalism among peasants' in *American Anthropologist*, 78:1 (1976), pp 45-58.
[50] Utsa Patnaik, 'Class differentiation within the peasantry: An approach to analysis of Indian agriculture' in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 11:39 (Sep. 25, 1976), pp 82-101; p. 123

'there are a variety of transitional forms, a complex interaction of developing capitalism with precapitalist organisations. We find that family-labour-based holdings produce for the market, while wagelabour-based holdings do not necessarily invest in capital . . .'[51]

Roseberry has a similar focus on process, arguing that: 'while capitalism is developing within a particular country, it may not have developed sufficiently to transform the precapitalist forms within the country'.[52]

Indeed the distinction drawn by Marx with regard to capitalist manufacturing and capitalist industry between the formal subsumption of labour, that is capitalist relations of production bolted on to the pre-capitalist forces of production and the real subsumption of labour where the labour process has been transformed into a new capitalist form would make no sense without a recognition of such a 'variety of transitional forms'.

To look at the question from another perspective contemporaries recognised a qualitative distinction between those who were imprecisely described as small farmers and large farmers. It is the small-holding peasantry who are subject to what Marx interprets as a feudal money rent:

'We are not referring here to the conditions in which ground rent, the mode of landed property corresponding to the capitalist mode of production has a formal existence even though the capitalist mode of production itself does not exist, the tenant himself is not an industrial capitalist, and his manner of farming is not a capitalist one. This is how it is in Ireland, for example.

---

[51] *Ibid.* p. 127
[52] Roseberry, 'Rent, differentiation, and the development of capitalism among peasants', p. 47.

Here the tenant is generally a small peasant. What he pays the landowner for his lease often absorbs not only a portion of his profit, i.e. his own surplus labour, which he has a right to as owner of his own instruments of labour, but also a portion of the normal wage, which he would receive for the same amount of labour under other conditions.'[53]

This is true of a peasantry driven to a bare subsistence; it is clearly not true of farmers who had a surplus to re-invest in new means of production — either technology or leaseholds on new land to expand their farms.

It is my contention that the embryonic development of the capitalist mode of production in the early-nineteenth-century Irish southern midlands was continually frustrated by peasant resistance. Moreover that this resistance can be accounted for in part by the colonial relations existing between the Irish agrarian economy and the British industrial economy and the attendant de-industrialisation of much of Ireland (as shall be further addressed in chapter two). Consequently the absence of an alternative source of survival in industrial employment means access to land is a necessity and the small-holding peasantry seek to maintain their hold on their lands against all odds. A comparison with lowland Scotland is instructive on this point where the more or less opposite seems to have happened.[54] Therefore the continuing dominance of a feudal mode of production into the later part of the nineteenth-century as identified by Slater and McDonough can be understood in part as an outcome of class struggle.[55]

---

[53] Marx, *Capital Vol. III*, p. 763.
[54] T.M. Devine, *The Scottish Nation 1700 – 2000* (New York, 1999), pp 105-51.
[55] Eamonn Slater and Terrence McDonough 'Colonialism, Feudalism and the Mode of Production in Nineteenth-Century Ireland' in Terrence McDonough (ed), *Was Ireland a colony? Economics, politics and culture in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2005), pp 27 – 47.

In terms of Byres's six paths of historic agrarian transition the Irish case most greatly resembles the French case of which Byres writes that here 'we have a stubbornly persisting peasantry: a peasantry that, unlike its English counterpart, refused to go'.[56] The most important distinction from the French case is the radically different position at which Ireland is inserted into the world economy.

This determination of the socio-economic structure in part by class struggle underlines the importance of understanding the modes of class struggle. An investigation into the modes of class struggle is precisely what the main body of this thesis is about. In the next chapter I aim to show that Shankleman's analysis holds true in so far as there was a capitalist tendency in early-nineteenth-century agriculture and that the process of clearance, of removing small-holders from their lands in favour of larger farm-units, was at least to some degree inhibited by subaltern insurgency in the decades leading up to the Great Famine. That is to say the basic thrust of Shankleman's argument is correct even though the statistical evidence she marshalls to advance it can be questioned.

Land occupancy conflicts directly relate to rent and sometimes also to expropriation with "improving" landlords seeking reliable rent payments through increased productivity and capitalist farmers seeking more land, wage conflicts and land conflicts were each relatively more prevalent in different areas.

Undoubtedly not all land occupancy conflicts can be accounted for by the competition between a peasant farming sector and a capitalist farming sector as posited by Shankleman. Firstly, eviction occasioned by rent arrears could see a peasant-tenant replaced by another

---

[56] Terence J. Byres, 'Paths of capitalist agrarian transition in the past and in the contemporary world' in V.K. Ramachandran and Madhura Swaminathan (eds), *Agrarian studies: Essays on agrarian relations in less-developed countries* (London, 2003), pp 54 – 83; p. 63.

peasant-tenant and thus the concomitant violence is entirely within the peasantry or between the peasantry and their immediate landlord. Secondly, there is the matter of inheritance and conflict both between and within family groups. Thirdly, there is the transition from a tillage-dominated agriculture (labour-intensive) to a pasturage-dominated agriculture (land-extensive) which could take place within feudal social relations but involve the same processes of clearance and resistance as with growth of the capitalist mode. However, what is being discussed here is independent of that transition and predates the total dominance of grassland — which is a post-Famine phenomenon.

A truly comprehensive examination of what gets called 'agrarian unrest' would of necessity involve the consideration of more than class relationships and more than agriculture. Gender and relations within and between families would have to be brought in, as would sectarian conflict — both classed and otherwise. Beyond agriculture some proto-industrial settings and some urban settings also saw modes of conflict not dissimilar to whiteboyism. This is reflected in the notice collection studied here with notices concerning the employment conditions of coopers, boatmen and miners.[57] The main part though, the part that cast its colour on to the rest, was peasant resistance to both improving landlords and engorging farmers.

A central factor is this expropriation discussed by Shankleman and evocatively described by Marx, albeit in an analysis derived from the English context, thus:

> 'the transformation of the individualized and scattered means of production into socially concentrated ones, of the pigmy property of the many into the huge property of the few, the expropriation of the great mass of the people from the soil,

---

[57] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

from the means of subsistence, and from the means of labour, this fearful and painful expropriation of the mass of the people forms the prelude to the history of capital. . . . Self-earned private property, that is based, so to say, on the fusing together of the isolated, independent labouring individual with the conditions of his labour, is supplanted by capitalistic private property, which rests on exploitation of the nominally free labour of others, i.e., on wage labour.'[58]

Resistance to this primitive accumulation is also the part which played the significant role in shaping social structure as will be discussed further in the next chapter, hence its particular relevance. Before developing that argument further I will review those portions of the historiography of whiteboyism which have more of a cultural focus and I'll argue that this aspect, and indeed whiteboyism in general, has largely been under-researched, thereby underlining the importance of the cultural focus in the main body of this thesis.

Culture in the historiography of whiteboyism

To begin with defining culture I am partly following the definition proffered by cultural historian Peter Burke as: 'shared meanings, attitudes and values, and the symbolic forms (performances, artefacts) in which they are expressed or embodied',[59] but with the addition of culture in the sense employed by Raymond Williams or E.P. Thompson as: 'threaded through *all* social practices'.[60] So we have then a consideration of meanings explicit or implicit in all human practices. This is the study of culture: 'more in the sense of a distinctive mode of entry into general sociological questions than in the sense of a reserved or

---

[58] Marx, *Capital Vol. I*, p. 714.
[59] Peter Burke, *Popular culture in early modern Europe*, (Aldershot, 1994), prologue.
[60] Stuart Hall, 'Cultural studies: two paradigms' in Tony Bennett, Graham Martin, Colin Mercer, Janet Woollacott (eds), *Culture, ideology and social process: A reader*, (London, 1981), pp 19 – 37; p. 22.

specialized area'.[61] Not then culture as referring to art and literature or culture as referring to folklore but culture as referring to shared meanings within particular social practices. In the case of this thesis using culture in that documentary sense in: 'which culture is the body of intellectual and imaginative work, in which, in a detailed way, human thought and experience are variously recorded',[62] to understand cultures in that wider sense of shared meanings. The point is to understand how the people who produced particular cultural artefacts (the so-called threatening notices) made sense of the world in which they lived, and how they sought to response to various pressures they faced, particularly the exploitative (or expropriative) social relationships they were subject to. Ultimately, this will tell us something of particular cultural practices within social movements more generally, at least generally in the case of the collective identity theme; a narrower focus is at play in the discussion of the inter-relationship of subaltern and elite cultures.

There is some empirical data on cultural aspects contained within the published historiographical literature on whiteboyism but it is fair to say that this is by no means a major focus. That said the empirical data on cultural elements contained in earlier studies have been invaluable to the building of this thesis. The relative absence is not surprising when one considers the overall lack of research on the topic, a substantial share of the published material on whiteboy movements, especially on the eighteenth-century movements, is the work of one historian, James S. Donnelly Jr. Another not insignificant portion of unearthing is undertaken by amateur local historians writing for local history publications, work which is frequently empirically rich and analytically poor. The only book length general survey is Micheal Beames's 1983 *Peasants and power: The whiteboy*

---

[61] Williams, *Culture*, p. 14.
[62] Raymond Williams, *The long revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1965), p. 57.

movements and their control in pre-Famine Ireland, which has it main focus on the nineteenth-century movements.

In 1978 Donnelly argued that: 'Few subjects of such important in the history of Ireland during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries have been more neglected than agrarian rebellion';[63] and that this: 'persistent neglect cannot be adequately explained by lack of documentation';[64] rather state records for the early-nineteenth-century he represents as the 'fabulous wealth' of a "Potosí" which a 'small army of graduate students could not exhaust' in decades.[65] In the decades since he wrote that no small army of interested graduate students has materialised.

There has been even less in the way of research on more quotidian forms of social conflict away from the fiery glare of the more prominent insurgencies. In a 2005 'state of the field' survey of research on the social history of nineteenth-century Ireland Owens describes whiteboyism as part of the more than vast phenomenon that is the period's public protest violence.[66] Owens goes on to relate that publication on the whiteboy tradition: 'came to a near standstill during the 1990s', and argues that this was: 'not because the work of the 1970s and 1980s had left nothing more to say'.

Owens then calls for:

> 'studies that do more than relate the highlights of specific insurrections and analyse
>
> the social composition and economic motivations of secret societies. They might also

---

[63] Donnelly, 'The Rightboy Movement 1785 – 8', p. 120.
[64] *Ibid.* p. 121.
[65] *Ibid.* p. 121.
[66] Gary Owens, 'Social History' in Laurence M. Geary and Margaret Kelleher (eds), *Nineteenth-century Ireland: A guide to recent research* (Dublin, 2005), pp 27 – 42; p. 39.

probe more deeply into the mentalities and cultural milieux of the people who participated in them, areas that previous works did not investigate in depth.'[67]

Some years on the lacuna identified by Owens is not as stark with recent publications by Donnelly and Huggins addressing the *mentalités* of movement participants, the former building on Donnelly's 1983 article on sectarian millenarianism.[68] However it is fair to say this is a relatively under-researched aspect of Irish history and as a cultural phenomenon it is perhaps most over-looked.

In his 2009 book on the Rockite movement in Munster in the early 1820s Donnelly argues that:

> 'It was once fashionable to insist that Whiteboyism was a phenomenon that could be explained more or less exclusively in economic terms. There seemed much to be said in favor of this view. The grievances that the agrarian rebels expressed were for the most part economic in nature – excessive tithes, exorbitant rents, evictions, escalating food prices, not enough potato ground (or conacre land), high taxes, and heavy priests' dues. The most frequent precipitants of collective action stemming from such complaints were the recurrent economic events of acute price depressions or serious subsistence crises . . . .' [69]

His analysis of the Rockites however maintains that it is: 'misleading to believe that Irish country people, however illiterate, were not politicized in significant ways or were incapable

[67] *Ibid.* p. 39.

[68] J. S. Donnelly, 'Captain Rock: Ideology and Organization in the Irish Agrarian Rebellion of 1821-24' in *Éire-Ireland*, 42:3-4 (2007), pp 60-103; Donnelly, *Captain Rock: Irish agrarian rebellion*; James S. Donnelly Jr, 'Pastorini and Captain Rock: Millenarianism and Sectarianism in the Rockite Movement of 1821-4' in Samuel Clark and James S. Donnelly Jr (eds), *Irish peasants : violence and political unrest, 1780-1914* (Madison, 1983), pp 102-39; Huggins, *Social conflict in Pre-Famine Ireland*.

[69] Donnelly, *Captain Rock Irish agrarian rebellion*, p. 6.

of ever thinking in abstract political terms'.[70] Moreover, that in: 'their quest for a more just economic order, at least some Rockites took inspiration from a remembered Jacobite or Jacobin past or from news that filtered into the Irish countryside about radical or revolutionary movements taking place in other lands'; something which: 'kindled hope of far-reaching political and economic change in Ireland.'[71]

In a nutshell to Donnelly Rockism was suffused with a millenarian sectarianism which formed a sort of proto-nationalism. This millenarianism was built around a popularisation, and a particular popular reading/re-interpretation, of the prophecies of Pastorini,[72] as a foretelling of some form of combined invasion and revolution which would annihilate the Protestants of Ireland. To me the strongly confessional nature of outlook would suggest that perhaps it was something more of the order of a descendant of Jacobitism than an ancestor of nationalism. Something similar to this can also be seen in the slightly earlier east Galway "Ribbonism" of 1819-20.[73] Unfortunately Donnelly doesn't really define what he means by 'political' and in his work it isn't explicitly considered that responses to economic conditions, such as those listed above, are mediated through culture, including some of what he calls politics.

The purpose of Huggins's 2007 *Social conflict in pre-Famine Ireland: The case of county Roscommon* is: 'not to explain immediate causes of particular agrarian agitations, but to

---

[70] *Ibid.* p. 23.
[71] *Ibid.* p. 22.
[72] These are contained in the work by English Roman Catholic bishop Charles Walmesley (1722 – 1797) *'General History of the Christian Church from her birth to her Final Triumphant States in Heaven chiefly deduced from the Apocalypse of St. John the Apostle, by Signor Pastorini'*, which foretells the downfall of the Church of England through a reading of the Book of Revelations.
[73] David Ryan, ''Ribbonism' and agrarian violence in County Galway 1819-1820' in *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, 52 (2000), pp 120-34; the inverted commas are to distinguish this whiteboy movement which styled itself, or was described as, Ribbonism from the more urban, northern and nationalist Ribbon socities.

investigate the workings of a collective customary consciousness among the rural poor.'[74]

This consciousness consisted in part of defence of custom as social ties of reciprocal obligation were replaced by untrammelled commerce but it also included 'cosmopolitan discourses' from the French Revolution or from the British Reform movement which 'were imported and grafted on to indigenous traditional ingredients'.[75] Similarly Huggins argues for the presence of both a traditional repertoire of contention, that of anonymous threats and clandestine violence, and also a more modern associational repertoire.[76]

Perhaps the main focus of Huggins's monograph is an argument against nationalist interpretations of pre-Famine rural social conflict, and to a lesser extent, of interpretations which see the absence of nationalism as the absence of politics. There is a strong sense in his work of seeking to understand the cultures and consciousness alive in that conflict in its own terms not as a precursor to 'confessional nationalism'.[77] Nationalist interpretations meaning here placing great store in religious or ethnic division, e.g. explaining the vehement alienation and fervent violent feeling displayed in the notices by collapsing ethnic and class divisions into one, or alternatively meaning treating agrarian conflicts as something to be subsumed within the story of the struggle for national independence. Given Donnelly's analysis of the apparent proto-nationalism of Rockism it is unfortunate there is no published dialogue between Huggins and Donnelly.

Some of the differences of interpretation between Huggins and Donnelly can be accounted for simply by a difference between the empirical natures of their respective case studies; different facts on different grounds to put it more bluntly. In any case Donnelly's work on

---

[74] Huggins, *Social conflict in Pre-Famine Ireland*, p. 51.
[75] *Ibid.* p. 188.
[76] *Ibid.* p. 191.
[77] *Ibid.* p. 204.

confessional millenarianism and the Rockite movement does not speak directly to my empirical data though there are some minor parallels. Likewise, Huggins's 'cosmopolitan discourses' receive only the faintest echo in the primary sources I have been using. I have tried to avoid this problem of a limited-data set by looking with a general focus for what reoccurs in the notices again and again, and, having done so, tried to see if these recurrent elements can be found elsewhere.

It has certainly not been the case that historical researchers, at least in recent decades, have been dismissive of the significance of whiteboy movements. According to Emmet O'Connor: 'Whiteboyism remained the most extensive form of labour defence right up to the Great Famine';[78] while to Tom Garvin:

> 'Rural agitation became chronic after the 1760s, and between that decade and 1890, the island was, with some intervals and with some important regional exceptions, in a state of what might best be described as slow-moving and low-intensity guerrilla warfare'[79]

Similarly, Terence Dooley describes 'secret societies' as: 'a ubiquity of Irish rural society for generations'.[80] There is however an occasional element of airy disdain where, for instance, whiteboyism can be seemingly dismissed as 'mindless crimes'. [81]

The important point is that the significance and extent of these movements is not reflected in scholarly attention, as sociologist Samuel Clark and historian James S. Donnelly Jr. expressed it in 1983:

---

[78] Emmet O'Connor, *A labour history of Ireland 1824 – 1960* (Dublin, 1992), p. 13.
[79] Tom Garvin, *The evolution of Irish nationalist politics* (Dublin, 2005), pp 38-9.
[80] Terence Dooley, *The big houses and landed estates of Ireland: A research guide* (Dublin, 2007), p. 24.
[81] Donal McCartney, 'The Tenant Rights Struggle in Ireland' in Michael O'Dwyer (Callan, n.d.), pp 26 – 41; p. 27.

'The more we learn about the subject, the more evident it becomes that historians have in the past underestimated this unrest. They greatly underrated its magnitude, its frequency, its organizational sophistication, and its importance to the population. They also underestimated its geographical extent; although much of the violence was localized, there were also many regional movements that covered large areas of the country. The Rockites and Terry Alts, for example, were vastly larger movements than the rebellion of 1848 or the Fenian rising of 1867, yet are much less well known to students of Irish history.'[82]

One factor in its relative absence from the historical research agenda may be that whiteboyism is a subject very difficult to approach from methodologies suitable to the dominant political history. A Rankean empiricism is limited in what it can say about phenomena which are relatively poorly documented by comparison with, for instance, a twentieth-century political party. After a certain point a strongly theoretical and comparative approach is necessary even just to read what fragmentary records are left to us.[83] This is not to say that there are not unspoken theoretical assumptions behind a focus on 'high politics' – assumptions as to where the most relevant activity in a society takes place and as to the extent of the autonomy of that 'high politics' from its social context.[84]

Conclusion

We have seen that whiteboyism can be conceived as the main form of subaltern contention in early-nineteenth-century Ireland with the proviso that whiteboyism is something quite amorphous merging in one sense into combinations among both rural and urban workers

---

[82] Clark and Donnelly, *Irish peasants : violence and political unrest*, p. 420.
[83] Richard J. Evans, *In defence of history* (London, 1997).
[84] Fergus Campbell, *Land and revolution: Nationalist politics in the West of Ireland 1891 – 1921* (Oxford, 2008), pp 292-3.

and in another sense into more everyday forms of resistance. For the most part it consisted of the peasant side to conflicts over possession of land. Whiteboyism is generally taken as the context for the production of so-called threatening letters but again this needs qualification. Whiteboyism, at least in so far as we know it, is best conceived of as a repertoire of contention consisting of violent direct action which likely developed as an intensification of everyday forms of peasant resistance. As per the Shankleman thesis conflict around land occupancy, the mainspring of whiteboyism and as we shall see the context for most of the notices examined in this study, can be conceptualised in terms of an 'uneven and localised' development of a capitalist mode of production.[85] This conceptualisation will be further explored in the next chapter and will be brought into dialogue with an appraisal of the agrarian economy derived from a major government study conducted in the 1830s. The exploration of the role played by peasant resistance to clearance in economic development in the next two chapters makes the case for the relevance of the topic explored in the main body of this thesis – namely the mind-sets that have left faint documentary traces in the form of the notice texts. Additionally a brief review of the scholarly literature on culture and whiteboyism has shown that the topic is not only under-researched but it is particularly under-researched as a cultural phenomenon, thus the particular relevance of the cultural approach to whiteboyism contained in parts II and III of this study.

---

[85] Shankleman, 'Agricultural Change and Rural Conflict in Co. Tipperary', p. 86.

Chapter Two: Capitalist and Feudal Modes of Production in Leinster and East Munster

This chapter principally draws on the Poor Law inquiry, a major government study of social conditions in early 1830s Ireland, to explore the agrarian economy of Leinster and east Munster, so as to both contextualise the threatening notices and to demonstrate their relevance.

The existence of a capitalist mode of production in early-nineteenth-century Leinster and east Munster can be seen through the practices of larger farmers, namely their employment of wage labour, their transformation of the forces of production and their greater responsiveness to market demand. This capitalist mode of production existed side by side with a feudal mode of production as seen in labour rent, and in small-holding tenants who did not accumulate — who were left with subsistence after meeting their rent demands. That is to say, that there was a qualitative difference in the nature of the production carried on by what were known as 'small farmers' and 'large farmers' and in the different sets of relations that production was embedded in.

After establishing the presence of a capitalist tendency I will move on to, in the next chapter, an argument to the effect that peasant resistance to clearance successfully inhibited programs of clearance which were in effect a process of primitive accumulation and as such a precondition to the further growth of the capitalist mode. Thus peasant resistance inhibited the further development of the capitalist mode of production in early-nineteenth-century rural Ireland. Hence the relevance of the subjectivities which are explored in the main body of this thesis, the cultures partly accessible through the surviving

threatening notices played an active role in creating the pre-Famine social structure through maintaining its predominantly feudal nature.

Overlying and underlying all this was the relationship between the Irish agrarian economy and the British industrial economy and so this section concludes with a delving into that relationship's impacts on the pattern of economic development. Before moving delving into the findings of the Poor Law report I'll first set the scene in terms of physical and social geography.

A necessary preliminary to all of the above is to clarify some terms. Some of this has already been touched upon in the initial discussion of the Shankleman thesis in chapter one. When referring to mode of production I'm referring to an abstraction the centrally defining characteristic of which is the relation of surplus appropriation from the direct producers. By the capitalist mode therefore I am referring not to situations of commodity production but to situations of commodity production where labour-power itself is a commodity. Hence capital is here not a synonym for markets or commercialisation, it being perfectly possible to have non-capitalist production for market exchange (e.g. slavery in the nineteenth-century Americas).

Central to the feudal mode of production is, and this is somewhat of a misnomer, extra-economic coercion as a means of surplus appropriation, this is a necessity because of the direct producers' effective possession of the means of production. That is to say a peasantry must be compelled to pay some form of tribute (either in labour, produce or money), for the simple reason they are capable to maintaining themselves, as possessors of the means of production, without doing so, as opposed to being propertyless and hence having to sell their labour. Of course in a society as commercialised as early-nineteenth-century Ireland

the relationship of tribute exactation may be given a veneer of market exchange – it is clear though that the contemporary peasantry regarded themselves as having a right of possession. It is also necessary to distinguish between a feudal rent and a capitalist rent, as I do below in the section on the small-holding peasantry.

As all analyses of early-nineteenth-century Irish society from within the historical materialist tradition describes it as in large part dominated by the feudal mode I largely take that as a given in the following,[1] though I do highlight specific aspects of that feudal mode when it seems pertinent, rather the main thing which needs closer analysis is the evidence of the development of the capitalist mode and hence I concentrate on that. A portion of the Marxist literature on nineteenth-century Ireland is concerned with the putative mid-nineteenth-century transition to the capitalist mode associated with the switch from tillage/cereal farming to pastoral/beef farming. This is not what I am examining here: firstly, the capitalist tendency identitifed in this chapter is in tillage and in mixed- and dairy-farming, and occurs both prior to the mid-nineteenth-century and independently of the switch to pasturage; secondly, although it is not a major focus of my research, it seems to

---

[1] Chandana Mathur and Dermot Dix,'The Irish Question in Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels's writings on capitalism and empire' in Seamas O'Siochain (ed.), *Social thought on Ireland in the Nineteenth Century* (Dublin, 2009), pp 97-107; Ellen Hazelkorn, 'Some Problems with Marx's Theory of Capitalist Penetration into Agriculture: the Case of Ireland' in *Economy and Society*, 10:3 (1981), pp 284 – 315; Eamonn Slater and Terrence McDonough, 'Colonialism Feudalism and the Mode of Production in Nineteenth-Century Ireland' in Terrence McDonough (ed.), *Was Ireland a colony? Economics, politics and culture in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2005), pp 27 – 47; Eamonn Slater and Terrence McDonough, 'Marx on nineteenth-century colonial Ireland: analysing colonialism as a dynamic social process' in *Irish Historical Studies*, 36:142 (2008), pp 153-72; Terrence McDonough, 'A million of the Irish toilers: A Marxist approach to the Great Irish Famine' in *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 30:3 (1998), pp 56-63; Eoin Flaherty, 'Geographies of Communality, Colonialism, and Capitalism: Ecology and the World-System' in *Historical Geography*, 41 (2013), pp 59-79; E. Strauss, *Irish nationalism and British democracy* (Westport, 1975); Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Ireland and the Irish question* (Moscow, 1971).

me that the change-over from cereal to meat production had the effect of prolonging feudal relations in Irish agriculture.

The foregoing has been a broad brush introduction these issues will receive more fine-tuned attention below. To re-cap, with regard to identification of the capitalist mode of production the main areas examined this chapter will be: firstly, the extent of wage labour and the contrast between that and labour-service or labour-rent — i.e the cottier-farmer relationship; and, secondly, the differing forms of production conducted by what were known as 'small farmers' and 'large farmers' and the transformation of the forces of production by the large farmers. Finally, there will be a consideration of the impact of colonialism, particularly the impact of colonialism in impeding the development of the capitalist mode of production.

Geography of east Munster and Leinster

The island of Ireland is divided into four ceremonial provinces which roughly correspond with early-medieval political divisions though they now have their principal significances in the sports of rugby, hurling and Gaelic football. The discussion of agricultural production here will pertain to the relatively more fertile zone making-up the eastern province of Leinster and the eastern parts of the southern province of Munster (that is for

Figure 2.1 Ceremonial Provinces
(After seomraranga.com)

71
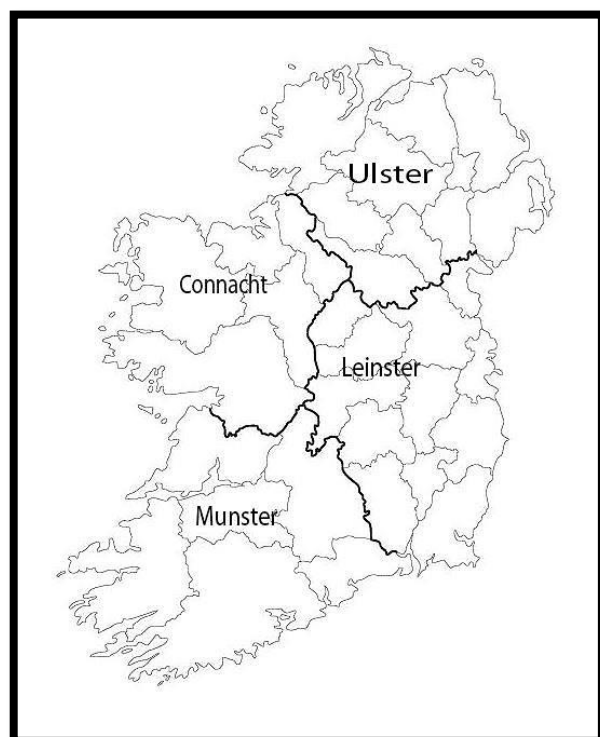
Munster the counties of Limerick, Waterford and Tipperary and the eastern portion of the

county of Cork). In so far as is possible then my unit of analysis will be Leinster and East

Munster or all Leinster counties excluding Dublin (as this is where the notice collection is

from) though I will on occasion have to draw on material from across the island or from

other parts of it. Contrasting environmental conditions form broadly distinct agricultural

regions on the island of Ireland. Less rainfall, more fertile soils and better drainage make for

greater land -use adaptability and favour agricultural production in the south-eastern half of

the island. The western seaboard in particular features wet peaty soils while moving across

to the south-east involves moving to an area of brown earth and more fertile grey-brown

and brown podzols. These broad strokes obscure other more socially conditioned regional

specialisations as well as the puncturing of the fertile zone with upland areas. Nonetheless,

this basic east-west division is observable across Irish history. In the early-twentieth-century

eleven counties and the eastern part of County

Cork – the area east of a line from Bandon to

Limerick to Dundalk – constituted the sector of

larger farms, agricultural employment,

labourer identity and the concomitant

organisation of the Irish Transport and General

Workers' Union.[2]

Broadly-speaking, and with exceptions, for

most of the late-medieval period the same
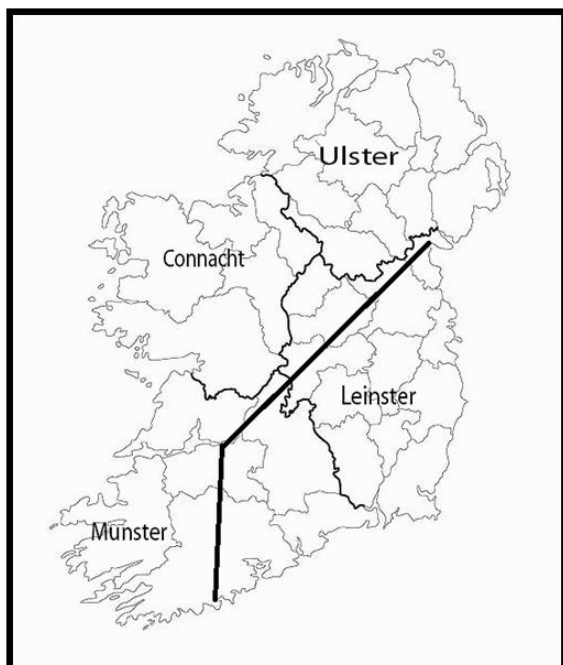
Figure 2.2 Bandon-Limerick-Dundalk Line
(After seomraranga.com)

---

[2] Dan Bradley, *Farm labourers: Irish struggle 1900 – 1976* (Belfast, 1988), pp 8-11.

territory constituted the Lordship of Ireland.[3] The Lordship of Ireland being the area held by

Norman-French aristocracies and populated in part with English settlers.

Today a similar pattern is to be seen:

'In 1997, in the east and south (the provinces of Leinster and Munster except for

counties Longford, Clare, and Kerry, also West Cork) the value of average farm

output was over twice

that in the remainder of

the State. The difference

was more than three-fold

if the comparison is

confined to the regions of

the South-East and West.'

[4]

South-East in the specific context

of this quote meaning the

counties of Wexford, Carlow,

Kilkenny, Waterford as well as

south Tipperary, West meaning
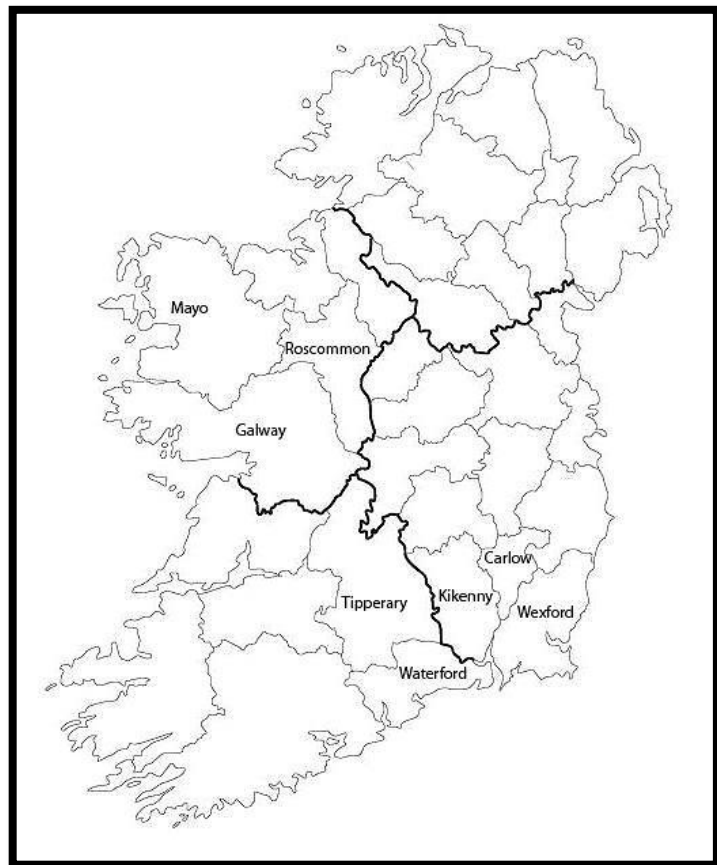
Figure 2.3 South-East and West
(After seomraranga.com)

counties Galway, Mayo, and Roscommon. The Department of Agriculture's classification of

---

[3] K. W. Nicholls, *Gaelic and Gaelicized Ireland in the Middle Ages* (Dublin, 2003), p.15; Seán Duffy (ed.), *Atlas of Irish history* (Dublin, 2000), p. 47; Ruth Dudley Edwards, *An atlas of Irish history* (London, 1973), p. 50.
[4] Séamus Lafferty, P. Commins, and James A. Walsh, *Irish agriculture in transition: a census atlas of agriculture in the Republic of Ireland* (Maynooth, 1999), p. 8.

the twenty-six counties of the Republic of Ireland into severely disadvantaged areas, less severly disadvantaged areas and other areas has almost all the west as severely disadvantaged, while the east is more of a mixture with a smattering of upland districts or occasional expanses of bog classed as either severely disadvantaged or less severely disadvantaged and the rest as the not disadvantaged other category.

It should be stressed I am not arguing that in the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries there was a division between an area of commercial agricultural production and an area of subsistence agricultural production. These two forms of production in fact overlapped for the not surprising reasons that land holders had to pay rent and had to eat. It should also be stressed that there is considerable local variation within the more favoured eastern area. For instance, with regard to county Carlow: 'over two-thirds of the soils of the county have a wide use-range'; adaptable to: 'the production of a great variety of farm, fruit and vegetable crops'; but even here: 'one-quarter of the soils of the county have a limited use-range'.[5] There were also regional economic specialisations with comparatively more cattle fattening and linen production in the northern parts of Leinster.[6]

Additionally, while the following is focused on farming it is worth mentioning that there was also small-scale industries such as ironworks in Lucan and weaving in Celbridge,[7] agricultural processing such as mills and transport of agricultural products as well as resource extraction like coal-mining in Kilkenny and Tipperary and lead-mining in Wicklow. Moreover, the northern linen production area did include parts of north Leinster – mostly in

---

[5] M. J. Conry, 'The soils of County Carlow' in *Irish Geography*, 5:3 (1966), pp 204-213; p. 213.
[6] Kevin Whelan 'The Modern Landscape', p. 77.
[7] T.W. Freeman, *Pre-Famine Ireland: A study in historical geography* (Manchester, 1956), p. 175.

counties Louth and Longford. De-industrialisation will be discussed later in this chapter and some of the notices examined here, as mentioned before, came from non-agrarian contexts.

The landed estate

The vast majority of land was parcelled out into estates owned by a proprietorial elite. These estates varied in size from the truly massive Leinster estate consisting of 67,227 acres in Kildare, to large estates such as the Ormond properties in Tipperary and Kilkenny with 27,725 acres or the Wandesforde estate in north Kilkenny with 22,232.[8] By the mid-nineteenth-century, in Ireland as a whole, three hundred estates consisted of more than 10,000 acres and a further 3,400 fell into the 1,000 to 10,000 acre size.[9] A further diversity lay in the extent to which the proprietor exerted any practical control over an estate beyond soaking up rents.

The classic image is of the estate centred on the owner's residence in the demesne – with its high walls, landscape park, home-farm and big house. Excepting the urban location of the Ormond residence, Kilkenny castle in the centre of Kilkenny city, the above mentioned estates do match that image. In other estates their owners were non-resident and absent in fact and deed with the land sub-let on long leases to middlemen who in turn let the land to others. These middlemen were typically a mixture of non-inheriting younger sons, or the descendants of lower-ranking Parliamentarian or Williamite officers, or descendants of Gaelic or Old English landed families who had been the vanquished dispossessed of the civil

---

[8] 1876 [C.1492] Land owners in Ireland. Return of owners of land of one acre and upwards, in the several counties, counties of cities, and counties of towns in Ireland, showing the names of such owners arranged alphabetically in each county; their addresses--as far as could be ascertained--the extent in statute acres, and the valuation in each case; together with the number of owners in each county of less than one statute acre in extent; and the total area and valuation of such properties; and the grand total of area and valuation for all owners of property in each county, county of a city, or county of a town. To which is added a summary for each province and for all Ireland; p. 31, p. 40, p. 167, p. 42.
[9] Jonathan Bell and Mervyn Watson, *A history of Irish farming, 1750 – 1950* (Dublin 2008), p. 15.

wars of the seventeenth-century. However, the era of the middleman is very much on the wane by the 1830s and 1840s as there had been a long-term move to re-assert proprietorial control over estates.[10] There is a variation in both the relative status of an estate and in the extent of control possessed by the owners of estates.

The Bowen and Lecky estate, for example, parts of which are addressed below in chapter three, can be contrasted with the three listed above, in that practical control over it was exercised more by substantial leaseholders than by the actual proprietors. The diversity of landed estates may very well account in part for the diversity in forms of agricultural production detailed below.[11] While a comparative study of estates with regard to the relationship between tenurial relations and forms of production would be of interest it is beyond the scope of this study given that these chapters are intended as an introduction.

Historically the fundamental basis of all these estates was the extraction of surplus-labour in the form of rent from direct producers who were in effective possession of the means of production; that is to say direct producers who maintained some form of customary use-right to their land-holdings. According to the analysis of British Marxist-historian Rodney Hilton 'the struggle for rent was the 'prime mover' in feudal society'.[12] This struggle drives feudal society's extensive expansion, that of bring new land into cultivation, and its more limited intensive expansion, that of improvement in technique. Likewise the struggle's parameters determine ecological crises, the growth of limited commodity production and, partly through successful peasant resistance, the eventual 'emergence of the capitalist

---

[10] Lindsay J. Proudfoot, 'Spatial transformation and social agency: Property, society and improvement, *c.* 1700 to *c.* 1900' in Brian J. Graham and Lindsay J. Proudfoot (eds), *An historical geography of Ireland* (Dublin, 1993), pp 219-57; p. 230.
[11] *Ibid.* p. 229.
[12] Rodney Hilton, 'A Comment' in Rodney Hilton (ed.), *The transition from feudalism to capitalism* (London, 1978), pp 109-17; p. 115.

entreneur'.[13] This is an analysis principally based on the historic experience of medieval and early-modern England.

In the Irish instance while the demand for rent also has an ultimately transformative impact on the feudal mode it is in the particularly different context whereby there existed the example of the giant leap forward in productivity – and hence rental income – represented by capitalist agriculture in England and Scotland. An important consideration is the fact that significant sections of the feudal ruling class straddled the Irish Sea, which is say they held estates on both sides of it, or even if their property was only in Ireland Irish peers and M.P.s sat in the Parliament in London, while lesser-lights had British and imperial careers in military or state service. Even without these extensive links they were within a cross-circulation of information and ideas which spanned the British Isles. Consequently, it should not be surprising that the proprietorial elite in Ireland should seek to emulate the successes of the agricultural revolution in England and its slightly later successful adoption in Scotland.

While efforts at "improvement" predate the post-1815 agricultural depression and concurrent decline in rental incomes this obviously had the effect of concentrating minds. Likely a similar effect was produced by the relative share of rental income accruing to lease-holding middlemen during the economic boom of late-eighteenth and early-nineteenth-centuries. I will give a specific example of this British influence below. It will not be an easy task to transpose not just the technologies of the agricultural revolution, in any case some of which were not necessarily suited to Irish physical conditions, but more fundamentally the social relations within which those techniques were embedded. For instance, this will require a mixture of both insecurity of tenure and security of tenure. Insecurity of tenure to

---

[13] Rodney Hilton, 'Introduction' in Rodney Hilton (ed.), *The transition from feudalism to capitalism*, pp 9 – 30; p. 27.

consolidate land-holdings and to proletarianise or semi-proletarianianise the peasantry, and security of tenure, so that tenant capital investments, or improvements in contemporary parlance, are not just gobbled up by increased rent demands.

The Midleton estate provides a case of a project, at least on paper, to transform Irish agriculture in a capitalist direction. The Midleton estate, at a sizable 20,000 acres plus, was located in the eastern portion of county Cork and was in the possession of the Broderick family, who also held extensive lands and local political prominence in Surrey in the south-east of England.[14] The Cheltenham-based surveyor Charles Bailey made an extensive study of the estate, townland, by townland, and tenancy by tenancy, also frequently including details of sub-tenants.[15] The Bailey report invariably recommends clearance, the consolidation of small-holdings and 'the selection of good Tenants' as a means to realise 'Rents approximating the real value'.[16] Bailey argues that this course of action would almost double the rental intake. Although Bailey sometimes recommends devoting particular areas to pasture or to forestry plantation for the most part this project is aimed at an area of labour-intensive tillage production and dairying. While partly a projected move against middlemen the centrality of maximising rental income through removing small-holders is shown in the following in Bailey's summary of his survey:

'It will be seen, by a perusal of the Survey that, many of the Townlands are

encumbered by an over population, created by improvident subdivisions and

sublettings, and, in several cases, the pernicious system has been carried to such an

---

[14] The Earl of Midleton K.P., *Records and reactions 1856-1939* (New York, 1939), p. 34.

[15] James S. Donnelly, Jr., *The land and the people of nineteenth-century Cork* (London, 1975), pp 12-5, pp 52-6; Charles Bailey's summary report on the valuation of the Midleton estates, 6 Apr. 1840 (National Archives of Ireland, Private Accessions, Midleton Estate Office, 978/2/4/3).

[16] *Ibid.*

extent, as to create mouths sufficient to swallow up the whole of the produce leaving nothing for Rent.'[17]

Bailey goes to consider the relative merits of the workhouse or assisted emigration as a solution to this problem for the estate. This approach is for estate management to place its bets on capitalised farmers with large-holdings and on their potentials for technological innovation and economies of scale. An approach which necessitated moves against both sub-letting and sub-division; something which this period saw both with regard to state measures, e.g. the Sub-Letting Act of 1829, and with regard to estate management, e.g. leases with clauses seeking to prevent unapproved transfer of property. More generally this approach necessitated a more active intervention into, and direct control over, an estate by the proprietor or his agents than had often hitherto been typical. The case being made in this thesis is that such control was frequently frustrated, or at least subject to countervailing influences.

The Poor Law inquiry

The main source I will use to introduce agricultural production in Leinster and east Munster will be the government study carried out in the 1830s known as the Poor Law inquiry. A necessary preliminary is to introduce this investigation, who controlled it and how it was carried out. The short version is that the Poor Law inquiry as its name suggests was part of an effort to introduce a Poor Law, a system of state-run provision for the poor, into Ireland, and it eventually ended up as a source of controversy when its recommendations were at odds with the wishes of the government of the day.

---

[17] *Ibid.*

The Poor Law inquiry's full title was the Royal Commission of Inquiry into the Conditions of the Poorer Classes in Ireland. It was headed up by Richard Whately, Church of Ireland archbishop of Dublin, former chair of Political Economy at Oxford, founder of the Chair of Political Economy at Trinity College Dublin and head of the national education board. Joining him on the Poor Law board were Catholic archbishop of Dublin, Daniel Murray, also on the education board and instrumental in the establishment of the Sisters of Charity and the Society of St. Vincent de Paul, and for confessional balance Rev. James Carlile, a Dublin-based Presbyterian cleric. Other board members included Richard More O'Ferrall, Whig-liberal M.P. for Co. Kildare; Fenton Hort, a junior member of the landed family led by Sir Josiah William Hort, who was another Whig-liberal M.P. for Co. Kildare; James Naper of Loughcrew, Oldcastle, Co. Meath, a Tory land owner and High Sheriff of Meath; and Dr. Charles Vignoles, chaplain to the Lord Lieutenant.[18]

Two stipendiary, or paid, commissioners were brought over from England - Rev. John Corrie, a non-practising Unitarian minister from Birmingham and William Battie Wrightson, barrister, Yorkshire landowner and former M.P.[19]

The biases of this body hardly need to be highlighted but it against that it should be noted that the methods of the inquiry included, at least at times, taking input from a very broad section of the populace, and on occasion reporting what was said verbatim. How openly that broad section of the populace could speak is of course another question. It should be borne in mind that a number of Tipperary evictees were remarkably outspoken in their approaches to the commissioners, so we should not assume an excessive circumspection

---

[18] Helen Burke, *The people and the Poor Law in nineteenth century Ireland* (West Sussex, 1987), pp 17-20; Peter Gray, *The making of the Irish poor law, 1815-43,* (Manchester, 2009) pp 95-7.
[19] *Ibid.* pp 96-8.

either (see appendix c). Nonetheless while the Poor Law inquiry records what a lot of people have to say it should be remembered it records what they have to say in public.

Historian Peter Gray outlines the utility of the Poor Law inquiry as a source thus:

> 'The output of the commission was impressive, filling five volumes of parliamentary
> blue books with some 5,000 pages of text, much of it comprising transcripts of oral
> and written testimonies taken from about 1,500 witnesses drawn from all social
> classes. The volumes of evidence offer a wealth of information on social and
> economic conditions and perceptions, unparalleled for Ireland (or indeed most other
> countries) in the nineteenth century, and as such continue to serve as a principal
> resource for Irish historians.'[20]

There were three modes of inquiry employed to make up the report: firstly, baronial examinations, which were a sort of local meeting happening in selected baronies; secondly, questionnaires distributed to local dignitaries in all civil parishes, where the respondents were usually clergymen or magistrates; and thirdly, the observations of forty salaried assistant commissioners who traversed the country.[21]

The baronial examinations were pretty unique by the typical standards of this kind of state investigation, as cultural historian Niall Ó Ciosáin comments:

> 'While the questionnaire answers come from the local elite, the oral evidence comes
> from all social classes, with the poor often being in the majority; the answers come
> from individuals, whereas the oral evidence attempts to represent the views of the

---

[20] *Ibid.* p. 92.
[21] Niall Ó Ciosáin, *Ireland in official print culture, 1800 – 1850: A new reading of the Poor Inquiry* (Oxford, 2014), p. 15.

entire society; and the answers aim principally at geographical completeness,

whereas the oral material aims more at social comprehensiveness.

The oral evidence is consequently very unusual, even unique, not just among

parliamentary publications but within contemporary printed material in general. It

represents the largest single archive of oral material in nineteenth-century Ireland,

and most likely in the United Kingdom as well.'[22]

The information in the Poor Law reports was organised on a baronial or, less often, civil

parish basis, baronies being the administrative sub-divisions of counties, civil parishes being

smaller part-administrative/part-ecclesiastical territorial units. Accordingly the following

exposition will be arranged by reference to the now archaic political geography of baronies.

Unless otherwise stated the information will have been provided in the Poor Law baronial

examinations by local farmers, proprietors, labourers, clergymen etc. or, more rarely, by the

commissioners employed as part of the inquiry.

Before turning to the report proper it is worth framing it with relevant statistical

information. This can give us some rough indication of the extent of the different forms of

production to be discussed in the following pages. According to the summary of census

returns for Leinster in the 1831 census 20,789 adult males were land occupiers employing

labourers, 87,819 adult males were land occupiers not employing labourers and 162,417

adult males were labourers employed in agriculture.[23] We cannot take the census results as

indicative of the size of the farm labouring population, only of the relative sizes of the

employing (for want of a better term) and non-employing sections of the farming

---

[22] *Ibid.* p. 51.

[23] 1833 (634) Population, Ireland. Abstract of answers and returns under the Population Acts, 55 Geo. III. Chap. 120. 3 Geo. IV. Chap. 5. 2 Geo. IV. Chap. 30. 1 Will. IV. Chap. 19. Enumeration 1831; p. 123

population, as the statistics do not tell us what 'labouring' means – that is to say whether this is a wage or rental relationship (i.e. where labour service is performed as rent).

One of the appendixes to the Devon Commission report, a major government study into agriculture in the 1840s, includes Ireland-wide details of the number of farms of different sizes.[24] There are 317,264 holdings with less than 5 acres (of which 135,314 are an acre or less),[25] 187,909 farms consisting of 5 to 10 acres, 329,401 holdings with 10 to 50 acres; 68,908 farms of 50 to 500 acres and finally 1,827 of 500 to 5,000 acres. These figures are from Poor Law valuations, which is to say the valuing of farms for the setting of rates to pay for the workhouse system introduced after the Poor Law inquiry addressed below. The Poor Law valuation statistics on farm size are considered to be more accurate than those contained in their nearest equivalent – the 1841 census.[26]

Labour relations in the Poor Law inquiry

Similar to farm size, and as we shall see to forms of production and forms of tenure there is a diversity of types of labour relations. Some people described as labourers work for a wage, some people described as labourers pay a rent in the form of labour in ostensive return for access to land (i.e. cottiers). While the existence of wage labour alone would not

---

[24] 1845 [672] [673] Appendix to minutes of evidence taken before Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the state of the law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland. Part IV. Appendix 95; p. 288.
[25] *Digest of evidence taken before her majesty's commissioners of inquiry into the state of the law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland: Part I* (Dublin, 1847), p. 396.
[26] One of the problems with getting to grips this kind of statistical information is that, similarly with today's simultaneous use of imperial and metric systems of measurement, there were differing ways of expressing land volume at this time. The two principal variants were Irish acres also known as plantation acres (but also sometimes used in particular localities in England) and English acres also known as imperial acres (and on occasion used in Ireland). Today we colloquially use 'acre' as meaning an English acre but hectare is the actual official metric system measurement. The useful rule of thumb is 1 Irish acre is equivalent to 1.6 English acres which is roughly two thirds of a hectare. Acreage given in the above farm size statistics from the Devon Commission are in English acres generally elsewhere such as in Tithe applotment books, the Poor Law inquiry etc. acreage will often be expressed in Irish acres. In any case land volume only directly relates to potential farm productivity in areas of roughly the same soil type and climatic conditions.

make the case for the growth of capitalist social relations, wage labour, coupled with the other factors discussed here, does seem to point to that diagnosis.

The Poor Law Inquiry questionnaire asks: 'are wages for labour usually paid in money, or provisions, or by con acres? Or in what other way?' Some terminological clarification is necessary before approaching the responses to that question, conacre (or sometimes con acre) is being used here to mean land given to the cottier in return for labour service (it is more typically used to refer to marketed single season plots), other terms like house-rent, potato ground and the grass of a cow also refer to the cottier-farmer labour rent relation. Wages are paid either in a money wage or in some combination of money plus provisions (or diet).

For Kildare and Wexford most respondents claim money wages are usual. In Kilkenny and a number of other counties the situation is more varied with, for instance, the Rev. Henry Carpenter of Ballylarkin answering that question thus: 'Variable ; sometimes in one or more, sometimes in all these ways.'[27] There can be a fair degree of variation within counties; many respondents for the King's county (present-day Offaly) speak exclusively of money payments or money with provisions (also known as diet). For example, the Rev. Charles Burton of Ballyboy claims: 'Wages for labour, I believe, paid universally in money; there may be instances, a few, perhaps, of some commutation for to earn, horses for ploughing, &c., but I think I may almost confine myself to money for labour only.'[28] But in the same county, in Lynally, the Rev. R. H. Dunne answers the same question with: 'Either by potato ground or

---

[27] *Royal Commission on Condition of Poorer Classes in Ireland, Appendix D. (Baronial Examinations relative to Earnings of Labourers; Cottier Tenants; Employment of Women and Children; Expenditure; Supplement*); p. 67, H.C. 1836 (38), , xxxii.1 (hereafter *Poor inquiry Appendix d Supplement*) (page numbers refer to the supplement).
[28] *Ibid.* p. 77.

provisions, or in grass for a cow ; seldom for money';[29] and of labourers in the same civil

parish of Lynally Alexander Andrews J.P. claims: 'They are usually paid in each way';[30] which

might suggest diversity is a facet of the nature of the evidence. On the other hand, In

Dunboyne and Kilbride in county Meath we learn labourers are paid 'usually in money' and

in Moynalty also in county Meath we learn that they are paid: 'Usually in potato land, house

rent, provisions, and very little money';[31] which is likely geographic variation. Mostly the

answers in Meath range between money wages or a combination of all three. Note that

wage-related threatening notices examined for this thesis predominantly come from the

King's county, Kildare and Meath (i.e. the same three counties where questionnaire

respondents predominantly report wage labour).

In part this diversity is a reflection of the fact that respondents are referring to

fundamentally different sets of relations; i.e. as to whether they are referring to cottiers or

to wage labourers. The abridged version of the Devon Commission report clarifies:

> 'The labourers may be divided into three classes – unmarried farm servants, who
>
> reside with their employers; cottiers, who hold, in addition to their cabin, small lot of
>
> ground at a fixed rate, generally payable in labour ; and those who hold only a cabin,
>
> with perhaps a few perches of land as a garden, and who depend for their
>
> subsistence chiefly on potatoes raised on land taken in con-acre.' [32]

Here 'land taken in con-acre' refers to the commercial market for single season plots. In the

report on the Poor Law baronial examinations a distinction is made between four types of

---

[29] *Ibid*. p. 79.
[30] *Ibid.* p.79.
[31] *Ibid.* p. 105.
[32] *Digest of evidence taken before her majesty's commissioners of inquiry into the state of the law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland: Part I* (Dublin, 1847), p. 474.

labourers: the first set of whom are permanently employed and consequently we can safely

assume are either servants or cottiers; the other three types are occasionally employed,

with that category further broken down according to different amount of employment they

get per year. So in Portnahinch the occasionally-employed category yields three sub-

categories those employed for 190 days, or 140 days, or 100 days of the year.[33] These more

marginally employed groups are those for whom conacre (i.e. hiring a plot) is a necessity.

The only exception to this situation of under-employment is to be found in harvest-time and

as a consequence, this time, when demand for labour is high, is when conflict over

employment conditions is principally to be found. As it was expressed at the poor law

inquiry examination of Gowran:

> 'The majority are not permanently employed ; perhaps not more than one-third are
>
> so employed; the chief resource of the remainder so far as wages go, is in the
>
> harvest and the planting and digging of potatoes' [34]

An account of harvest hire from the civil parish of Kilmacahill, in the barony of Gowran,

county Kilkenny, is given in an earlier, 1816, attempt to survey conditions across Ireland:

> 'In general the number of a farmer's domestics is not sufficient to reap and save his
>
> crop, and therefore in harvest he is obliged to have recourse to a species of
>
> labourers called "spalpeens;" these men come from the mountainous parts of
>
> Carlow and Kilkenny, and even from Kerry, in Munster. They assemble on a Sunday
>
> or holyday, in large bodies, sometimes of three or four hundred, in Gowran and the
>
> neighbouring towns, offering themselves for hire, and are taken as the farmer may

---

[33] *Poor inquiry Appendix d*, p. 44. (reference to main body not the supplement as above).
[34] *Ibid.* p. 20.

have occasion for them . . . . That lasts about one fortnight, when they return home in time to reap their own crops. They come again about the latter end of October, to assist in taking out the potatoes, when they are hired in the same manner.'[35]

The seasonal nature of the agricultural labourers' employment with long periods of unemployment punctuated by times of high-labour demand was by no means unique to early-nineteenth-century Ireland. Andalusia, for instance, saw a similar pattern throughout much of the nineteenth-century and across the first two-thirds of the twentieth.[36] This pattern is found in many other agrarian economies.[37] The dispossession of the small tenantry feeds more potential labourers into the mass of already underemployed producing more competition for work and surely exerting a downward pressure on wages.

In addition to the cottiers, servants and occasional labourers discussed above, the baronial examination of Gowran puts forward another category 'gentleman's labourers'. This presumably referring either to demesne workers, that is to say people employed on the home-farm of a landlord's estate, or to the employees of tenant farmers with the most substantial holdings (gentleman being an imprecise emic term referring to perceived status more than anything else).

There are then two sets of labour relations — a wage relation, and a rental relation in the form of the labour service performed by the cottier in return for a plot. It is notable that in so far as can be seen from the evidence of both the notices and the records of "crime" accumulated by the state and the media the cottier-farmer relationship did not produce

---

[35] William Shaw Mason (ed.), *A statistical account or parochial survey of Ireland*, *Volume II* (Dublin, 1816), p. 472.

[36] Temma Kaplan, *Anarchists of Andalusia 1868 – 1903* (Princeton, 1977), pp 27-8.

[37] Susan A. Mann and James M. Dickinson 'Obstacles to the Development of a Capitalist Agriculture' in *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 5:4 (1978), pp 466-81.

much in the way of overt conflict. This can likely be accounted for by the inherent lack of independence in the position of the cottier. Wage disputes on the other hand show up both in litigation and in a sizable minority of the notices examined for this study (see figure 4.6).

Persons who were only temporarily employed and who had insufficient or no access to land were dependant on the hire of conacre for their subsistence. Conacre, also spelt con acre and also known as quarter ground or potato ground, in its most typical usage refers to small plots rented out for a single growing season and prepared to some degree by the person renting them out. Conacre was sometimes rented for speculative purposes but was more typically used to provide a subsistence crop, usually potatoes, for the family hiring the conacre, with the poorer quality potatoes feeding a pig, the sale of which would go someway toward meeting the price of the conacre. As recounted in the Poor Law inquiry:

> 'Con acre generally means potato ground, always tilled and prepared for the crop by the farmer, and manured either by him, or by the labourer who takes it. The price, if manured by the farmer, is from £6 to £8 or even £10, per acre, according to the quality of the land and its situation ; if manured by the labourer, the price varies from nothing to £3 per annum. The labourer always finds the seed, and weeds, hoes, and takes up the crop. Con acre land is sometimes left for oats, but not often, as the practice is diminishing from want means in labourers, and the disinclination of farmers.'[38]

---

[38] *Royal Commission on Condition of Poorer Classes in Ireland, Appendix F. (Baronial Examinations relative to Conacre , Quarter or Score Ground; Small Tenantry; Consolidation of Farms; Emigration; Landlord and Tenant; Agriculture; Taxation; Roads; Supplement*); p. 16, H.C. 1836 (38), , xxxii.1 (hereafter *Poor law inquiry appendix f*).

Agricultural production in the Poor Law inquiry

With regard to agricultural production the Poor Law inquiry report proffers a striking contrast, a qualitative difference, between the imprecise emic categories of the small farmer and the large farmer. The latter being involved in the sort of technological innovation congruent with the capitalist mode of the production, this qualitative difference can be considered as part of the difference between the two modes of production discussed here.

It should be borne in mind that exactly what is meant by 'large' and 'small' can be location specific. The categorisation used in description of the barony of Balrothery in north county Dublin is of a small farmer being a holder of ten to thirty English acres. This would be a larger than the average small farm nationally as can be seen from the above census statistics.[39] Additionally 'large' should by no means be axiomatically read as meaning 'capitalist'.

A variety of 'improved' agriculture techniques are discussed in the report as exclusively the practice of the larger farmers — representing a tendency to transform the forces of production, a greater capacity on their part to respond to market demand is also identifiable as is a differing landlord-tenant relations represented by different forms of leasehold (yearly, for a fixed period of years, or for the length of a life or lives).

Of green cropping, the use of certain plants to manure and improve the nutrient content of the soil, we learn in the Baronies of Upper and Lower Philipstown in the King's County that:

> 'Clover, vetches, rye-grass, and turnips, are grown by the large farmers, but very little by the small farmers, wheat, oats, and potatoes, being the crops usually

---

[39] *Ibid.* p. 226.

cultivated. The advantages of green-feeding are unknown to the small farmers ; nor do any, except the large farmers and those in their neighbourhood, practise a useful alteration of crops.'[40]

 Similarly it is reported that 'Artificial feeding' which is to say the feeding of cattle with root crops as opposed to pasture 'is common with large graziers only, and the cattle are all housed in winter'.[41] On a similar theme in the barony of Galmoy, county Kilkenny, apparently no knowledge existed 'of the advantage of stalling cattle over grazing them, considered as a source of manure, except among the large farmers.'[42] Stalling refers to keeping the animals in buildings in part as a means of collecting manure.

There is also the sense that the larger farmer possessed greater capacity to alter production in line with fluctuations in demand. In the barony of Gowran, county Kilkenny:

> 'the larger farmers have of late years got more into sheep-farming ; and the low prices of corn, and the rise in wool, are fast increasing the practice'[43]

> 'considerable number of sheep is kept by most of the larger farmers; the smaller farmers keep very few ; and on farms below 20 acres they are seldom found at all.'[44]

Similarly to farm size and forms of production so too were tenurial arrangements varied, ranging from a yearly tenancy or a tenancy at will to leaseholds for a period of years or of lives. The qualitative difference with regard to production as described above is embedded in fundamentally different rental relations, it is the small-holding peasantry, described below, who are within a feudal rent relation.

---

[40] *Ibid*. p. 245.
[41] *Ibid.* p. 246.
[42] *Ibid.* p. 245.
[43] *Ibid.* p. 236.
[44] *Ibid.* p. 238.

What is colloquially known as the strong farmer has to a degree been overlooked both in historical research and in more contemporary rural sociology, the latter having, according to Hilary Tovey, a bias both towards the examining the small farmer and towards a focus on the less productive marginal lands of the West.[45] However, agriculture has great regional variety.[46] There are some relevant studies.

Geographer T. Jones Hughes in the edited volume chapter *The large farm in nineteenth century Ireland* claims that in 1850 there were 7,200 farm units valued at above £100, almost half of which were in Leinster, principally in Meath, Louth, Kildare, and Westmeath; 30% widely spread across Munster; 15% clustered in eastern Connaught; and, the remainder scattered around Ulster.[47] This research is based on a land valuation survey of the early 1850s (known as Griffith's valuations). Large farms were largely confined to areas where land had high value,[48] the better the land the bigger the farm. He specifically refers to the multitude of large farms in 'widespread areas of rich calcareous loams such as are found in south county Tipperary',[49] that is the area of Shankleman's study. Excluding county Dublin 15% of holdings worth £100 or over were grazier holdings principally to be found in a broad zone across north Leinster and eastern Connaught while excluding county Clare only 2% of that value of holdings in Munster were grazing farms.[50] While it is not part of his analysis I would argue that this shows the large farm as something which is independent of the switch over to grazing, a change in production which will be discussed more below. This is important in a consideration of the extent of the capitalist mode as grazing farms in the

---

[45] Hilary Tovey, 'Rural Sociology in Ireland: a review' in *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 2 (1992), pp 96 – 121.
[46] Bell and Watson, *A history of Irish farming*, p. 18.
[47] Hughes, 'The large farm in nineteenth century Ireland', p. 93.
[48] *Ibid.* p. 95.
[49] *Ibid.* p. 95.
[50] *Ibid.* p. 98.

post-Famine period are best thought of as embedded in a form of highly commercialised feudalism.

Idealised and impressionistic evidence is offered by Mary Fogarty's reminiscence of her strong farmer father and his farm in the middle years of the nineteenth-century which nonetheless give a more immediate sense than statistical analysis. She recounted:

'My father, who was born in 1816, farmed about 200 acres of land, rented from Count de Salis. He gave constant employment to a number of men and women, some of whom lived in the four cottages on the farm. There was a potato garden for each cottage, also a goat. The labourers were paid a shilling a day, which was threepence more than the wages usually given in the neighbourhood. Their wives and daughters helped with the milking of our fifty beautiful cows, under the supervision of the head dairywoman, whose wages were thirty pounds a year. Extra men, called *spalpeens*, coming usually from Kerry and Cork, were hired for the potato digging in October. My father's head man, Dick Dooley, used to go to Bruff on a Sunday in late September – if the ground was dry enough then for digging – and after Mass he inspected and engaged the required number of *spalpeens* who were waiting in the street to be hired by the highest bidder. The same *spalpeens* came year after year to our farm: quiet and unobtrusive they were, grateful to my father for giving them work and to my mother for providing abundant nourishing food.'[51]

It should be noted that both the Hughes analysis and the Fogarty reminiscence concern farms of an order considerably larger in scale again than much of what Shankleman characterises as capitalist farming.

---

[51] Mary Carbery, *The farm by Lough Gur: The story of Mary Fogarty* (Dublin, 2010), pp 9 – 10.

Bernstein summarises the defining characteristics of the capitalist mode of production as generalised commodity production, the imperative of accumulation, and commodity labour power.[52] With regard to generalised commodity production agricultural products were produced for market exchange. Access to and control over land, either in the form of tenancies or in the form of proprietorship, had also been commodified at least to a degree.[53] There was a market for tenancies, albeit one restricted by the possibility or actuality of violence in defence of customary claims to land. There was also a market for land in fee simple, that is for land ownership, despite the widespread practice of fee tail or entail (that is to say provision that property would have to pass to heirs and was inalienable); there was always a *nouveau riche* element among estate proprietors.

The effects of the imperative of accumulation can be seen above both in technological innovation and in switching to different produce. This imperative to accumulate is of course underpinned by the fact that inputs were commodities — in particular by the fact that there is a market for tenancies. Commodity labour power was discussed above in the preceding section. However, as should be apparent from the foregoing — particularly the section on labour relations where we find labour-rent and with the clear qualitative different identified between the large-holder and the small-holder – the capitalist mode of production by no means exhausts the variety of social relations existing in early-nineteenth-century Leinster and east Munster.

The capitalist forms of production described above were a transitional form existing within a social formation which remained, at least as in so far as we confine our analysis to the island

---

[52] Henry Bernstein, *Class dynamics of agrarian change* (Winnipeg/Sterling, 2010), p. 25.
[53] *Ibid.* p. 28

of Ireland, dominated by a feudal mode of production. The conditions of the small-holding

peasantry within that feudal mode of production are described in the next section.

Subsequent sections in this chapter will look at clearance, which is to say the clearance of

that small-holding peasantry from off their lands, a process analogous with the so-called

primitive accumulation of the final section of volume one of *Capital*. The impeding of that

process of clearance, or primitive accumulation, was an impeding of the growth of capitalist

social relations and a maintenance of the feudal mode of production.

The small-holding peasantry

For the small farmer what they were left with after paying rent was a subsistence wage

equivalent:

> 'The small tenant is not often able to retain more than a bare subsistence for
>
> himself and family, being very little better than a labouring man'.[54]

> 'It is generally impossible for the tenantry . . . if all but a bare subsistence for the
>
> tenant and his family be given up to the landlord . . . to accumulate capital or retain
>
> any little which may accidentally arise to them'.[55]

After rent 'the small tenants have nothing left but lumpers and buttermilk';[56] lumpers

referring to the highly yield efficient variant of potato consumed by the poorer sectors of

early-nineteenth-century society, buttermilk being a liquid less nutritious than normal milk

which is left over after butter is produced. The butter would have been sold for 'he is

obliged to give up everything' that is as rent 'but what is barely sufficient to sustain life'.[57]

---

[54] *Poor law inquiry appendix f*, p. 55.
[55] *Ibid.* p. 57.
[56] *Ibid.* p. 49.
[57] *Ibid.* p. 49.

The situation of the small-holding tenantry is then as it was described by Marx thus:

'Here the tenant is generally a small peasant. What he pays the landowner for his lease often absorbs not only a portion of his profit, i.e. his own surplus labour, which he has a right to as owner of his own instruments of labour, but also a portion of the normal wage, which he would receive for the same amount of labour under other conditions.'[58]

The absence of alternate means of subsistence, lack of employment opportunities due to de-industrialisation, the creeping switch from tillage to grazing and the growth of capitalist farming made for a great competition for the possession of small holdings. A squeeze made tighter by the pressure on the relative share of any land-unit given over to subsistence as opposed to cash cropping produced by the post-1815 agricultural depression and decline in tillage product prices without equivalent decline in rent prices (see below).

As James Brophy, a Gowran, Co.Kilkenny labourer featured in the Poor Law inquiry, put it: 'A man that has land is always sure of a meal of potatoes at any rate'.[59] Dislodged tenantry were faced with pauperisation at least as often as proletarianisation. On a similar theme but with greater detail and adducing perhaps other reasoning Dennis Murphy is paraphrased in the report from the Barony of Dundalk Upper (in County Louth) that: 'although he had constant employment from a good master, he would prefer having even but three roods of land' (a rood is a quarter of an acre). The report continues:

'The reasons why the labourers have this preference are, then when sick or old, some of their family could work for them, that they were also more independent,

---

[58] Marx, *Capital Vol. III*, p. 763.
[59] *Poor law inquiry appendix f*, p. 46.

could keep pigs, poultry, &c.; and perhaps carry on some little trade, as well as employ their own otherwise idle time, and that of their family.'[60]

The consequence of competition was that, at least nominally, the acre-by-acre rent for a small-holding was greater than that for a large-holding. The relatively smaller number of prospective tenants with sufficient funds to pay for, stock, equip and hire the necessary labour for a larger farm-unit made for less competition for large holdings. A comparative advantage of the small farmer to many witnesses in the Poor Law inquiry is that their production rests on cheaper and more attentive family labour. An interpretation which dovetails with that in Karl Kautsky's study of late-nineteenth-century European farming where he writes:

'Small farms have two major weapons to set against the large. Firstly, the greater industriousness and care of their cultivators, who in contrast to wage-labourers work for themselves. And secondly, the frugality of the small independent peasant, greater even than that of the agricultural labourer...... The small peasants not only flog themselves into this drudgery: their families are not spared either. Since the running of the household and the farm are intimately linked together in agriculture, children – the most submissive of all labour - are always at hand! And as in domestic -industry, the work of children on their own family's small peasant holding is more pernicious than child wage-labour for outsiders.'[61]

---

[60] *Poor law inquiry appendix f*, p. 95.
[61] Karl Kautsky, *The agrarian question volume I* (London, 1988), p. 110.

Clearance

Despite the at least nominal higher rents paid acre-by-acre for small farms there is a definite tendency in this period towards the ejectment of small holders in favour of larger farms. As the Poor Law inquiry reports of Gowran: 'There is a universal desire among landlords, and one that there is no reason to deny, to have their estates tenanted by large occupiers.'[62] There must have been a counter-tendency frustrating this desire because most witnesses also claimed that the average size of farms in Gowran was decreasing. [63] The existence of such a desire seems counter-intuitive, it can be explicated in two-ways — the kernel is the nominal nature of the rent; given the downward trend in the relative price of agricultural produce the ability of the small-holding peasantry to pay rents was likewise decreasing; secondly, over the longer-term allowing, and indeed assisting, tenant innovation would produce higher rents. Innovation was not really an option for the super-exploited and under-resourced small-holding peasantry. The extent of the growth of larger farms is dependent on the ability of landlords (either actual proprietors or some sub-letting variant) to exert absolute control over the estates and hence the inhibition of that control, as discussed below, is an inhibition of the growth of the area encompassed by larger farms.

Large farm is not necessarily a synonym for capitalist farm, particularly in predominantly grazing/beef-producing areas as opposed to tillage or dairy areas, but there is a capitalist sub-set of the large farm group. As grazing required less labour than tillage, its direct producers, called herds, were typically in a kind of sharecropping relationship with the graziers who rented from the landlords. Although, as has been seen, there was a transition to a pastoral economy going on before the mid-nineteenth-century the main switch over to

---

[62] *Poor law inquiry appendix f*, p. 90.
[63] *Ibid.* p. 90.

grazing happened after 1847 with the repeal of a set of policies maintaining cereal prices (the Corn Laws).

Clearance, at least some of the time, represents a re-distribution of land from one to the other of the two forms of agricultural production outlined above in the words recorded by the Poor Law inquiry and outlined in the last chapter in the review of the Shankleman thesis. That is to say it represents at times a switch from feudal social relations to capitalist social relations and at times a switch from tillage to pasturage — with no necessary transformation of the mode of production in this second case. Consequently successful resistance to clearance represents a curtailment of the development of capitalist social relations.

The most evocative details on ejectment and consolidation within the Poor Law report come from the edges of the great cattle fattening plain of Meath:

> 'In the instances where tenants have been ejected, some have become labourers, some little shopkeepers, tradesmen, or workmen in towns, some beggars, and others have emigrated. One or two instances have occurred, where, with the good will and wishes of their neighbours, they have taken forcible possession of the commons in their neighbourhood, though the landlords of commonage lands would never willingly suffer it. They generally sought shelter for a time in the cabins of the neighbouring peasantry. . . . They have suffered great privation in every way, want of food, of shelter, of fuel, sickness, and all the other miseries of extreme poverty to which houseless and penniless wanderers could be subject. . . . . Those of them who

settled on bog or mountain land have mostly been able to weather the storm, to build themselves cabins, get large gardens, and obtain occasional employment.'[64]

'Those who could, sought shelter in the cabins of the peasantry on the adjoining estates ; but this they seldom were enabled to do, because the same system of "clearing estates," as it was called, was prevalent on most estates. About four years ago a large extent of common-land belonging to the corporation of Kells was taken possession of by between 500 and 600 persons, who had collected for that purpose from several parts of Ireland as well as from the neighbourhood. . . . they regularly divided the whole common, consisting of several hundred acres, into small lots, marked off into distinct occupancies, and began building cabins on them ; they could only be expelled by sending to another district for a troop of cavalry. There are no waste lands in these baronies on which ejected tenants might be located ; the common land first spoken of is enclosed and cultivated or grazed ; no instances are known of the landlord assisting his ejected tenantry, either by enabling them to emigrate or otherwise : a very few of them emigrated by their own means ; it is not known whether they have succeeded. Those who remained at home, except in a few cases where they were constantly employed by the proprietors, suffered the greatest privations from poverty and want of employment . . . . those who have gone to settle on bogs are generally the most miserable, except a few who are situated near towns and who have a little money and a horse and cart, and can afford to hire bog ground and to live while they are cutting and drying the turf, which they

---

[64] *Ibid.* p. 88.

afterwards convey to, and sell in the town for fuel; it is utterly impossible for the

peasantry to lay by any savings to meet such occurrences.'[65]

This consolidation was associated with, though independent of, the move away from tillage

towards cattle-raising, something which required either extensive tracts of land or greater

technological innovation in the form of cattle houses and artificial feeding — both of which

were outside the capacities of the small tenantry.

The agrarian economy in its colonial context

To explicate some of what we can see happening in the minutiae of the Poor Law inquiry it

is necessary to consider more fully some macro-economic trends. Running through the

evidence above is: firstly, the switch in the value of pasturage products relative to tillage

products; secondly, the agricultural depression from 1815 onwards; and, thirdly, the decline

in handicrafts and proto-industrial production. But these price movements as well as de-

industrialisation can only be understood in their context and that context is the colonial

dependent development of modern Ireland. In the following I'll begin by briefly outlining

the nature of that colonial relationship and the associated decline of proto-industry in much

of southern Ireland before briefly discussing some of its impact on Britain. I'll then turn to

addressing the switch in the relative price of pastoral products and tillage products and the

post-1815 agricultural downturn in the next section.

Kiernan describes Ireland as a 'classic instance of a colonial economy intentionally injured',

the explication of this injury necessitates leaving the early-nineteenth-century for the

seventeenth. [66] In the post-Reformation period the English monarchy clamped down on its

over mighty subjects in English-Ireland and expanded its frontier to incorporate all of what

---

[65] *Ibid.* p. 98.
[66] V.G. Kiernan, *Imperialism and its contradictions* (New York, 1995), p. 46.

was hitherto Gaelic-Ireland.   A unitary Kingdom of Ireland was established as part of the composite monarchy centred in Whitehall, London.

This polity was riven apart in the seventeenth-century by a series of civil wars during which a large portion of the Irish ruling class consistently take pro-Catholic and, less consistently, pro-monarchy stances. Having been soundly defeated many of them end up having their estates confiscated or truncated. Their places are taken by an *arriviste* horde many of whom are imported from England for this purpose — these, together with earlier post-Reformation settlers, as well as Gaelic and Old-English gentry who conform to the Anglican denomination constitute the eighteenth-century 'political nation'.

Given this state of flux wherein some of the island's rulers were being ousted and others were dependant on military intervention from England (and later from associated continental states) there seems little potential to withstand a mercantilist English domination (especially given the decline of the power of the monarchy relative to the power of the English parliament). It is possibly instructive to compare again with Scotland which is absorbed into a unitary British state at the close of this period in the year 1707.

As Munck explains:

> 'For mercantilism to be effective as a replacement for direct plunder, it was necessary to restrict production in the periphery, for example, Ireland. Thus the Cattle Acts of 1663 placed prohibitive duties on cattle or sheep exported from Ireland, these duties being extended in 1667 to beef and pork. The crucial Navigation Acts of 1663 forced all goods destined for the colonies to be shipped from England leading, for example, to the decline of Galway. In 1669 the export of woollen goods

from Ireland was also prohibited, with subsequent Acts being directed against brewing and glass manufacturing . . . each measure individually and especially as a package was instrumental in making the Irish economy dependant on Britain and in thwarting the possibility of balanced economic growth.'[67]

It is clearly not the case that extensive economic growth did not occur in eighteenth-century Ireland, particularly in the provisions and linen trades but rather that a peripheral dependant growth occurred which 'locked Ireland tightly into an Atlantic division of labour that was substantially controlled by England in the interests of hegemony and English core industrialisation.'[68]

In the 1821 census approximately two-fifths of the work-force was principally employed in trades, manufactures, or handicraft.[69] However under the Act of Union of 1801 which incorporated Ireland into the United Kingdom tariffs and other trade barriers — those that sheltered Irish proto-industry — were eventually removed — the last of them in 1824 — and a free trade zone between Britain and Ireland was created. There was a consequent de-industrialisation of almost all of Ireland.

As O'Malley argues:

'all the other countries which industrialised successfully, after Britain, in the nineteenth century used some degree of protection for a time against their more advanced competitors, especially against Britain itself… it does seem clear that, given

---

[67] Ronnie Munck, *The Irish economy: Results and prospects* (London, 1993), p. 6.

[68] Denis O'Hearn, 'Ireland in the Atlantic Economy' in Terrence McDonough (ed.), *Was Ireland a colony? economics, politics and culture in nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2005), pp 3 – 26; p. 13.

[69] Fintan Lane, 'Envisaging Labour History: Some Reflections on Irish Historiography and the Working Class' in Francis Devine, Fintan Lane and Niamh Puirséil (eds), *Essays in Irish labour history: A festschrift for Elizabeth and John W. Boyle*, (Dublin, 2008), pp 9 – 25; p. 12.

effective protection, the woollen and cotton industries in particular could have grown and carried on much longer. In an age of simple and newly developing technology in which engineering industries arose to meet local needs (unlike in the twentieth century, as with Ireland's post-1930s protectionist phase), the dynamic benefits for machinery and related industries could have been of considerable value for several generations at least. . . .'[70]

The immediate impact of de-industrialisation was to increase the role of agriculture in people's livelihoods and thereby increase their need to maintain their access to farmland. Similar processes of clearance and agricultural "improvement" in lowland Scotland proceed without meeting the sort of resistance to be found in the Irish case.[71] Crucially this agricultural transition in Scotland is not conjoined with de-industrialisation but is in fact simultaneous with a local industrialisation.

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Ireland, at least outside of the industrialising north-east, is best thought of as a subordinate adjunct to the British industrial economy. The impact of that adjunct on the industrial parts of the British economy was twofold, encapsulated in the import of food and the import of labour.

By 1845 Irish exports into Britain constituted enough food for two million people; the population of Britain at the time being eighteen and a half million. [72] Between 1815 and

---

[70] Eoin O'Malley, 'The Decline of Irish Industry in the Nineteenth Century' in *Economic and Social Review*, 13:1 (1981), pp 21 – 42; p. 36.

[71] Neil Davidson, 'The Scottish Path to Capitalist Agriculture 2: The Capitalist Offensive (1747–1815)' in *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 4:4 (October, 2004), pp 411-60; pp 446-7; Tom M. Devine, 'Unrest and Stability in Rural Ireland and Scotland, 1760-1840' in Rosalind Mitchison and Peter Roebuck (eds), *Economy and society in Scotland and Ireland, 1500-1939* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp 126-39.

[72] Cormac Ó Gráda, *Ireland: A new economic history 1780 – 1939* (Oxford, 1994), p. 162.

1835 approximately 60% of British cereal imports came from Ireland. [73] The bulk of these imports were oats and oatmeal.[74]

Likely this supply of foodstuffs had two effects; firstly, that of cheapening the price of food and, food making up a large portion of the contemporary wage goods, thereby allowing a reduced price for labour; and, secondly, it may have reduced conflict between agrarian and industrial interests.[75] This agrarian versus industrial conflict was perhaps most overtly expressed the anti-Corn Laws campaign, as the Corn Laws protected the agricultural economy at the expense of the industrial economy, but was also seen in conflicts around parliamentary reform, culminating in the Reform crisis of the early 1830s. New urban industrial centres such as Birmingham and Manchester having little or no parliamentary representation prior to the Reform Act of 1832.

The burgeoning Irish agricultural export sector of the early-nineteenth-century probably made a not insignificant contribution to ensuring that socio-political conflict within Britain was more restrained than it might have been in this of one most the conflictual periods in the island's modern history. As Britain's own resources were supplemented with those of Ireland this likely made the issue of food supply to the industrial working class less fraught than it might have been. The issue of food supply was also an issue of wage costs.

Moreover, Irish migrants to Britain functioned as a reserve army of labour which is to say an impoverished or semi-unemployed population whose desperation exerts a downward pressure on wages and working conditions. The original formulation of the concept of the

---

[73] Shankleman, 'Agricultural Change and Rural Conflict in Co. Tipperary', p. 37.
[74] Shankleman, 'Agricultural Change and Rural Conflict in Co. Tipperary', p. 39.

[75] Anthony Brewer, *Marxist theories of imperialism: A critical survey* (London, 1990), p. 32; David Goodman and Michael Redclift, *From peasant to proletarian: Capitalist development and agrarian transitions* (Oxford, 1981), p. 73.

'reserve army of labour' was in Frederick Engels's 1844 work *The condition of the working class in England* and was specifically applied to the Irish migrants to England. Engels writes that:

> 'The rapid extension of English industry could not have taken place if England had not possessed in the numerous and impoverished population of Ireland a reserve at command. The Irish had nothing to lose at home, and much to gain in England; and from the time when it became known in Ireland that the east side of St. George's Channel offered steady work and good pay for strong arms, every year has brought armies of the Irish hither. It has been calculated that more than a million have already immigrated, and not far from fifty thousand still come every year, nearly all of whom enter the industrial districts, especially the great cities, and there form the lowest class of the population. Thus there are in London, 120,000; in Manchester, 40,000; in Liverpool, 34,000; Bristol, 24,000; Glasgow, 40,000; Edinburgh, 29,000, poor Irish people.'[76] '. . . the pressure of this race has done much to depress wages and lower the working-class'[77]

This is the fate of some of the victims of clearances as described above. To some extent then the processes of primitive accumulation in nineteenth-century Ireland was creating a diaspora proletariat.

Price movements

With regard to price movements there was a brief period in the late-eighteenth-century when tillage products, particularly cereal crops, commanded higher prices than the produce of pastoral farming. There was a longer period when tillage prices were relatively high in

---

[76] Friedrich Engels, *The condition of the working class in England* (St. Albans, 1969), p. 122.
[77] *Ibid.* p. 125

comparison to what they were or what they would be. This time of tillage boom is in sharp

relief simply by being at odds with the nature of farming in most of Ireland both in the first

half of the eighteenth-century and in the century and a half from the Great Famine to today.

The classic view of this shift, found for instance in the writings of agricultural economist

Raymond Crotty, is to associate it with the ending of the Revolutionary and Napoleonic wars

in 1815. The long period of armed conflict from 1792 to 1815 cut off continental European

agricultural producers from the British market and also created new markets in the form of

mass armies. However, the latest scholarship would suggest that the alteration in the

relative price of pasturage products to tillage products happened earlier than this, in fact at

the start of the wars, rather than the end.[78] Perhaps then it is more a delayed effect of the

repealing of the restrictions on the export of cattle from Ireland to Britain in 1776.[79]

While grassland beef production was not dominant until after the Great Famine it was

certainly emergent before then:

> 'the annual average number of live cattle exports for the five-year period 1821-5 was
>
> 46,714; in 1835 the figure was 98,150, and in the period 1846-48 the average had
>
> jumped to 190,828.'[80]

Moreover, it has been calculated that pasturage took up 63.5% of farm land and constituted

45.2% of agricultural output by the 1840-1845 period.[81] So the transition to pasture was

underway despite being inhibited to some extent by the Corn Laws, which operated

---

[78] Liam Kennedy and Peter M. Solar, *Irish Agriculture: A price history from the mid-eighteenth century to the eve of the First World War* (Dublin, 2007), pp 95–9.

[79] Desmond A. Gillmor and J. T. Coppock, 'The Cattle Trade Between Ireland and Great Britain' in *Irish Geography*, 5 (1967), pp 320-26; p. 320.

[80] Gearoid Ó Tuathaigh, *Ireland before the Famine 1798 – 1848*, p. 121.

[81] Kevin O'Rourke, 'Did the Great Irish Famine Matter?' in *Journal of Economic History*, 51:1 (1991), pp 1-22; p. 4.

between 1815 and 1846, which shielded British and Irish cereal producers behind a protective tariff on continental European cereal imports (and likewise inhibited by resistance to clearance).

The significance of all this is that tillage is, in this period, massively more labour-intensive than most forms of pastoral farming. The Poor Law inquiry is replete with references both to the throwing of small tillage farms into larger grazing units and the paucity of employment in grazing areas. This is not necessarily a monochrome distinction, there was mixed farming, and dairying, particularly concentrated in the south, did require much more labour than grazing.

Tillage retains a major role up to at least the middle part of the century, writing in 1829 agriculturalist Horatio Townsend comments:

> 'The view presented by the country in the months of July and August is an interwoven patchwork of potatoes, wheat, barley, and oats, with so little intervention of meadow and pasture, that one is surprised how the inhabitants contrive to maintain their cows, horses, and sheep'.[82]

So, while agreeing with Shankleman that there is a nascent capitalist mixed farming in this period, it should be stressed that not all whiteboyism can be accounted for by reference to this, as demonstrated by the above identified growth in pasturage. Otherwise one could hardly account for the existence of a whiteboy movement, the Terry Alts, in the hitherto untypical location for such movements of the classic pasturage territories of north Clare, east Galway and south Roscommon.

---

[82] Qouted in Cormac Ó Gráda, 'Poverty, population, and agriculture, 1801-45' in W.E. Vaughan (ed.), *A new history of Ireland Volume V: Ireland under the union 1801-70* (Oxford, 2010), pp 108-57; p. 122.

The second macro-economic factor to put flesh on here has already been touched upon in the foregoing. The ending of the war at Waterloo in 1815 resulted in a dramatic downfall in the prices of agricultural products. This happened partly as the British market was now open again to continental European producers and partly as military forces were being de-mobilised and hence were no longer being fed by the state. There really is a long period of agricultural depression in these decades interspersed with particularly bad years. The result is actually a growth in exports as more has to be produced for the market to meet rent costs and other outlays. It also makes for a disproportional relationship between rents and product prices, as people could be, for instance through lease agreements, locked into paying rents set during the earlier decades of buoyant prices.   As Second International era Irish Marxist writer James Connolly put it:

> 'With the rise in prices rents had also risen, but when the close of the war cut off the demand, and prices consequently fell, rents did not fall along with them. A falling market and a stationary or rising rent-roll could have but one result in Ireland – viz., agrarian war. The landlords insisted upon their 'pound of flesh,' and the peasantry organised in secret to terrorise their oppressors and protect themselves.'[83]

Conclusion

In short there were tillage, mixed tillage and livestock and mixed tillage and dairy farms in which wage labour was employed and some technological advancement carried out. The evidence suggests that at least some landlords favoured this model of development. This is a mode of farming which is qualitatively different from that carried on by the mass of small-holding peasantry who have no capacity to accumulate and re-invest and who are dependant on family labour and left with a subsistence after meeting demands for rent. The

---

[83] James Connolly, *Labour in Irish history* (Dublin, 1983), p. 77.

expansion of capitalist farming through a process of primitive accumulation is arrested by peasant resistance. This is distinct from the switch from tillage to pasturage (itself arguably delayed by popular resistance).

In the next chapter a close study of conditions existing in the south-east of the Queen's County in the early 1830s will show that at least some among the rural elite considered the possibility of provoking resistance a very real prospect to be guarded against. This bears out what is reported in the baronial examinations that the 'fear of outrage' prevented the consolidation of small-holdings into larger farm-units in a southern and central region.

Clearance is necessary for the capitalist mode of production even if all cleared areas are not incorporated within that mode. Thus up to the mid-nineteenth-century the development of the capitalist mode of production is inhibited. This inhibition can in part be accounted for by the absence of alternative livelihoods due to a de-industrialisation occasioned by the colonial relationship between Britain and Ireland. The Scottish lowlands which saw a capitalist agrarian transformation and concomitant expulsion of former cultivators in the eighteenth-century experiences no great popular violence partly as the same area is home to a burgeoning industrial sector.

In the mid-nineteenth century, with the repeal of the Corn Laws, the terms of trade with Britain again prove decisive and occasion a massive switch over from labour-intensive tillage to pasturage with its low labour to land ratio. There is only a localised development of the capitalist mode as this pastoral farming ends up being conducted within a highly

commercialised form of feudal relations not unlike share-cropping (though this too was the

setting for conflict around attempts at proletarianisation).[84]

---

[84] John Cunningham, ''A Class Quite Distinct': The Western Herds and their Defence of their Working Conditions' in Carla King and Conor McNamara (eds), *The West of Ireland: New perspectives on the nineteenth century* (Dublin, 2011), pp 137 – 60.

Chapter Three: Primitive Accumulation, Clearance and Resistance

The project to eject small holders in favour of larger farm-units was inhibited by peasant resistance, thereby stunting the development of the capitalist mode of production in east Munster and Leinster. In this chapter this point will be explored through both the Poor Law inquiry report and a close-study of land occupancy conflicts in the south-east of the Queen's County in the early 1830s. It follows from this curtailment of the growth of the capitalist agrarian sector that class struggle shaped the pre-Famine social structure. The process of clearance is equivalent to what Marx describes as the so-called primitive accumulation which is to say 'the historical process of divorcing the producer from the means of production' something which forms the 'pre-historic stage of capital and of the mode of production corresponding with it'.[1] The 'expropriation of the agricultural producer, of the peasant, from the soil, is the basis of the whole process' whereby capitalist social relations, relations between two different kinds of commodity-possessors — sellers of labour-power and owners of means of production — can come into being.[2]

Clearance in the poor law inquiry report

As noted above the report of the Poor Law commission poses a problem in its findings on the barony of Gowran in east Kilkenny. According to those findings there 'is a universal desire among landlords, and one that there is no reason to deny, to have their estates tenanted by large occupiers'.[3] Paradoxically, the report also claims that in the barony of Gowran the average size of farms is in fact decreasing. From a review of what the Poor Law commission report has to say about ejectment of tenants and consolidation of farms across

---

[1] Marx, *Capital Vol I*, p. 668
[2] *Ibid.* p. 669.
[3] *Poor law inquiry appendix f*, p. 90.

Leinster and east Munster it would seem that, in some districts, 'fear of outrage' inhibited the development of larger farm-units.[4]

One part of the inquiry carried out by the Poor Law commission consisted of baronial examinations. These examinations were local meetings in a selection of baronies where a surprisingly broad range of local people were questioned on predetermined topics, these meetings took place in the summer of 1834 and so are nearly contemporary with the threatening notices scrutinised in the subsequent chapters of this thesis (they date from 1832) . Baronies were sub-county level administrative districts. One of the issues investigated in the baronial examinations was 'impediments to junction' which is to say what prevented the creation of larger farm-units. Looking at what people had to say in the baronial examinations through the sample of baronies examined across east Munster and Leinster it seems that the removal of tenants from their farms to make way for larger farms was a regionalised phenomenon, for whatever reason there are some baronies where it doesn't seem to be happening. Furthermore, it is in a smaller region again where there is both an impetus to throw cleared small-holdings together to make larger farms out of them and an at least partially successful opposition to this process. This seems to be the case in a southern and central region consisting of at least parts of Tipperary, Kilkenny, the Queen's County, the King's County and Waterford. From the examination of the barony of Middlethird, county Tipperary we learn that:

> 'The ejector always has recourse to the sheriff, assisted by a military force. In most cases the ejected tenantry threaten those who take their farms, and in hundreds of cases outrages have been committed in consequence of ejection. It is agreed by all that the fear of causing an extension of distress does not prevent the landlord from

---

[4] *Poor law inquiry appendix f*, pp 87 – 124.

112
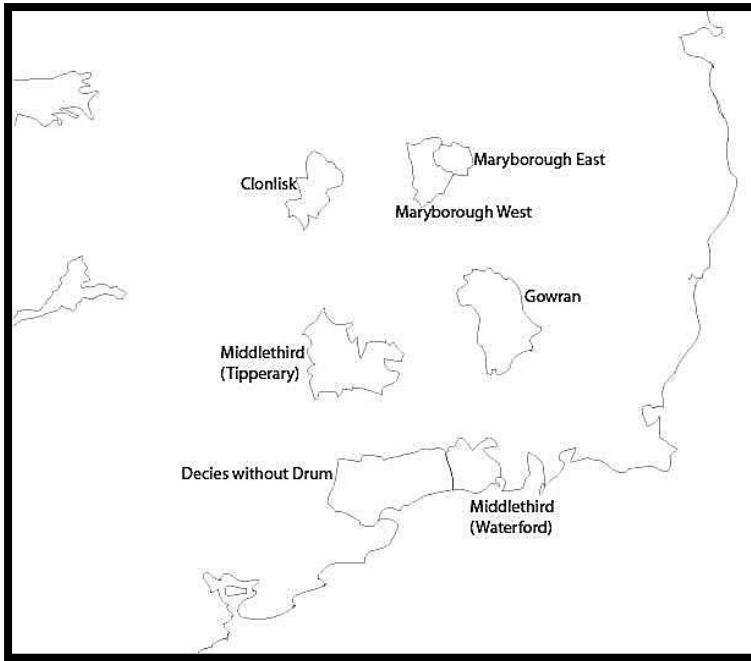
Figure 3.1 Outrage Baronies

(after Kennedy et al. *Mapping the Great Irish Famine,* p. 23)

ejecting; his own pecuniary interest is too pressing to permit his feelings of sympathy to operate but fear of outrage has prevented ejection.'[5]

The same sentiments are expressed less emphatically in the examinations of the baronies of Middlethird, county Waterford, Clonlisk, King's County, and Gowran, county Kilkenny.

The extent of successful resistance is considered more temporally specific in the examinations of the Barony of Decies without Drum in county Waterford and the Baronies of Maryborough East and West in the Queen's County. In the former case, in the words of Pierce Heley, a magistrate,[6] that until 'the last three or four years a good number of tenants were ejected, but now the landlords are afraid',[7] while in the latter 'about two or three years ago junction was prevented by fear of outrage, but is not now'.[8]

---

[5] *Poor law inquiry appendix f*, p. 119.
[6] *Poor law inquiry appendix f*, p. 60.
[7] *Poor law inquiry appendix f*, p. 121.
[8] *Poor law inquiry appendix f*, p. 102.

On the other hand, there is little fear of resistance to eviction in the Barony of Dundalk Upper, county Louth; likewise no resistance in Moyfenragh barony, county Meath; only in some cases is it thought that fear of 'outrage' has prevented eviction of small-tenantry in Talbotstown, county
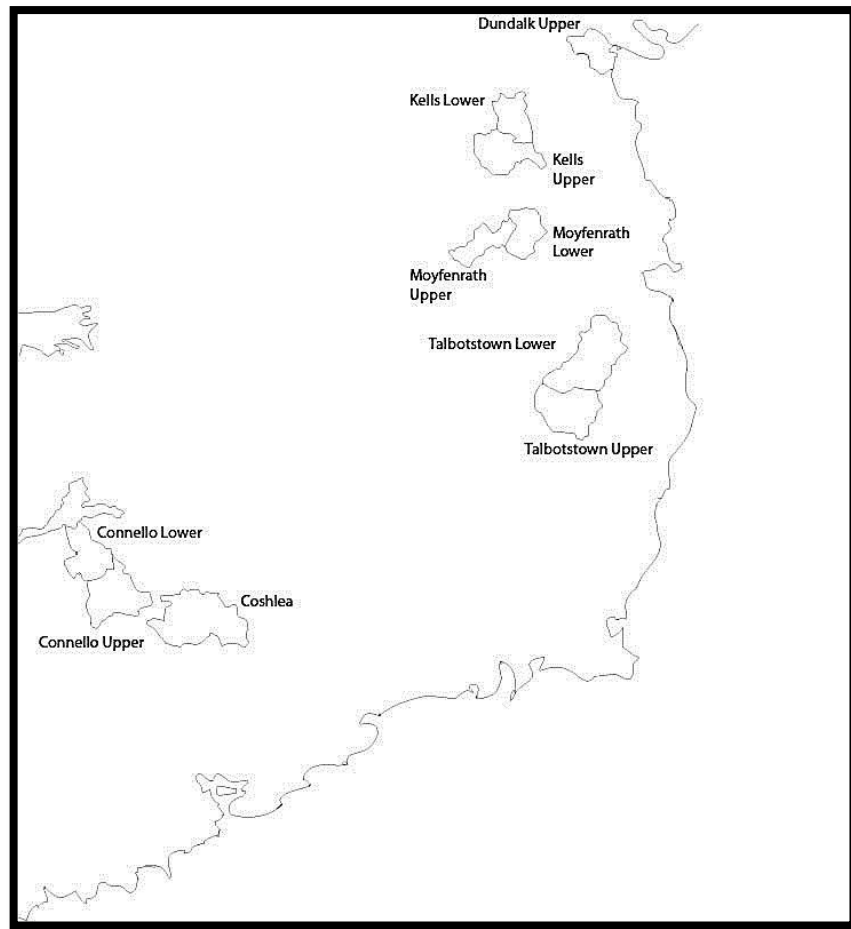
Figure 3.2 Baronies with little or no successful violent resistance to clearance

(after Kennedy et al. *Mapping the Great Irish Famine*, p. 23)

Wicklow; while in Conello, county Limerick, ejection is always opposed but without success, and in the barony of Coshlea, county Limerick, only in parts nearby to Tipperary does the prospect of opposition check the process of conjoining of farms. The report from the baronies of Kells Upper and Lower, county Meath, gives an impression of the kind of opposition this enlargement of farms might meet before, or in place of, the sort of spectacular violence that ends up being recorded by police or magistrates:

'The small tenantry very seldom resist ejection ; if they do they are forcibly ejected by the sheriff. The ejected tenants in many cases, though not in the majority, threaten the takers of enlarged farms, and in one or two instances outrage has

114

followed. The union of this cause with the fear of causing an extension of distress,

has probably operated to prevent a more rapid junction of farms, though it seems to

be generally considered that the former has more effect than the latter, or, at least,

if not actual outrage, that degree of personal odium and obloquy which is almost as

bad and, perhaps, more painful and insupportable, because more lasting and difficult

of cure.'[9]

This is illustratative of something which often times is not accessible in the bald and

perfunctory 'outrage' reports generated by the police or included in newspapers. That is

that the violence there recorded exists as the cutting edge of a broader collectivity.

Finally, in other baronies the issue does not seem to arise, there is not much in the way of either ejectment or resistance to it in Balrothery, county Dublin; or in the baronies of Philipstown Upper and Lower, King's County; the question doesn't seem to have been seen as relevant in Galmoy, county Kilkenny, where the territory
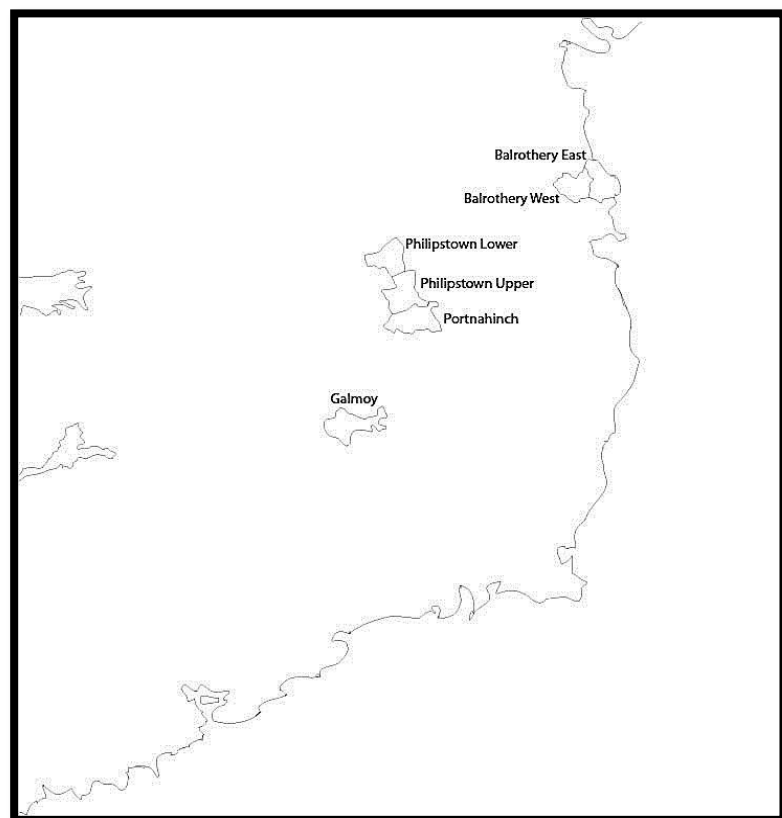
Figure 3.3 Baronies with little or no ejectment

(after Kennedy et al. *Mapping the Great Irish Famine*, p. 23)

---

[9] *Poor Law Inquiry f*, p. 98.

covered by small farms was increasing; and on a similar note in Portnahinch, Queen's

County, the average farm size was perceived as neither increasing nor decreasing.

At least according to the evidence presented in the Poor Law report, the hindering and

inhibiting of unbridled landlord control over estates, the chilling effect of "outrage", was a

factor in at least one particular region: a central core of east Munster and Leinster from

Waterford in the south, through Kilkenny and Tipperary and as far north as the King's

County.

The next section will turn to scrutinising in more close detail a subdivision of this region, an

examination which will foreground the impact of peasant resistance in land occupancy

conflicts on elite attitudes. This examination will show that there was at least some

recognition on the part of some agents, magistrates and proprietors that the possibility of

provoking resistance had to be given consideration. A recognition which dovetails with the

claims made in the Poor Law inquiry report. It follows from this recognition that resistance

at least slowed down the growth of capitalist farming.

The Leinster colliery district

The following section is a close-study of episodes of social conflict in the south-east of the

Queen's County circa 1826 to 1834. In terms of formal political geography the places here

examined are located in the barony of Slievemargy (see figure 3.4 overleaf). Most of the

relevant area is within a sub-region known as the Leinster colliery district, a coal-mining area

straddling the borders of Kilkenny, the Queen's County and Carlow. This territory being one

of the four areas in Ireland with coal mining industries in the nineteenth-century,[10] all of

which were on a very small-scale in global terms though nonetheless of local significance.

The colliery district was one of the main centres of the Whitefeet. The Whitefeet were the

---

[10] Laurence J. Kettle, *Irish coal and coalfields* (Dublin, 1920).

whiteboy movement active in the midlands in the early 1830s, they can be classed alongside the Terry Alts of county Clare and adjacent districts as part of a broad peasant mobilisation across a central band of the country from 1829 to 1834 (a mobilisation which does not map symmetrically onto the sub-region of successful resistance to clearance identified above). This movement was contemporary with, though distinct from, a popular insurgency against tithe, the tribute to the Church of Ireland.
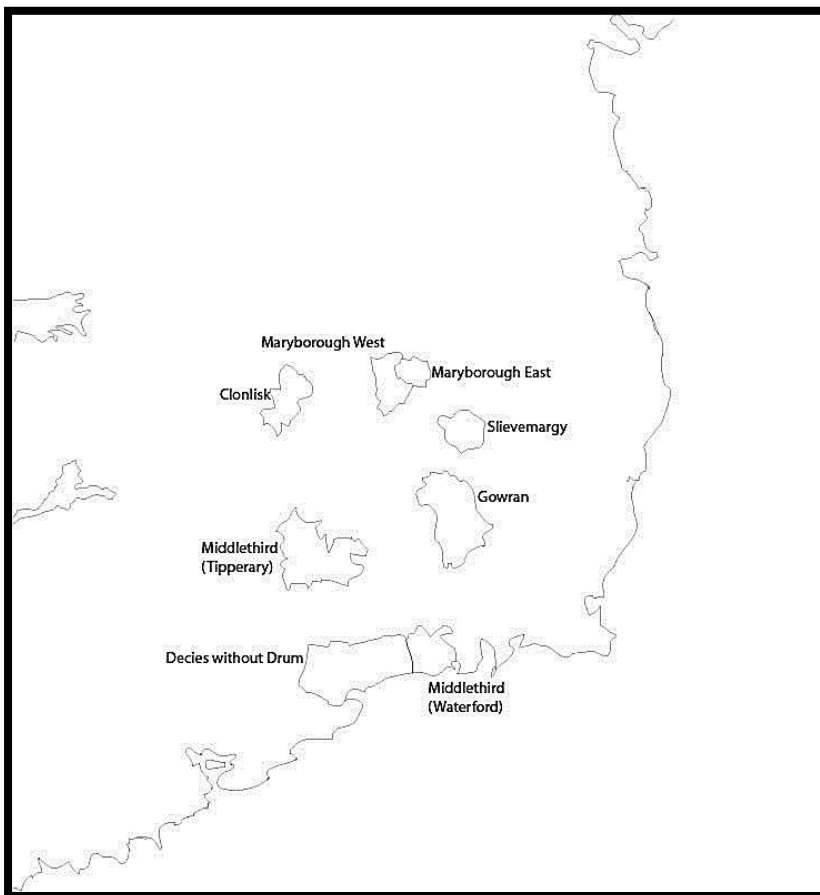
Figure 3.4 Slievemargy in relation to the baronies which saw a counter-tendency to ejectment and farm enlargement

(after Kennedy et al. *Mapping the Great Irish Famine*, p. 23)

'Captain Rock has got into the collieries' was the observation of Sir John Harvey, head of the Leinster police force, in a letter to William Gregory, Under-Secretary at Dublin Castle, in May 1829.[11] Captain Rock was, as we shall see later, particularly in chapters four, five and eight, a popular *nom de guerre* used in threatening notices

---

[11] Sir John Harvey to William Gregory, 4 May 1829 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1829/H26).

(to the extent that in this period 'rockite' is used almost as much as 'whiteboy' as a generic catch-all term for subaltern violence).

Harvey was commenting on the thorough destruction of some of the premises of the Modibeadh colliery and partial destruction of the projected residence of its owner, a man named Hanlon.[12] Hanlon had acquired some farmland adjoining the colliery and threatened to evict the twenty-three families who lived on it.[13] Hanlon was subsequently described by a Stradbally-based Chief Constable as a man 'whose management if I am rightly informed will I fear cause himself, the Magistrates and the Police endless trouble'. [14]

The proximate origins of the Whitefeet movement in the Leinster colliery district lie in a string of conflicts in different workplaces and estates particularly significant in that they involved large numbers of people. These conflicts included the key mobilisations from which the movement developed though as it developed it gained a far more expansive agenda involving a host of smaller local clashes. On the Queen's County side of the border the locations which saw particularly significant struggles included the Hackett property in Slatt Upper; the townlands of Ballylehane Upper and Ballylehane Lower; as well as Newtown colliery and the attached tenements of Clonbrock townland. It is important to bear in mind that while this was a coal-mining area the disputes I'm about to detail are not conflicts within the coal-mining industry as such, though they may have, and in fact did, involve people who were also involved in that industry. It wasn't uncommon for all kinds of occupational groups to have agrarian interests, and hence be drawn into conflict around the

---

[12] Thomas P. Cosby to Sir John Harvey, 3 May 1829 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1829/H26).

[13] *Ibid.*; Hovenden Stapleton, *State of Ireland*, p 94.

[14] Stradbally: Chief Constable Clancie to Sir John Harvey, 30 October 1829 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1829/H84/10).

possession of land, see, for instance, the weavers of Carrick-on-Suir and their involvement in one of the early whiteboy movements.[15]

A major source employed in the following exposition is the testimonies given to a House of Commons Select Committee on the state of Ireland in June and July 1832.[16] The Select Committee had been moved for by the two Queen's County Members of Parliament, Sir Henry Parnell and Sir Charles Coote, and, as it had originally been intended to be an inquiry into just the Queen's County, much of the evidence given concerned that county.[17] The committee is best understood as a study conducted by Members of Parliament aimed at producing a report for the government as to how best to respond to the Whitefeet movement.

The mode of information gathering was to seek testimony from, essentially to interview, experts, which in this context means members of the local elite, clergymen and officials in the administration of law and order. Particularly relevant witnesses include John Edge, operator of the Newtown colliery and landlord of the Clonbrock townland, holding the lease of both from the Lecky and Bowen estate; John Cahill, a Barrow valley dairy farmer, surveyor and civil engineer; and local magistrate and mine owner Hovenden Stapleton.

Other significant sources include the Chief Secretary Office Registered Papers which contain police records and communications from magistrates to the administration at the Dublin

---

[15] J.S. Donnelly, 'Irish agrarian rebellion: the Whiteboys of 1769-76', in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 83 C (1983), pp 293-33; p. 314.

[16] Testimony of Lieutenant General Sir Hussey Vivian, PP 1831-32 (677) Report from the Select Committee on the State of Ireland; with the minutes of evidence, appendix and index, pp 82-3, (cited here after as *State of Ireland* along with the name of the particular person giving testimony, e.g. John Cahill, *State of Ireland*, p. 470).

[17] Stephen Randolph Gibbons, 'Captain Rock in the Queen's County', in Pádraig G. Lane and William Nolan (eds), *Laois history and society: Interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin, 1999), pp 487 – 512; p. 502.

Castle; the minute books of the board of directors of the Grand Canal Company
(leaseholders of Newtown colliery until 1831); and, the local newspapers of Carlow, Kilkenny
and the Queen's County. Useful background material was provided by early-nineteenth-
century publications dealing with the colliery district by Tighe, Coote and Griffith.[18] The
Lecky and Bowen estate papers do not have a significant amount of material relevant to
these conflicts.

Michael Hackett

The Hackett property consisted of three hundred acres in the townland of Slatt Upper
leased from the Bowen and Lecky estate by Michael Hackett, a resident of Sackville Street,
Dublin.[19] These lands were described by stipendiary magistrate Matthew Singleton as 'the
cause of much disturbance and discontent'.[20] On 8 January 1832 one of Hackett's tenants
was attacked and sworn to quit his holding and again on 29 January 1832 Hackett's bailiff
was attacked and his herd sworn to quit his employment.[21] In this context 'sworn' means
made to swear to an oath. Constable Robert Wright of the Towlerton (Tolerton) station
commented in his report on the latter incident that Hackett had left some of his lands
'untenanted for the last few years, and the cause, a repetition of similar events'.[22] As we
move into the spring and early summer of 1832 Hackett has lost control of his lands a
passing evocatively, if perhaps exaggeratedly, described by local magistrate and mine owner

---

[18] William Tighe, *Statistical observations relative to the county of Kilkenny made in the years 1800 & 1801* (Dublin, 1802); Sir Charles Coote, *General view of the agriculture and manufactures of the Queen's county: with observations on the means of their improvement, drawn up in the year 1801: for the consideration and under the direction of the Dublin Society* (Dublin, 1801); Richard Griffith, *Geological and mining report on the Leinster coal district* (Dublin, 1814).

[19] Primary valuation of tenements (a.k.a. 'Griffith's Valuations'), Queen's County/Barony of Slievemargy/Union of Carlow/Parish of Rathaspick, Aug. 1850, p. 52 (online at www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/ accessed 14/10/14)

[20] Matthew Singleton to Sir William Gossett, 2 Feb. 1833 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1833/88).

[21] Towlerton: Robert Wright to Hugh Boyd Wray, 12 Jan. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/233); Towlerton: Robert Wright to Hugh Boyd Wray, 30 Jan. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/233); Towlerton: Robert Wright to Hugh Boyd Wray, 30 Jan. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/255); D. T. Osborne to Sir William Gosset, 30 Jan. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/214).

[22] Towlerton: Robert Wright to Hugh Boyd Wray, 30 Jan. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/255).

Hovenden Stapleton thus: 'they levelled all his fences, and all the cattle of the country were turned in upon his ground'.[23] On the 23 June 1832 the *Kilkenny Moderator* reported that:

'There is in the barony of Slieumariga [Slievemargy] 150 acres of prime tillage and dairy land lying waste, belonging to --------- Hackett, Esq. of the city of Dublin, in consequence of the tenants being obliged to quit by orders of the Whitefeet. No one dare take it or they would be murdered.' [24]

One of the threatening letters examined for this thesis concerns the Hackett leasehold and was sent to a Fitzmaurice in Carlow town.[25] It reads:

'Sir,

as you have put me to the trouble of writing to you concerning an Agency that you are going to engage yourself in, and as I hold you in esteem for certain reasons best known to myself _ I now require you to have neither hand, Act, part in any thing to do with Hacketts Agency unless according to the conditions that I lay down to you in this writing. The first is that you will restore to the Duggin family a portion of their land at a fair value that will enable them to rear their familys. The second that Dooley will be always kept in the employment which he held from under Hackett together with the same salary and powers [?] which he had from the commencement up to the present date ; while he conducts himself with propriety as he has done heretofore though some lads [or Cads?] belonging to my community [or committee?] have treated him very ill it was unknown to me but it cannot be helped at present, the third and last is, if you take on yourself to be his head Agent that you

[23] Hovenden Stapleton, *State of Ireland*, p. 110; Matthew Singleton to Sir William Gosset, 9 May 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/853); Michael Hackett to Sir William Gosset, 9 Apr. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/685).
[24] *Kilkenny Moderator*, 23 June 1832.
[25] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

will shew both justice and tenderness to all the tenants ; Now take this a friendly

notice, and if you do not comply with these three requests I By the Great God I will

send you to wallow in dispair after your friend and Neighbour lately gone: Gregory.

I.A.B Rock and Star, Secretary to Powder & Ball.'[26]

The Gregory referred to there was a minor local landlord assassinated in the previous year –

this incident is discussed below.

On the 9 May 1832 two men, Micheal Foley and Patrick Kealey, were convicted of malicious

trespass on the Hackett property, and sentenced to a five pound fine or two months on the

tread mill in the county gaol.[27] Hackett's eviction of two tenants named Duggan, who were

probably in arrears, is to what he ascribed his problems (note also 'the Duggin family'

referred to in the above notice).[28] However, Hackett appears to have been a particularly

obstinate landlord and it is likely he alienated more people than just that. In September

1832 in a letter to Dublin Castle Singleton gave a flavour of Hackett's practice as a landlord:

'During the week Mr. Hackett sent down from Dublin a man to serve several tenants

on his property ejectment notices, such proceedings on his part just now I consider

very indiscreet, and is sufficient to add fuel to the flame amongst the inhabitants in

that part of the Country, he has complained frequently during the summer to the

government, and to me, that he could not exercise any ownership over his property

in that part of the Country, and I was myself, with the aid of the police, obliged to

take possession of his estate since I came to the District, if he should persist in these

---

[26] N..A.I. C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.
[27] Matthew Singleton to Sir William Gosset, 9 May 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832//853).
[28] Hovenden Stapleton, *State of Ireland*, p. 110; Michael Hackett to Sir William Gosset, 17 Aug. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/1586).

proceedings he will find it impossible to manage his property here, the Gentleman

that is now on the lands and superintending the leases sent the process server back

to Dublin with the notices, & denounced such conduct as most mischievous '.[29]

Singleton's commentary on this matter indicates how in practice it was not expected that

proprietorship be invested with absolute rights. This gives us some sense of more muted

day-to-day class conflict away from the glare of eviction and assassination. It also indicates

that subaltern violence had some impact on landlord behaviour given that Singleton, as

stipendiary magistrate the main organiser of state violence in the Queen's County portion of

the colliery district, here counsels concession. This episode happened while Hackett was

unable to harvest fifty acres of hay and fourteen acres of corn due to an unwillingness of

anyone to undertake the work.[30] The stationing of eleven policemen on the property in

order to protect harvest workers saw this resolved in Hackett's favour.[31] As an aside this

shows the importance of intimidation within the activity of a movement like the Whitefeet –

as clearly it was only intimidation that was preventing the entry of willing workers –

something which is unsurprising given the underemployment and poverty of the period.

Thomas Gregory

The Hovenden property in the townlands of Ballylehane Upper and Ballylehane Lower was

subject to a complicated process of litigation involving mortgage holders and potential

heirs.[32] Thomas Gregory was a party to this, a legal professional and husband of one of the

---

[29] Matthew Singleton to Sir William Gosset, 2 Sep. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O. /R.P./1832/1668).
[30] Michael Hackett to Sir William Gosset, 17 Aug. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/1586); Matthew Singleton to Sir William Gosset, 2 Sep. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/1668).
[31] Matthew Singleton to Sir William Gosset, 9 Sep. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/1668).
[32] Appendix VIII: STATEMENT respecting the Tenants served with Ejectments at Ballylehane, and Murder of Mr. Gregory, *State of Ireland*, pp 114-16 (hereafter *Ejectments at Ballylehane*); Robert Cassidy, *State of Ireland*, pp 381-2

potential heirs; he seems to have been exercising *de facto* ownership.[33] Fifteen tenants

were served with notice to quit, which including their families would amount to in the

region 100 persons to be ejected.[34] Stapleton succinctly summed it up like so: 'whether he

turned them out or not I do not know ; I believe he did not live long enough'.[35] When

returning to Carlow from Ballylehane accompanied by his clerk on an August evening in

1831 Gregory was ambushed and shot.[36] There were over half-a-dozen men in the assailing

party, one struck the horse that was carrying Gregory's gig in the head with a pitchfork, one

landed a blow on the clerk, while another blasted Gregory with a shotgun. The horse bolted

taking the wounded Gregory with him, the attackers followed in unsuccessful chase.

Gregory died of his injuries shortly afterward and later that night a policeman was wounded

while in pursuit of those suspected of being Gregory's assassins.

As with Hackett's case contemporary commentary strongly suggests that Gregory dug his

own hole, that he breached informal codes. Stapleton describes him as: 'excessively harsh

to the people'; and says that he: 'committed several acts upon the unfortunate people there

that I should be sorry to be guilty of, and acts of injustice'.[37] On a similar note Queen's

County based stipendiary magistrate O'Donoghue wrote of Gregory that he was:

> 'an attorney of some eminence ...although a man of great tact and cleverness in
>
> professional matters, he appears to have managed his private concerns with little
>
> discretion. Through some acts of oppression he rendered himself exceedingly
>
> obnoxious to his tenants and neighbours, so much so that a conspiracy against his
>
> life has been for some time past concocting. Although fully apprised of this hostile

---

[33] *Ejectments at Ballylehane*, pp 114-16; Hovenden Stapleton, *State of Ireland*, p. 97.
[34] *Ejectments at Ballylehane*, pp 114-16.
[35] Hovenden Stapleton, *State of Ireland*, p. 97.
[36] Robert Wright to Hugh Boyd Wray, 20 Aug. 1831 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1831/G30); D. O'Donoghue to Sir William Gosset, 21 Aug. 1831 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1831/G30).
[37] Hovenden Stapleton, *State of Ireland*, p. 97.

feeling entertained against him, this unfortunate gentleman, it appears, took no precautions whatever, to avoid the deadly fate with which he was threatened.' [38]

Newtown colliery and John Edge

The leasehold of Newtown colliery and the adjoining townland of Clonbrock had been held by the Grand Canal Company since 1803.[39] In 1830 in a process of retrenchment occasioned by heavy debts the company sought to surrender their lease. However, the proprietors, Bowen and Lecky, demanded that the lands be cleared of sub-tenants before it was returned to them.[40] Most of the residents of the 191 tenements to be cleared were colliery workers and their families.[41] The company issued notices to quit and it appears met immediate opposition. John Edge was then manager of Newtown colliery and Clonbrock farm for the Grand Canal Company and acted as its agent in serving the notices. In a letter of 8 September 1830 Edge far from raising objections to the clearance actually argues for this course of action,[42] but he seems to backtrack after he has delivered the notices to quit. In a letter of 24 September 1830 Edge predicts that: 'turning out so many people will be the cause of serious disturbance in the country'.[43] It is likely that while serving the notices Edge was made very aware at firsthand the extent and depth of opposition a clearance was likely to face. The larger part of the tenantry was to give up

---

[38] D. O'Donoghue to Sir William Gosset, 21 Aug. 1831 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1831/G30).

[39] Ruth Delany, *The Grand Canal of Ireland* (Newtown Abbot, 1973), p. 143.

[40] 28 August 1830 meeting, Minute book of the court of the directors of the Grand Canal 1830/1831 (National Archives of Ireland, Office of Public Works/10/1/69), p. 100 (hereafter Grand Canal minutes); Letter from John Edge, 24 Sep. 1830, Grand Canal minutes 1830/31 (N.A.I., O.P.W., 10/1/69), p. 147; Letter from John Edge, 11 Mar. 1831, Grand Canal minutes 1830/31 (N.A.I., O.P.W., 10/1/69), p. 342.

[41] Letter from John Edge, 11 Mar. 1831, Grand Canal minutes 1830/31 (N.A.I., O.P.W., 10/1/69), p. 342; John Edge, *State of Ireland*, p. 170.

[42] Letter from John Edge, 8 Sep. 1830, Grand Canal minutes 1830/31 (N.A.I., O.P.W., 10/1/69), p. 118.

[43] Letter from John Edge, 24 Sep. 1830, Grand Canal minutes 1830/31 (N.A.I., O.P.W., 10/1/69), p. 147.

possession on 25 March 1831 but all the tenants bar five refused to leave their homes.[44]

Around this time Edge painted a very forbidding picture of the situation writing that:

> 'there are considerable numbers of bad tenants on the land, who have not, nor will they not, pay rent, in fact they have nothing, and they not only keep possession, but are a continual pest to their neighbours, their chief support being plunder, it would be best to turn out such by a few at a time, and although much loss and annoyance would be caused by suffering bad characters to remain for a time, still it would be preferable to insurrection'.[45]

In the refusal of the sub-tenantry to give up possession of their tenements we see something of land occupancy conflict before it escalates in to the sort of violence which would attract the attention of the police, the magistrates and the press, these being the producers of the bulk of surviving source material.

It is possible Edge was manoeuvring himself at this point into becoming the leaseholder of the colliery, farm and townland as he was to become later in 1831 and these intimations of danger were part of an elaborate ploy. However, the simplest and likeliest explanation is that Edge was reacting to events on the ground, namely the response he received when issuing the notices to quit. However, even if Edge was involved in subterfuge this does not contravene what is being claimed here, for if he was involved in some subterfuge he would have couched his argument in such a fashion as to appeal to his audience, namely the directors of the Grand Canal Company. Consequently Edge's writings still give us an indication that sections of the elite understood that it could become necessary to precede with caution less a reaction is provoked.

---

[44] Letter from John Edge, 29 Mar. 1831, Grand Canal minutes 1830/31 (N.A.I., O.P.W., 10/1/69), p. 369.
[45] Letter from John Edge, 11 Mar. 1831, Grand Canal minutes 1830/31 (N.A.I., O.P.W., 10/1/69), p. 342.

In April 1831 Edge reached an agreement with the proprietors Bowen and Lecky for him to take on the leasehold of Newtown colliery and associated royalties, as well as Clonbrock farm and townland.[46] So there was no vacant possession given to Bowen and Lecky and the sub-tenants remained in their places. This most likely made Edge more popular, indeed he claimed there were celebratory bonfires when he took on the lease,[47] which is unsurprising, and he didn't flee the area for safety during the most intense period of Whitefeet activity as Hovenden Stapleton, the proprietor of a neighbouring colliery, did.[48] Also it is notable that a so-called threatening letter found in Clonbrock from October 1831 is conciliatory in its attitude towards Edge. There was an issue with Edge seeking rent arrears, which is mentioned in the letter, which opens thus:

> 'Mr. John Edge, take no erairs of rent any mor from the pore tennans, any man who will pay it he shall be no more ; but let him pay his half-year's rent, and If he does not he must lose house and land, and I will essist Mr. Edge with seven hundre men'.[49]

Note the respectful tone and use of the honorific title, coupled with conciliatory content offering compromise and assistance with policing compromise, all of which is quite different from many "threatening letters". Edge appears to have acceded to the demand not to claim rent arrears.[50]

---

[46] Letter from John Edge, 5 Apr. 1831, Grand Canal minutes 1830/31 (N.A.I., O.P.W., 10/1/69) p. 372; Agreement by Charles Jones Bowen & John Lecky to proposals of John Edge for new lease of Clonbrock & mines if Grand Canal Company surrenders their lease, 12 Apr. 1831 (Trinity College Dublin, Hartpole-Bowen, MS 4813 –4/18).
[47] John Edge, *State of Ireland*, p. 170.
[48] Hovenden Stapleton, *State of Ireland*, p. 96.
[49] *Leinster Express*, 22 Oct. 1831.
[50] John Edge, *State of Ireland*, pp 170-1.

Conclusion

In his willingness to make concessions and compromises Edge was possibly acting in the socially accepted and expected fashion for a landlord (or agent) to behave. It is notable that landlords who behaved as if they had absolute rights as proprietors (either of leaseholds or freeholds) were the victims of retaliatory violence and magistrates took the attitude that they had bought that violence on themselves. Looking at Edge, Hackett and Gregory together it is clear that the less politic, less savvy, less willing to compromise, were, unsurprisingly, more prone to experience retaliatory violence. The fact that at the time magistrates made this point, that is that Hackett and Gregory behaved in a poor and ill-judged manner, shows how it was expected that the possibility of subaltern resistance should be a consideration when running a workplace or estate. This is also shown by the objections Edge raises to clearing Clonbrock.

This was a pragmatic appraisal of the possibility of provoking resistance, an informal code which was not spontaneously occurring but was occasioned, and enforced, by pressure from below. Edge's caution in regard to the proposed clearance and his retraction of the demand for arrears and the magistrates' condemnation of Hackett and Gregory are suggestive of curbs imposed on the elite by resistance from below. Equally it seems more yielding approaches by elites were met by comparatively low-key responses from subaltern groups, at least this is the case in Newtown colliery and Clonbrock townland. The potency of peasant agency in land occupancy conflicts is underlined by what happened in its absence, namely the mass clearance campaigns of the Great Famine. James Donnelly estimates that over half-a-million persons were driven from their lands during the Famine, this occasioned

in part by 'the virtual collapse of the tenant capacity for effective resistance'.[51] The words of

English Radical MP G.P. Scrope, who was writing in 1834, were prescient:

> 'But for the salutary dread of the Whiteboy association ejectment would desolate
>
> Ireland and decimate her population, casting forth thousands of families like noxious
>
> weeds rooted out of the soil on which they have grown [...] the Whiteboy system is
>
> the only check on the ejectment system [...].'[52]

These introductory chapters have sought to do two things: firstly, to contextualise the

notices that the major portion of this thesis is concerned with; and, secondly, to underline

the relevance of the notices — they are windows into class struggles which shaped Irish

economic development. The next chapter will discuss my methodological approach to the

notices as well as their importance as a source. We have seen that whiteboyism was the

main form of subaltern contention in the early-nineteenth-century Ireland, that

whiteboyism can be conceptualised as a Tilly style repertoire of contention, a common

mode of social conflict, likely having its origins in Scott's everyday forms of resistance.

Whiteboyism (and as we shall see the notices examined here) was mostly, but not

exclusively, about land occupancy. At least in the early-nineteenth-century period these

conflicts around control over and access to land can be theorised as part of a transition from

a feudal mode of production to a capitalist mode of production. There was certainly wage

labour in early-nineteenth-century Ireland and there was certainly a qualitative difference

between what were colloquially known as 'large farmers' and 'small farmers'. Nonetheless

this transition remains at a nascent level. Just as the nature of the insertion of the Irish

economy into the British dominated Atlantic economy determined de-industrialisation and

---

[51] James S. Donnelly Jr., 'Mass eviction and the Great Famine' in Cathal Póirtéir (ed.), *The great Irish Famine* (Cork, 1995), p. 156.
[52] Quoted in John E. Pomfret, *The struggle for land in Ireland 1800–1923* (Princeton, 1930), p. 24.

hence reliance on agriculture so too did the changing terms of trade with Britain post-Corn

Laws promote a pastoral economy within which feudal relations were maintained. Bearing

in mind with regard to this continuation of feudal relations in the pastoral economy that the

production of beef and lamb calls for less labour than the production of cereals. However,

prior to this the growth of capitalist social relations was inhibited by the difficulties posed by

peasant resistance to processes of primitive accumulation. Consequently attempting to

understand culture of that peasant resistance is attempting to understand something which

shaped early-nineteenth-century social structure in helping to prolong feudalism into the

late-nineteenth-century; thereby, although it is beyond the scope of this thesis, laying the

basis for the later transition to the petty-commodity mode of production.[53]

---

[53] That is to say where there is production for market exchange, little or no wage labour, and no feudal rent —
the mode which existed across much of the Irish agrarian economy in the wake of the movements of the 1879-
1923 period.

Chapter Four: Methodology

The first task of this chapter is to outline the epistemological framework within in which the research for this thesis was carried out. After this I will outline my methodological approach which is based on grounded theory method. The central part of this chapter focuses on a discussion of the so-called threatening letters themselves, how they were used, how they were preserved, but most importantly their value as source-material today. Finally, I will present the process of inductive coding of the textual content of the notices, discuss the resulting codes and provide examples of coded notices.

Epistemology and documentary evidence

Questions of reliability of documentary evidence do not arise so much for the main body of sources used here, namely the threatening notices, as I'm often reading them not for what they say about the world outside them so much as how they say it. This section of my research is perhaps congenial to post-modernist perspectives often found in literary studies and intellectual and cultural histories which have broadly similar research objects and, for this part of my research, ostensibly similar goals of interpretative understanding. Epistemological questions do arise however for the sources I am using to contextualise the themes I have derived from the notices.

Guy Beiner, a cultural historian influenced by post-modernism, in his work on the social memory of the small military expedition made by the first French Republic to the west of Ireland in 1798, gives us a perhaps inadvertent demonstration of how documentary evidence is a window into a real world existing with at least a degree of independence from

how we view it. A flag currently on display in Westport House, a hotel and former

aristocratic residence in county Mayo in the west of Ireland, bears the following caption:

> 'This standard was made in France by order of the *Directoire* in 1798 and was
>
> presented by General Humbert at Killala, in August 1798, to the Mayo Legion when
>
> he raised that force. When the French surrendered in September 1798, the Mayo
>
> Legion was disbanded and this standard was handed over to the Earl of Altamont
>
> who, as the Lord Lieutenant of the county Mayo, was the representative of Great
>
> Britain and Ireland. It has remained in the family ever since.'[1]

Beiner goes on to relate:

> 'According to the guides in the house, local tradition recalls that dedicated French
>
> women sewed the flag in preparation for the expedition to Ireland. However, this
>
> small green pennant, which sports the title "The Mayo Legion" and professes in its
>
> Latin motto allegiance to King and Country (*Pro Rege Saepe, Pro Patria Semper*)
>
> evidently belonged to the local volunteer corps commanded by Lord Altamont and
>
> not to a French republican army unit. Social memory invested souvenirs with an
>
> authority that was clearly not grounded in reliable historical claims (in a positivist
>
> sense) but based primarily on belief and imagination.'[2]

Clearly the claim that this flag was a French one is absurd hokum in this instance being made

by a commercial establishment possibly with an eye to the diaspora market or simply out for

---

[1] Guy Beiner, *Remembering the year of the French: Irish folk history and social memory* (Wisconsin, 2007), p.237.

[2] *Ibid.* p. 237.

a more romantic story. We might construe the past but we do not construct it,[3] the flag

remained one whose provenance was evident to anyone with a cursory knowledge of late-

eighteenth-century Europe irrespective of what stories were told about it. But, as Richard J.

Evans points out, we cannot take our wide range of possible documentary evidence as

simple 'direct reflections of past reality'.[4] Most obviously to continue with the example of

the flag of the Mayo Legion it cannot be taken as comprehensive evidence of political

attitudes in late-eighteenth-century Mayo. When viewed in relation to other sources which

speak of the thousands of Mayo men who fought for the French republic we can see the

sentiments expressed in the flag as representative of only one section of the populace;

hence the necessity of using where possible a multiplicity of sources.

For example, we might use both estate records and police/magistrate records to a get a

cross cutting perspective – the former might confine us to a certain type of estate (larger

and with a more modern style of administration), the latter would tend to give a perhaps

undue impression of the extent of "crime" but tell us of smaller estates and leaseholds less

prone to producing and maintaining documentary evidence of their own. The state records

can tell us of social conflict when it has reached violent proportions but sometimes not tell

us of strikes, refusals to give up possession of land, re-appropriation of resources and other

more small-scale or restrained forms of conflict. The writings of magistrates would give us

the impression that they were at times disdainful of particular landed proprietors or

substantial leaseholders whose actions met resistance coupled with estate records though

we can see that this view, at least in so far as it was more openly expressed, was perhaps

limited to less socially prominent norm-breaking gentleman as opposed to major landed

---

[3] Andrew Sayer, *Realism and social science* (London, 2000), p. 10.
[4] Evans, *In defence of history*, p. 111.

proprietors whose innovations similarly provoked resistance. On a similar note we can contrast both liberal and conservative newspapers which tend to elide class division in favour of populism in the case of the liberals and sectarianism in the case of the conservatives with the so-called "threatening notices", a subaltern media which gives us an altogether different perspective.

A sceptical approach and the use, where possible, of multiple sources is clearly necessary. It should be noted that multiple sources can include non-documentary sources such as the material culture investigated by archaeologists and architectural historians as well as, for later periods, oral history. With regard to scepticism it should be noted there are many different types of documents, a newspaper or pamphlet, for instance, is obviously suffused with partisanship and calculated argument the point of this genre is to convince or to confirm people in their convictions, we cannot really say the same thing about an account book or a membership list or other such hum-drum bureaucratic documentation. Reading against the grain in this way means reading documents for what they are not saying, it means disagreeing with them, it means seeing their distortions, it means using them for purposes quite different from those the authors may have intended for their readers (e.g. a collection of evidence of "crime" can become a collection of evidence of popular culture).[5]

The relevance of theoretical abstraction can be explained in two related ways; firstly, because there is a difference between the extent that different phenomena are observable; and, secondly, because a theoretical perspective is necessary to simply read the documents beyond the most perfunctory level. With regard to the first point critical realism

---

[5] John Tosh (with Sean Lang), *The pursuit of history: Aims, methods and new directions in the study of modern history* (Harlow, 2006), pp 106-8.

distinguishes between the real and actual on the one hand and the empirical on the other. This distinction is elucidated by Andrew Sayer thus:

> 'While we may be able to observe things such as the structure of an organization or a household, as well as what happens when they act, some structures may not be observable. Observability may make us more confident about what we think exists, but existence itself is not dependant on it. In virtue of this, then, rather than rely purely upon a criterion of observability for making claims about what exists, realists accept a causal criterion too (Collier, 1994a). According to this a plausible case for the existence of unobservable entities can be made by reference to observable effects which can only be explained as the products of such entities. Both natural and social scientists regularly make such claims.'[6]

For example, account books, estate rentals, and crime reports do not contain the social structure known as class so much as they contain its 'observable effects'.

In a real sense then to simply read the documents, to make sense of what potential information they contain, necessitates theoretical perspectives. A point strongly made by Evans when he explains how without Marxism urban and labour history 'would be enormously impoverished' and similarly that it was anthropological studies of mid-twentieth- century witchcraft in rural Africa which allowed historical studies of witchcraft in early-modern Europe.[7] His argument can be encapsulated as no theory means no *Making of the English working class* and no *Religion and the decline of magic*.

---

[6] Sayer, *Realism and social science*, p. 12.
[7] Evans, *In defence of history*, p. 83.

It is necessary to have a continual creative dialogue and tension between theory and evidence which at times may necessitate pulling back from theory and focusing on the documents and at times may involve foregrounding theory. We cannot just read what is in the documents. To just base ourselves on documents would be to adopt the perspectives of the authors of the documents which taken to its logical extreme would mean interpreting medieval Europe through notions of divinely ordained social structure or the late-nineteenth-century world through racialism.[8]

Alternatively the lack of an explicit engagement with theory can mean uncritically adopting the 'common sense', in the Gramscian sense of the term, of our own time and projecting it back on the past — so mid-nineteenth-century Ireland is understood through the lens of the technocratic or patronage politics of late-twentieth- and early-twenty-first-century Ireland. The Great Famine on a local level, for instance, becomes apparently explicable through the lack of good management of an estate or the lack of a local champion such as a resident landlord.[9] Conversely theoretical perspectives which are not grounded in careful attention to what evidence we have from the past lack a foundational plausibility. As de Ste.Croix put it:

> 'the insistence on recognising the *specificity* of the historical situation in any given period (and even area) - must not be abandoned, or even compromised, when it is combined with a sociological approach.'[10]

---

[8] Kaye, *British Marxist historians*, p. 74.
[9] G. E. M. de Ste.Croix, *The class struggle in the ancient Greek world from the archaic age to the Arab conquests* (Ithaca, 1981), p. 33.
[10] *Ibid.* p. 33.

Methodology

The methodology I employ here is a based on grounded theory method because I think this is the best way to leave preconceptions to one side (in so far as is possible) to produce a valid/authentic sense of what is in the documents.[11] Having established that sense I move through successive stages of interpretation and re-interpretation, starting with analytical coding and culminating in the theory chapters. An approach congruent with the epistemology outlined above, in the sense that it is based on the premise that there is an accessible documentary authenticity outside of our interpretive apparatus but that remaining at this empirical level without any overt theoretical abstraction massively limits our understanding. Indeed, an absence of theory can never be achieved, given that all inquiry has some implicit or explicit ontology behind it (that is to say the most ostensibly empiricist history will actually have a covert unspoken theory within it).

In the case of this study a particular ontological perspective informs the choice of subject matter and source material and an attempt is made to approach that source material without any particular preconceptions beyond that initial choice. This first approach forms the initial descriptive/inductive coding phase. Later analytical coding is a combination of relationships between codes that become apparent during the earlier descriptive coding and more abstract concepts derived from a later stage of interpretation. Coding refers here to attaching desciptive tags to a line or lines of text, with these tags, or codes, later grouped together in a further process of coding into more analytical categories, also known as codes.

---

[11] For broader discussion of the use of grounded theory method in research on social movements see Alice Mattoni, 'The potentials of grounded theory in the study of social movements' in Donatella della Porta (ed.), *Methodological practices in social movement research* (Oxford, 2014), pp 21 – 42; Ina Peters, 'Too Abstract to Be Feasible? Applying the Grounded Theory Method in Social Movement Research', *GIGA Working Paper*, 247 (2014), online at www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/working-papers, accessed 27/10/14.

Following grounded theory method I started with a process of inductive coding of the collection of threatening notices and identified a number of recurrent themes within the notices through a process of analysing connections and relationships between sets of initial descriptive codes which allowed me to group descriptive codes together into analytical codes. Also following grounded theory method as opposed to starting out with a research question in the culminative chapters to the second and third parts of the thesis I bring my findings into dialogue with the existing theoretical literature which speaks to the various questions and issues I have identified.

For the ground theory method stage known as theoretical sampling, which consists of 'deciding on analytic grounds where to sample from next',[12] I have sought to tease out the meanings of the various themes identified within the notices through drawing on a wider primary source collection and secondary literature of a more empirical sort, or at least more empirical in my use of it than in my use of the literature explored in the theoretical chapters.

The point as I see it to this methodological approach is to be both grounded in what empirical evidence can be garnered and allow for theoretical abstraction to access what is real and actual but not observable in an empirical sense.

Threatening letters: The primary data

Quintessentially what became known as "threatening letters" or "threatening notices" were handwritten notes containing a demand or demands backed up with the threat of violent force. A small number were actually printed rather than handwritten. More often the notices include drawings as well as writing. Typically these would be illustrations of coffins,

---

[12] Cathy Urquhart, *Grounded theory for qualitative research: A practical guide* (London, 2013), p. 63.

and less frequently ball, heads, skull and crossbones, firearms and swords. Perhaps these pictures were included at the behest of illiterate persons in the group issuing the notices – so they could be sure of the message. Notices were delivered in a variety of ways – through the conventional post, fixed to windows, shoved under a door or left at a stile. Other notices were given to the servants or neighbours of an intended target for them to transmit and some were personally delivered by an attacking party whilst they were assaulting the person the letter was addressed to. Sometimes notices were posted up in public places such as near a forge or outside a church. At its most basic the "threatening notice" was a mechanism of anonymous intimidation. However, at one end of a spectrum it began to morph into a form of media. This is the case with the publically displayed notices – some of which are not addressed to anyone in particular, the author(s) of one make plain it was only issued so that it could be publically seen that they had given their intended target due notice and some of which ask for a response in the form of a public notice announcing compliance with the demands in the first notice. Of the two printed notices used as source material in this study at least one was widely distributed — more like a leaflet then that what is perhaps at first thought of as a "threatening letter".

The notices are a tactic, a means, a mechanism, or perhaps several tactics, several means, several mechanisms, given the different ways they could be used. They were a common way of doing things common to a number of different situations. Notices were generated within a variety of different forms of disputes and conflicts. Notices can have been produced in personal disputes and be an expression of animus between different individuals. Notices can have been produced in sectarian conflicts. Notices were found in innumerable conflicts over land which in themselves can be class antagonism or inter- or intra-family conflicts. Notices

featured in struggles between employer and employees where they could act as an announcement of/demand for a particular wage rate and as a means of discipline seeking to prevent people from working under-rate. Notices were used in the Tithe War, for instance against people who paid their tithe or who worked for people who paid their tithe, as well as against the recipients or collectors of tithe. Notices are recorded as being used in electoral intimidation. There was a restricted franchise and a system of open voting at this time. This study will not be concerned will all notices but with a particular selection made of notices related to conflicts around land and labour.

In one of the few studies of the anonymous notice as a form of social protest E.P. Thompson treats of letters dating as far back as the 1720s.[13] To Thompson the tactic relates to two macro-level factors; firstly, there are the beginnings of widespread literacy; and, secondly, forms of collective organised defence are weak or non-existent. That is to say there are no trade unions or similar associational bodies. So he tends to see notice as arising out of a position of weakness something like what Scott calls the weapons of the weak.[14] Adrian Randall qualifies this analysis somewhat claiming that:

> 'historians have been inclined to see such letters as indicative of an essential
>
> weakness in bargaining position, this is not entirely true. Even skilled workers often
>
> conducted negotiations this way. The croppers, highly organised into a combination,
>
> the Brief Institution, which linked men in the trade across the country, saw

---

[13] E. P. Thompson, 'The crime of anonymity' in Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John G. Rule, E. P. Thompson, and Cal Winslow (eds), *Albion's fatal tree: crime and society in eighteenth-century England* (Harmondsworth, 1977), pp 255-344.

[14] James C. Scott, *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance* (New Haven, 1985).

advantages in announcing their demands in this form to recalcitrant and hostile employers'.[15]

Randall and Thompson were looking at eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century England. There are instances of similar practices outside the British world of the eighteenth- and nineteenth-centuries. *Anonimki*, or anonymous letters, and *listovki*, or proclamations, were the most basic form of peasant opposition to the expropriation of their land by the state in the Soviet Union of the 1930s.[16]

How the practice of issuing notices could function in the way Thompson argues can be demonstrated with reference to the following notice delivered by an armed party in Dunmore, Co. Kilkenny, in September 1832:

> 'Take notice that whereas a meeting of the brethren at Rock Glin Castle concluded to be a fair cause that you should resist a fair cause by reducing Mathew and Mich.l Quin's heir [hire] to ten pence per day as I am the honourable Captain Rock that never take one short or if not you shall be visited with powder & ball whilst here I am the man as happy as the King on his Throun and as a good a messenger as any messenger of mortality while I stand upon firm ground honourable Captain Rock from Armagh for Mr. Coady to take this as a warning you know you cant go against the rules of the County I will call on you or those men this night week to no if you

---

[15] Adrian Randall, 'Foreword' in Kevin Binfield (ed.), *Writings of the Luddites* (Baltimore 2004), pp xiii – xviii; p. xv.

[16] Lynne Viola, *Peasant rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the culture of peasant resistance* (Oxford, 1996), p. 116.

obey my orders and if not them nor any other man shall not work a stroke for you

until you do so'[17]

Not only is the demand ostensibly issued by a body other than workers actually concerned

with the issue, but frequently such demands are couched in a way as could be construed to

be a threat to them as much as to their employer. So rather than put themselves in the

potentially dangerous position of taking overt action over their cut wages instead they can

hide behind the fearsome threatening mythological figure 'Captain Rock from Armagh'.

Should they have to refuse to labour they can claim to be compelled to so at the behest of a

clandestine paramilitary force. The same pseudonymous intimidation can be used to

dissuade anyone from taking their employment, and, with larger groups of employees could

be used to keep discipline within the workers' ranks.

A minority of these ostensibly ephemeral missives have survived due to them being taken

down by, or reported to and subsequently taken as evidence by, the police or magistracy.

Then either a copy would be made and the text sent to Dublin Castle or the original would

be sent to Dublin Castle. The receiving party there would be the Chief Secretary's Office. The

Chief Secretary was the government minister with specific responsibility for Ireland.

As well as through the police, magistracy, and Castle, the texts of other notices survive due

to them being reported in the press, though this has to be considered a more questionable

source. The era of local newspapers begins in Ireland around the late 1820s and is in some

ways a product of the mobilisation and counter-mobilisation associated with O'Connellite

campaigning. Counties which had close and bitterly fought elections seem to also had more

---

[17] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

in the way of a press, and the tendency was for rival liberal and conservative newspapers to be established around the same time.

A smaller number of threatening letters survive in estate collections, which is to say the documentation remaining from particular landed estates. An unquantifiable number of notices are in private possession.

The relevance of the threatening letter lies in the bias of the historical record. Unescapably the lives, attitudes, worldviews and cultural practices of the vast majority of humanity for almost all of human history are shrouded in silence. Not to mention the more introspective and even more unreachable hopes, fears and desires. The experience of the majority of humanity in a sense continues to be pre-historic well into the twentieth-century. These notices are among the first sources we have in Ireland which come from the common people. Only the song tradition is a comparable source in these terms. This is not to say that there are not also issues with the representativeness of the notices. The question of their representativeness will be addressed later, suffice to say here it should be borne in mind that it seems reasonable to assume most threatening letters were composed by groups of men (though I'm not sure how we would ever know for sure). Whiteboy movements at least, though not accounting for all notices, were almost exclusively male. Consequently there are continuing silences and continuing unrepresentativeness at the heart of the historic record. Unrecorded oral cultures are lost for ever, we have to work with what we have without assuming that this material is totally representative.

Threatening letters as a source

The main problem faced in attempting to understand whiteboyism and the other still more shadowy forms of pre-Famine subaltern contention are in the nature of the documentary record. Typically the only primary sources remaining are elite ones which are frequently literally clueless. These sources are principally police and magistrates' reports, newspapers — at the time usually organs of either liberal or conservative activism, or estate records formed by estate agents or landed proprietors. All these sources are from outside of the subaltern social scene from which sprang Whitefeet or striking farm labourers. The producers of this source material were outside and with no way into understanding what was deliberately occluded from them being as they were typically in another way inside and directly concerned with what was going on. That is to say directly concerned as either the immediate authors of what the movements were standing in opposition to, i.e. opponents, or directly concerned as persons tasked with preserving the ruling class form of 'law and order'. Often both categories were actually the same persons as for instance when estate agents were also magistrates. Consequently even without any bias the main body of primary source material offers little to serve as insight into the consciousness of plebeian rebels.

Moreover, such elite sources are frequently jaundiced, prejudicial, and condescending. Sometimes their prime interest is to score points by gratuitously blaming their elite political rivals for moments of subaltern insurgency. This results in all kinds of distortion, especially when joined to class condescension. We can take for example the notes of De Tocqueville on his journey in Ireland in 1835, an excerpt from which is contained in the introduction chapter. Who does De Tocqueville record himself as having spoken to, principally clergymen and lawyers, but certainly not peasant-farmers or farm labourers.

While often curt and taciturn, and other times formulaic, the importance of threatening notices is that they are one of the very few ways we have of getting anything like direct access to the mental world of the rural poor of pre-famine Ireland. With regard to threatening letters in eighteenth-century England E.P. Thompson wrote: 'they are among the only surviving articulate testaments of millions of supposedly inarticulate'.[18]

What Thompson says here is only truer of the situation in Ireland. The "threatening notice" provides a window into a closed world.

There are other potentially alternative sources. The ballad tradition, the work of the folklore commission, the writings of 'peasant novelist' William Carleton and other novelists and diarists, and various loose strands here and there.

The Gaelic song and poetry tradition, which does intersect with whiteboyism at points,[19] is, by the 1820s and 1830s, not the most appropriate source for generally English-speaking Leinster. With regard to ballads in the English language the suspicion is that being commercially produced they tended to aim for a broader appeal.[20] Hence, often, in so far as they had an overtly socio-political message it was a pan-Catholic one,[21] likely to garner interest from the widest paying public. Thus the English language ballad tradition supports the anti-tithe movement which was dominated by the middling order. One surviving ballad text published by George Petrie, and given to him by James M. O'Reilly, was apparently often sung as a street ballad in county Carlow and adjacent districts. Petrie's comments on it as 'rude' but 'less objectionable than usual in songs of its class' and 'its preservation may

---

[18] Thompson, *crime of anonymity*, p. 275.
[19] Brian Brennan, *Máire Bhuí Ní Laoire: A poet of her people* (Cork, 2000), pp 34 – 46.
[20] Kevin Danaher, *In Ireland long ago* (Dublin, 1962), p. 145.
[21] Maura Cronin, 'Popular Memory and Identity: Street Ballads in North Munster in the Nineteenth Century' in L. Irwin (ed.), *Explorations centenary essays* (Limerick, 1998), pp 125-45.

perhaps be desirable' to serve 'as a historical memorial'.[22] Comments which suggest that biases of song collectors against this more than usually unrespectable subject may have left us with even less surviving song texts. Someone like Petrie with an unusual basic sympathy towards and interest in popular culture is precisely the person most likely to have made a record of this. We are seeing there then the ultimate outer limits of elite interest in this as something other than criminal activity to be investigated, feared or avoided. The ballad seems to have been a Whitefeet one and for this reason and to see the parallels and perhaps differences with the notices is worth including in an appendix (see appendix b).

The material garnered by the Folklore Commission was principally recorded in the 1930s and consequently is more from post-Famine generations alive in the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-centuries. To expect from it a timeless store is to assume the existence of static unchanging custom and tradition as well as to ignore the rupture that was the Great Famine. There is also a regional issue: the folklore archive, while it contains records from across the island, is strongest in material from the west.[23] There is also the possibility of a class bias within this collection.[24] Again this is not to dismiss the utility of this source: in fact it has been drawn upon to great extent for chapter five of this thesis, rather it is be aware of its limitations with regard to the early-nineteenth-century.

The novelist William Carleton, though from a rural plebeian Catholic background, and very familiar with that world, stands outside it, alienated from it by virtue of his evangelist religious conversion, his adoption of the cause of moral reform, and his addressing himself to an elite audience. Not to mention the particular regional nature of Carleton's work based

---

[22] David Copper (ed.), *The Petrie collection of the ancient music of Ireland* (Cork, 2002), p. 132.

[23] Diarmuid Ó Giolláin, *Locating Irish folklore: Tradition, modernity, identity* (Cork, 2000), pp 129-41.

[24] Cormac Ó Gráda, 'Famine, Trauma and Memory' in *Béaloideas*, 69 (2001), pp 121-43.

as it was on his experiences of his early life in the north-west. Other literary figures of the period, such as Uí Shúileabháin or Leadbeater, while offering us useful insight, were actually further removed from the rural poor than Carleton.

Part of Carleton's work can be classed with what Emer Nolan describes as 'an entire subgenre of Irish fiction', namely 'the novel of agrarian violence'.[25] A notable and early, perhaps originatory, contribution to this genre was Thomas Moore's *Memoirs of Captain Rock*, which was responded to by the Rev. Mortimer O'Sullivan in *Captain Rock Detected* and later by Roger O'Connor in *Letters to his majesty, King George the fourth, by Captain Rock*.[26] However, these works, and others of this genre, including Carleton's contributions to it, are frequently quite removed from the reality of subaltern insurgency. More to the point they are not subaltern representations, not access points into the non-elite cultures of early-nineteenth-century Ireland. As with ballads and the archives of the Folklore Commission literary sources have been used for this study — it is a question of their relative utility for the purposes of this study.

There are other glimpses here and there, such as the purported words of a Whitefeet leader as transmitted to De Tocqueville as contained in the introduction chapter, or the words of Tipperary evictees reported by the Poor Law commissioners (see appendix c). These are often insightful, but of paltry quantity relative to the notices. The value of the Poor Law report in general as a source has been explored above (in chapter two), it should be stressed that the oral evidence gathered for that report is, socially speaking, broad-based, but it was,

---

[25] Emer Nolan, Introduction to 2008 edition of 'Memoirs of Captain Rock' (Dublin, 2008) pp xi – li; p xlvi.
[26] Thomas Moore, *Memoirs of Captain Rock : the celebrated Irish chieftain with some account of his ancestors written by himself* (Dublin, 2008); Rev. Mortimer O'Sullivan, *Captain Rock detected: by a Munster farmer* (Dublin/Edinburgh, 1824); Roger O'Connor, *Letters to his majesty, King George the fourth, by Captain Rock* (London, 1828).

however, gathered from public events, where there likely to have been was some degree of circumspection.

All of these sources can be useful and some of them have been used in this study in conjunction with the threatening letters. However, the least mediated and largest source material we have emanating from within the ranks of the rural subordinate classes of pre-Famine Ireland are the threatening letters. One possible objection is that as the production of threatening letters is an anonymous clandestine activity we more often than not do not know who composed them and consequently do not know how representative they are. On a similar note only a small proportion of the population could have been involved in the authoring of the notices used in this study. I would argue the representativeness of the notices is to be seen in their often generic nature. The same issues, motifs and themes occur over and over again within documents across a broad geographic range. In this study precisely to address the issue of representativeness I have concentrated on the generic and recurrent rather than focus on the small minority of particularly effusive notices containing a more detailed and intelligent polemic.

Moreover, much, though by no means all, of these recurrent features are recognisable in some form in other studies. Close parallels are often to be found in the two other specific examinations of threatening letters in early-nineteenth-century Ireland and in more general studies of whiteboy movements.[27] Beyond that more distant resemblances are found across

---

[27] Gibbons, *Captain Rock, knight errant*; Daniel Grace, 'The threatening notice in pre-famine county Tipperary' in *Tipperary Historical Journal*, (2009), pp 47–70.

a broader scope of social conflict, see for instance the 'culture of retribution' in early-modern France.[28]

Consequently the notices are displaying something more than the individual eccentricity of their authors; in the first instance they are showing something of the cultures within which their creators were located. This is true even if we put a question mark over the authorship of some the notices, at least one notice in the selection studied here was likely or not produced by one of the small number of liberal activists who aimed take on board, to some degree, subaltern demands (see figure 4.2 and compare with figure 4.1).[29]
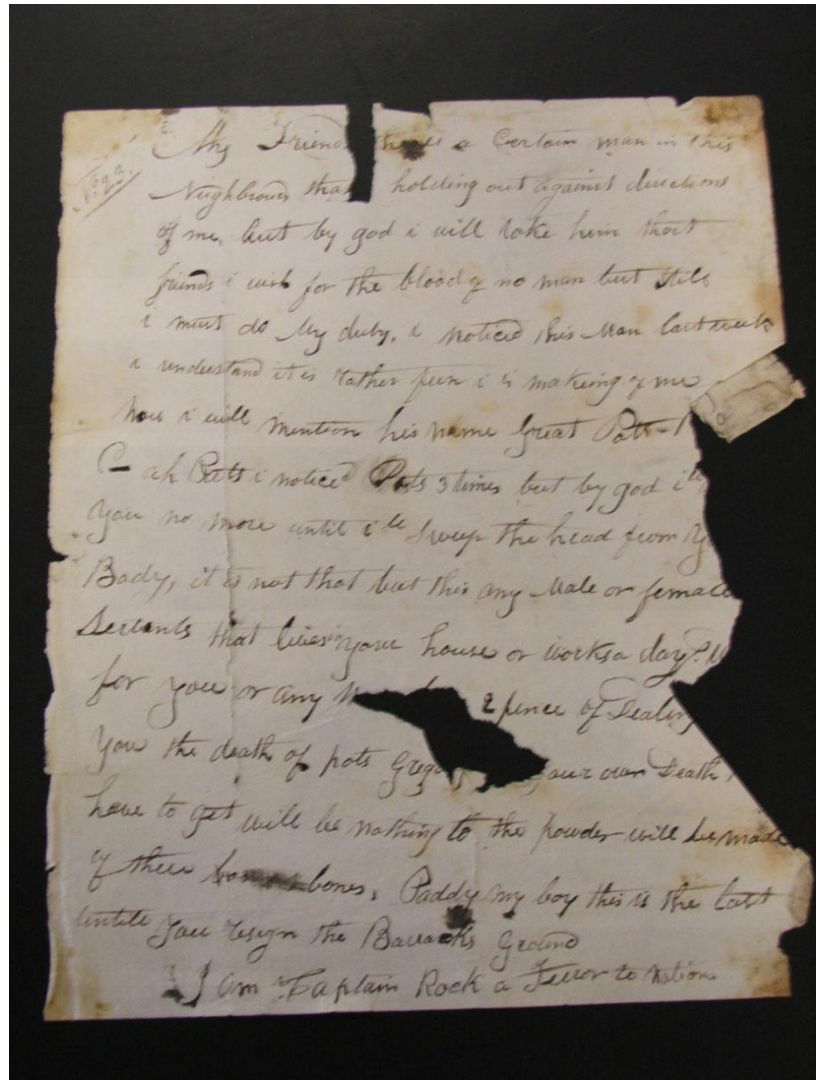
Figure 4.1 A typical threatening notice – note closing phrase 'I am Captain Rock a Juror to nations'

(N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267)

---

[28] William Beik, 'The Violence of the French Crowd from Charivari to Revolution' in *Past & Present*, 197:1 (2007), pp 75-110.
[29] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

We can adjudge this so by virtue of its political rhetoric and, to a lesser extent, by the fact that it is printed. I include the text of the notice below to illustrate the point:

> 'UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL. From the friends of civil and religious liberty. Resolved – that we take into consideration the state of our long injured country respecting the extra charges made on the poor humbled peasantry by our pretended dissimulating patriots, the unrelented farmers of Ireland, whose hearts are more obdurate than adamant. Resolved – that no man or man's man ought to charge more than Thirty Shillings per rood this ensuing November, for Potatoe Ground, any man setting contrary to these directions may be sure to incur the displeasure of every honest and well thinking subject belonging to our Hibernian isle ; - and it be further resolved that we shall not relax our efforts until we see our ends accomplished. It is but just that after the abolishment of Tithes, Church Cesses, and many other galling chains which were broken asunder by the noble exertions of our brave and dauntless countrymen, that Potato Ground be let henceforth on moderate terms.
>
> Hurra for the extinction of Tithes, the downfall of Potatoe Ground, and a speedy Repeal of the Union.
>
> GOD SAVE THE KING.'

UNITED WE STAND, DIVIDED WE FALL.

From the friends of Civil & Religious Liberty

"Resolved—That we take into consideration the state of our long injured country respecting the extra charges made on the poor humbled peasantry by our pretended dissimulating patriots, the unrelented farmers of Ireland, whose hearts are more obdurate than adamant.

Resolved—That no man or man's man ought to charge more than Thirty Shillings per rood this ensuing November, for Potatoe Ground, any man acting contrary to these directions may be sure to incur the displeasure of every honest and well thinking subject belonging to our Hibernian isle ;—and be it further resolved that we shall not relax our efforts till we see our ends accomplished. It is but just that after the abolishment of Tithes, Church Cesses, and many other galling chains which were broken asunder by the noble exertions of our brave and dauntless countrymen, that Potato Ground be let from henceforth on moderate terms.

Hurra for the extinction of Tithes, the downfall of Potatoe Ground, and a speedy Repeal of the Union.

GOD SAVE THE KING.

Figure 4.2 Printed Notice from County Louth

(N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267)

This notice can certainly tell us something about popular attitudes in a roundabout way –

for the author(s) would have given some thought as how to appeal to their audience, it also

can tell us something about the authorities when a leaflet or poster, which clearly isn't

threatening anyone, ends up in a collection of threatening notices. On the other hand

neither the King nor the Act of Union features in any of the other notices examined here,

indeed allusions to either national identity or liberal politics are quite rare and tenuous.

As I'm looking at what occurs in multiple numbers of the notices the fact that at least one

notice is in fact not at all typical either in its content or likely authorship does not skew my

results. In order to produce such a distortion there would have to be the same outlier

occurring across ten or twenty notices and probably from several different counties. If there

was such a feature it would of course cease to be an outlier and become a phenomenon

very much worthy of study in its own right. As, for instance, if many liberal activists were

producing propaganda leaflets against high rents for potato ground (a synonym for conacre

– see chapter two). If that was the case such notices would be a category all of their own

easy to bracket away from the generality of threatening notices.

On the other hand suppose if ten or twenty per cent of the notices I analyse were in some

sense fake as for instance if a panicky mine owner wanted to attract police protection and

so penned a threat to himself, or a landlord was looking for a quick way to evict and noticed

his tenants in the name of Captain Rock, or a magistrate was seeking promotion for himself

and a post for his son and so was composing letters threatening him for his loyal zeal and

duly posting the same to the Castle; and such a magistrate is comically portrayed in

Carleton's *The Tithe Proctor*.[30] I should stress I have found no instances of such a thing

---

[30] William Carleton, *The tithe-proctor: The works of William Carleton, volume two* (New York, 1881).

happening in the broader primary research which compliments my specific examination of the notices. Should even that large a proportion of the notices be something comparable to the Zinoviev letter or the Sinn Fein Oath or other such 'false flag' documents in order for them to have adopted the same motif or trope their creators would have to have been in concert with each other or they would have had to have been copying other genuine threatening notices.

The first possibility simply stretches an improbable hypothesis into hyperbole involving as it would have to had an extensive cross-country conspiracy which has left no record of its activity. The second option, that there was a recognised genre of the threatening notice whose forms anyone could adopt, actually reinforces my case that the generic content of the notices reflects something of the wider cultures of the period. In short seeking out the most regular and common features of the notices avoids the problem whereby particular notices may have had untypical authors.

Leinster 1832 threatening letters collection
The notices used in this study were found in the Chief Secretary Office Registered Papers in the National Archives. This office located in Dublin Castle was the centre point for the administration of Ireland during the 1801 to 1922 period when all of Ireland was part of the United Kingdom. The notices had been collated together into one collection of notices sent to Dublin Castle during the year 1832 from Leinster counties.[31] Mostly then notices issued during 1832 occasionally included are notices issued in late 1831. The collection includes: original notices; the transcribed texts of other notices; sometimes covering letters from

---

[31] National Archives of Ireland, Chief Secretary's Office/Registered Papers/1832/2267 (hereafter N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267). There are no individual references for individual notices – that is the catalogue reference for the entire collection.

magistrates or policemen accompanying these notices or transcription; and, sometimes letters about notices were no text or original notice is included.

This sort of material, that is to say "crime" reports in general, was usually filed under the category 'State of the Country Papers' or later 'Outrage Papers' but it actually has no particular heading for a few years around 1832. However, it still exists as a nameless sub-section within the Chief Secretary Office Registered Papers. These *de facto* Outrage Papers typically consist of letters from magistrates containing reports of particular incidents and their summaries of investigations or other activities, as well as more formulaic police reports. Less frequently there are military reports from military officers acting in aid of the civil power (i.e. in a policing role). These are copies of what are sent to the military command in Kilmainham. The papers are organised in a roughly chronological and geographic fashion but the only existing catalogue is from the nineteenth-century and modern archival cataloguing is only now taking place.

The notices having been collated within Dublin Castle were separated from the original context within which they arrived to Dublin Castle. That is to say, in may cases they have been removed from the police report or magistrates letter within which they were enclosed. Sometimes this is not the case. Sometimes there is a gloss with some information about the issuing of the notice. Sometimes the location where the notice originated from is only identifiable by virtue of familiarity with the handwriting of the police officer who transcribed it. The 1832 threatening letter collection contains notices from all counties within Leinster seemingly with the exception of Dublin (but not all the notices collected in Leinster in that year). Dublin at the time was in separate police division from the rest of Leinster.

According to gloss in the nineteenth-century catalogue to the Chief Secretary Office papers the collection was compiled as part of the effort to see the 1833 Coercion Bill pass through parliament. This bill, which was made law, was a controversial response to both renewal of whiteboyism and the mass opposition to tithe. It was controversial in that the then Whig government had something of a civil libertarian ethic and had regularly denounced similar Tory emergency legislation. Moreover, the terms of the Coercion Bill were such that its measures could possibly be applied to the semi-respectable and borderline constitutional activity of the liberal movement.

There is not any pattern to the collection which would suggest the collation was made selectively with a propaganda goal in mind. For example, there doesn't seem to have been any effort to exclude less violent documents or ones clearly concerned with local immediate material issues like wage rates or a particular piece of land, or ones about personal disputes. Moreover, only in its quantity and geographic range does it appear distinct from other smaller collection of notices, such as one from Clough in north Kilkenny, and one from Garrycastle in the King's County.[32]

It should be noted that the collection does not consist of all threatening letters reported to and recorded by the police or magistracy in the Leinster counties in the year 1832, nor all gathered by them, and additionally a forever unknown quantity will be the number of such letters sent whose existence was never reported to the authorities by their recipients. 1,339 'illegal notices' were recorded as having being issued in Leinster in the year 1832 — this figure includes Dublin but only fifteen came from that county — something which both gives a rough indication of the scale of this surreptitious literature, and, when compared to

---

[32] D. T. Osborne to Sir William Gosset, n.d. (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/608); 'Kings County – Barony of Garrycastle on the line of the River Shannon. Rockite notices.' (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1831/H40).

similar figures for the rest of Ireland, the relative extent of the regional insurgent

mobilisation.[33] In the same year for Munster 159 'illegal notices' were recorded, for

Connaught 268, and for Ulster 320.[34]

The collection is sub-divided into four categories – 'Notices Relative to the Occupation of

Land', 'Notices Relative to the Employment of Labour', 'Notices Relative to the Payment of

Tithe' and 'Miscellaneous Notices'.[35] In practice the collection has got a little mixed up in the

intervening 182 years. The selection I make from the collection is of letters which are

clearly about land occupancy, or which are clearly about employment conditions. This is to

meet the aim of uncovering subaltern voices.

Notices on employment matters often include notices demanding that someone quit their

employment or that someone be fired from their employment. In these cases it is not

necessarily apparent what the dispute is about and in view of the fact sending a threatening

letter is a tactic anyone can engage in these notices have been excluded. A similar case is

given by notices demanding that someone quit a particular place: they can be filed in the

land occupancy category but may not be explicitly about land, these doubtful notices are

also excluded. Tithe notices are excluded on the grounds of the cross-class nature of the

anti-tithe movement. It is beyond the scope of this study but a comparative analysis of the

tithe notices with the land and labour notices would be a potentially fruitful future

development for this research. Also excluded are all cases where neither the original letter

---

[33] PP 1833 (80) Offences, Ireland. A return of the number of offences against the law, which have been committed in Ireland, during the years 1831 and 1832, so far as returns of such offences have been made to the Irish government; specifying the general nature of the offences, and the counties or places in which they have occurred, p. 21, p. 17.

[34] *Ibid.* p. 21.
[35] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

nor what looks like a full transcript is included in the collection. That is to say excluded are letters about letters, paraphrases and part-transcripts.

The notices examined for this study are those pertaining to land and labour. The collection holds approximately 125 land notices, and approximately 100 employment notices. These are approximate figures as over the decades some notices have haemorrhaged out of their original binding/classification — which, as was stated earlier, was into tithe, land, employment and miscellaneous, and also as I included some which were classed under miscellaneous (but were in fact pertaining to land or labour).

There are significantly more employment-related notices in the collection than in the sample examined here, as Dublin Castle's classification of 'notices relative to the employment of labour' encompassed situations far wider than disputes related to the terms of the hire of labour. Specifically such employment-related notices could be about enforcing a boycott (or exclusive dealing as it was then known) around tithe or electoral issues, a personal dispute or it might be simply unclear what the notice is about. For instance, many of these notices involve orders not to work for a certain persons, or order a certain person to quit their employment — these could have been produced in many different contexts — including labour disputes but also including many other situations. Consequently, I have confined myself in this study to examining only those employment related notices which were clearly about the terms of the hire of labour.

Some notices in the collection were also excluded from the sample on grounds of legibility or if it was simply unclear what had, at least ostensibly, occasioned the threat contained in them. So there are 135 threatening letters analysed for this thesis, out of a sub-collection holding approximately 225 which represents a slice of the 1,324 notices reported as having

been received in the same time frame and geographic area as the collection; bearing in mind that the number of threatening letters actually sent will always be an unknown quantity.

The process of transcribing and selecting was a lengthy one. Transcribing involved deciphering handwriting, which in some instance could be very poor. At times it could be difficult to make sense of idiosyncratic or archaic spellings and abbreviations, this especially the case with names of places and people. Selecting meant systematically weeding through resulting transcripts on several occasions, and having to judge where to put particular notices which could have gone either into the pile for examination or that for rejection.

The selection is dominated by notices from Kilkenny — with 37 from that county, 40 if one includes cases from the Kilkenny/Wexford border (e.g. where a notice is delivered in Wexford about land in Kilkenny), with the King's County (present-day Offaly) in second place with 22, Meath with 15, Carlow with 14 (but another two from the border with the Queen's County – present day Laois) and Wexford with 14 (or 17 including the borderline cases).[36] Other counties like Longford, Louth and Westmeath only have one or two notices each. Many of the Meath and Carlow, and perhaps not as predictably, King's County, notices carry the employment related demands of agricultural labourers. Land occupancy, which is to say who holds a particular piece of land, is the main issue the notices are about with 87 on this economic theme. After this are various labour demands – about wage rates, against task-work and against the employment of 'strangers' or migrants. There are only 6 notices addressing conacre and 5 about rent. Of course it could be argued that the notices about land occupancy are ultimately about rent with people having lost their land to interlopers due to rent arrears or the better rent-paying prospects of the new tenant. To some extent the geographic spread of the notices might be a facade produced by skewed reporting efforts of the police and magistracy.
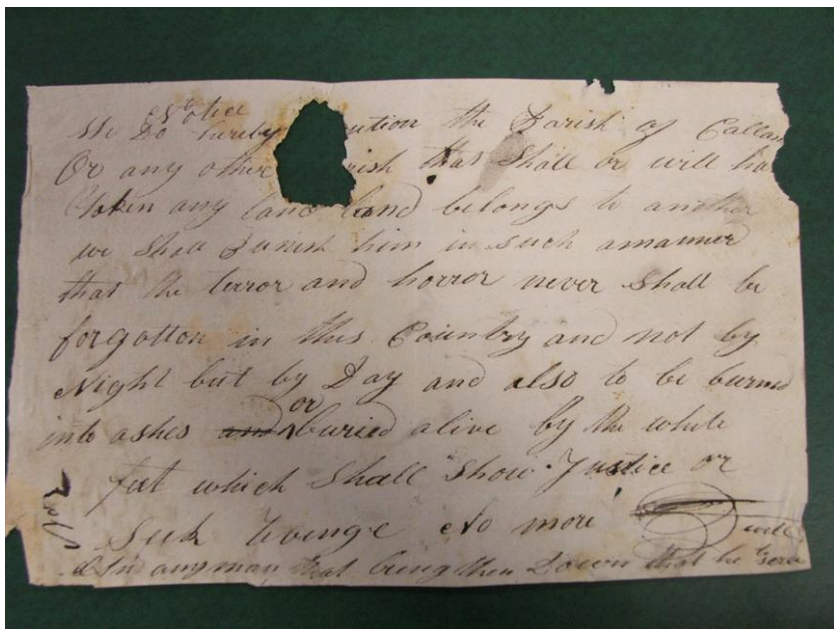
Figure 4.3 An original threatening notice from Callan, Co. Kilkenny.

(N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267)

---

[36] Information as to the geographic provenance of the notices and the economic issues they deal with are represented below in a spreadsheet and bar charts.

It is notable that the spatial dimensions of the Whitefeet movement, the contemporary whiteboy movement, is not reflected in the spread of the notices. There are only four, or at best six, from the Queen's County, and south Kilkenny is better represented than north. Yet north-east Kilkenny and south-east Queen's County was a core area of the Whitefeet. Likely this apparent incongruity is in part the product of which local authorities had the greater ability and eagerness to record "crimes" precisely those not beset by "crime" on all sides. Additionally at least some notices sent to the Castle from north Kilkenny were never collated into the collection.[37] There is more to it than that though. The notices examined here were produced in a number of different settings including a canonical whiteboy movement, farm labourers' strikes – especially in the eastern counties, and what Scott has called everyday forms of peasant resistance. See figures 4.1 and 4.3 for reproduction of typical notices and appendix a, as well as the rest of this chapter, for examples of the texts of notices.

---

[37] D. T. Osborne to Sir William Gosset, n.d. (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/608).

Coding examples

The initial process of line-by-line bottom-up open coding produced fifty-two descriptive

codes (listed below). This process is best explained with a number of examples of notices

and how they were coded.

'To Bullock men and land Pirates beware ye of this any of ye that attempt to either

take or bid for that farm called Bradys farm in Jinkinstown shall be opposed in every

manner as there will be none of ye allowed to take it and if ye do after this you may

believe the advertiser that you will rue the consequence for by a solemn mandate

you will be the same way dealt with as the Sheas was in Kilkenny do not think that

Meath is to slumber in ignorance of their persecution any longer or to submit to the

burdin of such rents as is imposed on the poor by such rents as charged for potatoe

lands & & neither will any stranger be allowed to take this farm and if any persist in

doing so after this notice let them mark the consequence let them not think that this

is A fiction for by all that is Just and Sacred any person after this that persists will be

either themselves or property be made as was an example as ever the County

witnessed also any person taking down this notice will show the same fate as its

expected this notice will be public caution which I really wish may be the case

Dated March 11th 1832.'[38]

This is coded <u>Rent</u>, <u>Land Occupancy</u>, <u>Conacre</u> and <u>Reference to Other Parts of the Country</u>,

all categories which are fairly self-evident by reference to the text. Also <u>Exemplary</u>

<u>Punishment</u> both in 'be made as was an example as ever the County witnessed' and in 'you

---

[38] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

will be the same way dealt with as the Sheas was in Kilkenny'. <u>Exemplary Punishment</u> is used to describe cases where previous victims are held up as representing the potential fate of the target of the notice or where the notice refers to making a new example. <u>Formal Organisational Structure</u> is the code given to the reference to 'solemn mandate' while the reference to the collective category 'the poor' is coded as <u>Class</u>. <u>Public Audience</u> is the code given to 'its expected this notice will be public caution'. This code referring to all cases where the author(s) of a notice refer to a wider public audience for their missive. The notice is also coded <u>Land Taking</u>, this code describing notices referring to persons taking land in some illegitimate sense e.g. taking land from its rightful owner. Finally, it is coded <u>Notice Form</u> the code for all notices that either adopt phases similar to estate notices or are referred to as notices within their text.

<div align="center"><u>'Notice to the Public</u></div>

There is a monster at Kilmoney by name George Neil who has coveted a poor mans property, and is determined to turn him out of his little holding and is to cant him in a few days, This monster is indebted to this poor man if he gives him a fair Settlement.

Any person that bids one farthing for this poor mans property, death, fire and pestilence will invade his House and property

<div align="center">Legion</div>

March 17th 1832'[39]

---

[39] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

'Legion' is coded <u>Irregular Pseudonym</u> as it is not one that occurs with any frequency either within the sample of the notices collection itself or within the material I have used to contextualise the notices. 'his little holding' and 'this poor mans property' are coded for <u>Land Ownership</u> the code for describing cases where tenants are described as having ownership rights in their holding, or, ex-tenants as having ownerships rights in their former holdings. The description of George Neil as a monster earns this notice the code <u>Amoral Individuals</u>. The title of the notice is coded <u>Public Audience</u> and <u>Notice Form</u>. The prospect of 'a fair Settlement' is coded <u>Negotiation</u> the code for all instances where a notices offers its target some compromise or addresses them in respect of their family's reputation etc... The code <u>Class</u> is not applied here as the description 'this poor man' does not describe a collective body. Finally, the notice is clearly about <u>Land Occupancy</u>.

<div align="center">'<u>Notice</u></div>

Frances Murphy I give you notice to give up the land to the man that you robbed him of his crop, manure, timber, & turf in the year 1828, in 15 days time you are required to give it up, if not Captain Rock and his Whitefeet will pay you a visit from old Leighlin sooner or later, you cannot tell if you persevere you will be no more, put us not to the trouble of coming to your fall, we are bound to go 15 miles on foot & 21 on horse.

<div align="right">C. Rock'[40]</div>

---

[40] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

With 'Captain Rock and his Whitefeet' this notice receives the codes <u>Captain Title</u>, <u>Rock</u> and <u>Whitefeet</u>. 'will pay you a visit from old Leighlin' is coded with <u>Travel</u> but not with <u>Reference to Other Parts of the Country</u> as the notice originates from Garryhill, County Carlow, not that far from old Leighlin. 'we are bound to go 15 miles on foot & 21 on horse' gets the code <u>Oath-Bound Organisation</u> – not only does bound refer to an oath but the wording is similar to the wording of oaths. 'I give you notice' makes for the code <u>Notice Form</u> which refers to the broad resemblance between some of these notices and the notices used in estate management. Again this notice is on the issue of <u>Land Occupancy</u>.

> 'Notice by Labourers of Leighlin
>
> We will meet on Saturday evening next in order to make a market rule for wages. Not to work for any man less than 2s./ day and diet, not withstanding having postponed our resolutions for Sunday still we charge any person as a labourer from this day forward not to work less, you might imagine that the labourer must work, in the name of goodness how many weeks will your corn stand when once ripe, the contents of our intentions will be posted on Sunday next – our reasons will be explained.
>
> Labourers Aug.t 1832.
>
> P.S. the conditions is agreed in Co.Kildare'.[41]

This notice is coded <u>Wage</u>, <u>Class</u> and <u>Reference to Other Parts of the Country</u>. It isn't coded <u>Formal Organisational Structure</u> as by that I mean allusions to structures which likely do not exist while the 'meeting' and 'resolutions' referred to here have a realistic air.

---

[41] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

Regulation, 8 notices are given this code in reference to demands being styled regulation or the rules this is exclusive of a further 16 notices which describe their issuers as regulators (frequency of codes are represented in bar charts and a spreadsheet below).

An example of a notice given the 'regulators' code here follows:

'To John Murphy of Rahakeen Parish of Mullinavat Take Notice that We the Regulators of the County of Kilkenny require that you shall give up the Quiet and Peaceable Possession of the Lands you hold in said Place, as it is the rules and regulations We require to be kept that no person shall for the space of five years after the former tenant being dispossessed, take or hold such lands, whilst such tenant pays an honest and regular rent for them. We give you until the first day of October to get clear of the Premises or the most one week longer. We the Regulators of the county of Kilkenny remain your Sincere Friends if you obey our orders but if you Persevere in holding said Lands, remark the consequence. It is not the loss of Property that will take place as it would be the cause of Taxation on the Parish, but the loss of life, or lives, so from the time above mentioned be always prepared as we are to make our journey to you and your neighbours Mr. Landy at the old turnpike of Ballyquoher, and shew some Public Example in that part of the country No more at Present until We go See You and there is no excuse to be taken then'

Amoral individual, 18 notices are given this code, for instances whereby they designate their targets as, in some form, wayward person in need of correction. The following is an example

of a notice coded for 'amoral individual', this notice is also of interest in that it was openly

delivered in broad daylight while the recipient was surrounded by his employees:

> 'Men. I am informed that Stephen Garry of Kildare is going to dispossess people of
>
> their land about Kildare which contrary to Laws so let no man work for Garry until
>
> such times as all of you shall hear of him, having nothing to do with any persons Land
>
> and any man going to labour until that time comes about he is under the sentence of
>
> Being Shot so men don't forget [unclear] times if you do we will not now? If the
>
> Villain proceeds any further in respect to the land he will put us to the necessity of
>
> paying him a visit not in the night but in the daylight now I conjure everyman of you
>
> all to quit Garry and no man to labour for him and if any fresh hands come to work
>
> the D__L might as well take him alive for we will destroy themselves and all belong
>
> to them now men that works for Garry at this present time Quit him for Gods sake
>
> By doing so we will remain your friends,
>
> Terry's Mother's Children'.[42]

Land ownership is the code I give 28 notices whose texts confer a species of property right

upon tenants or ex-tenants. As per the following example from near Stoneyford in Co.

Kilkenny:

> 'Patrick Cory of goodmanns yard i am informed that you hold the property which
>
> does not belong to yourself but rather to another And i hope you will not put me to
>
> any more necessity of speaking or sending to you About this and if you do again you

---

[42] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

will Displease me very much and put me to more trouble than you imagine and not

me alone but yourself.

Now i have ban some miles away this time back or otherwise unwell but now as my

health is restored to me and that i am able to go amongst my friends and count you

one of them if you will take my advice i will be thankful to you to give up the

property which you hold at present do not puserver oneless if you do not [unclear]

this [picture of coffin]

Given from under my hand

Captain Rock'.[43]

A related code <u>Land Taking</u> refers to another 20 notices wherein people are described as

having taken land in some illegitimate sense or are described as land takers, land jobbers,

land pirates etc... These two codes <u>Land Taking</u> and <u>Land Ownership</u>, as well as another

code <u>Negotiation</u> I have not drawn out into a deeper analysis in the following sections of the

thesis, like the more straightforward economic descriptive codes they relate back to what

has been discussed in the previous three chapters.

The code <u>Against Migrant Workers</u> refers to notices opposing the employment of what were

known as strangers, like this one from Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow:

'Notice No. 1 I request that no man will take less than 2s. : 8d. per day No strangers

admitted but the towne Boys alone Captain Carder or remark what will follow'

---

[43] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

9 notices are coded for that, and 10 are coded <u>Against Task Work</u> for their opposition to be paid by the amount done as opposed to by a time period, this is often found in cases of employment in turf-cutting.

9 notices are given the code <u>Infrequent Pseudonyms</u>, for pseudonyms which do not regularly show up in the sample of notices examined for this study, but do appear with greater frequency elsewhere.   9 notices are given the code <u>Irregular Pseudonyms</u>, for pseudonyms which seem more to be more singular in their occurrence.

A spreadsheet and four bar charts below visually represent the coding of the notices. Through secondary selective coding the initial descriptive codes were grouped into more abstract analytical codes. These analytical codes express both relationships which become apparent between different codes during the process of coding and relationships which are derived from a later stage of analysis.

The descriptive codes are grouped below under headings which are the analytical codes as well as into two larger descriptive categories of 'location' and 'economic issues'. 'Location' refers to where the notices come from – not geographic areas mentioned in the texts, and the 'economic issues' category is self-explanatory.

The two analytical codes developed here are 'coercive regulation' and 'collective identity'. Perusal of the descriptive codes will demonstrate that the process of selective coding was one of several stages. The reasoning behind the categorisation of some codes into a larger analytical grouping is fairly apparent, the name of the analytical code 'coercive regulation' is, for instance, directly derived from the descriptive code 'regulation'. Other descriptive codes were given their particular analytical code after a longer process.

Scrutiny of the following spreadsheet (figure 4.4) will show that the analytical codes coercive regulation and collective identity do not exhaust the potential for anaylsis of the content of the notices. A number of descriptive codes not further categorised into an analytical code or codes, particularly Land Taking, Negotiation, and Land Ownership could all be fruitfully developed further. Similarly some of the codes classed under the economic issues descriptive category could be subjected to greater examination. However, consistent with the objective of this study to move away from a purely economic-based approach to early-nineteenth-cenury subaltern contention this is not what I have chosen to focus on in the main body of this thesis. That said it should be borne in mind that these descriptive codes reinforce the analysis developed in chapters two and three in that they show that the authors of the letters regard tenants as having a right of possession.

Figure 4.4: The spreadsheet below shows all codes and their frequency (note any notice will only be given a particular code once).

Code System				817
	Coercive Regulation			0
		Amoral Individual		18
		General Legal Reference		20
		Formal Organisational Structure		16
		Oath Bound Organisation		7
		Status Title		15
		Exemplary Punishment		18
		Regulation		8
			Regulators	16
		Notice Form		76
		Law		11
	Economic Issues			0
		Land Occupancy		87
		Wage		29
		Against Task Work		10
		Against migrant workers		9
		General Employment		3
		Rent		5
		Conacre		6
	Collective Identity			0
		Infrequent Pseudonyms		0
			Lady Clare	2
			Mary Doyle	1
			Moll Doyle	2
			Carder	4
		Captain		47
		Reference to Other Part of the Country		11
		Travel		15
		National Identity		14
		Confessional Identity		2
		Liberal Politics		7
		Rock		41
		Class		16
		Whitefeet		22
		Terry Alt		9
		Irregular Pseudonyms		7
	Location			0
		Wexford		14
		Meath		15
		Kilkenny		37
		Queens County		4
		Wicklow		3
		Queens County/Carlow		2
		Kilkenny/Wexford		3
		Longford		1
		Louth		2
		Kildare		11
		Westmeath		2
		Kings County		22
		Carlow		14
		Unclear Location		7
	Uncategorised Codes			
		Land Taking		20
		Public Audience		28
		Polite Form		26
		Negotiation		22
		Land Ownership		28

Descriptive Categories:
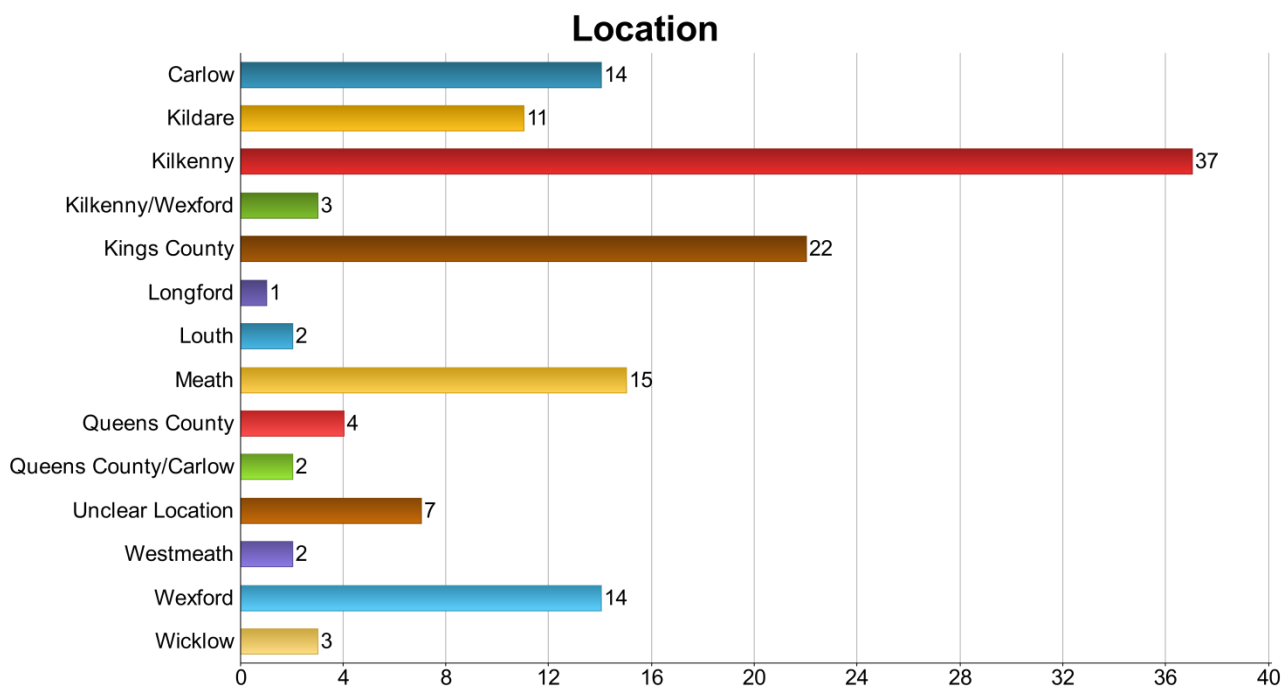
Location

Figure 4.5 Location Chart. Represented here are the locations of all 135 notices. Each notice gets only one location code.
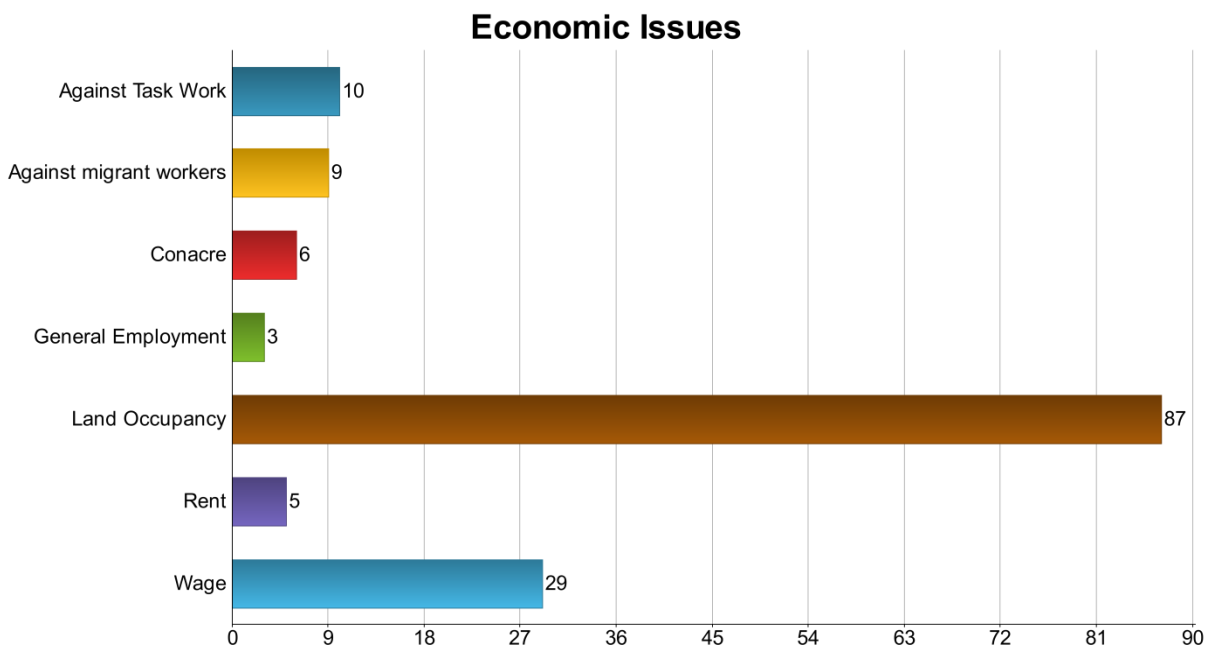
Economic Issues

Figure 4.6 Economic Issues chart. Each notice gets one code per issue, but as one notice can be referring to several issues (i.e. to both task work and to wage) the number of codes here exceeds the number of notices.

Analytical Codes:

Coercive Regulation
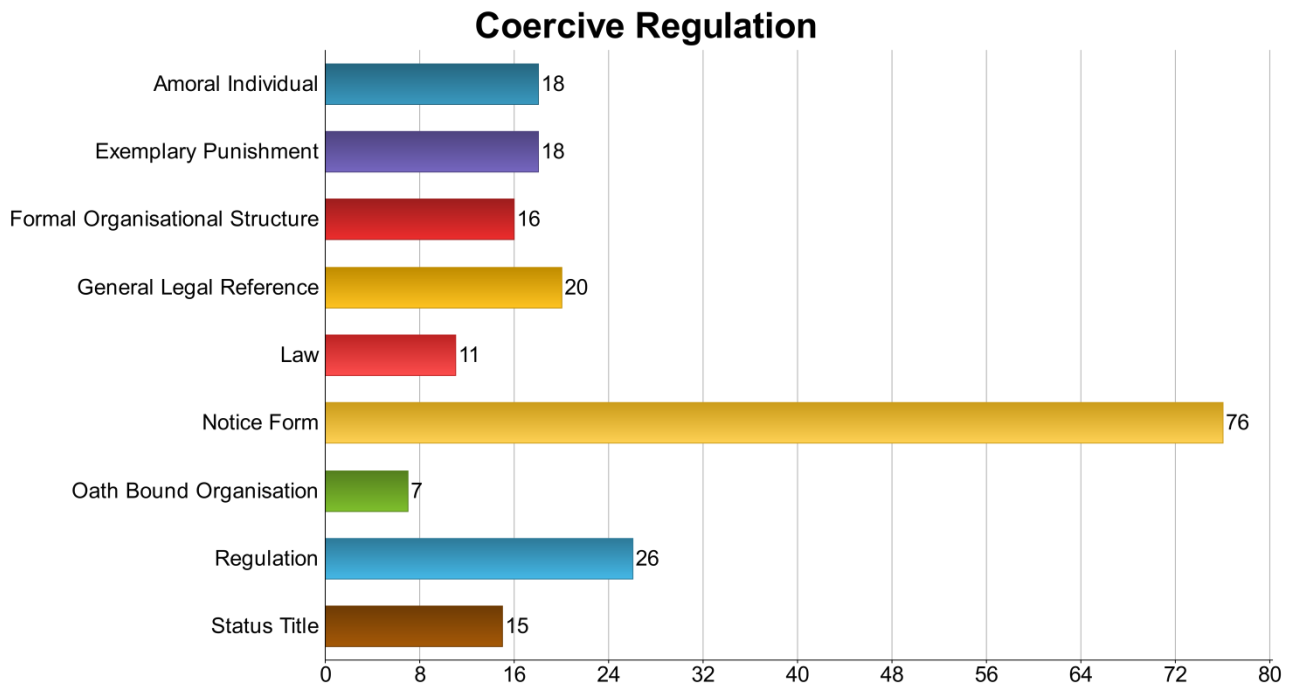
Figure 4.7 Coercive Regulation Chart. Showing the frequency (counted once per notice) of all occurrences of the descriptive codes grouped together within the analytical code 'Coercive Regulation'.

Collective Identity
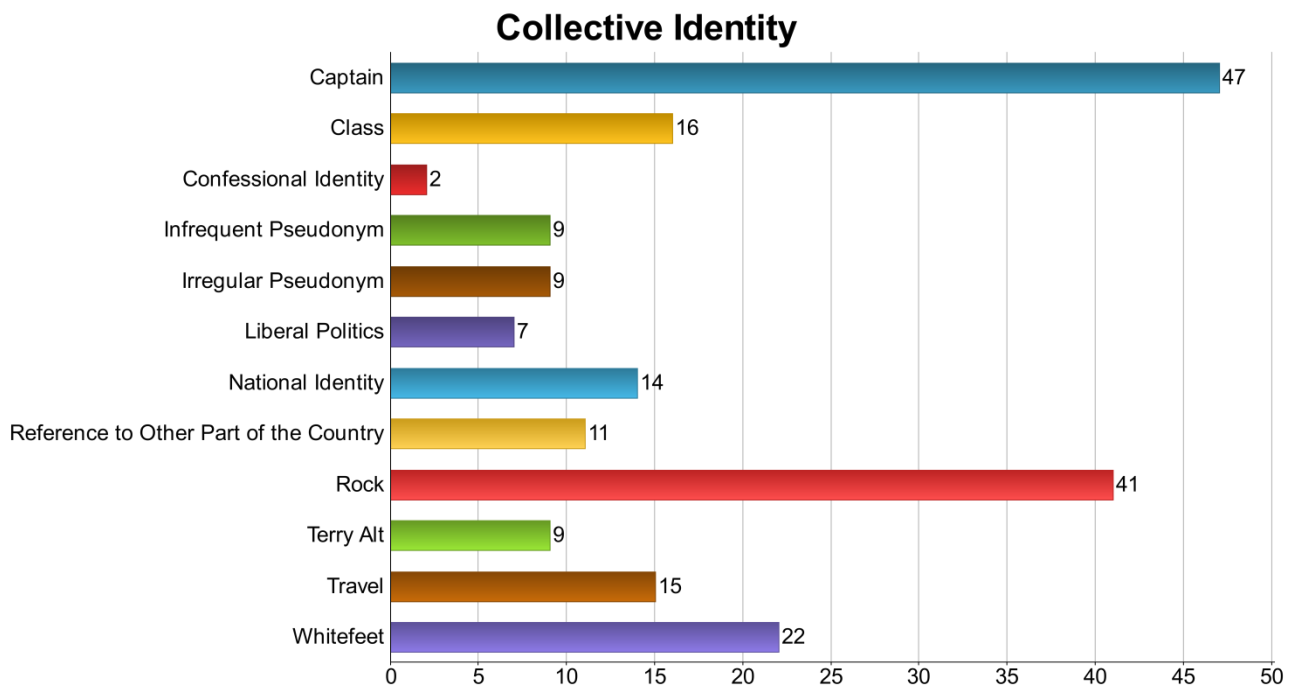
Figure 4.8 Collective Identity Chart. Showing the frequency(counted once per notice) of all occurrences of the descriptive codes grouped together within the analytical code 'Collective Identity'.

Part II: Coercive Regulation, the Law of Captain Rock

They were fully familiar with the omnipotence of documents. It had always been by means of papers covered with writing and seals that it had been proved to them that they had nothing to say, that they must submit and pay.

B. Traven, *The Rebellion of the Hanged.*

In this part of the thesis I shall examine the theme, or, in terms of the coding, the analytical code, of coercive regulation, this comprising in part of a use of the iconography of ruling class power, e.g. the term law itself, status titles, the actual use of notices, and in part to the forms of popular sanctions on offenders against communal norms. Additionally, on occasion, the authors of notices explicitly refer to their acts as regulation. Consideration of the coercive regulation theme builds towards a theoretical argument in the penultimate chapter in this section. Briefly, that argument rejects two different ways of approaching the legalistic allusions with the notices; these two different approaches could be given in short-hand as 'hegemony' and 'autonomy'. The hegemony argument maintains, in brief, that the use of forms derived from ruling class cultural uses represents an acceptance by subaltern groups of the ultimate legitimacy of ruling class power and an inability to express themselves outside of a sort of dominant ideology. What is meant by 'the law' then to this interpretation would be an appeal to a common cross-class sense of what is legitimate and illegitimate, or perhaps what was formerly such a common cross-class sense but is now outmoded. In particular, I will address Marc W. Steinberg's approach along these lines to movements of early nineteenth century English workers. This will be presaged by a consideration of the historical specificity of Gramsci's formulation of hegemony before ultimately arguing that this does not apply to societies which are feudal or in transition from feudalism to capitalism. The autonomy argument, by contrast, advances an explanation for this alternative subaltern law in a radical separateness between subaltern and elite cultures. In short the early-nineteenth-century peasantry create a law of their own because they experience the law of the state as an alien imposition. In the Irish case this is particularly advanced by Heather Laird. This might also be associated with the broad influence of the Subaltern Studies school. I will argue that the presence of elements derived from the

174

symbolic representation of ruling class authority within the notices is explicable by precisely

the opposite. It is precisely the existence of a common culture, of a common symbolic life,

that makes Captain Rock's law understandable. There will be some consideration given to

studies which show the weight of the legal system in popular culture both through

examinations of folklore and examinations of popular participation in the courts of petty

sessions. This is not, however, the main part of the argument. The hub of my case is that

these forms e.g. the paraphernalia of the legal system, oaths, status titles etc., were meant

to be symbolic displays of ruling class power intended as a sort of mental coercion

frequently congruent with physical coercion. They were recognised as such and their use

within the notices is an appropriation of the iconography of power. I will expound on this

through the work of Bakhtin and Vološinov. Vološinov writes of the multi-accentuality of the

sign – that the meanings of signs and control over signs are contested in the class struggle.

Bakhtin's discursive genres – relatively stable but flexible styles of communication – might

be considered in this context as sets of signs – and as such are not fixed and given but

potentially subject to a sort of semiotic dual power. The appropriated symbolic displays of

power can be considered a discursive genre of sovereignity. Another Bakhtinian concept,

that of addressivity, is useful here. This refers to the role of the addressee in partly forming

the context of a communication. It is precisely the pervasiveness and the role within popular

culture of these symbolic displays that makes them recognisable and relevant as a mode of

expression for an insurgent subaltern authority. Consequently, the resemblance between

the forms of the state and the estate, on the one hand, and the forms of subaltern

contention, on the other hand, are explicable without the necessity of any reference to

hegemony. Cutting across both the hegemony and autonomy positions is the existence of

another discursive genre in the coercive regulation theme. This is the popular form of

communal disproval whose symbolic forms I'm calling the discursive genre of *charivari*. Its existence means that there was an alternative language for authority. This is contrary to what one would expect if one applied Steinberg's analysis of early-nineteenth-century England to early-nineteenth-century Ireland. Subalterns had other languages with which to express themselves with than just those of the ruling class. It also highlights the most obvious interjection to Laird's analysis of alternative law. If alternative law was only understandable by reference to a popular alienation from the state it follows that alternative law would not call itself a law but something else, and in the discursive genre of *charivari* is likely to be found the form that alternative law would have taken. It did take that form but it also, and probably more so, took on a form adopted from the ruling class as there was a culture shared across classes. Finally, another Bakhtinian concept will be considered, that of the carnivalesque, and it will be argued that this was not a predominant element within the notices.

As this study uses a methodology adopted from grounded theory method the structure of this part of the thesis consists of an initial two findings chapters followed by a theory chapter. The findings chapters deal firstly with the discursive genre of *charivari*, particularly relating to the captain motif within the notices, and secondly with the discursive genre of sovereignty addressing the appropriation of ruling class iconography and the role of the legal system within popular culture. The final chapter of part II, the theory chapter of this part, will discuss hegemony, Gramsci, Subaltern Studies, Bakhtin, Vološinov and Steinberg, as has been outlined above.

Chapter Five: The Boys, Discursive Genre of *Charivari*

This chapter examines the traces of an autochthonous idiom of coercive regulation to be found within the notices, or at least one greatly more indigenous to peasant culture than the forms explored in the subsequent chapter on the discursive genres of sovereignty. The existence of this other means of culturally representing authority demonstrates that it is not the case that subaltern rebels *had* to express themselves in forms derived from those of the state and the estate; they were not then trapped in a situation of having no other recognisable way of expressing themselves. This point will be returned to in the theoretical chapter with which this part of the thesis culminates.

Of the 135 notices examined for this study, forty-seven are either signed with a *nom de guerre* bearing the title 'captain' or otherwise purport to be issued by, or in the name of, a captain.[1] While the most popular form is by far that of 'Captain Rock' there are others such as 'Captain Whitefeet', 'Captain Carder', 'Capt. Cannon', 'Capt. Fearnot' and 'Captain of the Regulators of Ireland'.[2] In his dying declaration, Darby Browne, hung in Waterford in 1762 for his part in the original Whiteboy movement, states: 'I acted one night among them as Captain, such as the May-boys have . . .'[3] This is the clearest and most explicit link between the captain trope within threatening notices, the possibility that beyond this trope there was an actual captain position as a regular feature of whiteboy bands, and the captain figure as the leader of a group of young men with a ceremonial role in calendar customs and rites of passage. This chapter explores the relationship between the whiteboy tradition and what

---

[1] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.
[2] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.
[3] Quoted in Maureen Wall, 'The Whiteboys' in T. D. Williams (ed.), *Secret societies in Ireland* (Dublin, 1973), p. 16.

are more conventionally classed as folk rites or customs. That said it is mostly just the traditional boundaries of academic disciplines which have whiteboyism as something separate from folk custom. It will be argued that the involvement of youth groups in customary rites headed by captains was a widely existing practice in the eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-centuries, and that such groups were involved in heaping opprobrium on members of the community perceived as deviant, particularly with regard to marriage issues and domestic issues, an Irish version of the European *charivari*. This coercive and regulatory aspect of youth folk culture is the core of what it shares with the whiteboy practice and was the reason for the similarity in symbolic form, the discursive genre of *charivari* was the signs and symbols of the authority the peasant community exerted over its own members. The title of captain, and the straw-masks, white shirts and cross-dressing all represented, in part, an authority both of, and over, the community of labourers, cottiers and small-to-medium farmers. This is not insignificant when one considers the extent to which the violent compulsion of whiteboy groups was directed towards persons from those social groups (or perhaps persons emergent from those groups). It should also be stressed that the regulatory aspect to youth groups and folk festivities was only one part of a much more multi-faceted phenomenon, and that a lot of what went on in this ritual-festival life was more a matter of good-natured fun, celebratory or luck-bringing.

Relationships between the rich ceremonial and festive aspects of popular culture and the modes of social conflict have received a good deal of study in British and French historiography.[4] In the Irish context it is something which has been more likely to receive

---

[4] General studies include: Bob Bushaway, *By rite: Custom, ceremony and community in England 1700 – 1880* (London, 1982); Andy Wood, 'Collective violence, social drama and rituals of rebellion in late medieval and early modern England' in Stuart Carroll (ed.), *Cultures of violence: Interpersonal violence in historical perspective* (Hampshire, 2007), pp 99-116; Robert Poole, The march to Peterloo: Politics and festivity in late

but passing reference mostly in regard to similar costumes being used by whiteboy and festival groups e.g. straw hat-masks, blackened faces, ribbons, female clothes, white shirts.[5] Beames argues that the use of such costume bolstered the legitimacy of whiteboy groups.[6] Exceptionally Wall highlights the possible link between the captain motif of threatening notices from the 1760s and the captain role in customary rites.[7] However, this relationship was not a major focus of any study in the 70s and early 80s when most of the research on the whiteboy tradition was being conducted.

Kate Chadbourne does concentrate on the connection in her paper *Rough music and folkloric elements in the Whiteboy movements*.[8] This paper is, however, by its own admission inconclusive and tentative. Chadbourne suggests that 'some communal form of shaming and punishment'[9] existed in Ireland similar to those found in England and Wales and that this 'left its mark on the Whiteboys'[10] in a fashion broadly similar to the relationship between *ceffyl pren*, the Welsh version of *charivari*, and the Rebecca riots, a series of protests in the 1830s and 1840s. However, while she identifies folkloric aspects to the whiteboy tradition and whiteboy actions over, for want of better terms, "personal" and "domestic" issues, she finds no surviving evidence for a 'communal, ritual, punitive activity'[11] extended into whiteboyism. Nonetheless, she continues to argue for the existence

---

Georgian England in *Past & Present*, 192 (2006), pp 109-53; studies more specific to what is discussed here will be cited in the following.

[5] Donnelly, *Captain Rock: the Irish agrarian rebellion*, pp 110-3; Kevin Danaher, *Irish Customs and Beliefs* (Cork, 2004), p. 38.

[6] Beames*, Peasants and power,* pp 98 – 101.

[7] Maureen Wall, 'The Whiteboys', p. 16.

[8] Kate Chadbourne, 'Rough music and folkloric elements in the Whiteboy movements', in *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 16/17 (1996/97), pp 176-94.

[9] *Ibid.* p. 190.

[10] *Ibid*. p. 176.

[11] *Ibid*. p. 176.

of something similar through inference from what we know of the situation in neighbouring countries. Her conclusion is apposite:

> 'the expression of Whiteboy activity in the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries drew its particular flavour from the cultural 'building blocks' closest to hand'.

These 'building blocks' — mainly derived from folklore and custom — encoded the message of rebellion both for the participants and their victims 'whose culture-specific knowledge allowed them to apprehend fully the choice of symbols employed in costume, rhetoric and method'.[12]

I would only disagree in so far as to point to other building blocks close to hand, namely the ruling class culture of the legal system and estate management. Chadbourne's building blocks can be considered as analogous to Bakhtin's discursive genres.

Owing to the nature of the primary source material, which is threatening letters, the main focus of this chapter is to delve into the link between folk rite and social conflict with particular respect to the captain motif frequently found within both the notices and the ceremonies. The multiple other aspects of the link, e.g. cross-dressing, should be kept in mind. Additionally it needs to be stressed that the captain title is singular in its frequency of occurrence in both the threatening letters and in customary rituals. It is not interchangeable with other titles and the fact that other specifically military titles such as Lieutenant or General occur far less often within the notices necessarily leads to a rejection of the postulate that the adoption of the title captain is part of a military posture on the part of the authors of the letters.

---

[12] *Ibid.* pp 193-4.

Forty-seven of the 135 notices selected from the Leinster 1832 notices collection which were analysed in this study include the captain motif in some manner, mostly frequently in the form of the alias Captain Rock.[13]

Mayboys

As we have seen, executed Whiteboy Darby Browne drew a parallel between the captain role he played in the Whiteboys and a similar role in the Mayboys. W. R. Wilde's *Irish Popular Superstitions*, published in 1852, contains a portrayal of Mayboys, in his version a perambulating custom where costumed youths visited houses performing rhymes and music in return for money and alcohol. In Wilde's description, the Mayboys featured both ritual cross dressing – a Queen of the May, and a captain.[14] This was a defunct custom by the time of Wilde's book and it seems it was more common in the early 1800s. Note that as well as the costumed musical procession referred to by Wilde, Mayday rites included the collection of May balls, decorated bushes within which was a hurling ball, from recently married couples, and conflicts with other groups over May bushes, which were decorated trees or shrubs.[15] Amhlaoibh Uí Shúileabháin, school-master and activist in the O'Connellite/liberal movement in Callan, Co. Kilkenny, relates in his diary entry for 3 May 1829 that:

> 'Two May balls were taken up, (that is a May bush covered with silk, ribbons, flowers
> , &c., with the ball in the middle of it hanging down and covered likewise with
> adornments), the one from the Grants of Coolalong, and the other from the
> Walshes of [lit.] on the Fair Green. The young men played for one of them [in a

---

[13] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

[14] W. R. Wilde, *Irish Popular Superstitions* (Shannon, 1972), pp 64-5, p. 34.

[15] Kevin Danaher, *The year in Ireland* (Cork, 1972), pp 88-107; *Cinnlae Amhlaoibh Uí Shúileabháin (The diary of Humphrey O'Sullivan) Part II containing the diary from 1st September 1828 to the end of December 1830,* ed. Michael McGrath (Irish Texts Society, London, 1936), p. 149; the phrase 'Walshes of [lit.] on the Fair Green' refers to a translation issue — translated literally from Uí Shúileabháin's Gaelic it would be 'Walshes on the Fair Green' meaning 'Walshes of the Fair Green'.

hurling match] afterwards. The golden apple that Paris raised aloft among the goddesses did not do as much mischief as some of these May balls do. Up to this day, no May ball has been taken for the past fifty years, since a man was killed on the crossroads of Callan taking a May ball from a newly married minister, Dr. Lambert'.[16]

A more innocuous re-telling of the customs of Mayday is given by William Farrell, a veteran of the United Irish movement from Carlow town, perhaps influenced by the fondness of old age for the reminiscence of youth:

'The remainder of the day was spent in bringing home maypoles and putting them up, midst music and dancing and bonfires. There were factions in every quarter of the town at the time and every gentleman they had influence on they went to him for a maypole and were never refused. I remember five maypoles up in the town together ; one in the quarries, one in the Closh, one in the Potatoe-Market, one in Burrin Street and one on the Castle Hill. The Quarry Boys and Closh Boys generally went to old Mr. Burton of Burton Hall, the King of the County Carlow, for their maypoles, the other factions to Garryhunden and Clogrenan. Their friends at home, in the meantime, were preparing themselves to form a long dance to go out and meeting them ; the girls all dressed in white, with every other finery they had or could borrow, the boys (their partners) all with white stockings, white waistcoats and white shirts, all clean out of the fold, and as they wore no coats to hide their finery they made a remarkable gay nice appearance ; and to set off all, their hats

[16] *Ibid.* p. 149.

were trimmed either with white tape or white paper and cockades of ribbon if they could get them.'[17]

The impressions from Wilde, O'Sullivan and Farrell are all of customs which had declined sharply or died out altogether by the time they were writing their accounts — Farrell's biography was written between 1832 and 1845, O'Sullivan's diary runs from 1827 to 1836, and Wilde's work is from the middle of the century.

Possibly the festivities identified by Wilde and Farrell, involving as they did the patronage of the gentry, fell victim to the widening social divisions of the period from the 1790s to the Great Famine. O'Sullivan in many ways represents the growing respectable Catholic middle class opinion in opposition to the more rambunctious aspects of popular culture and that perhaps too is an aspect of the decline of the May-day rites.

Strawboys

Later calendar customs and rites of passage also feature a captain role and sometimes other symbolic parallels with whiteboys. So we have the captain of the wrenboys of St. Stephen's day (26 December),[18] the captain of Christmas Mummers and the captain of the strawboys who performed at weddings.[19]

In their most basic and typical forms, mumming was a folk drama of the Hero-Combat type around a theme of death and resurrection; strawing the arrival of uninvited guests at a wedding party, whose leader then proceeded to dance with the bride; and a perambulating ritual hunt was the practice of the wrenboys. The captain role was not a universal feature of all the local forms of these rites but it was a frequently occurring feature.

---

[17] *Voice of rebellion Carlow 1798: The autobiography of William Farrell*, ed. Roger McHugh (Dublin, 1998), pp 22-3.
[18] Danaher, *The year in Ireland*, p. 242.
[19] Alan Gailey, *Irish folk drama* (Cork, 1969), pp 54-6.

The strawboys or strawing custom is the one which is most relevant to the discussion here. It took its most popular name from the straw costume worn by participants consisting of long straw cloak and a conical straw mask, though there were other names and other elements of costume, including women's clothes, ribbons or sashes and white shirts.[20] Indeed, to further complicate matters, similar straw costume was used in other rites, including those of mummers, wren boys and biddy boys.[21] The practice of the latter involved a procession on St. Brigid's Day (1 February). Strawboys were associated with wedding parties, arriving during the night to either dance with the bride and female guests or to perform in return for a round of drinks. Local names included sappers or soppers, whalpers, ban-beggars, collickers, claharas, and, in Gaelic speaking areas, *buachaillí tuí* (strawboys). The strawboy custom had an extremely wide distribution in the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-centuries occurring across Ireland excepting the northern part of the province of Ulster.[22]

A problem is that most of the documentary evidence for these customs pertains to their practice in the late-nineteenth- and twentieth-centuries, that evidence having been gathered from oral tradition by the Folklore Commission. The surviving record of pre-Famine popular culture is far scarcer. Though there were some precursors, the Folklore

---

[20] National Folklore Collection (henceforth NFC) 1395: 236–9; Michael Corduff, Rossport, Co. Mayo, Jan 1954/Feb 1955; NFC 1399: 81-4; Elizabeth Byrne (87), housewife, Rathmore, Co. Wexford. Collector: J Delaney, 1956; NFC 1210: 275-8; Richard Denihan (87), labourer, Gort na gCros, Co. Limerick. Collector: Colm Ó Danacain, Summer 1951.

[21] Alan Gailey, 'Straw costume in Irish folk customs', in *Folklife*, 6 (1968), pp 83-93; Such straw costumes are portrayed in *The Harvest Dance at Rossana*, a painting by Maria Spilsbury Taylor (1776-1820), which is reproduced in Tom Dunne, 'The darkside of the Irish landscape: Depictions of the rural poor, 1760-1850' in Peter Murray (ed.), *Whipping the herring: Survival and celebration in nineteenth-century Irish art* (Cork, 2006), pp 46-59; p. 52.

[22] Caoimhín Ó Danachair, 'Some marriage customs and their regional distribution' in *Béaloideas*, 42/44 (1974-1976), pp 136 – 175.

Commission really began its work in the 1930s, by which time the early-nineteenth-century was obviously outside living human memory.

Nonetheless, the text of a mummers' play which includes the captain role has been dated to the 1830s and the oldest record of mumming itself is of a play in Cork in 1685.[23] An earlier than usual account in the folklore commission archive from Castletown, Co. Carlow, of collicking, the local strawboy variation, in this instance somewhat merged with mumming, was given by a man born in 1839 and is about his youthful days in the 1850s/early 1860s.[24]

Patrick MacDonnell recounts:

> 'When I was a young man, living in Castletown, we had a mummers band. Oh! We didn't do much except all kinds of devilment. Nothing was too hot nor too heavy for us I was S. Patrick . . . Another member . . . was the fool. He carried an inflated bladder on the end of a stick & was constantly hitting people with it. It used to make an awful noise. Another of the band was Sir John, who represented the "state", while I represented the "church". Other members of our body carried chains, fuse-cord, flint & steel, a tarred rope, etc., not forgetting the man with the syringe for squirting dirty water into people's faces.
>
> We used to on Saturdays' night to any place that had a bad name especially round the walls & gates of the big houses. People coming home from Carlow became terrified when they heard chains rattling and fuse-cord spitting & a strong smell of sulphur in the air. They'd turn back & put any [unclear — trouble? distance?] on themselves sooner than face us.

---

[23] Alan Gailey, *Irish Folk Drama* (Cork, 1969), pp 18 – 31, p. 8, p. 67.
[24] NFC 407: 16 -8, 102; Pádraig MacDomnaill (69), estate manager, Castletown, Co.Carlow. Collector: Peadar MacDomhnaill, August 1908.

But we were more civilised when we went 'collicking' to a wedding. We always staged a kind of a play at the wedding. It was St Patrick's duty to try & convert Sir John & when that gentleman refused to be convinced by theological argument, we had recourse to arms. St. Patrick of course always won & Sir John, being conquered, had to recant & swear allegiance to the true Church.'

Peadar MacDomhnaill, the collector of these recollections and the son of Patrick MacDonnell, explains in a 1937 footnote to the above account that:

'The mummers who attend a wedding are in Co. Carlow called "collickers" They dressed up in every kind of fantastic garb in which feminine garments predominate they wear masks of some kind or other, speak in assumed voices & generally conduct themselves if well received, except when the match is unpopular when they appear as a rowdy [unclear — pest?] & remain outside & "blow" the couple. This is done by blowing though drain pipes (diameter about 2 ins). I often heard the blowing when I was young, but I think the practice is now obsolete. Before I left the county it was very much condemned by the clergy.'

This particular noise-making practice will be discussed further shortly. These fragmentary scraps of evidence from the mid-eighteenth- and to mid-nineteenth-centuries, coupled with the very extensive late-nineteenth-century distribution of some traditions featuring a captain role, particularly strawing,[25] makes for some grounds to say that such existed prior to the Great Famine as an important part of popular culture. That is to say it would be improbable that these sorts of practices had such a broad range in the late-nineteenth-century without having extensive precurors earlier in the century which are simply less well

---

[25] Ó Danachair, 'Some marriage customs and their regional distribution', p. 157.

186

recorded. This assertion, groping its way into the darkness, has to be seen in the context of the paucity of records. So we can at least say there was a common theme of captain shared by both calendar customs and social protest in the pre-Famine period.

An Irish *charivari*?

A stronger link could be made between the captain motif, folk ceremony and the whiteboy tradition, given the latter's basically coercive and regulatory nature, if we could delve into 'the peculiar mixture of the penal and the festive' that was rough music, or *charivari*, and find that Irish variants on this European theme also featured the captain icon. [26] Known as *charivari* in France, *ceffyl pren* in Wales, *Katzenmusik* and other names in German speaking areas, and rough music, skimmington, or riding the stang in different parts of England, this was a popular sanction against deviant members of the community, particularly over marriage or other related domestic issues.[27] Notwithstanding changes in form over different times and places, there were shared components. *A dictionary of English folklore* identifies two particular strands in rough music, the first being, as the name suggests, a cacophonous noise created by horns and hooting and banging pots and pans, typically outside the target's home. In the second recurrent theme the culprit, or a stand in, is carried on a donkey or pole facing backwards and paraded.[28] Folklorist Violet Alford puts forward a third element, a public play recreating the offense and making judgement.[29] Although usually employed as a punishment of domestic offences against public morality it was multi-functional and can also be found used on recalcitrant employers or blacklegs in industrial disputes,[30] while in

---

[26] Martin Ingram, 'Ridings, rough music and the "reform of popular culture" in early modern England' in *Past & Present*, 105 (1984), pp 79 – 113; p. 96.
[27] E.P. Thompson, 'Rough music reconsidered' in *Folklore*, 103:1 (1992), pp 3-26.
[28] Jacqueline Simpson and Steve Roud, *A dictionary of English folklore* (Oxford, 2000), p. 301.
[29] Violet Alford, 'Rough music or Charivari' in *Folklore*, 70 (1959), pp 505-18; p. 506.
[30] Thompson, 'Rough music reconsidered', pp 16-7.

Wales *ceffyl pren* grew into the Rebecca riots, an anti-tithe and anti-toll gate mass movement.[31]

In rural France, the *charivari* was particularly associated with groups of young unmarried men, a category which had an important ritual role generally.[32] The *charivari* tradition was to some extent focused on post-marriage issues such as the domination of the male by the female, infertility, and adultery, but was especially focused on second marriages and especially on marriages in which there was a wide age difference. There was also some element of conflict around relationships between males from outside the village and females from within it. One might say then that an aspect of the *charivari* was the exerting of jurisdiction over the local area's eligible females by its young unmarried males. Similarly, some French May rituals associated with youth groups express this jurisdiction in a symbolic way. Moreover, the youth group had a role in the wedding ceremony in general, involving blocking the path of the procession or arriving uninvited until they were given some tribute of money or alcohol.

Eighteenth-century evidence from secondary literature
There is some eighteenth-century evidence. One method of punishing transgressors adopted by the Rightboy anti-tithe protestors of the 1780s greatly resembles the riding element of the rough music typology. Victims were made to ride on a white horse, sometimes known as Cromwell, while mounted on a saddle of thorns and brambles.[33] There is also a report of Dublin journeymen subjecting one of their number who refused to join a

---

[31] David Williams, *The Rebecca riots: a study in agrarian discontent* (Cardiff, 1955), pp 53-6.
[32] Natalie Zemon Davis, *Society and culture in early modern France* (Cambridge, 1987), pp 104-9; Robert Muchembled, *Popular culture and elite culture in France 1400 – 1750* (Baton Rouge, 1985), p. 52, pp 95 -6.
[33] Donnelly, 'The Rightboy movement 1785-8', pp 182-83.

combination to a riding and this included the facing backwards element.[34] A 1710

religious/political protest in Limerick took a clear rough music form,[35] and there is also a

Swift poem featuring a submissive husband subjected to a cacophony and a riding by his

neighbours; though Swift may have been referring to something he had heard of from, or

witnessed in, England.[36] 'Riding the stang', the lowlands Scottish/northern English version of

charivari, seems to have been practised in seventeenth-century Carrickfergus.[37]

Munster, on the other hand, had a disciplining aimed at persons who prolonged the

unmarried state beyond its customary limits and that also featured rough music.[38] This was

carried out on Shrove Tuesday, the end of the marriage season, as was the following, which

is somewhat similar to the riding aspect of European tradition:

> 'Any unmarried young folks of either sex who were so unfortunate as to be caught
>
> on the streets on this day were compelled to drag a heavy timber at the end of a
>
> rope, followed by crowds of men and boys armed with shillelaghs and shouting,
>
> "Come draw the log, come draw the log."'[39]

Drawing the log was apparently a pre-Famine custom found in Cork, Waterford and

elsewhere in urban Munster. A later version has females who failed to be married roped

and dragged in short procession.

---

[34] J.S. Donnelly, 'Irish agrarian rebellion: the Whiteboys of 1769-76', in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy*, 83C (1983), pp 293-331; p. 314.

[35] T. C. Barnard, 'Athlone, 1685; Limerick, 1710: religious riots or charivaris?' in *Studia Hibernica*, 27 (1993), pp 61-75.

[36] Jonathan Swift, 'A quiet life and a good name, to a friend who married a shrew', in *Selected poems* (Manchester, 1990), pp 29 – 31.

[37] Sean Connolly, 'Approaches to the history of Irish popular culture' in *Bullán: An Irish studies journal*, 2:2 (1996), pp 83 -100; p. 86.

[38] Seán Ó Súilleabháin, *Irish Folk Custom and Belief* (Dublin, n.d.), p. 46.

[39] James Mooney, *The holiday customs of Ireland* (Philadelphia, 1889), p.387.

A very similar practice, pulling the plough, where eligible females are roped to a plough and made to pull it through the streets, at the behest of whip wielding bachelors, is extensively recorded across central Europe in the fifteenth- and sixteenth-centuries.[40] This was linked to Shrove Tuesday as well. In fact in some areas, particularly around the Alps, it was not a plough pulled but a log of wood, as in early-nineteenth-century Munster. The late medieval/early modern central European cases also included rhymes and plays and 'chalking' or daubing persons with chalk or ashes. The latter is found in Ireland in the form of chalk Sunday.[41] The rhyming element was also present in Ireland, in the Cork area at least, in the form of Skellig lists, comic, and at times extremely derisory, poems, which were transmitted orally, in manuscript, and sometimes in printed form.[42]

This is faint and fragmentary evidence: much of eighteenth- and early-nineteenth-century popular culture is obscured from our view by virtue of it being orally transmitted and because it was of no interest to elites and hence not recorded by them, or because records have been destroyed. It is necessary to follow Bloch and to carefully use the recent past to illuminate the more distant past, and so allow that the accounts of late-nineteenth to mid-twentieth ceremonies tell us that something similar went on in pre-Famine Ireland.[43]

---

[40] Norbert Schindler, *Rebellion, Community and Custom in Early Modern Germany* (Cambridge, 2002), pp 146-92.

[41] Danaher, *The Year in Ireland*, pp 47-8.

[42] John Pointon Moulden, 'The printed ballad in Ireland: a guide to the popular printing of songs in Ireland, 1760 – 1920 In four volumes: Volume one' (Ph.D. thesis, National University of Ireland – Galway, 2006), pp 66 – 69; An 1845 painting of Skellig night – the night such lists were distributed – entitled *Skellig Night on the South Mall, Cork,* by James Beale, can be seen in Peter Murray (ed.), *Whipping the Herring* (Cork, 2006), p. 70.

[43] Marc Bloch, *French rural history: an essay on its basic characteristics* (London, 1966), pp xxvi – xxx.

Furthermore, Ó Danachair argues that:

> 'the folk culture of the whole of western Europe is fundamentally the same, no matter how much it varies in detail … Ireland is part of western Europe, a sharer in the common cultural heritage'.[44]

If this is the case then given the prevalence of the rituals of popular punishment and public humiliation across Europe it is likely that there was more of this in Ireland than we have yet seen. We might also consider the influence of populations of Scottish or English descent, as in the Carrickfergus example mentioned above.

It would be instructive to consider the experience of the American mid-west, there the shivaree, the local name for *charivari*, became, over the course of the nineteenth-century, a rambunctious part of the wedding celebration, its coercive aspects supplanted by a more violent vigilante tradition.[45] The strawboy custom might have evolved in a similar fashion; this is especially likely in light of the tremendous expansion in nineteenth-century Ireland of a body greatly concerned with regulating sexual and domestic life, namely the institutional structure of the Catholic Church,[46] as well as the dramatic change in marriage patterns through the course of the century.[47]

It is is worth bearing in mind that, even in the pre-Famine period, that sexuality and marriage had a number of economic dimensions, including most obviously the inheritance

---

[44] Caoimhín Ó Danachair, 'Some distribution patterns in Irish folk life' in *Béaloideas*, 25 (1957), pp 108-23; p. 123.

[45] Loretta T. Johnson, 'Charivari/Shivaree: a European folk ritual on the American plains' in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 20: 3 (1990), pp 371-87; Bryan D. Palmer, 'Charivaris and Whitecapping in Nineteenth-Century North America' in *Labour / Le Travail*, 3 (1978), pp 5-62.

[46] Kevin Whelan, 'The cultural effects of the Famine', in Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly (eds.), *The Cambridge companion to modern Irish culture* (Cambridge, 2005), pp 137-54.

[47] K. H. Connell, *Irish peasant society: four historical essays* (Oxford, 1968), pp 113-61.

of land. This is especially to be noted in light of the examples below of whiteboy regulation of marriage, as well as the involvement of in-laws in disputes over land.

Post-Famine evidence: Strawboys and horning

There are late-nineteenth- and twentieth- century Irish parallels with *charivari*. Notably in horning, also known as blowing-them, a rough music on mismatched couples, i.e. where there is a large age difference, or against those who have shown poor hospitality or are otherwise disliked (see the account of this from Co. Carlow earlier). There is some cross-over between this tradition and that of the strawboys at least in north Kilkenny, Wexford and Carlow.[48] Ó Danachair has a circa 1900 distribution of horning across Leinster with a few outliers in east Ulster.[49] Ó Danachair also gives us a rhyme from Allenwood, Co. Kildare, referencing horning and mocking the male party of a mismatched couple, perhaps a fragment of the theatrical element identified by Alford.[50]

However, apart from the merging of horning and strawing in the south-east, the record we have of horning does not seem to feature the band of youth specifically being headed by a captain.

With regard to strawing, there are some accounts in the folklore archive and elsewhere which feature strawboys adopting a menacing posture, though mostly what is reported is a good natured and welcome pageant. Typically that menace is occasioned by the strawboy's perception of lack of hospitality on the part of the wedding party.[51]

---

[48] Ó Danachair, 'Some marriage customs and their regional distribution', 169; NFC 1399: 81; Elizabeth Byrne, 87, housewife, Rathmore, Co. Wexford. Collector: J. Delaney, 1955.
[49] Ó Danachair, 'Some marriage customs and their regional distribution', p. 166.
[50] *Ibid.* pp 167-8.
[51] Leon O'Kennedy 'Irish Mummers', in *Ireland's Own* (Apr. 21, 1951), p. 25.

Some examples from the folklore archive:

'it was not deemed prudent to antagonise the strawboys, for they had often resorted to reprisals whenever their enmity was incurred or their wishes opposed unduly';[52]

'if they were treated as unwelcome guests they refused to leave the wedding house or its precincts without passing some ugly remarks or creating some disturbances. They often threatened and even beat the guests; or at least terrified them waving their weapons which comprised scythe blades, handles of spades and big sticks';[53]

'The banbeggars were not always popular and in former times often became unruly when they considered they were not being properly treated, but the people were afraid of them and would not think of refusing them admittance or drink';[54]

'If they got nothing to drink, they'd open doors of outhouses and let out hens and pigs and cattle';[55]

'They announced their arrival by blowing horns. They had cows' horns and bottles with the bottoms cut out of them. They entered without any invitation and the people of the house would be afraid to refuse them admittance for fear they would become unruly and do damage as it was known for them to do. They were always unwelcome but usually people were too much afraid of them to refuse admittance to them.'[56]

---

[52] NFC 1395: 238; Michael Corduff, Rossport, Co. Mayo, Jan 1954/Feb 1955.

[53] NFC 277: 77; Padraig Ó Cádaín (45), farmer, Cloonfinish, Co. Mayo. Collector: S. P. Ó Piotáin, Dec 1935 - May 1936.

[54] NFC 1399: 548; Mary Morris (70), housewife, Carrickmaguirke, Columbkille, Granard Co.Longford. Collector: J. Delaney, 1955.

[55] NFC 1458: 544; James Fagan (56), Newtown, Cashel, Co.Longford. Collector: J. Delaney, 1956.

[56] NFC 1399: 82; Elizabeth Byrne (87), housewife, Rathmore, Co. Wexford. Collector: J Delaney, 1956

There are some irregular hints at menace associated with the marriage match being frowned upon. One folklore archive account has it that strawboys 'never kicked up a row, except they had a spleen again the groom, if they thought he had taken the girl off one of them'.[57] There is also an account of strawboys dunking in water 'a fine young girl getting married to a shoemaker with a crutch' but this is not explicitly described as a mismatch.[58]

An article in *Ulster Folklife* from 1962 mentions a contemporary incident in Kerry where:

> 'a young woman was to be married to a very old man. She did not want the Straw-boys to call, so she hid in a wood near the lake ; but the Straw-boys watched the house, and when she came back at four o'clock in the morning they went into the house along with her and had their dance.'[59]

In one of the small number of court cases linked to strawing in the first half of the twentieth-century, it was reported that in county Sligo a bride, after marrying a man forty years her senior, was forced to flee from her house through fields, and was caught and then beaten by a party of strawboys.[60] However, neither the *Ulsterfolk Life* article, nor the newspaper reports on the Sligo incident, comments on any particular reason for either the fear or the assault.

Finally, Glassie, in his ethnography of a small rural community in Co. Fermanagh, west Ulster, found a relevant straw-costumed youth group in the rituals of Halloween:

> 'the spirits of the dead rise and go on the earth, girls at the hearth play at divining the identities of future mates, and in the past boys dressed in suits of white straw and

[57] NFC 1458: 310; Mrs. Keaney, housewife, Dromhair, Cloonclare, Co. Leitrim. Collector: J Delaney, 1956.
[58] NFC 1399: 471-2; John O'Neill (85), farmer, Bargy, Co.Wexford. Collector: J. Delaney, 1955.
[59] Richard Hilliard, 'Biddies and Strawboys', in *Ulster Folklife*, 8 (1962), pp 100-2, p. 102.
[60] *Irish Press*, 21 Oct. 1933; *Anglo-Celt*, 28 Oct. 1933.

caroused over the hills in the company of the dead, attacking the homes of men who

kept their daughters from the cohort of bachelors. Into the girls' kitchens the

"strawboys" broke, demanding a dance, a pantomime of procreation . . .'[61]

The main element of this festive ritual life I wish to foreground can be summed up as bands

of youths exerting some form of control or regulation over eligible females, marriage,

gender relations and sexuality or, in another strand, demanding hospitality, but, on the

occasions when it is not forthcoming, punishing inhospitality. Furthermore, at times these

patterns of custom included elements similar to that which we see in whiteboyism, notably

the figure of the captain, but also at times similar costumes. As I shall address in subsequent

pages, the link between punitive and regulatory aspects of popular culture on the one hand,

and forms of social conflict on the other, have been extensively explored in studies focused

on cases in other European countries. Part of looking at the *charivari* aspect to whiteboyism

must be looking at the cases of participants within whiteboy movements attempting to rule

over issues of marriage and sexuality.

Whiteboy involvement in sexuality/marriage related disputes

It is in fact very difficult to separate sexuality and marriage from land in any consideration of

nineteenth-century rural Irish society. Witness, for instance, disputes over inheritance

involving children, widows and in-laws, or the abduction of marriageable females –

sometimes thought of as a means of acquiring part of their father's property.

In this section I will try to identify some disputes around sexuality and marriage which are at

the more *charivari*-like end of the spectrum such as disapproval of particular marriages or

ensuring the access of local youths to local maidens for potential marriage matches. With

---

[61] Henry Glassie, *Passing the time in Ballymenone: culture and history of an Ulster community* (Bloomington, 1995), p. 534.

regard to the latter, consider the following notice issued to Michael Cashin, of Coolroe, Co. Kilkenny in February 1833:

> 'We the Regalaturs of Ireland do hereby Require of you to Bring home your Ladys from each District that the Live in at present Before 3 Days time, if you don't you will be Burned alive yourself and family Horses and Catle and the houses where your Foxey Girls are Intertained shall meet with the same punishment. NB if you disobey this Notice you will be made an Example of in this County.'[62]

While sexual jealousy may seem to be the motive writ large in the above text, it is also the motive most explicable to today's reader, but in the early-nineteenth-century context we cannot sunder apart access to potential mates on the one hand from access to potential dowries, lands, and inheritance, as well as potential rights to the labour of in-laws. This interpretation is underlined by the simultaneous delivery of a notice about land with the above notice about this farmer's daughters.

A few more examples of marriage-related incidents from Kilkenny:

> 'A large part of the nightly legislators were "on duty" at Killeen, in the parish of Kilmanagh, on the night of the 15th inst. Mrs. Catherine Maher, a widow, who holds a large farm at Killeen (part of the estate of Waring, a minor) was about again to enter into the state of matrimony with a man named Cormick, a collier. It appears, however, that the match did not meet the approval of the "Gentleman Regulators," and accordingly a strong party of Whitefeet attacked her house on the above night, fired in through the door, and demanded admittance. On obtaining an entrance they commended her not to proceed any further with the matrimonial

---

[62] *Kilkenny Moderator*, 14 Feb. 1833.

arrangements, otherwise "that they would certainly make her and her intended sorry for it." The poor collier was afraid to disobey orders – so Cupid has fled and Mars remains triumphant ! What a comfortable state of society.

A visit of a similar nature was paid by a body of Whitefeet to Mrs. Marum, who lives in the liberties of this City, a few days since. A niece of her's was about to enter into the blessed state of matrimony ; & they ordered the intended not to marry her but to take an elder sister in her stead. In this instance, however, the orders of the "regulators" have not been complied with, for the parties were married the day after. Whether or not they shall suffer the penalty of their disobedience remains yet to be proved.' [63]

'An armed party of men entered the house of Martin Delany of Lisdowney Hill (Galmoy barony,) on the night of the 11th inst. and beat him and his wife severely for some alleged infringement of the Whitefoot regulations. They likewise beat Edmond Delany, brother of said Martin, and ordered him to marry a girl who they named before the following Sunday ; in case of refusal they said they would certainly shoot him. They fired two shots previous to leaving the house.'[64]

'Several houses in the village of Knocknacurpogue were searched on Wednesday night by a party of Whitefeet for a man of the name of Larkin, with whom a female belonging to the neighbourhood had eloped contrary to the injunctions of the

---

[63] *Kilkenny Moderator*, 23 Feb. 1833.
[64] *Kilkenny Moderator*, 20 Feb. 1833.

"Gentlemen Regulators," who vowed vengeance against Larkin, and threatened to shoot him wherever they met him.'[65]

A similar report from Kildare:

'On the night of Sunday last, the 26th ult., a party of men entered the house of the widow Price, of Sherriff's-hill, and beat her son, John Price, in a violent manner. The reason they assigned for their uncorteous visit, was to warn him not to neglect a girl he had been intimate with, but to marry her forthwith.'[66]

These reports are the product of a fairly perfunctory search for whiteboy-style actions pertaining to sexual relations; excepting the better-known phenonmenon of cases of abduction, which do not really fit the *charivari* model. These cases suggest that a further exploration of such activity would be a fruitful avenue for further research; they certainly reinforce the case for a link between regulatory rites and whiteboyism.

British and French historiography on relationships between folk practice and protest

Folklore studies and the historiography of popular protest in the British and French contexts have addressed this interlinking between folkloric festive life and social conflict. Notably, Peter Sahlins, in his 1994 book *Forest rites: The war of the Demoiselles in nineteenth-century France*, suggests that:

'rioting peasants modelled their activities on those of youth groups . . . Demoiselles used the culture of youth groups as symbolic material out of which to fashion a language of revolt. In particular, the rioters adapted a set of customs and

---

[65] *Kilkenny Moderator*, 23 Jan. 1833.
[66] *Leinster Express*, 1 Feb. 1834.

prerogatives of village youth groups in their enforcement of widely accepted notions of popular justice.'[67]

The focus here on regulation and enforcement has of course clear parallels with what I argue of the content of the notices examined in this thesis.

Sahlins's approach is similar to the analysis proffered by Bercé, who identifies two sets of links between festive life and social protest. One in which the seasonal festival itself becomes the moment of social conflict — conflict which in some submerged way was already present in the rites — and a second in which the festive practices are detached from their particular seasonal context and used to convey messages in new settings. As Bercé puts it:

> 'The rites of folk custom . .. become ... the elements of a concrete language, a range of gestures which, repeated, evolve into autonomous signals, and which are capable of being coordinated into messages. They can perform the function of communicating emotions and of addressing appeals which are readily understood by all those who are members of this popular culture.'[68]

Seal advances a different view, whereby protest activity is 'not like traditional customs', is 'not derivative from traditional customs' but is in fact 'traditional customs attempting to restore order to the shattered agrarian world.'[69]

Two highly suggestive possible English parallels with Captain Rock are Lady Skimmington and Jack Straw, ritual characters but also, respectively, the name taken on by leaders in the

---

[67] Peter Sahlins, *Forest rites: The war of the Demoiselles in nineteenth-century France* (Cambridge, 1994), p.34.
[68] Quoted in Thomas Pettitt, ''Here Comes I, Jack Straw:' English Folk Drama and Social Revolt', in *Folklore*, 95: 1 (1984), pp 3 – 20; p. 4.
[69] Graham Seal, 'Tradition and Agrarian Protest in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales' in *Folklore*, 99:2 (1988), pp 146-69; p. 151.

Western Rising in 1626–32 and the moniker of the possibly mythical leader of the 1381 rebellion.[70]

The captain as bandit hero

Conversely, another way of looking at the captain trope within threatening notices is to relate it to the captain trope within the interrelated literary and oral traditions of social banditry, which frequently feature criminal hero figures bearing the title of captain. This does not exclude the relationship between folk custom and the whiteboy tradition, but rather adds another layer to the rich cultural mix which made up that tradition.[71]

The two main texts of the Irish highwayman literature tradition were Cosgrave's *The lives and actions of the most notorious Irish highwaymen, tories and rapparees* and the autobiographical *Life and adventures of James Freeney, commonly called Captain Freeney*, both first published in the mid-eighteenth century. These books and stories were extremely popular, a popularity noted, for instance, by early-nineteenth-century antiquarian and proto-folklorist Thomas Crofton Croker.[72] As the title of the Freeney book highlights, within these works the bandit hero is frequently bestowed with a title, most often that of captain. As well as Captain Freeney we have Captain O'Hanlon and Captain Power, while Paul Liddy forms a brigade structure with a captain and subalterns.[73]

Ó Ciosáin's finely grained analysis of Cosgrave's book locates it within the wider European genre of criminal biography. He argues that the theme of titles and other facets of

---

[70] Thomas Pettitt, ''Here Comes I, Jack Straw:' English Folk Drama and Social Revolt'.

[71] Nor is this an exhaustive examination of possible meanings ascribed to 'captain', popular stories about pirate-captains might be considered as analogous highwaymen of the sea, and we might also consider sporting captains as representatives of local loyalties.

[72] Thomas Crofton Croker, *Researches in the south of Ireland* (Shannon, 1969), p. 55; P.J. Dowling, *The hedge schools of Ireland* (Cork, 1968), pp 64-5.

[73] J. Cosgrave, *The lives and actions of the most notorious Irish highwaymen, tories and rapparees ... to which is added The Goldfinder, or the history of Manus Maconiel* (Dublin, n.d.), p. 5, pp 33-4, p. 61.

alternative hierarchy found in that genre, and not just within the Irish works, derives from the influence of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-century European 'vagabond and picaresque tradition'. [74] This featured literary representations of marginal groups 'as forming organized hierarchies, with a leader, such as the "king of the beggars"; with their own rules, rituals and laws, and frequently featuring an alternative language such as beggars' cant or thieves' slang'.[75]

Ó Ciosáin points both to important differences between *Irish highwaymen* and its immediate English predecessors and to important changes in the text and its readership overtime. While the English equivalents of *Irish highwaymen* feature characters that have been typologised as heroes, brutes and buffoons; in Cosgrave there are no brutes and fewer buffoons and hence a relatively greater focus on the heroic. In later editions of the work there was an even lesser emphasis on the comic and more on the heroic.[76] Similarly, by the early-nineteenth-century, a foreword consisting of a moral warning against crime was dropped.[77] These changes may reflect a changing readership of the work as the price dropped and the audience became more plebeian.

In the immediate pre-Famine decades, we have then a very popular work mostly enjoyed by a lower-class audience, consisting of a series of heroic stories about brigands, some of whom bore the title captain. This literary tradition also fed into the popular oral tradition,[78]

---

[74] Niall Ó Ciosáin, *Print and popular culture in Ireland 1750 – 1850* (Dublin, 2010), p. 102.
[75] *Ibid.,* p. 95.
[76] Niall Ó Ciosáin, 'The Irish Rogues' in James S. Donnelly Jr. and Kerby A. Miller (eds), *Irish popular culture 1650 – 1850* (Dublin, 1998), pp 78-96; pp 88-9.
[77] *Ibid.* p. 83.
[78] Dáithí Ó hÓgáin, *The hero in Irish folk history* (Dublin, 1985), p. 191.

which likely as not predated it in some form, and there was also an earlier tradition of Gaelic

verse eulogising seventeenth-century outlaws which added to the mix.[79]

Something of the influence of the literary tradition can be seen where the leader of a group

of robbers in Tyrone, west Ulster, takes on the name Captain Freeney, in imitation of a

highwayman active half a century earlier in the other end of the country but made famous

by his autobiography,[80] or where an early-nineteenth-century outlaw band swear oaths

using a copy of *Irish highwaymen*.[81]

Some of the highwaymen stories were directly connected to class relations, notably the tale

in which a bandit reappropriates recently paid rent monies from a landlord and returns

them to the tenantry. A prevalent variation has him covering the rent in the first place while

interestingly getting the hard pressed tenant to nonetheless resist paying until the last

moment, thus encouraging more every-day forms of resistance. Later he retrieves the rent

from the landlord and forgives the debt of the tenant.[82]   This was a very widely distributed

narrative, not only in Ireland but internationally, found at least across the Anglophone

world.[83] The American version replaces the villainous landlord with the villainous banker.[84]

The bandit hero might be considered a representation of at least defiance towards the

authority of landlord and state and studies of the Irish literary and folkloric highwayman

tradition do see him in those terms. To Ó hÓgáin, legendary highwaymen were 'symbols of

---

[79] Éamonn Ó Ciardha, 'The early modern Irish outlaw: the making of a nationalist icon' in James Kelly, John McCafferty and Charles Ivar McGrath (eds), *People politics and power: essays on Irish history in honour of James I. McGuire* (Dublin, 2009), pp 51 – 69.

[80] J. R. R. Adams, *The printed word and the common man: popular culture in Ulster 1700 – 1900* (Belfast, 1987), p. 91.

[81] Ray Cashman, 'The heroic outlaw in Irish folklore and popular literature', in *Folklore*, 111 (2000), pp 191 – 215; p. 209.

[82] Ó hÓgáin, *The hero in Irish folk history*, p. 190; Cosgrave, *Irish highwaymen*, pp 34 -6.

[83] Cashman, 'The heroic outlaw in Irish folklore and popular literature', p. 208, p. 212.

[84] E.J. Hobsbawm, *Bandits* (Harmondsworth, 1972), pp 43-4.

social protest',[85] while Adams, in his analysis of non-fiction popular reading in Ulster, brackets stories of highwaymen with those of covenanters and Jacobties and argues that for:

> 'the masses, one of the main attractions of such figures was the extent to which they stood outside the established order and threatened it, whether they forecast fire and brimstone, attempted to change the political order, or merely removed sums of money from the well-to-do'.[86]

An obvious parallel here is with the concept of the social bandit, although I must stress that Hobsbawm's social bandit thesis is concerned with both the mythology of the noble robber as the avenger of the poor and banditry's actuality as 'a special type of peasant protest and rebellion'.[87] By contrast, it is only the popular perception of the heroic brigand I am addressing here, as the heyday of the highwayman was long over by the time of the whiteboy.

Critics of Hobsbawm's theory dispute the idea of brigandage as a vehicle of peasant resistance rather than the idea that idealised images of outlaws have had great currency.[88] Traditional stories of outlaw heroes with recurrent elements, e.g. being forced outside the law by injustice, seem almost internationally ubiquitous.[89] Perhaps a more apt parallel is with Hilton's analysis of the origins of the Robin Hood legend as a sort of aspiration generated by peasant participants in the endemic social conflicts of fourteenth-century

---

[85] Ó hÓgáin, *The hero in Irish folk history*, p. 190.

[86] Adams, *The printed word and the common man*, p. 79.

[87] Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, p 40.

[88] Anton Blok, 'The peasant and the brigand: social banditry reconsidered' in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 14:4 (1972), pp 494 – 503.

[89] Graham Seal, 'The Robin Hood principle: folklore, history and the social bandit' in *Journal of Folklore Research*, 46:1 (2009), pp 67 – 89.

England.[90] Similarly, one can easily imagine many of the pre-Famine Irish readership, or listenership, of the highwaymen books, or tales, experiencing them as vicarious triumphs with an imagined but very immediate relevance to their own lives.

To Ó Ciosáin, the subversive contents of the highwaymen stories are bound up with the highwaymen's role at the head of a counter-hierarchy mirroring mainstream society.[91] So we read of south Armagh bandit Redmond O'Hanlon that in:

> 'imitation of Oliver Cromwell, lord protector of the commonwealth, he took upon him either the title protector of the rights and properties of his benefactors and contributors, and chief ranger of the mountains, surveyor-general of all the high-roads of Ireland or lord examiner of all passengers..',[92]

while he receives tribute from 'all such as acknowledged his jurisdiction all over the kingdom' and even claims to act as 'in loco one of his Majesty's Justices of the Peace for County Armagh'.[93] Somewhat less spectacularly, Charles Dempsey, alias *Cahir na Gappul* (Charles of the horses), establishes a system of apprenticeships for horse thieves,[94] and the military structure adopted by Paul Liddy's band has already been alluded to.[95]

Here the captain figure is a symbol of rebellion against the conventional authority but one embedded in an imagined alternative power structure. This latter elaboration might be considered of some importance in view of the extent of another trope within threatening letters: that in which the authors are imposing the 'laws of the country' or 'the regulations'

---

[90] R. H. Hilton, 'The origins of Robin Hood', in *Past & Present*, 14 (1958), pp 30 – 44.
[91] Ó Ciosáin, 'The Irish Rogues', p. 91; Ó Ciosáin, *Print and popular culture in Ireland*, pp 101-2.
[92] Cosgrave, *Irish highwaymen*, pp 13-4.
[93] *Ibid.* pp 6-7.
[94] *Ibid.* p. 91.
[95] *Ibid.* p. 61.

or are otherwise agents of a counter-state or represent themselves as part of some non-

state formal organisational structure.

Conclusion

The title of captain is a frequently occurring motif within the threatening letters examined

for this study. Of the 135 notices forty-seven, bear the captain motif in some form, most

usually as part of a pseudonoymous signature. This chapter begins with an inquiry into what

meanings were implicit in the captain handle by exploring where else it is found in the

period. Perhaps the most obvious hypothesis — that captain is part of a soldierly affectation

— is rejected on the basis that no other military title occurs within the notices with any

great frequency. Where we predominantly, but not exclusively, see the figure of the captain

in nineteenth-century popular culture is in particular customary rites. Additionally, there are

further parallels between such rites and whiteboyism and this inter-relationship between

popular culture and popular protest is amply attested to in other contexts (e.g.

contemporary Wales). What I have tried to do in this chapter is explore a discursive genre

within the notices which is perhaps less overt than the discursive genre of sovereignty

addressed in the next chapter. What I'm calling the discursive genre of *charivari* is the

presence within the notices of the captain motif, which is explicable in terms of what is

usually classed as folklore. I argue that these folk rituals were, at least in part, about

regulating behaviour, and were drawn upon or paralleled in whiteboyism precisely because

it too was a mode of regulation. This is at least one whole cultural repertoire within which

their activity was situated other than a symbolic derivation from the practices of the ruling

class. What this tells us is their adoption of the discursive genre of sovereignty was not

caused by a lack of alternative modes of expression. The next chapter will delve into that

discursive genre of sovereignity: firstly, looking at legalistic allusions and related forms

within the notices; secondly, considering aspects of the legal system (and the act of giving

notice in estate management) as either meant to be, or likely to be experienced as,

overawingly emblematic of ruling class power; and, finally, considering popular participation

in the legal system — namely in the courts of petty sessions. These two chapters

contextualising the coercive regulation theme and offering some preliminary analysis of it

lead on then to the theory chapter with which this part of the thesis culminates.

Chapter Six: The Law, Discursive Genre of Sovereignty

The focus of this chapter is the resemblance between the forms of the state on the one hand and the forms of subaltern contention on the other, especially included in the latter are the forms used by groups in the whiteboy tradition and sometimes included with the forms of the state will be the forms of estate management. The anaylses of these parallels in this chapter is preliminary to a more abstract theoretically driven discussion in the next chapter.

Here, in this chapter, preliminary analyses will focus on three main areas: firstly, establishing the empirical basis for the claim that there were these resemblances, this is established through examining the threatening letters; secondly, advancing the proposition that the relevant forms of the state and the estate can be conceived as, and ususally were intended as, symbolic displays of power; and, finally, considering the role of the legal system within popular culture — in order to address the suggestion that this aspect of subaltern contention, this styling of such contention after the legal system, can be explained by a radical alienation from that system.

That second objective of the above agenda for this chapter is particularly important. This is to step back and try to grasp something of the likely reception of, for instance, the ritual of public execution, the prominence of courthouses as a public building, or the threatening use of the notice in estate management. Doing so can give us some sense of what the adoption of the iconography of the state and the estate meant to the creaters and receivers of the letters scrutinised in this study. We can certainly see that aspects of the legal apparatus

were intended as symbolic demonstrations of authority, were intended to impress with a suitable sense of awe.

The aforementioned resemblances are, with regard to the forms used by groups in the whiteboy tradition: firstly, the law trope within threatening notices, as in 'the law of Captain Rock', and in the Leinster 1832 collection there is often reference to 'regulations'; secondly, other legalistic devices within notices such as status titles, or notices purporting to be issued by an alternative judiciary and police; thirdly, the use of notices itself — similar to the practice of both the state and of estate management; fourthly, the use of exemplary punishment, e.g. letters often refer to an earlier assassination victim as a warning to others; fifthly; the use of oaths, that is to say, the so-called administering of unlawful oaths, oaths used both by new adherents to the movement and also compelled from their victims; and finally, very rarely showing up in the documentary record, the holding of meetings described as courts (and this may in fact have been more a trope of elite representation of whiteboys than an actual whiteboy practice).[1]

The argument made in this chapter is that this resemblance is in fact the appropriation of the discursive genre of sovereignty on the part of the subaltern side to social conflict. This appropriation was determined, at least in part, by addressivity: what was being taken and re-used with new meanings were the signs and symbols of authority precisely because the appropriating insurgents wished to be recognised, and understood as an authority. Hence, they expressed themselves in the way authority was expressed. In this case this entailed using the symbols through which the ruling class displayed their power.

---

[1] National Archives of Ireland, Chief Secretary's Office/Registered Papers/1832/2267 (hereafter N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267). There are no individual references for individual notices – that is the catalogue reference for the entire collection.

This chapter is divided into three main sections: firstly, there will be an examination of the aforementioned forms where subaltern insurgency parallels the customs of the ruling class; secondly, aspects of the legal system will be considered as ritual demonstrations of power, the appropriation of the language of law being then an appropriation of symbols of power; and, finally, there will be a consideration of popular engagement with the legal system, where it will be argued that the law of the state had a place within popular cultures rather than being apart from them and consequently that this form of subaltern insurgency — the claim to be the legitimate law — cannot be explained, as is sometimes done, by a radical cultural separation from the state.

The law of Captain Rock

20 of the 135 notices in the selection examined here are coded 'general legal reference', coupling general references to crime, punishment and justice, along with some more elaborate allusions to an alternative judicial and policing system.[2] Examples of the former include: 'you's must suffer for the crimes' or, from Croghan Hill in the King's County: 'the next time we come to croghan again to punish any oppression we will leave an example justly taking their life in one moment as a caution for every tyrant in Croghan'.[3] 11 notices make direct reference to an alternative law as in: 'you will suffer according to the laws of Captain Rock' or 'under the penalty of the law of Terry Alts' or, as a closing phrase: 'C_R_K now farewell till you break my laws'.[4] 15 notices are coded for 'status title', the most popular being 'gentlemen regulators', although others occur, more directly linked to the legal system or political system such as 'the honourable Captain Rock' or 'Captain

---

[2] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.
[3] *Ibid.*
[4] *Ibid.*

Rock_____Right Honourable' and there are military titles like 'Captain Rock the Commander and Chief of the Whitefeet'.[5]

18 notices are coded for 'amoral individual' and 18 for 'exemplary punishment'. Exemplary punishment refers to cases where notices either use an earlier assassination victim as an example as in: 'I will give you the death of Maram'; or where the authors declare their intent to make an example of their target, for instance: 'we are to make our journey to you and your neighbours Mr. Landy at the old turnpike of Ballyquoher, and shew some Public Example in that part of the country'.[6] Amoral individual designating notices which refer to their targets in terms such as 'hed strong rober' or 'rascall' or 'Tyrant'.[7] A particularly evocative example:

> 'I take this oportunity of visiting to you saying woe to the Mothers that gave you suck it was better for them that Millstone was tied about their neck and drowned in the depth of the Sea, before the brought such oppressors to Manhood and plunged themselves into the mire of iniquity that their crimes became hedious and black that the became detestable to all men'.[8]

To some degree this conception is one of punishing wayward individuals rather than opposing a particular structure, or class, a conception which is, of course, similar to that underpinning the state's legal system.

Finally, 76 of the 135 notices are given the descriptive code 'notice form' which denotes notices which use particular phrases mirroring the notices of estate management or of the

---

[5] *Ibid.*
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] *Ibid.*
[8] *Ibid.*

state or notices which refer to themselves as notices. The noun and verb 'notice' have a particular resonance in this society, particularly relating to the use of the notice in estate management to evict, to distrain for rent arrears, or, in a minority of cases to attempt to oversee forms of agricultural production, housing, etc.

One particular incident aptly illustrates these parallels in symbolism. In April 1832 a ten strong armed party in Newtown, Queen's County, were interrupted by police while in the process of seeking entry to a house. They had knocked its door and called for it to be opened in the name of Captain Rock. They then were called upon to halt in the name of the King by the interposing police detachment. [9]

An especially fine example of the simulation of an alternative state with alternative judicial machinery is given in part of the closing passage of a large notice posted at Tolerton Catholic church in the south-east of the Queen's County, in February 1832:

> 'My dear fellow Christianmen I will not deceive you the inquisition is established from Cape Clear to the Giant's Causeway and from the Bay of Galway to Wicklow head, your private and public actions are watched, your names are given down in our Calendar; if you do not reform and adhere to the advice here given your sordid actions will be tried by the sacred Tribunal, and if found guilty you shall suffer death without mercy. Thomas Gregory was one of those who suffered by this Institution.'[10]

The Thomas Gregory mentioned in the extract was a local landlord assassinated in August 1831 (see chapter three), while the calendar refers to a list of persons committed to trial. Tolerton is in the barony of Slievemargy which is the area treated of in chapter three.

---

[9] Matthew Singleton to Sir William Gossett, 14 Apr. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/714).
[10] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

Outside of the 1832 Leinster notice collection the laws of Captain Rock are a frequent synonym for the demands of Whitefeet groups. For instance, a notice posted up in Clough, in the north-east of county Kilkenny, in March 1832, from a person targeted by Whitefeet announces a willingness to comply with the laws of Captain Rock.[11] Henry Smyth, a Queen's County magistrate, claimed that often upon telling people to look to the law for protection heard back 'that the law of Captain Rock is more powerful.'[12] In a broadly similar vein, another notice posted up in Clough, also in late March 1832 threatens that 'Captain Rock will justify the case'.[13]

Here follows several examples from the 1832 Leinster threatening letters collection. From a notice coming from near Edenderry, King's County comes the statement: 'Friend you are not to trespass on the law of your country'; another pithily advises: 'Know the Rules and Laws of the Place'; another threatens punishment by 'a decree through the Kingdom of Ireland'.[14]

There are more legalistic allusions within the notices, ones more similar to that in the Tolerton proclamation above in that they go beyond reference to laws to expansively evoke the image of an entire legal system. Included among such are one from the collection which is signed: 'I am Captain Rock a juror to nations' (reproduced in figure 4.1); and another which claims: 'This case was regularly and fully investigated by our committee and you can make no apology or plead any because you are not entitled'.[15]

---

[11] D. T. Osborne to Sir William Gosset, n.d. (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/608).
[12] Henry Smyth, *State of Ireland*, p. 262.
[13] D. T. Osborne to Sir William Gosset, n.d. (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/608).
[14] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.
[15] *Ibid.*

In a similar vein is the use of status titles from within the legal system such as the 'his honor' wording in the following passage from a notice posted up outside Mayo church, in Slievemargy, in the south-east of the Queen's county (see chapter three), in October 1831:

> 'you high in authority, do not be oppressive or tyranizeing or if ye do ye shall not exist. It touches his honrs feelings very much to hear the manner in which numbers are oppressed by tyrants. But let them understand that if they do not Refrane from all such, they will Be sorry and heartly sorry at the moment of a untimely Death. His honor hopes that he will not be put to the trouble of marching his men to subdue tyrants in this Quarter of the country, ye may think that ye live remote from him or his delegates, But be asured of it ye do not. Certainly ye will find the result of this notice if ye do not Desist from the forementioned abuses.' [16]

The oath-taking ritual was used in two quite distinctive ways by the Whitefeet movement. In the first instance, it signified participants' adherence to the movement; a common bond of commitment. In the second instance victims were compelled to take oaths to engage in a specific activity; part of a process of coercion in a setting of punishment. The latter is more like the form of oath taking experienced by witnesses, defendants, etc., within the legal system than anything else. The former relates more to that form of oath-taking within the regime which was a ritual performed upon an individual's accession to a particular status group.

With regard to the second form, what the authorities referred to as 'administering illegal oaths', involved, as far as we can see from those descriptions left to us, individuals being forced to their knees and made to hold a book while swearing to carry out a certain course

[16] *Leinster Express*, 22 Oct. 1831.

of action, or to give certain information.[17] This seems to have been an important part of the operations of the Whitefeet movement. For instance, the magistrate William Wellesley Despard described their activity as: 'Serving illegal notices, attacking houses for arms, beating people who took land, and administering unlawful oaths'.[18]

Police reports for the Slievemargy district (in the south-east of the Queen's County — see chapter three), for the months of March, April, May and June 1832 show this practice as being particularly prevalent. For the month of March 27 incidents were reported, 16 of which involved people being forced to swear oaths. For the month of April 29 incidents were reported, including 17 cases of administering illegal oaths. For the month of May there are 11 reported incidents with 6 involving swearing oaths; and, finally, in June 6 incidents were reported, 2 of which included unlawful oaths.[19] Thus 58% of reported incidents during these four months in Slievemargy district involved the forcible swearing of oaths. That said, what we are seeing in that is what was reported and what a particular police functionary may have regarded as significant; there are other sets of police reports which do not mention the offence.[20]

Both kinds of oaths, the oaths employed by the Whitefeet and the oaths employed in the legal system, were highlighted by Baron Smith while sentencing two men, Francis Adams, and Thomas Langton, for 'administering illegal oaths' at the Maryborough Special Commission on 6 June 1832:

---

[17] *Leinster Express*, 12 May 1832; *Leinster Express*, 8 Dec. 1832; *Kilkenny Moderator*, 8 Feb. 1832; D.T. Osborne to Sir William Gosset, 6 Nov. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/1928); Matthew Singleton to Sir William Gosset, 27 Apr. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/793); Matthew Singleton to Sir William Gosset, 21 Apr. (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./ 1832 /761).
[18] William Wellesley Despard, *State of Ireland*, p. 36.
[19] Police reports for the Slievemargy district March, April, May and June 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/1414).
[20] On the impossibility of using police/magistrates records as comprehensive statistics see Huggins, *Social conflict in pre-Famine Ireland*, p. 69.

'Your crime does not belong to any of those classes, with which I have been hitherto dealing. It stands by itself, and manifests an approach still nearer to the source of the wicked and profligate conspiracy that now afflicts the Queen's County. Your crime is the administering of unlawful oaths, a crime of the most dreadful character, dangerous to society, prophane towards the Almighty, and calculated to suggest to the minds of persons of your class very perverted notions of the nature of the legal and religious obligations of an oath; it is a melancholy truth, that two species of demoralization seem to be going hand in hand together in this country; one manifesting itself in the fidelity with which unlawful oaths are observed ; and the other in the violation and contempt of those oaths that are lawful, and taken in the administration of justice. You, with others in arms, by compulsion, administered an oath to a man, calling upon him to give up his property, merely because you ordered it. That is an offence, in every point of view, atrocious and dangerous ; and, we sentence you to the severest punishment the law annexes to it. That you, and each of you, be transported for seven years [i.e. sent to the Australian penal colony].'[21]

Regarding the oaths which were taken upon an individual's accession into a particular public office, like the oaths taken by Members of Parliament, or into a particular professional group, like the oaths taken by lawyers or doctors, these 'oaths simultaneously express and confirm their swearers' elite status by calling upon the divine to witness and invest that status with sacred authority' and are 'a conduit through which individuals, their society, and

---

[21] James Mongan, *A Report of Trials before the right hon. The Lord Chief Justice and the Hon. Baron Sir W.M. C. Smith, Bart. At the Special Commission, at Maryborough, commencing on the 23rd May, and ending on the 6th June*, (Dublin, 1832), p. 314.

the divine united in a sacred, unbreakable system'.[22] In the case of legal and medical

professionals there is an element where the oath-taker purports to 'subordinate material

gain to duty', a strand also found within the whiteboy oaths.[23] As well as invoking divine

authority the oath also invokes the sanctity of tradition.[24] Beyond these oaths taken as part

of entry into a particular status group was:

> 'a legal culture constructed around practices of oath-taking. Coroner's inquests, the
>
> deposition of witnesses, state trials, and parliamentary inquiries all required that
>
> participants swear at least one oath to tell the truth.'[25]

Oath-taking in both official and unofficial forms was fairly pervasive aspect of eighteenth-

and early-nineteenth-century society. While it was certainly found within popular

mobilisation prior to the 1790s, the spread of United Irishmen, Defenders, Orangemen and

later Ribbonmen, all oath-bound organisations, must have reinforced the practice. Indeed,

various oaths used by whiteboy groups borrow aspects from all of these groups.

Interestingly, that outlier of Irish agrarian protest — the Houghers — an early-eighteenth -

century movement principally located in the west of Galway and thus spatially and

chronologically apart from the post-1760 movements — carried on much of the practices

associated with later whiteboys but not oath-taking in the same way or to the same

extent.[26] Consequently, in oath-taking we may be seeing something which diffused into

popular cutltures over the course of the eighteenth-century. Freemasonry, in its more

popular form of 'hedgemasonry', may have been another conduit of oath-taking practice:

---

[22] Albert D. Pionke, '"I do swear": Oath-Taking among the Elite Public in Victorian England' in *Victorian Studies*, 49:4 (Summer 2007) pp 611 – 33; pp 612-15.
[23] *Ibid.* p. 619.
[24] *Ibid.* p. 621.
[25] *Ibid.* p. 619.
[26] S. J. Connolly, 'The Houghers: Agrarian Protest in Early Eighteenth-Century Connacht' in C.H.E. Philpin (ed.), *Nationalism and popular protest in Ireland* (Cambridge, 1987), pp 139 – 62; p. 145.

'The sources for the study of the 'hedgemasons' are even fewer and more scattered than those for their 'regular' brethren. Nevertheless, unofficial masonry is a potentially important topic as it seems to have served as a medium of transmission of masonic ideas to later organizations, such as the Defenders and the Orangemen.'[27]

Oath-taking was also a practice conducted by combinations, associations of urban skilled workers.[28]

There are surviving texts of oaths at least allegedly employed within the Whitefeet movement, which are addressed below in the chapter on collective identity. Seven of the threatening letters from the 1832 collection analysed for this study contain references to oath-taking or parallel the text of oaths. For examples of the former: 'there is Four men Sworn for to Sute any man that take the said place' or 'we are sworn to do execution in different ways' and another 'Be All the Books in Trinity College you will sufer Blood'.[29] One notice informs: 'we are bound to go 15 miles on foot & 21 on horse'; which is a phrase taken from one of the oaths one would apparently take when joining the Whitefeet (see chapter eight).[30]

This legal posture, as well as being a trope in how whiteboy groups, and the crafters of "threatening letters" more broadly, represented themselves, was also a trope in how elites represented whiteboys. The authorities frequently referred to these sorts of groups and their actions in terms such as 'midnight legislators' as they are described by the magistrate

---

[27] Petri Mirala, *Freemasonry in Ulster 1733 – 1813: A social and political history of the Masonic Brotherhood in the north of Ireland* (Dublin, 2007); pp 126-32, pp 146 – 49, p. 102.
[28] Charles Callan, *Painters in Union: The Irish National Painters' & Decorators' Trade Union and its forerunners* (Dublin, 2008), p. 33.
[29] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.
[30] *Ibid.*

Singleton;[31] while Colonel Sir John Harvey, head of the police force in Leinster, described the object of the Whitefeet combination as: 'to legislate upon the subject of lands, rent, labour, and the hire of servants.'[32]

The one report I have found of what seems to have been an actual alternative court sitting *might* be best understood in terms of a trope within elite representations of subaltern contention. This description appeared in the *Kilkenny Moderator* of 28 April 1832:

> 'They compelled Michael Stapleton to go with them to the widow Stapleton's, on a distant part of the lands, and required him to give her up possession of his ground, At this place they held a "Court of Enquiry," to ascertain whether Michael's father did not promise, 16 years ago, to give those lands to the widow whenever she required them. They examined the widow and her son, on oath, and afterwards examined Michael Stapleton after having sworn him also, and ultimately came to the decision that the later should surrender the lands to the widow within three days, or forfeit his life. The widow Stapleton and her son (though at a late hour in the night) were ready dressed and prepared to meet the party when Michael was brought prisoner to her house.'[33]

Note that these alternative courts show up also in more literary sources such as the novels of William Carleton and land agent William Trench's often imaginative autobiography *Realities of Irish Life*.[34]

---

[31] Matthew Singleton to Sir William Gosset, 17 Jun. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/1055)
[32] John Harvey, *State of Ireland*, p. 118.
[33] *Kilkenny Moderator*, 28 Apr. 1832.
[34] William Steuart Trench, *Realities of Irish life*, pp 155 – 63; William Carleton, *The Tithe-Proctor, The Works of William Carleton, Volume Two* (New York, 1881).

My point here is not however that an alternative formal organisational structure mirroring the state existed, far from it, but rather that to a degree the authors of the notices expressed themselves in ways modelled after the state and wider elite institutions. This was an appropriation at the level of symbolism, but a pertinent one, given that the Whitefeet movement's attempt to regulate the local economy was by extension an attempt to commandeer the authority of the state, while their use of armed force challenged the state's monopoly on such.

A theme in the reported content of some notices is references to previously slain persons, or much less often to persons targeted in some other way, and this theme is also found in verbally issued demands. See, for instance, one notice which reads: 'Recollect the fate of Potts';[35] or the notice which ends: 'we will give ye the same usage as hanlon and his Bad Managers Got or worse'. [36]

So we might say the relatively small number of assassinations were used as examples to cow other targets. In a similar fashion, many analyses point to the exemplary role of state public executions in instilling respect variously for the sovereignty of the state, or the sanctity of their rulers' claims to property.[37] The practitioners of state public executions certainly thought of their actions in terms of example; for instance, see below the Maryborough Special Commission judge Baron Smith bemoaning the lack of attendance at the Special Commission thereby making it less of an example; while the magistrate Singleton

---

[35] *Kilkenny Moderator*, 25 Apr. 1832.
[36] John Hewetson to C.H.B.C.S. Wandesforde, 19 Jun. 1829 (N.L.I., Prior-Wandesforde papers, MS 35/567/8).
[37] Peter Linebaugh, *The London hanged: Crime and civil society in the eighteenth century* (London, 2006); Randall McGowen, 'Making examples' and the crisis of punishment in mid-eighteenth-century England' in David Lemmings (ed.), *The British and their laws in the eighteenth century*, (Woodbridge, 2005), pp 182 - 205; Michel Foucault*, Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (London, 1991).

unsuccessfully lobbied Dublin Castle to have Patrick Nash hung at Newtown in the heart of the colliery district, a course of action favoured presumably for its intimidatory value. [38]

None of this is unique to the Whitefeet movement. There are many examples of similar languages and practices in the literature on similar movements, i.e. Whiteboy movements, and some in literature on other situations of social conflict.

The Rockite movement was prevalent across Munster in the early 1820s, and their notices are replete with references to their laws, and their constitution. [39] According to Donnelly:

> 'The promulgation of their own laws and regulations was part of a more general and elaborate mimicry by the Rockites of the legal and judicial apparatus of the established government. Just as the government did with lawbreakers, the Rockites proclaimed their right to punish transgressors.' [40]

This was developed to a greater extent by the Rockite movement relative to earlier whiteboy movements. [41] Also with regard to the threatening letters of the Rockite period Gibbons holds that:

> 'Some of the letters, especially from the 1820 - 5 period, make an attempt to copy the form of a legal document, even reproducing the penman's flourishes and curlicues which would have been seen on leases and the like.' [42]

In addition, they commonly used grandly titled pseudonym such as: 'his excellency John Rock, captain general and supreme director of the Irish liberators'; [43] and: 'General John

---

[38] Matthew Singleton to Sir William Gosset, 26 May 1832 (N.AI., C.S.O./R.P./1832/741).
[39] Finbarr Whooley, 'The Rockite Movement in North Cork 1820 – 1825' (M.A. Thesis, University College Cork, 1986, pp 163 – 71; Donnelly, *Captain Rock: the Irish agrarian rebellion*, pp 63-5, pp 75-6.
[40] *Ibid.* p. 73.
[41] *Ibid.* pp 63-4.
[42] Gibbons, *Captain Rock: Knight errant*, p. 25.

Rock, legislator general of Ireland'.[44] This has parallels with what I coded as status titles within the selection from the 1832 Leinster notices collection. It also has interesting counterparts in eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Indian peasant revolts of which Guha writes:

> 'an anticipation of power was indexed on some occasions by the rebels designating themselves as a formally constituted army (fauj), their commanders as law-enforcing personnel (e.g. daroga, subahdar, nazir, etc...), and other leaders as ranked civilian officials (e.g. dewan, naib, etc.) all by way of simulating the functions of a state apparatus'.[45]

The proclamation of 'laws' was a general practice carried on by whiteboy movements. [46] A different but related phenomenon was the ritual which took place at the largest gathering of the original early 1760s Whiteboy movement, an apparently 500 to 600 strong assembly close to Fermoy where:

> 'a bay gelding, as if a substitute for its hated owner, was tried, found guilty, and shot; the horse belonged to the zealous magistrate James Grove of Ballyhimock near Fermoy'.[47]

Something similar was also found in other settings. Consider Lucas on eighteenth-century French crowds:

---

[43] Donnelly, *Captain Rock: the Irish agrarian rebellion*, p. 64.

[44] *Ibid*. p. 64.

[45] Ranajit Guha, *Elementary aspects of peasant insurgency in colonial India* (Durham, 1999), p. 10.

[46] George Cornewall Lewis, *On local disturbances in Ireland and the Irish church question* (London, 1836), pp 99-102, pp 219-20, p.250, Beames, *peasants and power*, p. 67, pp 74-5, p.89; Donnelly, 'The Rightboy Movement 1785 – 8', p. 123; Gibbons, *Captain Rock: Knight errant*, pp 22-3.

[47] James S. Donnelly Jr. 'The Whiteboy movement, 1761 – 5' in *Irish Historical Studies*, xxi :81 (1977-8), p. 24.

'The perception of the people exercising justice was profoundly anchored in *ancien régime* popular perceptions. This was why the crowd had recourse so frequently to acts that echoed or parodied state justice. Hence, the propensity of crowds to hang unpopular figures in effigy ; hence, the Parisian crowd's habit of going to the Place de Grève, not just as a necessary large open space but also as the site of public executions.' [48]

However, at least in the context of eighteenth-century England there is an alternative analysis as to why popular demands were embedded in the language of law. In *An Ungovernable People: the English and their law in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries*, John Brewer and John Styles argue that this reflected a fundamental acceptance of the rule of law and a belief that within in it was the common right to ensure that the law was upheld. Thus protest revolved around the failure of those in authority to implement the law, an interpretation similar to that applied by Thompson to food rioting.[49]

Brewer and Styles argue that:

'Popular grievances, often vividly expressed in judicial language, took the form either of complaints about authority's failure to execute the letter of the law, or of attacks on the recalcitrance and moral obtuseness of those, who for whatever reason, refused to fulfil the social and moral purposes for which the law had been created. In sum, grievances were more likely to be expressed in terms of authority's dereliction of duty than as an explicit challenge to authority itself. . . The opponents of the magistrate or of a particular law seized (and laid special emphasis) upon

[48] Colin Lucas, 'The crowd and politics between *Ancien Régime* and revolution in France' in *Journal of Modern History*, 60:3, (1988), pp 421-57; p. 436.

[49] Edward P. Thompson, 'The moral economy of the English crowd in the eighteenth century' in *Past & Present,* 50 (1971), pp 76-136.

certain aspects of the tradition of the rule of law which appeared to justify resistance to office-holders or to legitimate participation or intervention in the legal process . . . the belief, sustained even by those who did not necessarily have access to the law, that they were entitled to assert their notion of the common good, and to ensure that it was secured and sustained by the law and those who executed it. It was legitimate to show the magistrate how he ought to enforce the assize of bread or to demonstrate the fundamental illegality of imprisonment for debt by a mass breakout from gaol. Such were particular examples of the belief, exploited and generalized by Wilkite radicals , in the strongly asserted right to participate in securing justice.'[50]

While something similar to this may have existed in urban Ireland, the rural movements were doing something quite different. The 'law' they refer to was not one on any statute book, nor is there any evidence they were acting in place of traditional authorities, as would be the case with, for instance, legally regulated artisan trades, or the legally regulated bread market. In these situations people could hark back to 'the law', laws which were in fact negotiated compromises arising out of earlier struggles. What these rural movements were doing in using the terminology of law is the central question we are moving towards.

The law as a symbol of power

Important elements of the legal system consisted of a symbolisation of power, a kind of theatrical display of power, a demonstration of the authority of the state. The relevant rituals and symbolic demonstrations of power to consider in the legal system in pre-Famine Ireland are: the ritual of the opening of the assizes; the ritual of public execution; and the architecture and location in space of courthouses.

---

[50] John Brewer and John Styles, 'Introduction' in John Brewer and John Styles (eds), *An ungovernable people: the English and their law in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (London, 1980), pp 11 - 20; pp 15-6.

The former two practices – the opening of the assizes and public execution – can be considered as types of political ritual, similar to, for instance the civic processions of medieval cities, the coronations, jubilees and weddings of the cult of modern monarchy, and the revolutionary commemorations in the U.S.A., Republican France, the Soviet Union and in a host of new states of the global South created in the era of de-colonisation.[51] In a study of the use of political symbols in the conflict in the north of Ireland in the late-twentieth-century, Anthony D. Buckley comments: 'Governing the country consists to a remarkable extent in *dramatising* the fact that you govern the country' (emphasis in original).[52]

These aspects of the legal system were monumental and dramatic representations of sovereignty. It is also necessary to address the symbolic role of notices themselves both in the practice of estate management and in the practice of the state. All this was familiar to the denizens of pre-Famine rural society. The largest public buildings in county towns were frequently court houses, and they frequently dominated the public space. There was a spate of court construction in the pre-Famine decades. The opening of the assizes would sometimes coincide with market and fair days (i.e. when there were increased numbers of rural people visiting town). We do not know enough about the frequency of public execution in Ireland but it was certainly the sort of event attended by crowds, and earlier, in the first half of the eighteenth century, the last speeches of the condemned were a popular form of literature.[53] This is not to mention the considerable popular engagement with the

[51] David. I. Kertzer, *Ritual, politics and power* (New Haven, 1988); Christel Lane, *The rites of rulers: ritual in industrial society: the Soviet case* (Cambridge, 1981).
[52] Anthony D. Buckley, 'Introduction: daring us to laugh: creativity and power in Northern Irish symbols' in Anthony D. Buckley (ed.), *Symbols in Northern Ireland* (Belfast, 1998), pp 1 – 21; p. 15.
[53] James Kelly, *Gallows speeches from eighteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2001).

local lower courts known as the courts of petty sessions which will be treated of later in this chapter.

In the following two sections public executions, courthouses and the opening of the assizes will be addressed, the practice of issuing notices will be turned to in the next section.

The ritual of public execution

Many studies of public execution take a Foucauldian interpretation where:

> '. . .from the point of view of the law that imposes it, public torture and execution must be spectacular, it must be seen by all almost as its triumph. The very excess of the violence employed is one of the elements of its glory: the fact that the guilty man should moan and cry out under the blows is not a shameful side-effect, it is the very ceremonial of justice being expressed in all its force. '[54]

However, public executions were subject to multiple readings and different interpretations at the hands of various audiences. Some of the hangman's victims were heralded by the crowd while they died game; that is with nonchalance or defiance. Other executed persons became icons of religious dissidence after they embraced martyrdom. But in other cases, popular opprobrium becomes part of the exhibition of punishment; this was the case when particularly privileged or deviant offenders were marched to execution.[55]

Despite the ability of execution audiences to contest envisioned meanings there seems little doubt that the public execution was intended as a spectacular display of state power through terror, a re-establishment of sovereignty and a deterrence to others. An important

---

[54] Michel Foucault, *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (London, 1991), p. 34.
[55] Peter Lake and Michael Questier, 'Agency, Appropriation and Rhetoric under the Gallows: Puritans, Romanists and the State in Early Modern England' in *Past & Present*, 153 (1996), pp 64-107; Steven Wilf, 'Imagining Justice: Aesthetics and Public Executions in Late Eighteenth-Century England' in *Yale Journal of Law and the Humanities*, 5:51 (1993), pp 51-78.

proviso is that in some contexts public execution could also be about communal norms,[56] or about installing a new regime of appropriation. [57]

The prevalence of public execution has not been determined for pre-Famine Ireland. Some scholars have suggested that there was a prevalence similar to that in England and Wales,[58] though within the United Kingdom as a whole executions were a strongly regionalised phenomenon. The public execution certainly existed in Ireland as a ritual demonstration of state power. The most pronounced form of this display was the relatively rare 'scene of the crime' execution.

Perhaps the most famous example of a 'scene of the crime' execution is the hanging and gibbeting of Patrick Devan. Devan was the alleged leader of the party who burned eight people to death — a suspected informer, his family and servants — at the Wildgoose Lodge in north Louth in 1816. Devan's procession to his place of execution took five hours as the parade winded its way around the north Louth countryside, initially consisting of a cart carrying Devan and another for gibbets, escorted by the Dundalk yeomanry and Louth police, and joined in turn by the Louth, Ardee and Collon yeomanries, and the Louth regiment of militia. Devan was hung from a gallows formed by the chimney of the ruined Wildgoose Lodge and then his body gibbeted, that is to say his corpse exposed in an iron cage, for eighteen months at a busy crossroads, before final unmarked interment in Dundalk jail.[59]

---

[56] Richard J. Evans, *Rituals of retribution: Capital punishment in Germany 1600-1987* (Oxford, 1996).
[57] Peter Linebaugh, *The London hanged: Crime and civil society in the eighteenth century* (London, 2006).
[58] Owens, 'Social History', p. 41; for an opposing view see S.J. Connolly, 'Albion's fatal twigs: Justice and law in the eighteenth century' in Rosalind Mitchison and Peter Roebuck (eds), *Economy and society in Scotland and Ireland 1500 – 1939* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp 117 – 25.
[59] Terence Dooley, *The murders at Wildgoose Lodge*, pp 190–99.

A later example, one contemporary with the primary sources used in this thesis, is given in the following newspaper extract:

'On Friday last the unfortunate man named Flynn, who had been sentenced to death, for the attempt to murder Pierce Thomas Goold, Esq., was transmitted from this town through Kilbeggan, to Moate, under an escort of a troop of the 10th Hussars from Longford, and a large number of the constabulary of this county ; and on the following morning he was met by a large body of infantry and cavalry from Athlone, under command of Sir John Buchan. The sentence of the law was carried into effect in the presence of a large concourse of people. The unfortunate man, though he admitted his guilt, did not show repentance for it. His remains were conveyed back to this town, and buried in the gaol yard.'[60]

On the last day of the Special Commission at Maryborough, Wednesday 6 June 1832, Baron Smith in passing sentence addresses Patrick Nash, sentenced to hang, and expressly comments on the exemplary nature of the projected punishment, seemingly defeated by the absence of spectators — a fact he ascribes to a secret conspiracy:

'Upon some of its circumstance I am, therefore, reluctantly obliged to dwell: for, of punishment, (especially that which is capital) example is the end; and example is promoted by comparing the punishment with the character of the offence ; and showing that the former is but commensurate, and therefore just.

I cannot utter the word 'example', without recollecting how thinly attended this town and tribunal are. Acquainted as I am with the propensities and habits of our people ; considering too, how naturally a great number of prisoners for trial would

---

[60] *Kilkenny Moderator*, 27 Mar. 1833.

attract a numerous assemblage of anxious relatives and friends, independently of those whom curiosity and interest might bring together ; I can scarcely look upon this sparing attendance as undesigned. I can scarcely avoid considering it as a manoeuvre, the result of a command : as a feature of that system which the law is endeavouring to crush. He must be blind, who does not catch more than glimpses of a deliberate plan, to disparage, in the eyes of the people, the administration of the law. His memory must be frail, who, if he be old enough to remember, can forget, that such a plan prevailed in periods big with threats, which were afterwards soon and bloodily carried into execution [probably a reference to 1798]. The tribunals were then, in many instances, deserted as if the law were something in which the people had no concern. A contemptuous aversion to it, was then, by secret agitators, instilled with mischievous purposes, into their minds. To estrange them from the law, was to place them beyond the reach of admonition and example ; and impose upon their credulity by misrepresentations of the way in which justice was administered ; calumnies, which, if on the spot, their eyes and ears would have refuted. Is it possible that similar plans and projects are revived? For the sake and interests of the deluded people, I wish it may not be so.'[61]

The stipendiary magistrate Singleton argued, unsuccessfully, that Patrick Nash be hung within the Whitefeet stronghold of the colliery district, as a warning to others.[62]

---

[61] James Mongan, *A Report of Trials before the right hon. The Lord Chief Justice and the Hon. Baron Sir W.M. C. Smith, Bart. At the Special Commission, at Maryborough, commencing on the 23rd May, and ending on the 6th June*, (Dublin, 1832), pp 77-8.
[62] Matthew Singleton to Sir William Gosset, 26 May 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/741).

Courthouses and assizes

The ritual of the opening of the assizes, the highest local county court, seems positively

anodyne compared to the bloody terror of hanging. Nonetheless it too was a spectacle,

albeit at a much more muted level, with parades of dignitaries and military forces, and

accompanying social events. [63]

Regarding the bricks and mortar demonstration of authority that were courthouses, they

can be divided into different categories according to the courts they were housing i.e.

assizes, quarter-sessions, petty sessions, that division in order of the gravity of offenses.

There is a particular expansion of court construction in the early-nineteenth-century and

earlier courts seem to have been less impressive buildings and in less prominent locations.[64]

In architectural terms architectural historian Sean Rothery writes of Dundalk courthouse

that it is: 'a building which overawes and is to be respected, like the law'.[65] This imposing

neo-classical edifice was opened in 1819. Of a smaller court in Skibbereen, for courts of

quarter-sessions, Rothery writes of its massive 'fortress-like walling' and this had in part the

'purpose of supplying the appropriate image of majesty'.[66] As well as monumental

architecture, courthouses of the period also frequently had prominent and significant

spatial locations. So, for example, the courthouse in Nenagh, Co. Tipperary: 'occupies a

prominent junction site';[67] its equivalent in Birr, King's County, is: 'a focal point to the

---

[63] Desmond McCabe, 'The part that laws or kings can cause or cure': Crown Prosecution and Jury Trial at Longford Assizes, 1830-45, in Raymond Gillespie and Gerard Moran (eds.), *Longford: Essays in County History* (Dublin, 1991), pp 153-72; p. 160; Dooley, *Murders at Wildgoose Lodge*, pp 170-71.

[64] Mildred Dunne and Brian Phillips, *The Courthouses of Ireland: A gazetteer of Irish courthouses* (Kilkenny, 1999); Richard Butler 'Cork's court houses, the landed elite and the Rockite rebellion: architectural responses to agrarian violence, 1820-27' in Kyle Hughes and Don MacRaild (eds), *Crime, Violence and the Irish in the Nineteenth Century* (Liverpool, forthcoming – pre-publication draft).

[65] Sean Rothery, *A field guide to the buildings of Ireland: Illustrating the smaller buildings of town and countryside* (Dublin, 1997), p. 153 - I am indebted to Richard Butler for this reference and for access to his above cited draft chapter.

[66] *Ibid.* p. 154.

[67] Dunne and Phillips, *Courthouses of Ireland*, p. 242.

streetscape';[68] while courthouses in Ennis, Co. Clare, and Carlow town particularly dominate their surroundings.[69]

A corollary to the symbolisation of power is iconoclasm, the destruction, appropriation or negation of the symbols of power, something most clearly seen in the Great French Revolution, and in Eastern Europe during the Soviet era.[70] About this iconoclasm in peasant revolts in colonial India, Guha writes of: 'the peasants' attempts to destroy or to appropriate for themselves the signs of the authority of those who dominate them'.[71] Removing the symbolic power from rulers or taking the power vested in certain symbols for yourself — this is certainly one way of thinking about these symbolic parallels in the case of pre-Famine and late-eighteenth-century Ireland.

Another way of considering this is Bakhtinian addressivity — the determinant role of the other, of the addressee, in discourse. We shape what we are saying or writing with consideration as to how it will be understood, appreciated, responded to. This iconography of law and the issuing of notices would be recognised by the audience as ways of expressing authority. Addressivity shapes the utterance — the basic block of communication — and determines the choice of discursive genre; discursive genre being particular relatively stable but flexible patterns of utterances, that is to say ways of communicating in particular contexts with particular aims ranging from everyday informality, to military commands, to scientific literature. It is important to consider that much of the whiteboy tradition was basically a system of coercive regulation, — not then unlike the law itself. In order for it to

---

[68] *Ibid.* p. 56.
[69] *Ibid.* p. 150, p. 76.
[70] Alexey Tikhomirov, 'Symbols of power in rituals of violence: The personality cult and iconoclasm on the Soviet empire's periphery (East Germany, 1945–61)' in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 13:1 (2012), pp 47–88.
[71] Guha, *Elementary aspects*, p. 28.

be perceived as such, i.e. as the authority, it had to be represented in the ways authority was represented.

Giving notice

It is worth considering the symbolic value of the notice. Notices were regularly used in estate management. Moreover, the proclamation was frequently used to represent the authority of the state and to communicate its demands. The notice was a legal necessity to distrain for goods, or to evict, and the eviction notice was sometimes used as a prod to get rent arrears out of recalcitrant tenants rather than to evict per se. Notices informing people of various regulations were also employed by the minority of so-called 'improving' landed proprietors seeking to 'improve' their estates.

Not only does the language of subaltern notices frequently mirror that of estate notices, e.g. 'hereby required of you to give up Immediately the quieth and Peaceable Possession', and most especially in the stock-phrase 'Take Notice', but contemporaries used the same verbs noticing, serving notice or giving notice to describe the act of delivering both variants of notice. Did the subaltern notice itself, apart from its textual content, contain a message, was the act of writing the demands down a message in and of itself? Did the notice have an expressive function as well as its instrumental function?

The main interpretation of the use of the anonymous threatening letter or notice has been that it is a way of avoiding punishment or victimisation or retaliation: anonymity is the key concern. The relative powerlessness of the crafters of the notices is the kernel of the practice; the anonymous notice is born of the same capacity for employer or landlord retaliation that made the secret ballot a key radical demand. While agreeing with this analysis in the following I will also argue that the subaltern use of the notice had a particular

meaning which can be understood in the same framework as can the patterning of whiteboy activity after the forms of the legal system. That is to say just as 'the law of Captain Rock' was an appropriation from, and re-working of, how the authority of the ruling class was represented, so to was the act of giving notice itself.

The notice and anonymity

In *The Crime of Anonymity*, E.P. Thompson argues that:

> 'The anonymous threatening letter is a characteristic form of social protest in any society which has crossed a certain threshold of literacy, in which forms of collective organised defence are weak, and in which individuals who can be identified as the organisers of protest are liable to immediate victimisation.' [72]

Adrian Randall qualifies this interpretation to a degree, claiming that the threatening letter was 'a typical tool of effective negotiation in all sorts of labor disputes' which did protect individuals from 'employer retaliation', but should not necessarily be taken as 'indicative of an essential weakness in bargaining position'; as even 'skilled workers often conducted negotiation in this way'.[73]

Some of the activity of the Whitefeet movement undoubtedly bears the Thompsonian analysis out. For instance, in some cases the issuing of threatening letters might be considered a necessary cover for wage disputes. William Wellesley Despard, a magistrate residing between Abbeyleix and Mountrath in the Queen's County, recounted to a parliamentary select committee the following experience with his employees:

---

[72] Thompson, 'The crime of anonymity', p. 255
[73] Adrian Randall, 'Foreword' in *Writings of the Luddites*, p. xv.

'they came into my yard one morning, and I was never more surprised in my life ; I

considered they were treated with the greatest kindness ; and they said they were

served with notice not to work under 1 s. a day. I said I thought I was the last person

in the world, and advised them to consider of it ; but they seemed very careless

about it. I said you had better go to your work, but instead of that they put their

spades up and went away. I said, now mind this, you have turned your backs upon

me, and I will turn my back upon you ; and I have never given them a week's work

since, and I have got possession of their places.'[74]

Similarly the *Kilkenny Journal* reported that:

'A gentleman from the neighbourhood of Durrow was commanded to raise his

labourers wages, &c. &c. He would not consent. He was threatened in consequence,

and his workmen left his employment ; but instead of submitting, he got a guard of

policemen in his house, and after a few days, when it became evident he was not to

be intimidated, his labourers returned to their employment. They had sense enough

to observe that if they continued to inconvenience him, they would inflict serious

injury on themselves and families : and he has not since been threatened or

molested. When will his neighbours act in the same manner? When will the

magistracy and gentry recommend and follow the example.' [75]

Now this is clearly self-serving testimony but if one could be fired and evicted for refusing to

work after being issued with a threatening notice not to work below a certain amount, it

does not require great imagination to surmise that straightforward strike action would run

greater risk of meeting that end. The context of so-called unskilled labour and general

[74] William Wellesley Despard, *State of Ireland*, p. 48.
[75] *Kilkenny Journal*, 7 Apr. 1832.

underemployment needs to be borne in mind, hence the need for the form of cover which could be provided by the anonymous notice.[76] The practice of dressing up wage demands with fearsome anonymous notes could serve to make further action unnecessary. Failing that it could provide a pretence that the employees are not actually going into conflict with the employer but complying with threats from a mysterious other. Of course notices could also serve to dissuade potential replacement workers from taking on the work left unfinished by the workers in dispute.

On the other hand, much Whitefeet activity seems to have been of a decidedly less covert nature, which would place a question mark as to how important anonymity was. Often they seem to rely more on a combination of intimidation and popular support to shield themselves from prosecution. So there are as many instances of people being beaten and sworn to give up land as there are of the sending of notices. There are some instances where magistrates or newspapers make specific reference to a lack of disguise on the part of attacking Whitefeet.[77] One Whitefeet party told their victims to 'Look at us and try if you know us, and *prosecute us if you dare'* (emphasis in original).[78] Some assassinations were carried out with witnesses present, including that of Gregory as mentioned above in chapter three.

A relevant variable factor is likely to have been the relative susceptibility of different targeted persons to intimidation. Similarly, these are actions within different sets of relationships. Obviously, there is potentially great need for some kind of subterfuge in the

---

[76] Robert Cassidy, *State of Ireland*, p. 375.
[77] D. T. Osborne to Sir William Gosset, 16 Jan. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/79); D. T. Osborne to Sir William Gosset, 20 Feb. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/404).
[78] *Kilkenny Moderator*, 22 Feb. 1832

case of the employer-employee relationship. Perhaps that subterfuge could even be connived in by all parties.

The notice as a symbol of power

With regard to estate management, the written notice was ubiquitous and variously legally desirable or legally essential to, for example, terminate yearly tenancies, to seize goods in lieu of rent arrears (i.e. distrain), to sell such seized goods, and to confer powers on an agent.[79] The notice was also sometimes used as a stick to collect arrears, when eviction notices issued with the intent to intimidate rather than actually evict. Moreover, the minority of landed proprietors given to a so-called 'improving' role seeking to foster agricultural development on their estates might use notices to more closely manage their tenants farming practices.[80]

Here follows an example of the form of a notice to demand possession given in a tenancy law guidebook:

> 'Take notice, I hereby demand and require from you forthwith the possession of all
>
> that and those [describe the premises], situate, &c., and now occupied by you.
>
> Dated this, &c.' [81]

The following is the form of a notice relating to distraint, again given as an example in a guidebook:

---

[79] Hamilton Smythe, *The law of landlord and tenant in Ireland* (Dublin, 1841); John Finlay, *A treatise on the law of landlord and tenant in Ireland* (Dublin, 1835); Thomas De Moleyns, *The landowner's and agent's practical guide* (Dublin, 1860); Examples of notices to quit can be seen in Stacpoole Kenny papers, N.L.I., MS 18913/2 and in the Inchiquin papers, N.L.I,. MS 45,126, MS 45,127, MS 45,128, MS 45,129 and MS 45,130.

[80] John Maxwell Barry, *A statement of the management of the Farnham estates* (Dublin, 1830) – I am indebted to Dr. Joanne McEntee for this reference; Lismore papers, N.L.I., MS 43,779/5, MS 43,779/6; Tom Lyng, *Castlecomer connections* (Castlecomer, 1984), p. 314, p. 316.

[81] Smythe, *The law of landlord and tenant in Ireland,* p. 952

'To A.B. and all persons in possession of the lands of [the premises for the rent of which the distress shall be made] Take notice, that I [or I as bailiff of your landlord], have this day distrained on the lands of the goods and chattels mentioned in the inventory hereunder written, for the sum of being years due to me [or to the said landlord] out of said lands, on the day of last, [or being the amout of three half years' rent, which accrued due respectively on the 1st day of May, 1842, the 1st day of November, 1842, and the 1st day of May, 1843].

Dated this, &c.' [82]

It is worthwhile to try to imagine the subjective experience of being a recipient of a notice to quit: to grasp the awesome power embodied in such a notice, a power capable of plunging oneself and one's kin to the utter margins of subsistence or even beyond. Testimony to the Poor Law Inquiry describers how evictees:

'suffered great privation in every way, want of food, of shelter, of fuel, sickness, and all the other miseries of extreme poverty to which houseless and penniless wanderers could be subject'. [83]

As an aside, it is for this reason that the contemporary partisan terming of one set of notices as threatening notices cannot be too simply adopted without qualification, as the other set of notices were likewise threatening.

Given the potential control over people's lives and lands exercised in part through the estate notice it seems reasonable to suppose that to them such a notice would be

---

[82] *Ibid.,* p. 953
[83] *Poor law inquiry appendix f*, p. 88.

experienced as a demonstration of power, a display of power. The notice then is a material artefact which represents a power capable of divesting people of access to the land necessary for their subsistence. More simply the notice says who controls the land.

Appropriation of the notice

Appreciating estate notices in this way offers a means to understand instances of threatening notices being personally delivered during punishment beatings where the practice offers no mode of anonymous communication, when the assailants are neither particularly anonymous, nor in need of the medium of writing being as they are obviously in a position to issue their commands verbally and probably do so.

On 20 February 1833 the *Kilkenny Moderator* reports that:

'. . . . two unarmed men went to the house of Laurence Carroll, of Ballinacarrig, in the parish of Kilbride, and barony of Ida, and knocked violently at the door ; on being refused admittance, they went round to Carroll's bed-room window, which they entered and beat him severely for refusing to open the door. They then served him with a threatening notice, ordering him to give up land, the possession of which he has held for the last fourteen years.'[84]

A week later, in its issue of 27 February 1833 the same newspaper reports:

'A Whitefoot Notice was left at the house of Philip Lynch (who lives within a mile of Callan) on Wednesday last by three men, who, before leaving his yard fired two shots and said they would again visit him if he did not give up his ground.'[85]

---

[84] *Kilkenny Moderator*, 20 Feb. 1833.
[85] *Kilkenny Moderator*, 27 Feb. 1833.

There are other more ambiguous newspaper reports where it is not clear whether the notice was delivered at the same time as the party visited the house or at an earlier or later time.

From the Chief Secretary Office papers comes a report that on the 1 May 1832 a couple named Harvey were assaulted at their home near Athy, County Kildare, and during the assault a notice was left with them ordering them to quit their residence.[86] Furthermore, targets can be openly attacked before or after receiving the notice, the above just details instances where the attack was simultaneous with the delivery of the notice. One man during the course of an assault in Bagenalstown, Co. Carlow, is told: 'you damned villain we sent you notice and you did not take it'.[87] At least one of the notices in the sample examined in this study was in a similar fashion openly delivered to its target in a setting where there were multiple witnesses (this is according to a gloss inserted onto the notice itself by the investigating authorities). The content of the notice and context of the delivery suggests that it was intended that the recipient read it to those witnesses. The witnesses were the employees of the recipient and they are themselves addressed in the notice. The text of the notice in question, to a Stephen Garry of Kildare, is contained in the coding examples section of chapter four.[88]

The obvious interjection at this point is that this is a very small number of incidents, which makes for an evidentially weak case. However, whiteboyism isn't really a phenomenon accessible through quantitative research — so much of the record of it is determined by what is reported to the local authorities and what any individual chief-constable or

---

[86] James Tandy to Sir William Gosset, 10 May 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/818).
[87] Informations of Francis Robert Malcolmson, 4 Jan. 1833 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1833/92).
[88] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

magistrate chooses in turn to report. Moreover, these instances of notices being delivered during assaults were garnered from a small sample area — Kilkenny and adjoining parts of Carlow, the Queen's County, and Kildare, over a short time period. Fundamentally, what underlines the case for understanding these instances as something other than incongruous anomalies is the analysis of much of the textual content of many notices as an adaptation derived from ruling class iconography. The functions of notices did include providing a means for the anonymous issuing of demands, but there was also this symbolic or expressive aspect.

Some useful insight is provided by Ajay Skaria's study on the perception of writing among non-literate peoples encountering systems of rule and appropriation fixated on writing.[89] The study particularly examines the Dangs, a forest area in western India, in the nineteenth-century. British charting and recording determined which local rulers were "legitimate" and what their rights were, and, more pertinently to most, writing was used to control use-rights as well as cultivation and harvesting methods within the forests in favour of commercial logging interests. As only colonial officials could interpret the written records, writing appeared as an inexhaustible fount of new oppressive and exploitative meanings to the population of the Dangs. Skaria uses the experience in the Dangs to understand various instances of Indian rebels, on the one hand appropriating writing, that is claiming to be inspired by divine script, or producing a sort of parody of writing, or on the other hand negating writing with wholesale destruction of records. Skaria writes that these were: 'invocations of or confrontations with the written word ... evidently fuelled by the

---

[89] Ajay Skaria,'Writing, orality and power in the Dangs, Western India, 1800s-1920s ' in Dipesh Chakrabarty and Shahid Amin (eds), *Subaltern Studies Vol. IX* (Delhi, 1996), pp 13-58; On the textualization of dispossession see also Simon Springer, 'Illegal evictions? Overwriting possession and orality with law's violence in Cambodia' in *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 13:4 (2013), pp 520-46.

perception that it was enormously powerful . . . '[90] Writing was perceived as: 'a desirable,

dangerous instrument of élite domination, one that has to be challenged and

incorporated'.[91] This is to a degree different from the situation in Ireland as there was a

wider literacy within that society; nonetheless, it is an interesting and illuminating parallel.

While challenging and arrogating the authority of the landed proprietor (or of middlemen,

or of agents), insurgents also appropriated the symbolic representations of ruling class

power such as the law, the oath, exemplary punishment and the notice. Part of this was a

sort of iconoclasm, a sort of symbolic negation, but there was also a factor of addressivity —

whiteboy groups were representing themselves in the ways in which authority was

represented because they wish to be understood as an authority, recognised as an

authority. They were ousting their opponents from the exclusive control of the symbolic

space of the notice as part of exerting a challenge to control of the material space of the

land.

The law and popular culture

In *Subversive Law in Ireland* Heather Laird similarly highlights the other law arguing that:

> 'Traces of alternative courts and other subversive legal practises that can be found in
>
> numerous official and non-official accounts of rural Ireland provide evidence that
>
> alternative law has functioned as a fundamental component of Irish agrarian
>
> agitation since at least the emergence of Whiteboyism in the 1760s.'[92]

---

[90] Skaria,'Writing, orality and power in the Dangs', p. 14.
[91] *Ibid.* p. 58.
[92] Heather Laird, *Subversive Law in Ireland, 1879 – 1920: From 'unwritten law' to the Dail courts* (Dublin, 2005), p. 24.

She locates this as a 'by-product of conquest'[93] and argues that it was an expression of popular alienation from the state's legal system. In particular she contrasts the Irish experience with E.P. Thompson's analysis that the rise of the rule of law in eighteenth-century England served to legitimise ruling class power.   In order for the legal system to play a hegemonic role it had to appear as impartial, and thereby it inhibited the actions of the ruling class to a degree and occasionally made just rulings. It could not be just a pliant tool for private power or the merest covering for near-naked force. She contrasts this with the situation in Ireland:

> 'it would be difficult to pinpoint any attempt during the same period in Ireland to create the appearance of legal impartiality. The penal code that operated during the eighteenth century protected Protestant interests and was, therefore, 'evidently partial and unjust', while 'British' law was popularly interpreted as a foreign imposition that had displaced an earlier legal system.' [94]

This is a:

> 'contrast between a society in which an ideology of justice had become the primary means through which class power was legitimized and a society in which the official legal system was both too coercive and too partisan to serve any legitimizing function.' [95]

Positing the alternative law as the product of radical alienation from ruling class culture begs the question of why then would the forms of subaltern rebellion be seemingly patterned after the state? There were alternative expressions of authority and power

---

[93] *Ibid.* p. 23.
[94] *Ibid.* p. 24.
[95] *Ibid.* p. 58.

available: the Whiteboy movement of the 1760s raised the banner of Queen Sieve Oultagh, a mythical figure possibly derived from Medieval Gaelic sovereignty goddesses,[96] and, as the previous chapter of this thesis discussed, also present was the discursive genre of *charivari* — a more popular form of authority. It is also worth noting at this point that the notices examined for this study do not tend to express a nationalist world view as would be expected from Laird's suggestion that: ''British' law was popularly interpreted as a foreign imposition that had displaced an earlier legal system.'[97] Nor do the notices harken back to the legal system of the Gaelic social order. There are certainly interconnections between Gaelic tradition and whiteboyism in Munster, though it is quite questionable to regard the Gaelic culture of this period as a pre-conquest museum-piece. However, there is far greater discontinuity in the Leinster context, being by this time almost entirely English-speaking, with the principal exceptions of north Louth and south Kilkenny, and having, for several centuries beforehand, already possessed more of a hybrid culture than, for instance, the West of Ireland.

Popular familiarity with the legal system: Folklore

It is possible that law and the courts were neither the means by which 'class power was legitimized',[98] or at least, that is, not successfully legitimized, nor wholly outside of popular culture. Moreover, several strongly empirically-based studies of the early-nineteenth-century legal system find a great deal of popular engagement with it, and are indicative of a more varied and multi-dimensional set of relationships existing between the general populace and the machinery of jurisprudence.

---

[96] James Kelly, 'The Whiteboys in 1762: A contemporary account' in *Journal of the Cork Historical and Archaeological Society*, xciv:253 (1989), pp 19-26; Chadbourne, 'Rough music and folkloric elements in the Whiteboy movements', pp 176-94.
[97] *Ibid*. p. 24.
[98] *Ibid.* p. 58.

In the folklore field Hickey found a suspicious and sceptical popular attitude to the legal system:

> 'By and large, folk culture presents the common law as being biased in favour of the powerful – such power coming by way of class, wealth, education, achievement, religious or political affiliation.' [99]

However, he also found a considerable amount of folklore source material on courts, trials, litigation and lawyers, the prevalence of which suggests a familiarity with the state's legal apparatus rather than bewilderment with an alien culture.[100] One might that add a familiar attitude might be more likely to be a sceptical attitude.

Hickey's work is primarily based on records of oral tradition in the national folklore archive, material which is better for the late-nineteenth-century than the early-nineteenth-century. Moreover, it has strong regional biases, with generally speaking more of a focus on the western seaboard rather than Leinster, the rural rather than the urban and the Gaelic-speaking rather than the English-speaking. There are also the specific interests of specific folklore collectors and their specific informants as a factor. In Hickey's case this gives him a lot to work on from Cavan and Kerry in particular and little from Leinster.[101] This actually puts Hickey's main focus both chronologically and geographically closer to Laird's than to mine.

Hickey also uses those parts of early-nineteenth-century literature which address pre-Famine popular cultures, such as the novels and short stories of William Carleton, and accounts written by travellers. In these sources, particularly in travel writing, Hickey finds

---

[99] Éanna Hickey, *Irish law and lawyers in modern folk tradition* (Dublin, 1999), p. 40.
[100] *Ibid.* p. 2.
[101] *Ibid.* p. 7.

evidence of a great popular propensity for litigation, especially as the continuation of private or intra-family disputes via the courts.[102] Notwithstanding the serious issues with travel writing as a source this is of interest because, as we shall see, studies of the courts of petty sessions have found a similar fashion for litigation. Hickey argues that a similar popular use of the legal system as an instrument of personal and factional conflict is to be found in early-modern England and in colonial Africa and colonial India.[103] One might speculate that the dim view of lawyers and of going to law (litigation) to be found in the folklore record is a reaction to an earlier period in which people took to it with enthusiasm.

For a final insight on this issue from folklore studies, according to Ríonach uí Ógáin's study of Daniel O'Connell's place in folk tradition, no historical figure has had more surviving folklore generated about him or her than Daniel O'Connell.[104] When the folklore is referring to the period prior to Catholic Emancipation he typically is known as 'The Counsellor' and there is a wealth of material pertaining to his role as a legal professional. [105]

Commenting on uí Ógáin's work Ó Ciosáin writes:

> 'One consequence of the argument which would merit further examination is the familiarity with legal process which it presupposes among a pre-Famine peasantry.
>
> The predominance of folklore concerning litigation and court cases is striking, and many of the stories feature cases being won or lost on technicalities.
>
> The nineteenth-century equivalent of the warrior, the saint and the poet of previous eras, therefore, was the lawyer. The achievement of mythic/heroic status by

---

[102] *Ibid.* pp 22 – 4, p. 27, pp 33-4.
[103] *Ibid.* pp 34 – 5, pp 164 -5.
[104] Ríonach uí Ógáin, *Immortal Dan: Daniel O'Connell in Irish Folk Tradition* (Dublin, 1995), p. 1.
[105] *Ibid.* pp 16-7.

O'Connell reminds us that increasing regulation by law and state institutions was not always a process of acculturation in which an older culture was destroyed. Elite Gaelic culture in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries had appropriated legal forms and rituals for use in burlesque or ironic mode. On the evidence of this book, folk culture subsequently encountered and absorbed state law, and interpreted and explained it within its own categories.'[106]

The courts of petty sessions

Moving on to studies of the courts of petty sessions again we need to be wary and cognisant of specific regional situations and processes of historical change, as we have two studies of the courts of petty sessions in a pre-Famine context, but both pertain to the West, while Marilyn Silverman's Kilkenny research was more on post-Famine cases.[107] Nonetheless, there is an element of balance in that selection. Moreover, again, we would reasonably expect the most marked cultural division between the general populace and the state to be found in the Gaelic West. Consequently if anywhere the legal system was experienced as alien and foreign it would have been amid the rocks and bogs of Mayo and Galway.

The introduction of the courts of petty sessions from 1823 was a move to a more formalised organisation of local jurisprudence for civil cases and more minor criminal cases. Essentially such a court consisted of a group of magistrates meeting together to adjudicate at a set time. This was a move away from the private chamber justice of individual magistrates which was highly informal, more open to patronage and corruption and less accessible than

---

[106] Niall Ó Ciosáin, 'Review Immortal Dan' in *Irish Historical Studies*, 30:118 (1996), pp 282-84; p. 284.
[107] Marilyn Silverman, *An Irish Working Class: Explorations in Political Economy and Hegemony* (Toronto, 2001).

the new system.[108] A bitter, though comic, taste of private chamber justice is given to us by Carleton's description in *The Black Prophet*:

> 'Dick o' the Grange – whose name was Henderson – at least such is the name we choose to give him – held his office, as many Irish magistrates have done before him, in his own parlour ; that is to say, he sat in an arm-chair at one of the windows, which was thrown open for him, whilst those who came to seek justice, or, as they termed it, law, at his hands, were compelled to stand uncovered on the outside, no matter whether the weather was stormy or otherwise. We are not now about to pronounce any opinion upon the constitutional spirit of Dick's decisions, inasmuch as nineteen out of every twenty of them were come to by the only "Magistrates' Guide" he ever was acquainted with – to wit, the redoubtable Jemmy Branigan. Jemmy was his clerk, and although he could neither read nor write, yet in cases where his judgements did not give satisfaction, he was both able and willing to set his mark upon the discontented parties in a fashion that did not allow his blessed signature to be easily forgotten.'[109]

In McCabe's extensive delving into forms of customary dispute settlement, manor courts, and courts of petty sessions in pre-famine Mayo he finds, amongst many other things, that: 'there was . . . in most petty cases, little opportunity to take a side self-evidentially in the landed interest.'[110] So Laird's description of the legal system as 'too partisan' doesn't really come into it so much at this level, and moreover, rather than being the coercive agents of an overweening state McCabe found that magistrates preferred customary, unofficial, out-

---

[108] *Ibid.* p. 122.
[109] William Carleton, *The Black Prophet: A Tale of Irish Famine* (Shannon, 1972), p. 156.
[110] Desmond McCabe, 'Law, conflict and social order: County Mayo, 1820-45' (Phd. thesis, University College Dublin, 1991), p. 437.

of-court settlement of disputes which tended to preserve the status and power of individual proprietors.[111] On a similar note, in regard to excise prosecutions magistrates seem to have put communal mores and norms ahead of the letter of the law.[112] This is a good warning against making too simple a dichotomy between official and customary law.

McCabe also found that litigation in the courts of petty sessions was massively popular. In Mayo in 1839, there were 10,967 cases in the petty sessions courts. McCabe estimates that this figure represents members of 27% of Mayo families in the courts as either litigants or defendants in that year alone. [113]

The courts of petty sessions were primarily a means of resolving, or continuing, conflicts between different parts what McCabe calls 'country people' or 'the peasantry'. To some degree then they could be considered popular in both senses of the word.

McMahon argues for a similar popularity in the adjoining county of Galway and using McCabe's methodology argues that the 16,630 petty cases in that county in 1839 makes for 38% of Galway families having members in the courts in 1839.[114] McMahon makes a fine analysis of the range of disputes featured in the Gurteen petty sessions between 1838 and 1845. Trespass constituted 40% of the civil cases in that court in that period – usually the straying of animals with concomitant destruction of crops.[115] Criminal cases and conflicts within families also frequently involved land. There were also a range of prominent civil cases over wages and hire between farmers and their labourers. There is a class content

---

[111] *Ibid.* pp 437-38, pp 440-42.
[112] *Ibid.* p 443.
[113] *Ibid.* p. 431.
[114]Richard McMahon, 'The court of petty sessions and society in pre-Famine Galway' in Raymond Gillespie (ed.), *The remaking of Modern Ireland 1750 – 1950: Beckett prize essays in Irish history* (Dublin, 2004), pp 101 – 37; p. 102.
[115] *Ibid.* p. 104.

here, but not at all one impinging directly on the propertorial elite whose members sat in judgement.

To temper the view that might be suggested by the above of the impartiality of the courts of petty session in the pre-Famine West, it ought to be stressed that McCabe concludes: 'Cases of tenants prosecuting landed gentry were too infrequent to be sure of magisterial probity in this regard';[116] while judgements were usually in favour of estate officials in cases concerning timber re-appropriation.[117] Similarly, according to McMahon:

> 'petty sessions were not a particularly viable forum in which to seek redress in disputes with the higher orders. The gentry were probably also reasonably confident of victory when they did prosecute.'[118]

Class and the petty sessions

This liberal view of the class nature or otherwise of the legal system being apparent in how just or otherwise individual cases of individual litigation were is too simple a reading. What is determined lawful and unlawful in the first place? This question is posed by Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, and E.P. Thompson when they ascribe, in part, the growth in the eighteenth-century English crime rate to 'a property-conscious oligarchy redefining, through its legislative power, activities, use-rights in common or woods, perquisites in industry, as thefts or offences.'[119] This is a similar strength as is to be found in Silverman's analysis of the petty sessions courts in mid-nineteenth-century Thomastown, Co. Kilkenny, that of puncturing beneath surface appearance to reveal the class interest underneath.

---

[116] McCabe, 'Law, conflict and social order: County Mayo, 1820-45', p. 446.
[117] *Ibid.* p. 444.
[118] McMahon, 'The court of petty sessions and society in pre-Famine Galway', p. 118.
[119] *Albion's Fatal Tree*, p. 13.

Silverman argues for a complex hegemonic process in the petty sessions where labourers appropriated the courts to pursue private disputes, but in doing so were slowly imbricated with notions of respectability inculcated by landlord-magistrates. This was part of the civilising role of the courts intended by the central state, though the intention was also in part to better discipline and regiment magistrates. Their role as magistrates gave landed proprietors another stage to act out paternalism towards the labouring class and it is notable that, in what Silverman sees as the tripartite class structure of eastern Ireland, the courts, as with charity and employment, saw better relations between labourers and gentry than between either and the third class — farmers. Similarly, the local landlord-magistrates were able to play the role of adjudicators while the representatives of outside authority — the constabulary — continued to be treated with relative hostility. The courts were also experienced as a coercive force — labourers and artisans were the majority of defendants — 68% — and only 11% of complainants.[120] Many cases were brought by Poor Law Guardians and the constabulary. This coercive role was also part of the hegemonic process. On the other hand, the petty sessions had a mostly working-class audience there to enjoy a social occasion, gossip and entertainment.[121]

The petty sessions had then, according to Silverman, multiple roles:

> 'a *theatre* in which the power of the state to punish and educate was starkly dramatized. . . .. a *forum* in which interpersonal ties were (re)created, class relations reproduced, and class experience made manifest. . . . . an *arena* which working people gradually appropriated in order to pursue their private quarrels.'[122]

---

[120] Silverman, *An Irish Working Class,* p. 123.
[121] Silverman, *An Irish Working Class,* p. 124
[122] Silverman, *An Irish Working Class,* pp 124-5.

But hegemony is not best thought of as being only a combination of educative and punitive factors. There is a third element — that of tangible material benefits accruing to subordinate and/or allied social groups (as we shall see in detail in the next chapter). This, if it existed in Thomastown between 1854-84, takes us into the wider web of social relationships outside the court room. In addition, if there was an increasing 'respectability' among the 'lower orders' across nineteenth-century Ireland, which seems like a reasonable proposition, the major role in occasioning this can surely be ascribed to demographic change given the massive cull of the poorer parts of the population which took place in the middle of the century and which resulted in a definite altering of the class structure. In other words a large role must be ascribed to the Great Famine and subsequent mass migration in any putative growing 'respectability' which could contrast the standards and practices of the early-nineteenth-century with those of the latter half of the century.

While these analyses are of the early- and mid-nineteenth-century machinery of the law, and of only one part of the that system, earlier studies on the law in the eighteenth- and seventeenth- centuries by Garnham and Gillespie would seem to bear out this more complicated and messy picture of a mixture of popular engagement with the legal system as well as popular alienation.[123]

Conclusion
We have seen that elite cultural practices were mirrored within the forms of subaltern contention, and this was particularly true of practices associated with the legal system. These include oaths, the use of notices itself, exemplary punishment, status titles and a range of legalistic allusions within the notices, perhaps best typified with the description of

---

[123] Raymond Gillespie, 'A manor court in seventeenth century Ireland' in *Irish Economic and Social History*, xxv (1998), pp 81-7; Neal Garnham, *The courts, crime and the criminal law in Ireland, 1692*-1760 (Dublin, 1996).

demands as 'the law'. How do we understand this? Some of the options have been foreshadowed above. To Laird, the alternative law is understandable by reference to popular alienation from the official law. However, we have seen that the legal system was a part of, not apart from, popular culture, as testified to both by the folklore record and by studies of popular participation in the petty session courts. Is this cultural commonality best understood in terms of hegemony as for instance in English social histories influenced by a reading of Gramsci? As an example of such to Brewer and Styles 'grievances' were 'vividly expressed in judicial language' and were thought of more 'in terms of authority's dereliction of duty than as an explicit challenge to authority itself'.[124] What is involved here is an expectation of being able to secure one's rights in law, and by law is meant here the law of the state. We have already seen Silverman's hegemony based interpretation of the courts of petty sessions. She doesn't apply this to the alternative law of subaltern contention, but if one followed her analysis Brewer's and Styles's approach could seem to be something which could be sensibly applied to the Irish case.

 Alternatively are these parallels best understood as a common culture where different meanings could be put on different symbols and these symbols contested and appropriated by different groups? Subaltern contention was not then trapped within a hegemonic order and left to tinkering around the edges of what was permitted or conceivable but actually posited something radically different while using similar language to that of the ruling class. This use of a similar language was precisely because that language was recognisable and familiar as a mechanism of power. This is the major question we leave this chapter with to take to a deeper theoretical enquiry in the next chapter.

---

[124] John Brewer and John Styles, 'Introduction' in John Brewer and John Styles (eds) *An ungovernable people: the English and their law in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (London, 1980), pp 11 - 30; p. 15.

Chapter Seven: The Marks of Hegemony and the Struggle over Signs

This chapter is centrally concerned with reviewing theories which speak to the issue of the relationship between the cultures (or cultural uses) of ruling classes and the cultures (or cultural uses) of subordinate classes. These theories can be given in short-hand as hegemony, autonomy, and common culture.

By hegemony I am referring to approaches which posit some form of imposition of a value-system on the subordinate classes. Gramsci's original conceptualisation of hegemony was, as we shall see, more nuanced that this, giving more of an emphasis to the conflictual and negotiated nature of hegemony. However, for the most part most of the time the scholarly invocation of hegemony falls short of this original spirit. Within this perspective the law motif within notices would be an attempt to legitimate demands premised on the official legal system being accepted as legitimate. On the contrary I will argue that the concept of hegemony was not only developed within a historically-specific context but that it was formulated to understand that historically-specific context, and, more pertinently, it is a concept which cannot be successfully applied to the early-nineteenth-century Irish south, east and midlands.

By autonomy I'm referring to approaches which posit a radical separation between elite and subaltern cultures so here, by contrast, it is the very alienness of the state's legal machinery which accounts for the development of alternative law. By common culture I'm referring to what I'm advancing through drawing on the work of Vološinov and Bakhtin. In short this is to extrapolate from Vološinov's common sign community to Bakhtin's discursive genres arguing that forms of representation do not have fixed meanings and can be contested. It

therefore follows that adoption of particular forms does not necessarily entail acceptance of prior meanings or uses associated with those forms.

In terms of literature the main body of the chapter will review several relevant theoretical outlooks, beginning with the Gramscian concept of hegemony before turning to the positing of a radical separation between elite and popular cultures associated with some strands within Subaltern Studies. It will be argued that both these approaches are not apt ones for an understanding of subaltern resistance in pre-Famine Ireland.

Finally, there will be a consideration of some of the works of the Bakhtin circle. The concept of the carnivalesque will be rejected as inapposite to the genre of threatening notices. However, Vološinov's writings on the multi-accentuality of the sign and Bakhtin's on discursive genres and on addressivity are useful vantage points from which to understand some of the themes found within the threatening notices.   Finally, there will be an examination of the work of a contemporary scholar, Marc W. Steinberg, and his use of the writings of Vološinov and Gramsci as a means to interpret the workers' movement of early-nineteenth-century England.[1]   This chapter will then conclude with an argument to the effect that the concept of hegemony cannot be applied to a society of the nature of early-nineteenth-century Ireland as it was characterised by class relations of overt coercion that is to say relations of feudalism and of primitive accumulation.

---

[1] The Bakhtin circle has also been drawn upon in studies of present-day collective action see: Chik Collins, 'To concede or to contest? Language and class struggle' in Colin Barker and Paul Kennedy (eds), *To make another World: Studies in protest and collective action* (Aldershot, 1996), pp 69-91; Chik Collins, *Language, ideology, and social consciousness: Developing a sociohistorical approach* (Aldershot, 1999); John Krinsky, *Free labor: Workfare and the contested language of neoliberalism* (Chicago, 2007).

Gramsci and hegemony

In this section I will review Gramsci's original formulation of hegemony, and I will argue that he understood it as something which was more of a two-way street than a simple top-down process of acculturation and which of necessity involved an element of social reform or amelioration. Moreover, I will argue that his conception of hegemony was intended to be historically and spatially specific, that is to say to principally apply to the core capitalist states of the early-twentieth-century and, in any case, it was formulated in a specific social context where those states were responding to the rise of the labour movement. Consequently the concept seems to have limited explanatory value in the very different context of early-nineteenth-century Ireland.

The main body of Gramsci's writings on hegemony are contained in fragmentary manuscripts written in extremely difficult circumstance, namely while in prison, and which more than anything represent a work in progress, a thinking aloud. Important terms such as 'hegemony' and 'civil society' are employed in different and almost contradictory ways. For instance, sometimes hegemony is used to refer to rule through consent and coercion and sometimes it is used to refer to the consent side of a consent-coercion spectrum. Nonetheless, it always involves both these moments of domination.[2] As an additional problem much of the secondary literature on Gramsci glosses hegemony as a wholly discursive or ideological phenomenon, which, furthermore, is mechanically imposed rather than constituted 'according to the specific relation of class forces',[3] that is to say produced through a process of negotiation and conflict.

---

[2] Anne Showstack Sassoon, *Gramsci's politics* (London, 1987), p. 112.
[3] Bob Lumley, *Gramsci's writings on the state and hegemony 1916 – 35 a critical analysis* (Birmingham, n.d.), p. 36.

In essence Gramsci's theory of hegemony is an investigation into the problem of how a class rules. This including both how a class maintains its rule in different changing forms and how a class rises to the position of a ruling class in the first place. The latter problem he examines through the historical experiences of Jacobin rule in the first French republic, the *Risorgimento*, and medieval Italian city-states. It is also the main focus of the polemic he was writing at the moment of his arrest and imprisonment — the *Notes on the Southern Question* — wherein he proposes an alliance between Italy's Northern industrial proletariat and Southern peasantry. The former issue, that of how a ruling class maintains its rule he examines in light of Giolitti's reforms, Fordism, etc.

Hegemony, or how a ruling class rules, means a variable combination of the following: firstly, the meeting of some of the economic-corporate needs/interests of subordinate (or allied) social groups (e.g. reforms and vertical cross-class interests); secondly, ideologies/values/opinion/culture; and, thirdly, force/repression/coercion/violence and all of this is ultimately based on economic power/position. This can be seen instrumentally as a sort of manipulative political strategy, but is, at least in regard to the first and second factors, better understood as a sort of 'truce-line' in a struggle between contending social forces.[4] As Lumley argues:

> 'Hegemony is precisely articulated through a combination of relations, economic, political and ideological, but it is characterised by the subordination of economic interests both on the part of the exploiters and the exploited. The hegemony of a

---

[4] Laurence Cox, *Building counter culture: the radical praxis of social movement milieux* (Helsinki, 2011) p. 86.

class is maintained through constraining the dominated classes to sectional and corporate forms of consciousness based on immediate economic interests.' [5]

For example, Chalcraft interprets labour and consumer protests in Egypt in the 1970s and 1980s as a defence of the pre-existing developmentalist hegemony in the face of a neo-liberal turn by elites. He writes:

'Subaltern groups are not ciphers of elite control. Their culture(s) and interests are neither completely autonomous of the dominant bloc, nor are they entirely defined by them (Hall, 1981; Patnaik, 1987). The maintenance of effective hegemony – whether paternalist, statist developmentalist, socialist or liberal-democratic – requires a stream of concessions, symbolic and material. It is a dynamic and unfinished process involving both change over time and hegemonic expansion and contraction. It encompasses a 'field-of-force' involving unequal reciprocity (Thompson, 1978). Where consent is won for a dominant hegemony, then one might expect either quiescence from below or protest when that hegemony comes under threat.'[6]

Gramsci expresses this here as 'a certain compromise equilibrium':

'Undoubtedly the fact of hegemony presupposes that account be taken of the interests and the tendencies of the groups over which hegemony is to be exercised, and that a certain compromise equilibrium should be formed-in other words, that the leading group should make sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind. But there is also no doubt that such sacrifices and such a compromise cannot touch the essential ; for

---

[5] Lumley, *state and hegemony*, p. 28.
[6] John Chalcraft, 'Labour protest and hegemony in Egypt and the Arabian peninsula' in Sara C. Motta and Alf Gunvald Nilsen (eds), *Social movements in the global south: Dispossession, development and resistance* (Basingstoke 2011), pp 35-58; p. 36.

though hegemony is ethical-political, it must also be economic, must necessarily be based on the decisive function exercised by the leading group in the decisive nucleus of economic activity.'[7]

Hegemony represents then not the absence of class conflict but a form of class conflict. In addition, as can be seen above, Gramsci makes very clear, that he sees hegemony as imbricated with the economy, and this is particularly true in his writings on Fordism.

Hegemony also has a cultural-ideological aspect:

'every State is ethical in as much as one of its most important functions is to raise the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level, a level (or type) which corresponds to the needs of the productive forces for development, and hence to the interests of the ruling classes. The school as a positive educative function, and the courts as a repressive and negative educative function, are the most important State activities in this sense : but, in reality, a multitude of other so-called private initiatives and activities tend to the same end-initiatives and activities which form the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes.' [8]

And again:

'That aspect of the modern crisis which is bemoaned as a "wave of materialism" is related to what is called the "crisis of authority". If the ruling class has lost its consensus, i.e. is no longer "leading" but only "dominant", exercising coercive force alone, this means precisely that the great masses have become detached from their

---

[7] Antonio Gramsci, *Selections from the prison notebooks* (New York 1971), p.161.
[8] Gramsci, *prison notebooks*, p. 258.

traditional ideologies, and no longer believe what they used to believe previously, etc.'
[9]

Hegemony in Gramsci's terms also always either includes, or is related to, a coercive,
violent, repressive aspect, a fact amply testified to by his analysis of the French Jacobin
regime as hegemonic. He expressed this in a pithy manner: 'hegemony protected by the
armour of coercion'.[10]

Gramsci also conceptualises hegemony as part of a developmental process of class
consciousness with different degrees 'of homogeneity, selfawareness, and organisation'
attained by a class in a similar fashion to that outlined by Marx and Engels in the *Communist
Manifesto*, and, briefly, by Marx in *The Poverty of Philosophy*.[11] This begins with a particular
craft or trade cohesion, a cohesion which, with its accompanying exclusiveness, is familiar to
students of the nineteenth-century labour movement. Gramsci writes: 'the members of the
professional group are conscious of its unity and homogeneity, and of the need to organise
it, but in the case of the wider social group this is not yet so.'[12] After this comes a moment
of class consciousness comparable to that attained by the early-twentieth-century social
democratic movement which posits an economically-based class unity coupled with
demands for political reform (e.g. demands for universal suffrage or representative
government):

'consciousness is reached of the solidarity of interests among all the members of a
social class-but still in the purely economic field. Already at this juncture the problem

---

[9] Gramsci, *prison notebooks*, pp 275-6.
[10] Gramsci, *prison notebooks*, p. 263.
[11] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The communist manifesto* (London, 1967), pp 89-90; Karl Marx, *The poverty
of philosophy*, online at www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/poverty-philosophy/ch02e.htm,
accessed 19 Nov. 2012.
[12] Gramsci, *prison notebooks*, p. 181.

of the State is posed-but only in terms of winning politicojuridical equality with the ruling groups : the right is claimed to participate in legislation and administration, even to reform these but within the existing fundamental structures.'[13]

The third moment, that of a new hegemony arising from below, is something of a recapitulation of what Gramsci argued for in *Notes on the Southern Question* — an alliance between the industrial proletariat and the Southern peasantry, led by the proletariat and which involves economic-corporate sacrifices and compromises on their part as well as the rejection of bourgeois racialist anti-Southerner ideology. As he outlines it in *The Modern Prince* in this third moment:

> 'one becomes aware that one's own corporate interests, in their present and future development, transcend the corporate limits of the purely economic class, and can and must become the interests of other subordinate groups too......not only a unison of economic and political aims, but also intellectual and moral unity, posing all the questions around which the struggle rages not on a corporate but on a "universal" plane, and thus creating the hegemony of a fundamental social group over a series of subordinate groups.'[14]

Similarly, in his analyses of bourgeois revolutions including Italian city-states, the French revolution and the process of Italian unification he distinguishes between situations, like Jacobin France, where there is this establishment of a system of class alliances, led in this instance by the bourgeoisie (or a section of it), forming a hegemonic bloc or a national-popular will, and where this isn't developed (e.g. late-medieval Italy). As Williams put it

---

[13] Gramsci, *prison notebooks*, p. 181.
[14] Gramsci, *prison notebooks*, p. 181.

hegemony is not then the same as 'a system of illusionary beliefs — false ideas or false consciousness —which can be contrasted with true or scientific knowledge'.[15]

Historical context of Gramsci's development of the concept of hegemony

However, regarding the relevance of Gramscian hegemony to approaching an understanding of pre-Famine Ireland we are forced to consider the historical specificity of Gramsci's concept of hegemony. Firstly, that concept was developed and articulated in a particular historical context. That context was, in part, the development of 'the modern interventionist state',[16] which included early welfare state measures. Associated in Italy with a series of administrations dominated by Giolitti, this was often expressly a response to the growth of the socialist and labour movements. As Giolitti himself put it:

> ' . . . not by shooting the workers, but rather by instilling in them a deep affection for our institutions so that we ourselves and not the socialists will be seen as the promoters of progress and as the ones who are trying to do everything possible in their favour.'[17]

In the Italian context this saw the unveiling of sickness and old age pension schemes, the regulation of female and child labour, the nationalisation, and consequently state funding, of life-assurance companies and the introduction of statutory weekly rest periods. Bodies to arbitrate between employers and employees were also established.

The government went so far as to declare its neutrality between capital and labour (the principle of 'non-intervention') — with the result being massive wave of strikes in the years 1901 to 1904 and the government had to abandon some its own policies. The main

---

[15] Raymond Williams, *Marxism and literature* (Oxford, 1977), p. 55.
[16] Showstack Sassoon, *Gramsci's politics*, p. x.
[17] John A. Davis, 'Socialism and the working classes in Italy before 1914' in Dick Geary (ed.), *Labour and socialist movements in Europe before 1914* (Oxford, 1992), pp 182-230; p 191.

beneficiaries were Northern workers in full regular employment. Corporate cross-class interests, that is to say the interests of a particular industrial sector as a whole, were also, according to Gramsci part of the forming of the '"urban" bloc (of industrialists and workers) in the North'.[18] In this case these were interests in particular trade and tariff policies. This was coupled with a basically racialist attitude towards Southern Italians. In regard to which it should be noted that this early outlining of hegemony by Gramsci was very much particular to the context in one part of Italy, while the situation in the South was quite different:

> 'The Mezzogiorno was reduced to the status of a semi-colonial market, a source of savings and taxes, and was kept "disciplined" by measures of two kinds. First, police measures : pitiless repression of every mass movement, with periodical massacres of peasants. Second, political-police measures : personal favours to the "intellectual" stratum . . .'[19]

The late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-centuries saw similar developments in other European states. For example, republican governments in France in the 1890s and early 1900s introduced hours limitation for female and child workers (1892), compensation rights for victims of industrial accidents (1898), a ten-hour working day for some adult male workers (1899)and weekly rest-days for workers (1906). French governments at this time also sought to encourage the growth of a larger, more moderate, trade union movement, involved trade unions in the management of the State naval dockyard and attempted to introduce compulsory arbitration between unions/management/state (there was already

---

[18] Gramsci, *prison notebooks*, p. 94.
[19] *Ibid.*

voluntary arbitration in 20% of strikes). These were also the first ministerial cabinets with Socialist participation.

In addition the French republicans launched ideological appeals around anti-clericalism and education reform as well as through the intertwining of popular culture and imperialism. The popular appeal of imperialism also had a corporate-economic aspect with a vertical cross-class interest in promoting the interests of particular industries in global trade.[20]

This is the backdrop against which Gramsci sketched his distinction between Russia and the war of manœuvre and the West and the war of position.[21]

Historical specificity of Gramsci's concept of hegemony

Which bring us to the second point in regard to Gramsci and hegemony and historical specificity: not only do we need to be cognisant of the context in which the concept was developed and elaborated but Gramsci seems to use it, as was hinted at above, to understand a particular context namely — the most developed states, the capitalist core of the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-centuries. See, for instance, his distinction between Russia and the West in his attempts to understand the revolutionary wave of the 1917 to 1921 period, its success (in his terms) in Russia as well as its failure in the West:

> 'In Russia the State was everything, civil society was primordial and gelatinous ; in the West, there was a proper relation between State and civil society, and when the State trembled a sturdy structure of civil society was at once revealed. The State was only an outer ditch, behind which there stood a powerful system of fortresses and earthworks: more or less numerous from one State to the next, it goes without saying-

---

[20] Roger Magraw, 'Socialism, syndicalism and French labour before 1914', in Geary, *Labour and socialist movements in Europe before 1914,* pp 48 – 100.
[21] Gramsci, *prison notebooks*, pp 233-9.

but this precisely necessitated an accurate reconnaissance of each individual country.'[22]

This is in the context of a polemic against the political positions of Rosa Luxemburg whom Grasmci characterises as favouring a 'spontaneous' movement in the wake of economic crisis, something which could led to revolution in Russia but not in the West (where 'the war of position' was needed). It should be noted at this point that Gramsci uses 'civil society' in a number of different meanings and one could read the above as the state meaning the moment of coercion and civil society as the moment of consent (organised in part by what we would usually class as elements of the state).[23] In any case what is important to the discussion here is that this seems to be a distinction between two different types of society, one which can be understood in terms of hegemony and one to which the concept does not apply.

Again in some passages discussing the ideas of Leon Trotsky, in the usual oblique fashion, Gramsci seems to point of the historical specificity of his conception of hegemony:

'Political concept of the so-called "Permanent Revolution", which emerged before 1848 as a scientifically evolved expression of the Jacobin experience from 1789 to Thermidor. The formula belongs to an historical period in which the great mass political parties and the great economic trade unions did not yet exist, and society was still, so to speak, in a state of fluidity from many points of view : greater backwardness of the countryside, and almost complete monopoly of political and State power by a few cities or even by a single one (Paris in the case of France) ; a relatively rudimentary State apparatus, and greater autonomy of civil society from State activity

---

[22] Gramsci, *prison notebooks*, p. 238.
[23] Roger Simon, 'Gramsci's concept of hegemony' in *Marxism Today*, 21:3 (Mar., 1977), pp 78 – 86.

; a specific system of military forces and of national armed services ; greater autonomy of the national economies from the economic relations of the world market, etc. In the period after 1870, with the colonial expansion of Europe, all these elements change : the internal and international organisational relations of the State become more complex and massive, and the FortyEightist formula of the "Permanent Revolution" is expanded and transcended in political science by the formula of "civil hegemony".

The same thing happens in the art of politics as happens in military art: war of movement increasingly becomes war of position, and it can be said that a State will win a war in so far as it prepares for it minutely and technically in peacetime. The massive structures of the modem democracies, both as State organisations, and as complexes of associations in civil society, constitute for the art of politics as it were the "trenches" and the permanent fortifications of the front in the war of position: they render merely "partial" the element of movement which before used to be "the whole" of war, etc.

This question is posed for the modern States, but not for backward countries or for colonies, where forms which elsewhere have been superseded and have become anachronistic are still in vigour.'[24]

Similarly, his interpretation of ancient and feudal societies seems to posit decidedly non-hegemonic social forms:

'In the ancient and mediaeval state alike, centralisation, whether political-territorial or social (and the one is merely a function of the other), was minimal. The State was, in a

---

[24] Gramsci, *prison notebooks*, p. 242-3.

certain sense, a mechanical bloc of social groups, often of different race: within the circle of political-military compression, which was only exercised harshly at certain moments, the subaltern groups had a life of their own, institutions of their own, etc., and sometimes these institutions had State functions which made of the State a federation of social groups with disparate functions not subordinated in any way – a situation which in periods of crisis highlighted with extreme clarity the phenomenon of 'dual power.''[25]

Gramsci tends to use hegemony to interpret some bourgeois revolutions, modern capitalist societies and the development of the working class movement. It is fair to say that these were his primary concerns and consequently societies without hegemony do not feature prominently in his writings — with the exception of Tsarist Russia and in regard to the contrast between Italian unification and the Great French Revolution.

Pre-capitalist and colonial hegemonies?

Sumit Sarkar makes a similar point as I in regard to the historical specificity of hegemony, though his reading of hegemony is of a hegemony that is less immanently conflictual than in the interpretations I favour and hence places great stress on acquiescence:

'Acquiescence, several of our contributors have reminded us, does not necessarily indicate a hegemonic situation, for hegemony in its precise sense is bound up with developed capitalist civil society. Gramsci, it is well known, was careful to distinguish here between the Russian and West European experience, as well as between the models of Jacobin France and Risorgimento Italy. In pre-capitalist and colonial societies, 'hegemony' may help to focus upon vital dimensions of 'culture, common

---

[25] Gramsci, *prison notebooks*, p. 54f.

sense and discourse' – we need ' a concept of the relatively similar class', but the use

of the term itself always should be 'under a sort of brackets'. Acquiescence proceeds

in the civil society model through the bourgeois reconstitution of the map of lower-

class common sense, but we need to explore also the possibility of a variety of

alternative bases of acquiescence in pre-capitalist forms. These lack the bureaucratic

and communicational facilities for such thorough penetration of the plebeian world.'[26]

On the other hand hegemony has been deployed to aid interpretation of societies other

than those in the midst of bourgeois revolution or those of the last 130 years or so. E.P.

Thompson attempts such an interpretation in *Patrician society, plebeian culture* and in

Eighteenth-century English Society: class struggle without class?[27] In these articles he

analyses England in the short eighteenth-century as a hegemonic social formation.

Regardless of the success or otherwise of that particular interpretation of that particular

society Thompson's use of hegemony to prise open the workings of that society is bound up

with specific considerations as to the parameters within which the concept of hegemony is

operationable. Kaye's interpretation of Thompson's position is that hegemony:

> 'refers to an *order of struggle* that is constantly being disputed and negotiated, but
>
> does not become revolutionary conflict, or entail the continuous use of physical
>
> force or coercion by the state (or similar authority) to maintain the social order. This

---

[26] Sumit Sarkar 'Hegemony and historical practice' in Dagmar Engels and Shula Marks (eds), *Contesting colonial hegemony: State and society in Africa and India* (London, 1994), pp 277 – 81; p. 279.

[27] E. P. Thompson, 'Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture' in *Journal of Social History*, 7:4 (Summer 1974), pp 382-405; E.P. Thompson, 'Eighteenth century English society: Class struggle without class?' in *Social History*, 3:2 (1978), pp 133-65; see also revised versions of these essays in E. P. Thompson, *Customs in common* (London, 1993).

understanding of hegemony is arguably the one which Gramsci intended when he offered it….' [28]

Thompson approvingly quotes Eugene Genovese in this regard:

'Hegemony implies class struggles and has no meaning apart from them…..It has nothing in common with consensus history and represents its antithesis - a way of defining the historical content of class struggle during times of apparent social quiescence.' [29]

Whatever else one could say of them the decades between the 1798 – 1803 insurrectionary period and the Great Famine of the 1840s were hardly 'times of apparent social quiescence' (nor for that matter was the place and period which Gramsci was trying to understand). To re-cap from the earlier parties of this thesis: firstly, these decades saw in the region of ten whiteboy movements each spread over at least several counties, and all engaged in the sort of activity described in chapters one and three; secondly, the years between the mid-1820s and the mid-1840s saw successive liberal mass mobilisations; and, thirdly, there was ribbonism, which was, in one sense, similar to the insurrectionary consiparicies on the European mainland associated with Blanqui and Buonarroti, with the exception that it, unlike its continential cohorts, was broad-based and popular.[30]

While there was perhaps little in the way of 'revolutionary conflict' in this period (outside the 1820s and early 1800s) whether this says something of the popular cultures and

[28] Kaye, *British Marxist historians*, p. 197.
[29] Quoted in Thompson, 'Eighteenth century English society: Class struggle without class?', p. 163.
[30] Beames, *Peasants and power*, p. 43; Gary Owens, ''A Moral Insurrection': Faction fighters, public demonstrations and the O'Connellite campaign, 1828' in *Irish Historical Studies*, 30:120 (1997), pp 513-41; Noreen Higgins, *Tipperary's Tithe War 1830 – 1838: Parish accounts of resistance against a church tax* (Tipperary, 2002); Beames, 'The Ribbon societies: Lower-class nationalism in pre-famine Ireland'.

subaltern mentalités of the time is another question. As for 'the continuous use of physical force or coercion by the state (or similar authority) to maintain the social order' if this is true or not of pre-Famine Ireland really depends on how we define continuous and coercion.   As Jenny Marx put it:

> 'Theoretical fiction has it that constitutional liberty is the rule and its suspension an exception, but the whole history of English rule in Ireland shows that a state of emergency is the rule and that the application of the constitution is the exception.'[31]

A verdict mirrored from the opposite end of the political spectrum by George Cornewall Lewis, essayist, civil servant and later government minister:

> 'The statue book has been loaded with the severest laws; the country has been covered with military and police; capital punishment has been unsparingly inflicted; Australia has been crowded with transported convicts; and all to no purpose.'[32]

For example, the army were regularly called out to support the civil power, with an estimated four hundred military stations in the country in 1815,[33] though a counter-argument could have it that this was as much a facet of the weakness and inefficiency of civil power, in the form of the magistracy, than anything. However, the continually recurring subaltern insurgencies of early-nineteenth-century Ireland would leave one inclined to agree with Patterson's judgement on events in Cork between 1798 and 1803 of which he writes: 'they confirm the essential fact that extremely large sections of the Irish population

---

[31] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *Ireland and the Irish question* (Moscow, 1971), p. 392.

[32] Cornewall Lewis*, On local disturbances in Ireland*, p. 1.

[33] John Nicholas Johnston, *The armed forces and the suppression of agrarian disorder during the Wellesley administration, 1807-09* (M.A. thesis, University College Dublin, 1993), p. 94.

were overtly hostile to the system of governance'; which was maintained: 'not by consent, or more primitively by deference, but by superior firepower'.[34]

In any case it is very questionable if, from the perspective of Gramsci, the presence or absence of 'continuous use of physical force' on the part of the state would determine whether or not we can speak of hegemony. It is important to recognize that English society in the short eighteenth-century would not necessarily be bracketed with English society of the preceding or proceeding centuries let alone Irish society. As Peter King puts it:

> 'In the seventeenth and the nineteenth centuries articulate resistance to ruling institutions and ideas is highly visible. In the eighteenth there is considerable evidence of direct specific action by the poor, but the extent of opposition to ruling ideas and authority structures is difficult to unravel.'[35]

There is then a question as to whether we can meaningfully talk about hegemony in the context of pre-Famine Ireland. There are perhaps embryonic hegemonies, some which were never to be born, such as the Second Reformation, the Poor Law and the national schools, and the liberal/Catholic mass mobilisations of the late 1820s, 1830s and early 1840s. But these are more precursors to an ensemble of social relationships characteristic of a later period. There is an absence of situations where, to quote Gramsci, the leading group 'makes sacrifices of an economic-corporate kind' unless we surmise that acceding to violent compulsion constitutes hegemony.[36] Additionally the mechanisms of raising 'the great mass of the population to a particular cultural and moral level' seem at least in this period to have

---

[34] James G. Patterson, *In the wake of the great rebellion: Republicanism, agrarianism, and banditry in Ireland after 1798* (Manchester 2008), p. 105.
[35] Peter King, 'Edward Thompson's contribution to Eighteenth-century studies: The Patrician/Plebeian model re-examined' in *Social History*, 21:2 (1996), pp 215 – 28; p. 219.
[36] Gramsci, *prison notebooks*, p. 161

been at a very early stage of development.[37] Precisely as Sarkar argues there is a lack of 'the bureaucratic and communicational facilities for such thorough penetration of the plebeian world.'[38]

Subaltern Studies

With regard to perspectives which would put a great stress on the autonomy of subaltern cultures, the popular familiarity with the state's legal system in early-nineteenth-century Ireland was explored at length in chapter six. I will continue to explore these perspectives in the following section, but I shall also focus on a case against hegemony associated with them.

The Subaltern Studies school was a group of specialists in South Asian social history coming together in the early 1980s under the influence of Gramsci and the British Marxist historians, especially E.P. Thomspon, but later, to some extent, moving in a post-structuralist and post-modernist direction. It is the "earlier" incarnation of Subaltern Studies I am interested in here, though it is actually difficult to make a clear-cut dividing line. Strands of Subaltern Studies have been criticised for positing a radical separation between elite and subaltern cultures, a 'bifurcation of the worlds of domination and autonomy' in the critical words of Sarkar.[39]

Indeed the original programmatic statement of Subaltern Studies states:

'. . . parallel to the domain of elite politics there existed throughout the colonial period another domain of Indian politics in which the principal actors were not the dominant groups of the indigenous society or the colonial authorities but the

---

[37] Gramsci, *prison notebooks*, p. 258.
[38] Sumit Sarkar, 'Hegemony and historical practice', p. 279.
[39] Sumit Sarkar, *Writing Social History* (Delhi, 1997), p. 90

subaltern classes and groups constituting the mass of the labouring population and the intermediate strata in town and country – that is, the people. This was an autonomous domain, for it neither originated from elite politics nor did its existence depend on the latter.'[40]

This stress has to be seen in the context of a traditional downplaying of subaltern agency in explaining the collective action of the lower orders in favour of either top-down models of elite manipulation, or inspiration, depending on the author's point of view, or economistic models of hungry bellies responding in a Pavlovian-style to economic stimuli. A context recognised by Sarkar:

> 'The 'Cambridge' assumption that factions explain everything since local 'patrons' have a kind of inherent and automatic capacity for mobilizing their 'clients', as well as the standard nationalist interpretation in terms of mobilization from the top by patriotic leaders or ideologies share in common a serious underestimation of the extent of popular initiative. A point brought out by much recent research on other regions and periods, this is abundantly confirmed by the data from early twentieth century Bengal. Nor can popular outbursts be explained by immediate economic factors like price-fluctuations alone. What needs to be questioned is the central assumption underlying all these approaches: that subaltern groups lack any relatively autonomous culture or mind of their own, and only respond mechanically to economic pressures or are mobilized through initiatives from the top.'[41]

---

[40] Ranajit Guha, 'On some aspects of the historiography of colonial India' in Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (eds), *Selected subaltern studies* (New York, 1988), pp 37 – 44; p. 40.

[41] Sumit Sarkar 'The conditions and nature of subaltern militancy: Bengal from Swadeshi to Non-Co-operation, c. 1905 – 22' in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern studies III: Writings on South Asian history and society*, (New

In any case whatever of the applicability or otherwise of this approach to India, in the Irish context we are addressing common cultural forms to at least some degree. It should be stressed that in *Elementary aspects of peasant insurgency in colonial India* Guha does recognise the appropriation of ruling class symbolic forms by subaltern insurgents, a recognition that makes for something other than the bifurcation criticised above.[42]

In *Dominance without hegemony: History and power in colonial India* Guha argues for an understanding of both colonial and postcolonial India as non-hegemonic social formations where persuasion is outweighed by coercion in the structure of dominance. [43]

This is inherent to the colonial state as it is based on an act of conquest and continues as an autocracy incomparable to the metropolitan mother-country and to Western Europe generally. Moreover pre-capitalist elements are accommodated both by the British and Indian states. The latter as:

> 'the indigenous bourgeoisie, spawned and nurtured by colonialism itself, adopted a role that was distinguished by its failure to measure up to the heroism of the European bourgeoisie in its period of ascendancy'.[44]

India experiences a sort of semi-abortive bourgeois revolution in the form of its nationalist movement which fails to sweep away the refuse of the *ancien regime* but rather merges with it. Dipesh Chakrabarty clarifies Guha's position as not a matter of an incomplete transition to capitalism but that:

Delhi, 1984), pp 271-320; pp 276-7. See also Sumit Sarkar, *Modern India, 1885 – 1947* (Hampshire, 1989), p. 11.

[42] Ranajit Guha, *Elementary aspects of peasant insurgency in colonial India* (Durham, 1999), p. 10, p. 28, p. 75.

[43] Ranajit Guha, *Dominance without hegemony: History and power in colonial India* (Cambridge Mass., 1997); Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'A Small History of Subaltern Studies' in Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (eds), *A companion to postcolonial studies* (Malden, 2005), pp 467-85.

[44] Guha, *Dominance without hegemony*, p. 5.

'modern colonialism was quintessentially the historical condition in which an expansive and increasingly global capital came to dominate non-Western societies without effecting or requiring any thoroughgoing democratic transformation in social relationships of power and authority.'[45]

This pivot of capitalism and bourgeois revolution on the one side and democracy and hegemony on the other is the point at which Vivek Chibber's recently published trenchant criticism unravels the Subaltern Studies case.[46] Before turning to that it is necessary to pause to consider that the version of hegemony in Guha's writings is a particularly mechanical, reified and partial one. That is to say it appears as a strategy imposed from the top-down, which is an element of what makes up hegemony, but there is no element, in the Guha version, where hegemony is partly formed by contestation from below.

In *Postcolonial theory and the specter of capital* Chibber claims that Guha's essentially contrastive argument 'dramatically misconstrues the European experience'.[47] The form of social order where there is more persuasion than coercion which Guha variously represents as a product of European bourgeois revolutions, as intertwined with an inherent tendency of capital to universalise, as a blossoming of liberalism and as European normality is in fact the outcome of contending classes and class alliances and mostly of a period much later than 1641 or 1789. Hegemony then is best thought of as a historic and contingent achievement of the European working class, allied in some instances with petty-commodity producers, an achievement in that it involves considerable reform. This does not preclude the possibility or actuality of hegemony outside of Europe (and some European settler-

---

[45] Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'A Small History of Subaltern Studies' in Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (eds), *A companion to postcolonial studies* (Malden, 2005), pp 467-85; p. 476.
[46] Vivek Chibber, *Postcolonial theory and the specter of capital* (London, 2013).
[47] *Ibid.* p. 87.

colonies). I would add that this achievement was made possible by particular structural conditions relating to the uneven development of global capitalism.

It is not necessarily a choice of either autonomy or hegemony: Guha's position in *Elementary aspects* would seem to reflect neither of these antinomies, there is not then necessarily a blanket adhesion to a marked version of the autonomy thesis to be found in all the writings associated with Subaltern Studies. Chibber's critique of Guha on hegemony reinforces the point made in the previous section — hegemony is best thought of not as a dominant ideology but rather something of that with a good deal of other elements including a sort of *modus vivendi* between classes which can really only be associated with a period of significant social reform.

The Bakhtin circle

In following sections I will look at some of the works of the Bakhtin circle, a group of wide ranging theorists active in the Soviet Union in the late 1920s and early 1930s.

I'll be addressing three concepts from within the writings of the Bakhtin circle. Firstly, I'll treat of Bakhtin's concept of the carnival. The Bakhtinian carnivalesque may be said to speak to some facets of pre-Famine Irish society but I will argue it is not apposite in this case. Secondly, I'll address Vološinov's theory of the multi-accentuality of the ideological sign before turning to the idea of discursive genres or speech genres which was mostly, though not exclusively, developed and elaborated in the works of Bakhtin. I'll argue that both these theoretical tools can contribute to the understanding of the law motif in pre-Famine insurgencies. Specifically in that we can understand the patterning of whiteboyism after ruling class symbolic displays of power can be understood as a discursive genre of sovereignty. This patterning can be seen in myriad aspects of the notices as is addressed in

chapter six. By discursive genre of sovereignty is meant the relatively fixed but flexible set of ways in which authority was represented. Discursive genres are conglomerations of what Vološinov calls signs and as such are both shared across classes and contested in class conflict. The presence within the notices and the practice of whiteboy groups more generally of another discursive genre, what I'm calling the discursive genre of *charivari*, shows that contrary to some readings of hegemony, such as those put forward by Steinberg and addressed in a later part of this chapter, subaltern groups, at least in this instance, were not dependent on expressing themselves in a discourse associated with the ruling class.

Carnival

Carnival to Bakhtin denotes a whole pattern of popular festive life from antiquity into the early-modern period and with some predecessors and with some legacy. He does not then mean just those early-modern festivals known as carnival some of which continue to this day though these are related to Bakthin's broader generic category. Carnival he depicts as a sort of second-life in opposition to official feudal and ecclesiastical culture.

Bakhtin sees literary genres as absorbing influences from everyday communication and from popular festive culture. Hence he understands carnival principally through the Rabelais' 16th-century novel *Gargantua and Pantagruel*.[48] However other Renaissance writing is also carnivalesque, for instance Cervantes' *Don Quixote*. [49] Carnival is also related to the novelistic genre through its many voiced nature.[50]

To Bakhtin, carnival was not an event where a passive audience observed performing actors but rather one where all participated to some extent. Carnival was not an event where one

---

[48] François Rabelais, *The histories of Gargantua and Pantagruel* (Harmonsworth, 1955).
[49] Miguel de Cervantes Saavedra, *The ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha* (London, 2000).

official voice dominated but rather one where all could speak. Bakhtin's concept of carnival

is characterised by a cyclical sense of time marking destruction and renewal and laughter

and degradation, this all meant in a positive sense expressing renewal through the fertile

'material bodily lower stratum'. Carnival is related to grotesque realism in art and literature:

> 'Degradation here means coming down to earth, the contact with earth as an element
> that swallows up and gives birth at the same time. To degrade also means to concern
> oneself with the lower stratum of the body, the life of the belly and the reproductive
> organs; it therefore relates to acts of defecation and copulation, conception,
> pregnancy, and birth. Degradation digs a bodily grave for a new birth; it has not only a
> destructive, negative aspect, but also a regenerating one. To degrade an object does
> not imply merely hurling it into the void of nonexistence, into absolute destruction,
> but to hurl it down to the reproductive lower stratum, the zone in which conception
> and a new birth take place. Grotesque realism knows no other lower level; it is the
> fruitful earth and the womb. It is always conceiving.' [51]

In contrast with this sense of renewal, death and re-birth, constant becoming, official

culture sought to fix the present as eternal.[52] Perhaps in a contradictory way, Bakhtin argues

the carnival celebrates the eternal life of the people as a collective.

The carnival is 'the utopian realm of community, freedom, equality, and abundance'[53] with a

suspension of hierarchy and restrictive social norms. An important aspect of this is parody

of official forms and positions, and included within that is inversions of rank. Carnival, in the

Bakhtinian sense, doesn't then just refer to a particular rest period or celebration but rather

---

[51] Mikhail Bakhtin, *Rabelais and his world* (Bloomington 1984), p. 21.
[52] *Ibid.* p. 9.
[53] *Ibid.,* p. 8.

to festivity filled with this particular ideological content and the carnivalesque includes literary works influenced by the festive second-life.

In terms of analysing the content of early-nineteenth-century threatening notices, the parody element of the carnivalesque is that which most immediately strikes one as a potential link. Bakhtin recounts of this parodic carnivalesque strand in medieval literature that:

> ' . . . . parodical doublets of every ecclesiastical cult and teaching were created – the so-called parodia sacra, "sacred parody," one of the most peculiar and least understood manifestations of medieval literature. There is a considerable number of parodical liturgies ("The Liturgy of the Drunkards," "The Liturgy of the Gamblers"), parodies of Gospel readings, of the most sacred prayers (the Lord's prayer, the Ave Maria), of litanies, hymns, psalms, and even Gospel sayings. There were parodies of wills ("The Pig's Will," "The Will of the Ass"), parodies of epitaphs, council decrees, etc. The scope of this literature is almost limitless. All of it was consecrated by tradition and, to a certain extent, tolerated by the Church. It was created and preserved under the auspices of the "Paschal laughter," or of the "Christmas laughter"; it was in part directly linked, as in the parodies of liturgies and prayers, with the "feast of fools" and may have been performed during this celebration.[54]

> Another essential element was a reversal of the hierarchic levels: the jester was proclaimed king, a clownish abbot, bishop, or king was elected at the "feast of fools," and in the churches directly under the pope's jurisdiction a mock pontiff was even chosen. The members of this hierarchy of fools sang solemn mass. At many of these

---

[54]*Ibid*. p. 14.

feasts kings and queens were elected for a day, as on Epiphany and on St. Valentine's

day. The custom of electing such ephemeral kings and queens (*rois pour rire*) was

especially widespread in France, where nearly every popular banquet was presided

over by them.'[55]

This parodying of the forms of the church and of legal documents would strike one as similar

to the mimicking of the forms of the state and estate in some of the threatening letters.

However, threatening notices were typically composed in an authoritative, monological,

commanding voice, much more like Bakhtin's official culture than the polyphony of the

carnivalesque. Moreover the notices do not regularly feature humour and there is little

sense of renewal and life-giving degradation. If the carnivalesque 'digs a bodily grave for a

new birth'[56] the threatening notice just digs a bodily grave.

There is within threatening letters an occasional, or better rare, element of laughter and

more frequently something like inversion where particularly ostentatious titles are taken on.

The following is a rare example of the darkly comic from north Cork in 1822:

'My Dear Sir In compassion to your human weakness, and in consideration of the

enormous weight of your corpulent fraim I mean to rid you of these inconveniences by

a decapitation. Do not, I pray you be alarmed, for your life must be a load to you, and I

think that you ought to thank me for my good intention, to deprive you of it. . .' [57]

In terms of Bakhtin's 'reversal of the hierarchic levels' [58] some notices do display this sort of

ritual inversion with pseudonym bearing verbose regalia such as: 'Lt Genl breakneck Lord

---

[55] *Ibid*. p. 81.
[56] *Ibid*. p. 21.
[57] Gibbons, *Captain Rock, knight errant,* p. 148
[58] Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, p. 81.

advocate of the Poor & Commiserator thereof';[59] or: 'Sir John Doe Governor of Munster'[60].

However, plainer forms of pseudonym are far more frequent.

For the most part this seems more like a distant faint connection between the carnivalesque and the threatening notice than them being of the same species. Such a connection is not impossible. Indeed Bakhtin analyses later literary forms, for instance, the early -nineteenth-century romantic and gothic,[61] as carriers of some influence from the Medieval and Renaissance literature belonging to the world of carnival. But these elements, both elements of the grotesque and elements of humour, have, by the nineteenth-century, been majorly transformed from their carnival roots. The content of the notices seem very removed from the carnivalesque so removed it seems Bakhtin's writings on the carnival offer little of direct relevance to the analysis of the threatening letters.

However, beyond his immediate deciphering of carnival in a broader sense Bakhtin's analysis does highlight two important considerations which I think do speak to my empirical data. These are the influence of popular festive life and the interrelationship between official and popular cultures. With regard to the former this is of course in line with the relationship between ritual life and popular protest explored in chapter five. With regard to the latter we have to consider not just the carnival's parodies, but also the literate (and hence elite) absorption of carnival themes in the works of Rabelais and other authors.

Which is not to say that we cannot see elements of carnivalesque in nineteenth century Ireland: for instance, wake amusements — which included mock courts and mock religious ceremonies; as well as fairs which at least in the early nineteenth century at times didn't

---

[59] Gibbons, *Captain Rock, knight errant*, p. 88.
[60] *Ibid.* p. 54.
[61] Bakhtin, *Rabelais*, pp 37 – 44.

have a division between performers and audience, and, finally, patterns and religious observance at holy wells could too be considered to have a carnivalesque aspect. [62] Callan school-master Amhlaoibh Uí Shúileabháin's expressive summing up of night-time at a wake was: 'needless to say, if they were not married, they knew how to make love'.[63] There are faint traces of an earlier carnivalesque tradition as, for instance, in the following ban issued in Kilkenny by Archbishop Thomas Minot in 1367:

> 'A constitution that transactions be not held in churches or their lands or cemeteries, nor that secular trades be conducted . . . And because many bodies of saints and of the saved, to which all honour and reverence are due, are buried in dedicated cemeteries, we strictly instruct parish priests of our diocese and province to give official notice publicly in their churches that none should presume to hold dances, contests [wrestling matches?], or other base plays/games in churches or cemeteries, especially on vigils and feasts of saints, with the theatrical plays/games and spectacles of wantonness, through which churches are polluted; that the aforementioned priests, on pain of suspension, warn those [so doing] and advise them that they utterly abstain and desist from [pursuits] of this kind, on pain of the greater excommunication.'[64]

Nonetheless, the carnivalesque does not seem to have a massive presence within the body of notices examined for this study.

---

[62] Séamas Ó Maitiú, *The humours of Donnybrook: Dublin's famous Fair and its suppression* (Dublin 1995), pp 20-1; Seán Ó Súilleabháin, *Irish Wake Amusements* (Dublin 1967); Patrick Logan, *The holy wells of Ireland* (Buckinghamshire 1980), pp 133-40.

[63] *Cinnlae Amhlaoibh Uí Shúileabháin* (The Diary of Humphrey O'Sullivan) *Part III. Containing the diary from 1st January, 1831 to the end of December, 1833,* ed. Michael McGrath, (London, Irish Texts Society, 1936), p. 39.

[64] Alan J. Fletcher, *Drama, performance, and polity in pre-Cromwellian Ireland* (Cork, 2000), p. 119.

Vološinov and the struggle over signs

Vološinov's 1929 publication *Marxism and the philosophy of language* is primarily concerned with a critique of both Ferdinand de Saussure's structuralist linguistics and Wilhelm von Humboldt's view of an unrestrained individual human linguistic creativity. Our concern here is more what Vološinov has to say about ideology but as his analysis of ideology is closely linked to his social semiotics I'll briefly summarise the latter as a necessary introduction to the former.

For Vološinov the meaning of a sign, i.e. a word, a symbol, a gesture, is not fixed, but this lack of fixed meaning is not a random and accidental arbitrariness rather meaning is contested, shaped by the social context in which the sign is deployed. Signs develop out of interaction between human individuals and are the shapers of individual consciousness through that interaction. A sign only exists within a social context and is not explicable by abstracting it out of the context. Dialogue, in a very broad sense, is the semiotic well-spring.

Vološinov wields the terms ideological and ideology in ways quite different from twentieth-century Marxist orthodoxy, in the words of Williams Vološinov uses ideological to 'describe the production of meaning through signs' and ideology to mean 'the dimension of social experience in which meanings and values are produced'.[65] The world of signs is also the world of ideology:

> 'Every sign is subject to the criteria of ideological evaluation (i.e., whether it is true, false, correct, fair, good, etc.). The domain of ideology coincides with the domain of

---

[65] Williams, *Marxism and literature*, p. 70.

signs. They equate with one another. Wherever a sign is present, ideology is present, too. *Everything ideological possesses semiotic value.*' [66]

The sign is ideological because there is not a simple correspondence between the sign and what the sign represents. According to Vološinov: 'existence reflected in sign is not merely reflected but refracted';[67] that is to say the sign offers a vision of reality which is slanted, seen from a particular angle or bent in a particular shape rather than simply represented as a mirror image. Crucially, the determinant of this refraction is 'an intersecting of differently oriented social interests within one and the same community, i.e., *by the class struggle*.'[68] Signs are shaped by social conflict: 'signification does not take place in some neutral space'.[69]

Culture, is cross-class, Vološinov refers to 'the sign community' meaning 'the totality of users of the same set of signs for ideological communication'; but different classes impose, contest and struggle over signs and their meanings — 'differently oriented accents intersect in every ideological sign. Sign becomes an arena of class struggle'.[70]

This multi-accentuality of the ideological sign, the multiple meanings a sign can hold, the flexibility of what a sign can represent, is immanent, inherent to the sign, ever-possible, but not free from restraint, free-for-all in a world of open communication. Socio-material power is congruent with cultural-linguistic power and the struggle over signs carries on by degrees with its fullest extent being a sort of semiotic dual power:

---

[66] V. N. Vološinov, *Marxism and the philosophy of language* (New York 1973), p. 10.
[67] *Ibid*. p. 23
[68] *Ibid.* p. 23
[69] Michael Gardiner, *The dialogics of critique: M.M. Bakhtin and the theory of ideology* (London, 1992), p.17.
[70] Vološinov, *Marxism and the philosophy of language*, p. 23.

'In actual fact, each ideological sign has two faces, like Janus. Any current curse word can become a word of praise, any current truth must inevitably sound to other people as the greatest lie. This *inner dialectical quality* of the sign comes out fully in the open only in times of social crises or revolutionary changes.' [71]

To Vološinov the ruling class attempts to capture, pin-down and hold-fast the meaning of any ideological sign, to make it fixed and unquestionable:

'The ruling class strives to lend the ideological sign a supraclass, external character, to extinguish or exhaust the struggle of class relations that occurs within it, to make it the expression of only one, solid and immutable view.'[72]

So we can have a struggle over the meaning of a sign or a straightforward annexation of a sign. In regard to the latter of Vološinov's theories Stuart Hall comments:

'if the social struggle in language could be conducted over the same sign, it followed that signs (and, by a further extension, whole chains of signifiers, whole discourses) could not be assigned, in a determinate way, permanently to any one side in the struggle.'[73]

Sets of signs, or what Hall calls above 'whole chains of signifiers, whole discourses' can be considered as analogous with Bakhtin's discursive genres. Vološinov's approach is congruent with the structure-agency integration discussed in the ontological note at the start of this thesis. This, in that it is not discourse determinism, but at the same time it avoids the idea that actors' activity is unstructured — people can shape the signs with which

---

[71] *Ibid.* p. 23.
[72] Quoted in Gardiner, *dialogics of critique*, p. 90.
[73] Stuart Hall, 'The Rediscovery of 'Ideology': Return of the Repressed in Media Studies' in John Storey (ed.), *Cultural theory and popular culture: A reader* (Harlow, 2006), pp 124 – 155; p. 145.

they seek to understand and influence their social world, but not just in anyway they like, but rather by working on pre-existing sets of signs. In the context of early-nineteenth-century Ireland suchs signs as the notice itself, the practice of oath-taking, and the term 'the law' are appropriated as a part of subaltern contention and turned into a part of subaltern contention. Instead of representing the authority of the ruling class they come to represent the displacement of that authority. Here the term 'the law' means not an expectation that one's rights are secured in the law, not even a questioning of who has the right to set 'the law' but rather a bold assertion of the right to regulate.

Discursive genres and addressivity

Discursive genres are relatively stable types of utterance. Consequently understanding the discursive genre concept requires first a consideration of the concept of utterance. Bakhtin's argument revolves around making a distinction between sentence as a unit of language and utterance as a unit of communication or discourse.[74] Utterance, simply put, is embedded in dialogue and based on responding to another utterance and anticipating the response of the person you are addressing. Bakhtin describes this as the 'active role of the *other* in the process of speech communication':[75]

> 'Central to all this is the 'addressivity' of an utterance, that is, its quality of being directed towards someone. The utterance will be different depending on whether it is addressed to an immediate partner in dialogue, a collective of specialists, 'the public', opponents, like-minded people, a subordinate or superior, and so on. This addressivity has an important effect on the shape of the utterance, affecting the selection of vocabulary, stylistic pattern, intonation etc. Such factors determine the

---

[74] M.M. Bakhtin, *Speech genres and other late essays* (Austin, 1986), p. 99, p. 73.
[75] *Ibid.* p. 70.

formality or informality of the utterance, dependent on the type of relationship being enacted.'[76]

Vološinov and Bakhtin do not hermetically bracket off literary discourse from everyday communication, from social conversation, from publications of scientific research, from military commands.[77] Bakhtin typifies genres as primary, or simple, and secondary, or complex. Primary genres are mostly oral communication in everyday life, and secondary genres are more complex forms of primarily written discourse, e.g. artistic, scientific or socio-political works. Secondary genres are ultimately developed out of primary genres. A genre is essentially a style of communication which we can in the first instance learn unconsciously much like grammar though obviously particular types of genre can be consciously learnt:

> 'Our repertoire of oral (and written) speech genres is rich. We use them confidently and skilfully *in practise*, and it is quite possible for us not even to suspect their existence *in theory*.'[78]

Different genres relate to different institutions and different spheres of human activity. Genres differ as to their relative plasticity or relative fixedness and it is possible to re-accentuate genres, as in Vološinov's analysis of the sign. To Bakhtin without the genre 'communication would be almost impossible',[79] and part of this is about addressivity — about making one's self explicable to those to whom you are communicating — but also *bricolage* — one communicates with what one has to hand to communicate with. There is

---

[76] Craig Brandist, *The Bakhtin circle: Philosophy, culture and politics* (London, 2002), p. 164.
[77] *Ibid.* p. 158.
[78] Bakhtin, *Speech genres*, p. 78.
[79] Bakhtin, *Speech genres*, p. 79.

nonetheless some room for creativity and flexibility within these slowly changing stable patterns.

I use Bakhtin's concept of discursive genre to contextualise particular tropes within the threatening notices linking them up with similar cultural forms in the wider society. I group these themes into two types: the discursive genre of sovereignty and the discursive genre of *charivari*. The former groups together such codes as amoral individual, exemplary punishment, general legal reference, as well as law, for direct reference to law; the later revolves around the title of captain and the parallels between customary rites and modes of social conflict.

By discursive genre of sovereignty I mean the genre usually expressing the authority of the state, which is to say the forms of the legal system, and the authority of estate management, that is the practice of issuing notices itself. This appropriation of the discursive genre of sovereignty by the authors of the threatening notices relates of course also to Vološinov's struggle over the sign. The systems of signs making up this discursive genre were annexed precisely to appear as the real sovereign authority in terms of addressivity. Not in terms of legitimacy, but in terms of intimidation, overawing, and the majesty and terror of the law. The point is these symbols of power would be recognised as such by their recipients, and taking them, was, in a way also disarming their previous holders.

Steinberg: The marks of hegemony

What I have advanced above is somewhat different to how Marc W. Steinberg draws on the theories of Vološinov, as his empirical data can be related to struggles over the meaning of signs while mine I think is more a straightforward case of struggle over the possession of signs. The core idea here is, in the words of Steinberg, that:

> 'Rather than positing exclusive cultures and oppositional subcultures, we should analyze social movement culture more as an appropriation from a dominant culture.'[80]

This is congruent with the Chalcraft or Thompson uses of hegemony above, but also fits with the ideas of critics of the concept of hegemony such as James C. Scott. Scott writes that:

> 'for the great bulk of political life, including most violent conflict, the stakes are less than the conquest of a new world. The conflict will accordingly take a dialogic form in which the language of the dialogue will invariably borrow heavily from the terms of the dominant ideology prevailing in the public transcript.'[81]

This is both the same as what I have found but also radically different. What Scott writes of is a stratagem where subaltern demands are expressed in a language at least some way congenial to rulers: a language of Christianity, or of paternalism and deference, or of monarchism according to whatever is the dominant ideology of the particular society. He expounds that:

---

[80] Marc W. Steinberg, 'The Talk and Back Talk of Collective Action: A Dialogic Analysis of Repertoires of Discourse among Nineteenth-Century English Cotton Spinners' in *The American Journal of Sociology*, 105:3, (1999), pp 736-780; pp 741-42.

[81] James C. Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts* (New Haven, 1990), p. 102.

'. . . we might say that addressing the dominant elite under less than revolutionary

circumstances, and given certain constraining assumptions about the distribution of

power, the use of the terms of the dominant ideology in the course of political

struggle is both realistic and prudent.'[82]

To Steinberg and Scott these appropriations aim at legitimating subaltern claims; this is not

what I'm arguing for as an interpretation of the annexation of symbols carried on within

subaltern insurgencies in pre-Famine Ireland. Rather, I will argue, these symbols were being

used as straightforward symbolic demonstrations of power both by insurgent groups and by

the ruling class. To Steinberg subordinate groups express their claims through re-articulating

elements of a hegemonic (in his terms) discourse, through chipping away at the fringes of

the dominant group's ideology through contesting the meaning of the terms of that

ideology. The constituting force of ideology then is this dialogic contest, this 'give and

take'.[83] For example, part of the Spitalfields silk weavers' argument against de-regulation of

their trade was to postulate that labour was a form of property and their labour

consequently deserved protection as property,[84] the east London silk weavers' movement

of the 1820s being one of Steinberg's case studies.

However, the derived outlooks, arguments and identities always bear 'the marks of

hegemony';[85] that is to say the meanings produced are always within certain hegemonic

---

[82] *Ibid.* p. 103.

[83] Marc W. Steinberg, *Fighting Words: Working-Class Formation, Collective Action, and Discourse in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Ithaca and London, 1999), p.236.

[84] Marc W. Steinberg, 'The Dialogue of Struggle: The Contest over Ideological Boundaries in the Case of London Silk Weavers in the Early Nineteenth Century' in *Social Science History*, 18:4 (1994), pp. 505-41; pp 523-24.

[85] Steinberg, *Fighting words*, p. 236.

boundaries. The appropriation from dominant discourses on the part of subaltern groups

creates 'the ideological legitimacy necessary for legitimating interests and action'.[86]

Steinberg does not really explore what mechanism of cultural or ideological influence is it

that necessitates both the subordinate group to express itself within the dominant

discourse (that is what makes it a dominant discourse) and need to legitimate its claims in

relation to that discourse. As we have seen in chapter five regarding the case under scrutiny

in this thesis another discursive genre was present, that of *charivari*, which could have been,

and was, drawn upon.

Moreover, it needs to be borne in mind that the specific context of the silk weavers'

appropriations from the dominant discourse was, according to Steinberg's description, a

lobbying campaign addressing elite opinion:

> 'To counter the manufacturers' repeal petition the silk weavers and their community
>
> allies organized a sustained campaign that included sophisticated lobbying of the
>
> Commons. The campaign included numerous public gatherings and several
>
> substantial petitions that were presented by sympathetic MPs (Hansard's 1823, vol.
>
> 9: 378; 1824, vol. 10: 780-81, 869, 1221, 1285, 1312). Accompanying the mass
>
> meetings and petitions was a pamphlet that sought to confront directly the
>
> discourses of the manufacturers.'[87]

Is this not Scott's public transcript, might there not be a hidden transcript being overlooked

here? Scott argues for a 'dualistic political culture' with 'a negotiated version of what we

might call great tradition politics and a more radical set of values which cannot be

---

[86] Steinberg, *Fighting words*, p. 236.
[87] *Ibid.* p. 523.

reconciled with dominant political conceptions.'[88] Something which Scott later formulates as the 'public transcript', that is to say the face shown to power — which draws on the dominant ideology and aims at negiotiation, and the more radical 'hidden transcript', which only becomes public, or overt, in moments of crisis or opportunity.[89] The nature of a lobbying campaign is such that one would expect it to draw heavily on the 'public transcript'.

Furthermore, Steinberg tends to gloss over examples of those subaltern mentalities within his case studies going, to my mind, well beyond 'a conflict on the boundaries, that is, those areas in this dominant ideology where definitions of the moral, just, and possible were open to contention';[90] and which look more like 'the pitting of one worldview against another'; which is to say exactly what shouldn't be occurring according to Steinberg's perspective.[91] Namely, the adoption of what at least looks like republican insurrectionism and also a Biblical-tinged communism.[92] Ultimately, however, the differences in our interpretations can primarily be understood in terms of the very different societies (very different despite their cultural commonalities) which we are attempting to understand. This is the point I will be bring forward in the next section: the concept of hegemony is not one which can be applied to the sort of society existing in the areas from which the threatening notices analysed here emanated.

---

[88] James C. Scott, 'Protest and profanation: Agrarian revolt and the little tradition, Part II.' in *Theory and Society* 4.2 (1977), pp 211-246; p. 212.
[89] Scott, *Domination and the arts of resistance*.
[90] Steinberg, 'The dialogue of struggle', p. 506.
[91] *Ibid*. p. 506.
[92] Steinberg, 'The Talk and Back Talk of Collective Action', pp 767-69; Steinberg, 'The Dialogue of Struggle', p. 524.

Modes of production and the struggle over signs

The mixture of consent and coercion, negotiation and conflict, reform and imposition, which makes up hegemony, is not present in early-nineteenth-century southern and eastern Ireland. Nonetheless there are common cross-class cultural forms. The absence of hegemony can be explained by hegemony not being a trans-historical category or there having been an earlier crisis of hegemony.

The postulate that there was a crisis of hegemony from the 1790s onwards can appeal to empirical evidence: there certainly seems to have been deepening social divisions contrasting early-nineteenth-century society with eighteenth-century society, though it must be said the whiteboy movements predate the 1790s. However, applying the concept of hegemony to early-nineteenth-century Ireland is to apply it to a form of society very different from that which it was formulated to understand. The core territories of whiteboy movements, and they set the tone for subaltern contention in general, were areas within a feudal mode of production adjacent to or intertwined with a burgeoning capitalist mode of production and undergoing a sometimes arrested process of primitive accumulation. This is a long way away from early-twentieth-century Western Europe.

The extraction of surplus from the direct producers in a feudal mode of production is characterised by overt power (coercion) and personal relations of domination as opposed to the impersonal social forces that can appear to extract surplus in a capitalist society, and indeed in capitalist society that extraction is to a degree masked. [93] Furthermore, the process of transition from a social formation dominated by a feudal mode of production to one dominated by a capitalist mode of production involves coercion and violence to an even greater extent. Fundamentally, this process involves the separating of the direct producers

---

[93] Eric R. Wolf, *Europe and the people without history* (Berkeley, 1982), pp 79 – 82.

from their possession of the means of production and measures to prevent them acquiring alternate sources of sustenance other than wage labour. The latter can be seen for instance above in the section on clearance in chapter two where we see cavalry being deployed against squatters on a commons. Thus a society primarily comprising of a feudal mode of production with capitalist social relations developing in some areas and a congruent process of dispossession will in fact have even more explicitly coercive class relations than in a feudal mode alone.

 To Marx the history of this expropriation is: 'written in the annals of mankind in letters of blood and fire';[94] and the relevant parts of *Capital* are replete with passages stressing violence: 'capital comes dripping from head to foot, from every pore, with blood and dirt';[95] and force: 'is the midwife of every old society pregnant with a new one';[96] this embryonic capitalism is distinct from later more mature capitalism:

> 'The dull compulsion of economic relations completes the subjection of the labourer
>
> to the capitalist. Direct force, outside economic conditions, is of course still used, but
>
> only exceptionally. In the ordinary run of things, the labourer can be left to the
>
> —natural laws of production, *i.e.*, to his dependence on capital, a dependence
>
> springing from, and guaranteed in perpetuity by, the conditions of production
>
> themselves. It is otherwise during the historic genesis of capitalist production. The
>
> bourgeoisie, at its rise, wants and uses the power of the state to —regulate wages,
>
> *i.e.*, to force them within the limits suitable for surplus value making, to lengthen the

---

[94] Marx, *Capital Vol I,* p. 669.
[95] *Ibid.* p. 712.
[96] *Ibid.* p. 703.

working day and to keep the labourer himself in the normal degree of dependence.'[97]

This is not violence in defence of a particular set of social relations, whether such violence is deployed frequently or infrequently. It is rather a relationship of violence itself. It is such even if, as I argue, that at times it was met with a successful counter-violence, which retarded the advance of dispossession at least until the onset of the Great Famine.

Alternatively, we might consider some peculiarly Irish aspects to this instance of the feudal mode of production as accounting for a particularly coercive set of social relations: namely the lack of a common bond of religious affiliation between landlord and tenant. There are two problems with this though: firstly, there is the extent of conflict not directly involving the proprietorial elite; and, secondly, studies of those areas remaining in the possession of Catholic gentry have not found class relations there to be notably divergent from the rest of the country. [98]

Cultural historians have recognised the existence within pre-capitalist societies of cross-class cultural forms put to different uses and interpretations.[99] We must go back to Vološinov and the multi-accentually of the sign and to Stuart Hall's reading of Vološinov where he argues that:

---

[97] *Ibid.* p. 689.

[98] Desmond Mooney, 'The origins of agrarian violence in Meath, 1790-1828' in *Ríocht na Mídhe*, VIII:1 (1987), pp 45-67; Desmond Mooney, 'A society in crisis: agrarian violence in Meath, 1828-1835' in *Ríocht na Mídhe*, VIII: 2 (1988-89), pp 102-128; Desmond Mooney, 'A new order established - agrarian violence in Meath, 1835-1844' in *Ríocht na Mídhe*, VIII: 3 (1990-91), pp 118-133.

[99] Carlo Ginzburg, *The cheese and the worms: The cosmos of a sixteenth-century miller* (Baltimore, 1980); Peter Burke, *Popular culture in early modern Europe* (Aldershot, 1994), pp xxi – xxii.

'different social interests or forces might conduct an ideological struggle to disarticulate a signifier from one, preferred or dominant meaning-system, and rearticulate it within another, different chain of connotations.'[100]

The form of a particular symbol might be the same but the content very different. This is the difference between appealing to what is justly yours within the law, as with the Gramscian interpretations of English social history, and appropriating the symbols of the law as I argue occurs within the whiteboy tradition. We have then two laws, or indeed two courts as Brian Merriman puts it in the eighteenth-century poem *Cúirt an Mheán Oíche* (The Midnight Court):

'Not a court without standing, or statute, or code,

Nor an imported court of the plundering mode,

But a court that is ruled by a civilized throng,

Where the weak are empowered and women are strong;

And the people of Ireland can hold their heads high'. [101]

A dialogue from Charles J. Kickham's 1879 novel *Knocknagow or the homes of Tipperary* similarly projects the idea of two fundamentally different courts:

'"I say 'tis justice in the eye uv God," exclaimed old Phil Morris, "to punish the bloody tyrants – the robbers and murdherers that rob the people uv their little spots, an' turn 'em out to perish. 'Tis justice to punish the bloody robbers !" And as old Phil

[100] Stuart Hall, *return of the repressed*, p. 145.
[101] Ciaran Carson, *The Midnight Court: A new translation of 'Cúirt an Mheán Oíche' by Brian Merriman* (Oldcastle, 2005), p. 21.

struck his stick against the ground and looked around, there was a murmur of applause from the bystanders, who by this time were pretty numerous.

"The man that believes he is robbed or persecuted," said the priest, "cannot be an impartial judge. If every one was to take the law in his own hands, there would be nothing but violence and bloodshed."

"Well, what do you say to giving the exterminators a fair trial before judge and jury?"

"What judge and jury ?"

"'Tisn't the judge an' jury in the coort-house," returned Phil Morris, "because they're all for the tyrants, an' some uv 'em tyrants themselves ; but a fair jury uv the people, an' a fair judge."'[102]

Conclusion

In this chapter I have argued that hegemony is not a trans-historical concept; it was formulated to understand a specific conjuncture (and was developed as a response to that conjuncture). In the first instance necessary facets of hegemony are, to say the least, thin on the ground in the pre-Famine period. Gramsci, for instance, refers to: 'the apparatus of the political and cultural hegemony of the ruling classes' such as schools.[103] As we know, a state controlled system of schooling was only being introduced at this time. Similarly there isn't the major social reform (or flow of concessions) as associated with the place and period Gramsci is trying to understand.

---

[102] Charles J. Kickham, *Knocknagow or the homes of Tipperary* (Dublin, 1978), p. 222. Although this novel was published in 1879 the author was born in 1825 and the character Phil Morris is an old man who was born in the eighteenth century.
[103] Gramsci, *prison notebooks*, p. 258.

Attempts at Gramscian readings of earlier societies have pivoted on 'apparent social quiescence'.[104] This is to say that class conflict is obscured and muted to a degree (but is still very much present). This isn't at all like the situation prevalent in much of at least the rural and southern portions of the island of Ireland in the period examined here — which had quite explicit and overt social conflicts which were not at all muted. Also in Steinberg's approach, the subaltern derivation from ruling class discourse is predicated on the lack of any other means of expression — but the existence of subaltern contention suffused with plebeian forms of social control shows that this was not the case in the Irish context at least. More fundamentally though, hegemony is surely an inappropriate approach to social formations based in large part on social relations of overt coercion — as is the case in feudalism and most certainly in a feudalism undergoing a process of primitive accumulation.

But it does not follow from the absence of hegemony that there were hermetically sealed off distinctive cultures associated with different classes. There were common cross-class cultural practices, examples of which include the literature influenced by the carnivalesque or the relationship, in the context of highwayman legends, between the oral and the written tradition and between popular and elite literature (which may have included a carnivalesque element). With specific reference to the legal system we have also seen a good deal of popular participation in the courts of petty sessions. More importantly though the point of much of the sort of totemic aspects of the state and the estate which end up within the notices, and in the broader practice of whiteboy groups, is precisely to be seen by a broad audience. Significant elements within the judicial system, such as the ritual of public execution, the ritual of the opening of the assizes and the prominent spatial location and

---

[104] Eugene Genovese quoted in Thompson, 'Eighteenth-century English society: Class struggle without class?', p. 163.

monumental architecture of some courthouses were elements intended to be seen, to overawe and to impress. In terms of the use of the notice in estate management although it was likely not always intended in the same way as these aspects of the legal system, it is quite possible it was perceived in the same way, that is as a symbol of power. In any case the use of the estate notice is predicated on it having an audience. These symbols are meant to be familiar and threatening.

We can conceive then that what is at play here is an appropriation, a divesting of the signs of power from the holders of power, as in instances in India of which Guha writes of: 'the peasants' attempts to destroy or to appropriate for themselves the signs of the authority of those who dominate them'.[105] This appropriation hinges on the flexibility of the sign or what Vološinov calls the multi-accentuality of the sign, which is to say that signs, or sets of signs, do not have a fixed external meaning but have an unstable, dialectical character.

Moving from the sign to Bakhtin's theorisation of discursive genres, which are relatively stable but flexible modes of expression, we can conceptualise discursive genres being appropriated. Consequently the content of the coercive regulation theme within the notices can be seen as a mixture of the appropriated discursive genre of sovereignty — that is the ruling class cultural uses of the state and estate — along with the more autochthonous discursive genre of *charivari* — derived from the self-policing of the peasant community. A further Bakhtinian concept is apposite here — that of addressivity — which concerns the role of the person addressed in determining how they will be addressed, any communication taking place in a dialogue. From this perspective it is the familiarity of the

---

[105] Guha, *Elementary aspects*, p. 28

discursive genres of sovereignty and of *charivari* which determined their place within the

notices and within whiteboyism more generally. It is not necessary then to impute either an

alienality to the legal system or an acculturative role to the legal system to account for the

law of Captain Rock.

Part III: Collective Identity, Captain Rock and Terry Alt.

The words were as the breath of life to them, and the song welded them together as into a block of steel. A first dim awareness of the immense power and strength of the working people united in a common purpose was awakened in them. By the time the first refrain was repeated, the whole field was singing. I knew what was likely to happen if the last refrain were reached without the desired answer having been received. I knew it from experience.

B. Traven, *The Cotton-Pickers*.

In this part of the thesis I shall examine the theme, or, in terms of the coding, the analytical code, of collective identity. Under this heading I grouped together the descriptive codes pertaining to parts of the notices where the authors seemed to be expressing an extra-local sense of commonality or collective identity. The most obvious collective identities, those of class (meaning those expressly referring to class or to a close synonym), country and creed are there. Of them, class identity expressed in a language of class is the most salient and the others do not figure so much, however even that particular form of class identity has a minor role. I argue that the most prominent form of expression of imagined community within the notices is the use of recurrent pseudonyms, especially when those pseudonyms are being used at some distance from the times and places they are typically associated with, most prominent of these monikers were Captain Rock and Terry Alt. Related descriptive codes include those grouping together references to other parts of the country and references to travel. This was the predominant form of collective identity within the notices. Following a methodology informed by grounded theory method, Part III of this thesis begins with a findings chapter discussing the various forms of collective identity within the notices and putting forward an interpretation of the prevalence of recurrent pseudonyms and related aspects of the notices as a form of collective identity. The results of the process of coding the notices will also be used to interrogate secondary literature; some secondary literature puts forward the proposition that there was an absence of class identity in this period, other secondary literature argues for a particular prominence to confessional and/or national identities. The sample of the 1832 Leinster "threatening notices" collection examined here does not bear out these claims.

There are two central arguments contained in the subsequent theoretical chapter. Firstly, it will be argued that the recurrent pseudonyms represented a variant of class identity. That is to say that identities developed in the course of class conflict are in a sense class identities but need not use a language of class. This is to argue both against class identity as a wholly discursive phenomenon and against class identities and movements as wholly determined by social structure. Rather the inherently conflictual relationships that comprise the social structure provide the potential for class-based identities and movements but how and in what way those potentials are realised depends on the *bricolage* of agents.

Secondly, a proposition will be put forward linking collective identity to collective efficacy, a conceptualisation from within social psychology linking a belief in the capacities of oneself and ones' cohort to a propensity for collective action. This proposition will be further developed into an argument that the experience of social subordination negatively impacts on the sense of collective efficacy and hence makes for the need for a bolstering of the sense of collective identity. Thus practices building collective identity are an essential part of popular mobilisation even in very localised contexts. This is a proposition for further study arising from the attempt to understand the content of the notices.

Chapter Eight: Collective identities, Class, Creed, Country and Captain Rock.

This chapter is concerned with collective identity, something which is most simply understood as a sense of *'we-ness'* or an imagined community. In the first place it will be argued that the main form of identity expressed in the notices is not that of sect or nation. It might be considered an identity of class but it does not, at least for the most part, use a language of class. Collective identity is primarily found within the notices in the form of common sets of symbols used across different times and places. These symbols were the recurrent pseudonyms with which the notices were signed. Continuing to follow the adaptation of grounded theory method employed throughout this thesis, this chapter primarily discusses the empirical data derived from the notices sometimes in relation to more empirically-based secondary literature. These findings will then be brought into dialogue with theoretical literature on collective identity in the chapter after this.

The following notice, served by an armed party in the parish of St. Johns near Kilkenny city on 20 August 1832, illustrates the expression of pan-regional identity within the notices:

'Take Notice

here i am the bold determined man Cald Captain Rock served to powder and ball from Ben Doyle in the County of Clare with pistol in me hand and sword by my side and as many men at my command as stars in the sky now Brennan you now that you had no right towo this nine acres now bie the Contents of this pistol in in our hand f you dont come to a settlement before this day week and i will give you no longer we

will hunt bie day and take your head from your boddy if it is not in a fair cause now

you sent men to his place and you had no right to for as we can hear but you sent

men to his place but if the were men that had a right to know whether it was a fair

cause or a wrong cause but you may tell them that he has men and not mice so now

come to a settlement in one week and i will give you no longer

Signed

Captain Rock'[1]

'Captain Rock' is a recurrent pseudonym, probably the most popular pseudonym with which

to sign notices. The phrase: 'served to powder and ball from Ben Doyle in the County of

Clare', refers in the first instance to an apprenticeship, which is the meaning of the term

'served to', and this apprenticeship was in 'powder and ball', powder which is to say

gunpowder and ball the contemporary version of bullets. Some form of 'Doyle', especially

Moll Doyle, occurs within notices with some frequency, but much less than Rock. Finally 'the

County of Clare' is over 100 kilometres from Kilkenny city. There was a whiteboy movement

in Clare, usually called the Terry Alts, simultaneous with the Whitefeet in Leinster, but the

Clare movement peaked a little earlier in 1830-31.

Before delving deeper into this symbolic commonality and the pan-regional collective

identity articulated within the notices I'll speak to the identities we might at first

consideration expect to be at least present, or perhaps prominent, namely identities of

class, creed and country. In this section I am using class identity to mean class identity

expressed in a language of class. As mentioned above, in the next chapter I will be drawing a

distinction between class identities on the one hand, and class identity using a language of

---

[1] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

class on the other, and arguing that the aforementioned pan-regional collective identity constituted a class identity. For now class identity will refer to class identity in what we might consider a more overt and explicit form but perhaps could be better thought of more simply as a form more explicable to us, namely class identity using a language of class.

Class identity

In his iconoclastic 1982 essay, *Class, family and rural unrest in nineteenth-century Ireland*, Fitzpatrick argues against the previously dominant view of pre-Famine rural agrarian violence as class-based in favour of an interpretation revolving around factional conflict; conflict within socio-economic strata rather than between socio-economic strata, inter-family and intra-family conflicts.[2] His argument is that the threats associated with Captain Rock and Captain Moonlight were not based on class but on: 'the desire of factions within social classes to assert their claims to whatever land, employment or other allurements might appear on the market';[3] and that the family was 'the primary origin of social tension and conflict'.[4]

His argument against the class-centred interpretations of whiteboyism is in fact often quite weak. For example, he puts great stress on statistics which show that the eighty-two male homicide victims of 1842 were predominantly labourers, servants or paupers, with only one-sixth farmers or 'other 'respectable' men' and 'only one twentieth landlords or their assistants'.[5] But this tells us nothing of the circumstances leading to their deaths. Obviously all kinds of extra-official violence existed in early-nineteenth-century Ireland just as today: robbery, drunken brawls, crimes of passion, with additional nineteenth-century practices

---

[2] David Fitzpatrick, 'Class family and rural unrest in nineteenth-century Ireland' in P.J. Drudy (ed.), *Ireland: land, politics and people* (Cambridge, 1982), pp 37-75.
[3] *Ibid.* p. 38.
[4] *Ibid.* p. 39.
[5] *Ibid.* p. 40.

such as duelling and faction fighting. We must be interested in a particular sub-set of violence, not all violence, and if we were interested in all violence we would in fact mostly be interested in the state (the groups with the greatest capacity for violence in nineteenth-century Ireland were, of course, the army and police; while the overwhelming bulk of Irish violence in that century was carried out by men in redcoats in Spain, Ceylon, Crimea etc.).

Later we read that 'bloodthirsty language' within notices is the language of 'faction' but why that follows is not explained.[6] He also writes that 'information continued to pour into Dublin Castle' as an extension of intra- or inter- family strife but I at least have found a dearth of information supplied to the authorities. Ultimately, Fitzpatrick concludes with a more sociological argument as to the necessary preconditions of class conflict, an argument partly addressed below and partly in the subsequent chapter. Despite the fact that his challenge to the class-based interpretation is not successful, his foregrounding of the role of inter- and intra- family disputes within agrarian violence is not to be dismissed. Such struggles undoubtedly constitute part of what makes up the multi-variant phenomenon that is land occupancy conflict but they do not seem to constitute the dominant element; they do not account for the major part of the successive whiteboy movements.

Fitzpatrick claims that land-hunger inhibited solidarity and 'drove a wedge between the rhetoric and reality of rural unrest',[7] and secondly that there was no consciousness of divergent classes with divergent interests and ergo no class conflict:

> 'the impulse towards class conflict could only develop if sufficient members of at
> least one of the classes concerned perceived those classes as being separate and

---

[6] *Ibid.* p. 46.
[7] *Ibid.* p. 47.

potentially antagonistic entities . . . [no] static conception of their class affiliation . . . divided the "rural poor" from middlemen and landlords before the Famine'. [8]

Pre-Famine society was divided into small subtly different grades with upward and downward mobility, moreover, though mostly he seems to be referring to post-Famine society here, the line between farmer and labourer was blurred with land-holders engaged in wage labour and vice versa, farmer's sons being labourers, and there was inter-marriage across socio-economic strata. Consequently 'the concept of class divisions within agrarian society seems artificial and implausible when applied to nineteenth-century Ireland'.[9]

Now while I regard the idea that there must be a subjective sense of class prior to class conflict to be wrong-headed and this is addressed in the next chapter, and while it seems outlandish to suggest there was not a massive and commonly-recognised distinction between the rural poor and landed proprietors none the less Fitzpatrick's case can be argued against in its own terms and where it should be the strongest — namely in regard to perceived class division between labourers/the rural poor on the one hand and substantial farmers on the other. The evidence from the threatening notices collection suggests that perception of classes as separate and antagonistic did very much exist:

> 'You are hereby required to take notice that there has been lodged with the Secretary of these four parishes complaints of the many grievances practised and intended to be practised against the poor, by the uncharitable and tyrannical habits of the middle classes. Those whom I allude to is the haughty and insolent farmers who rejoice at their fellow Christian man being reduced to the state of wretchedness

---

[8] *Ibid.* p. 53.
[9] *Ibid*. p. 57.

which he labours under you also strive to recognise them in general as seditious Ribbonmen; you also intend to starve them on the ensuing year by not employing them or affording them necessary means of sowing provisions for their helpless and innocent children . . . .'[10]

'I am that noble man called Capt. Rock a Whitefoot – I am labouring in fatigue and hardships when others are sleeping in their beds the cries of the poor has pierced my heart gentlemen look to your consciences and consider the poor man how can he maintain a family on the wages you are pleased to give them let me ask the gentlemen how he lives, and he tells me by his land and properties let the farmer be asked how he lives he tells by his grounds, and if you ask every man from the beggar to the King will say they have ways of living but I say the all live by the slaves and is not the reward of a shillings a day little enough'.[11]

'the extra charges made on the poor humbled peasantry by our pretended dissimulating patriots, the unrelented farmers of Ireland, whose hearts are more obdurate than adamant'.[12]

'Take notice, That we will no longer bear the oppression of paying double rent to farmers for land, and the gentlemen so favourable to the poor. Therefore all farmers will be obliged to return their under-tenants to the head landlord, at the same rates

---

[10] National Archives of Ireland, Chief Secretary's Office/Registered Papers/1832/2267 (hereafter N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267). There are no individual references for individual notices – that is the catalogue reference for the entire collection.
[11] *Ibid.*
[12] *Ibid.*

an acre for which they hold the land themselves. And we trust the gentlemen will
not allow them any longer to tyrannise over the poor of this impoverished nation.'[13]

Fifteen notices contain some kind of use of explicit class terms or identity such as: 'the poor
of the parish'; 'the working class of this parrish'; 'the oppressed labourers of Athy'.[14] These
are identities which appear both class-based and local, though some also seem supra-local
such as handles like: 'a brother to the peasant'; and a sign-off like: 'We remain the poor
mans friends'.[15] In terms of categorising their opponents as a class, as opposed to amoral
individuals which is an option explored earlier, consider the following:

> 'I hereby give you notice to enable Your tenantry an abatement of 5s/0d per Acre, or
> if not, you will put me to the disagreeable necessity of visiting you personally and
> terminating Your existence, by giving you the Death of some of your comrade
> landlords'.[16]

While the notices containing this kind of class-based expression are a small proportion of
the threatening letters collection they are a high proportion of those notices within the
collection that seem less like the conventional threatening letter and more like propaganda.
That is to say less likely to contain a specific order and associated threat concerning a
specific situation and more general in their application. Two of the above were printed, and
they are the only printed notices in the collection, and at least one of the printed notices

---

[13] *Ibid.*
[14] *Ibid.*
[15] *Ibid.*
[16] *Ibid.*

was widely distributed (it occurs several times in the notice collection and its distribution is noted in an accompanying cover letter). The first quote above is from a document posted up outside a church and is essentially addressed to all passers-by, in a sense more like a proclamation than what we conventionally think of as a threatening letter. They might be considered then another form of document with a different function or additional functions, aimed perhaps at least as much to inspire into mobilisation as intimidate into concession.

This does not in any way preclude that some agrarian violence was between families, within families, or otherwise essentially a personal dispute, or organised around vertical rather than horizontal ties. The operative word is some, as opposed to all.

Confessional identity

There is very little in the way of confessional or sectarian identity within the core set of notices examined for this study. The following is suggestive of Catholic loyalties:

> 'Remember the Brave Action of Knocktopher and the Brave Right Hon. O'Connel's victory over the Brunswickers there'.[17]

Knocktopher refers to an incident in the tithe war (the Carrickshock massacre to be specific see below), and Brunswickers were a Protestant group opposed to the granting of 'emancipation' which is to say the ending of the form of oath taken by Members of Parliament which precluded Catholics from sitting in the House of Commons and House of Lords. The only other notice with a confessional aspect actually rejects considerations of sect being brought into matters of tenant defence:

---

[17] *Ibid.*

'Durrow and the Sky over it

We understand that there is a farm out of lace in Philipstown or about it of late in

the possession of a good family now let all persons take notice have no call to it and

if the do let them mark the consequence al do we here that he is a protestan but let

him be what profession he will be we will not allow itt be done in our Country this is

to give notice to all persons to have no call to it as yous know the farm that we

allude to giving under our hands the 11th day of April 1832 Terry Alt

Let no person take down this'.[18]

The wording we 'we here that he is a protestan' presumably meaning by 'he' the existing

tenant.

This is not to say that there were not notices with a sectarian colour rather that notices

around issues of employment conditions and land do not contain within them any

expression of confessional identity (excepting that is the above). There were sectarian

notices and instances of sectarian conflict but not necessarily with an overlap with

Whitefeet activity or with farm labourers' combinations. The lack of a sense of commonality

of creed with notices around land and labour issues does not preclude the authors and their

wider milieu from also partaking in a confessional collective identity. Possibly, and most

likely, sect simply didn't seem to them to have a relevance to the conflicts within which

these notices were generated.

---

[18] *Ibid.*

Additionally what isn't found in these threatening notices is any mention of, let alone focus on, the land ownership changes of the seventeenth-century, though based on some of the historiography one would expect the folk-memory of dispossession to loom large. More specifically, it is claimed that simmering indignation percolated down from the former now dispossessed Gaelic ruling class to immerse the general Roman Catholic population, as outlined by Elliot here:

> 'their sense of grievance at lost ancestral rights which was gradually assimilated into popular catholic thinking. Every traveller and social commenter remarked upon the prevalence of peasant resentment at ancestral dispossession, at their long memory of the exact boundaries of the lands belonging to their families, and their firm belief that they would one day be restored'.[19]

Nothing like this occurs within the collection of Leinster threatening letters. The Rockite movement of the early 1820s was, as examinations of their threatening notices show, highly sectarian and its scribes were given to Jacobean references and references to the conflicts of the sixteenth- and seventeenth-centuries generally.[20] Nontheless, it seems to lack this sense of ancestral dispossession, at least there is no reference to be seen to lost estates. The nearest to all this in the sample examined for this study is a notice signed 'Sarsfield' – a name presumably taken from that of Patrick Sarsfield, late seventeenth-century Jacobean cavalry commander and earl of Lucan. Tentatively I would suggest this might demonstrate a greater degree of autonomy from elite Catholic opinion on the part of subaltern Catholics than has perhaps hitherto been granted, or perhaps there was a particular regional context to what has been identied by Elliot.

---

[19] Marianne Elliott, *Partners in revolution: the United Irishmen and France* (New Haven, 1982), p. 6.
[20] Gibbons, *Captain Rock, knight errant*, pp 119-27.

One does find sectarian content in the Whitefeet oath, which people were supposed to take upon joining the movement, but the only dispossession raised to seems to be of the more prosaic *'Land Jobin'* variety:

> '2nd. I sware, I will to the best of my power, Cut Down Kings, Queens and Princes, Duks, Earls, Lords, and all such with Land Jobin and herrisy.

> 3rd. I sware that I will never Pity the moans or groans of the Dying, from the Cradell to the Crutch, and that I will wade knee Deep in Orange Blood.'[21]

The oath could be taken as a ripple from the late-eighteenth-century conflicts in the south Ulster sectarian fracture zone; however, similar oaths also occur within the Rockite movement and within Galway "Ribbonism" and Donnelly cautions us not to treat these ultra-sectarian oaths as simply meaningless carryovers.[22] There is certainly scope for further research on popular sectarianism in the southern portions of pre-Famine Ireland.

A number of factors need to be considered. Firstly, the existence of a popular sectarian conflict in southern Ireland in the early-nineteenth-century and the associated presence of a larger and relatively more plebeian Protestant population then than in subsequent decades;[23] secondly, the largely, and in many places exclusively, Protestant nature of the state had the consequence that to be in conflict with the state meant to be in conflict with the Protestant minority; and, finally, the tendency to exaggerate or perhaps imagine or invent sectarian elements to subaltern contention. With regard to this latter point it should

[21] John Wilson to Sir William Gossett, 9 May 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/850).
[22] Ryan, ''Ribbonism' and agrarian violence in County Galway 1819-1830'; Donnelly, *Captain Rock: Irish agrarian rebellion*.
[23] Bruce Elliot, 'Emigration from South Leinster to Eastern Upper Canada' in Canada' in Kevin Whelan and William Nolan (eds), *Wexford, History and society: Interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin, 1987), pp 422-46.

be stressed that conservative-Protestant newspapers, some of the more activist-magistrates and at least some evangelical Protestants inhabited a worldview which saw the next instalments of the 1641 rebellion, the reign of bloody Mary, the St. Bartholomew night's massacre and the inquisition as an immediate prospect presaged by, amongst other things, whiteboy activity that was anything but a preliminary to sectarian persecution. As an example, Kilkenny-based evangelical activist Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna interpreted the whiteboy assassination of John Marum, a former United Irishman and nephew of the Roman Catholic Bishop of Ossory, as part of this all pervasive plot of persecuting popery.[24] On the other hand as the saying goes just because you are paranoid that doesn't prove they are not out to get you.

National identity

Only fourteen notices were coded for national identity, and I was quite generous in applying that code. There is little evidence of anything which would be considered nationalist in the sense of late nineteenth and early twentieth century nationalism. One notice is signed: 'We continue to be the Brave loyal and faithful Irish', and another, the only which calls for, or indeed mentions, 'a speedy Repeal of the Union' also ends 'GOD SAVE THE KING'; expressions which are ambiguous to say the least.[25] Most of the rest comprise such references as 'your countrymen' which is tenuous or, more strongly, designations such as 'we the Regulators of Ireland'.[26]

Only two notices link some form of national identity with what might be considered the proto-nationalist liberal movement and the associated movement of opposition to the

---

[24] Charlotte Elizabeth Tonna, *Irish Recollections* (Dublin, 2004), pp 57-61; Pádraig Ó Macháin, *Six years in Galmoy: Rural unrest in County Kilkenny 1819 – 1824* (Dublin, 2007), pp 30-1.
[25] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.
[26] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

payment of tithe. They are, one, where the issuers of the notice describe themselves as: 'we the true Patriots of old Carrickshock', and another, mentioned above, which links conacre, tithe and repeal of the union together and likely as not was actually produced by a liberal activist.[27] Carrickshock is a reference to the aforementioned killing of thirteen police officers and a tithe proctor in Carrickshock, south Kilkenny, in December 1831. Only one notice expresses any kind of anti-English animus and this in the specific context of issues with a newly-arrived English land proprietor.[28]

Seven notices are coded for reference to liberal politics; this is a very broad category as I have included here mentions of the ongoing opposition to tithe. Additionally one of the seven purports to be from someone who has been involved in some disagreement with local anti-tithe activists. There are very few notices which explicitly make positive reference to liberal politics in any kind of 'high politics' sense. Both of the notices which do are in fact referenced above with regard to national and confessional identities. This could be a case of compartmentalised identities where forms of cultural expression which make sense in one setting have no apparent relevance to another. On the other hand the lack of nationalism and the lack of affinity to liberal politics would suggest grounds for re-examining what the rank-and-file of the apparently nationalist and apparently liberal mass mobilisations of the preceding forty years thought they were doing.

Jim Smyth's 1992 book *The men of no property: Irish radicals and popular politics in the late eighteenth century*, while not centrally focused on whiteboyism, is unquestionably the main work attempting an exploration of popular *mentalités* in the late-eighteenth-century context, excluding works concentrating on Ulster or Dublin. Smyth argues that: 'lower-class

---

[27] *Ibid.*
[28] *Ibid.*

solidarity and collective awareness found expression through opposition to the ascendancy, religion and an as yet inchoate nationalism'.[29] This, it should be stressed, is quite different to Donnelly's interpretation of Rockism and sectarian millenarianism as Donnelly argues that the latter functioned to create a cross-class movement.[30]

Neither religion, in the sense of confessional identity, nor nationalism, inchoate or otherwise, feature with any prominence in the collection of threatening letters I analysed. With regard to that part of primary research which sought to contextualise the notices, I certainly found evidence of loyalties of creed, but loyalties of country seem more ethereally tenuous and occur with little frequency. Perhaps the difference can be ascribed to Smyth's use of the terms 'popular' and 'lower-class' as catch-all conveniences. Smyth explains his use of the term popular as:

> 'a category elastic enough to comprehend the subtly graded, open-ended nature of the late eighteen-century class structure. Any simple three-tier model of upper, middle and lower classes would be inaccurate, just as constructs like 'peasantry' and 'proletariat' are usually inappropriate. Ireland was a transitional, proto-industrial society, based increasingly on a cash economy. Journeymen weavers rubbed shoulders with tenant farmers and landless labourers in the countryside; 'independent' artisan craftsmen with wage-earning employees in the city.'

Moreover, that the: 'popular character of the catholic agitation of 1791-3, and of the Unitied Irish movement . . . extends to the middle as well as to the lower classes . . .'; while: 'the most meaningful line of demarcation was one which divided this broad popular

---

[29] Jim Smyth, *The men of no property: Irish radicals and popular politics in the late eighteenth century* (Dublin, 1992), p. 8
[30] Donnelly, *Captain Rock: Irish agrarian rebellion*.

category from the landed gentry and aristocracy'; which as that landed elite was apparently 'almost exclusively' Anglican meant that: 'Class antagonisms were confused, if not always submerged by political and religious differences.'[31] I'll leave aside the assertions concerning class structure, both as there are no substantive arguments backing them up and as class analysis is addressed in the next chapter at length, while economic structure in a broader sense was focused on in part I of this thesis.

Regarding Smyth's view of a dichotomous conflicted society with a popular movement on one side and an entrenched ascendancy on the other and an absence of class conflict below the level of the landed elite, this does not marry with what we know of Ireland in the 1820s and 1830s at all. It is perfectly possible that this analysis does nonetheless accurately reflect what is knowable of the empirical reality of the 1790s. In later decades there is a clear presence of both class identity and social conflicts best explicated with reference to class. In the 1820s and 1830s the analogous popular movement that of the Catholic Association, the Liberal or Independent Clubs, and the Tithe War, has a far more complex and conflicted relationship with whiteboyism.

The liberal movement, though it always had a mass following, was unquestionably dominated at the local level by substantial farmers, clergymen and traders, and for the most part was resoundingly hostile to the collective action of peasants and labourers.[32] This is unsurprising given the basic conflict between these groups. The Tithe War was more popular in Smyth's sense than the rest of the liberal mobilisation. Nonetheless, prominent anti-Tithe organisers such as Pat Lalor (M.P. for the Queen's County) and Bishop James

---

[31] *Ibid.* p. 7

[32] Fergus O'Ferrall, *Catholic Emancipation: Daniel O'Connell and the birth of Irish Democracy 1820 – 30* (Dublin, 1985), p. 76.

Doyle (of the diocese of Kildare and Leighlin) were equally anti-Whitefeet organisers.[33]

While the Tithe War did draw on the whiteboy repertoire of contention, it does seem

spatially distinct from the contemporary whiteboy movements — the Whitefeet and the

Terry Alts. Generally speaking, tithe opposition was prevalent in south Kilkenny,

whiteboyism was prevalent in north Kilkenny and tithe was not a major issue in County

Clare which was the core area of the Terry Alts.

The hidden collective identity: Recurrent pseudonyms

A language of class is more salient than one would expect from a reading of Fitzpatrick or of

Smyth. Nonetheless it is not a major feature within the sample of notices as a whole.

Neither confessional identity nor national identity features prominently, despite what one

might expect from the received wisdoms about the Irish past. This not what demands

analysis. What demands analysis is what is found within these documents. What is found to

a greater extent is a common set of symbols, some of which transcend time and space,

some of which are more localised, those symbols being the recurrent pseudonyms which

provide a notice with an imprimatur in the name of an extra-parochial collective. That is the

main focus of analysis in this chapter and the next and it will be argued that the use of these

symbols represented a form of collective identity.

Of the 135 notices within the selection of notices from Leinster in 1832 examined for this

thesis, forty-one are signed with some form of Rock pseudonym or otherwise make

reference to Rock.[34] Of those letters the vast majority are signed 'Captain Rock' but there

---

[33] Thomas McGrath, *Religious renewal and reform in the pastoral ministry of Bishop James Doyle of Kildare and Leighlin, 1786 – 1834* (Dublin, 1999), pp 190 – 206; M.G. O'Brien, 'The Lalors of Tenakill 1767 – 1893' (M.A. thesis, St. Patrick's College Maynooth, 1987), pp 34-5.
[34] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

are occasional variations such as General Rock.[35] Similarly a text can have a reference to Rock in the main body and be signed something else. Forty-seven of the notices refer to a captain and similarly this captain is usually a Captain Rock but there are deviations such as the occasional 'Captain Whitefoot'.[36]

There are some less popular recurrent pseudonym, with two of them, and the law motif, to be seen in the following notice sign-off:

> 'I am your friend or otherwise your dreadful old Captain Carder a brother to the peasant and a father to the Terrys and also their law'.[37]

'Terrys' is a reference to the Terry Alts, the handle given to a mostly Clare-based movement most active in 1830 and 1831. The notice is from Tullamore in the King's County so again this is a symbol most commonly associated with another place. The 'dreadful old Captain Carder' refers to an earlier whiteboy movement, the Carders. The name Carder was adopted from the practice of carding, a form of torture where a small piece of wood with nails or sharp points on one side, as used to process wool, is used to tear human flesh. Nine notices bear the imprimatur 'Terry Alt' (or a variation on that theme) with another two using the associated pseudonym 'Lady Clare'. Four letters speak of 'Captain Carder' or 'Jack the Carder' with another four containing some form of Doyle name.[38]

There were more localised monikers such as Whitefeet and Gentleman Regulators. Localised does not necessarily mean parochial. The 'regulators' motif in various forms from 'Capt. Cannon & Company of Regulators', to 'Gentleman regulators of our County', to 'The

---

[35] *Ibid.*
[36] *Ibid.*
[37] *Ibid.*
[38] *Ibid.*

regulator Boys of Ireland' is confined to the south-east of Kilkenny and adjoining parts of Wexford.[39] In fact 'regulators' is usually found in notices in the area of Rosbercon, on the riverside border of Kilkenny and Wexford. This is true at least of the selection from the 1832 collection examined here. There are sixteen notices bearing some form of 'regulators' sigil. Whitefeet had a broader range; it shows up in twenty-two notices from Kilkenny, Carlow, Wexford, Kings County, and the Queens County.[40] For the sake of comprehensiveness it should be noted that a very small number of notices, only two, refer in a negative or ambiguous sense to 'the Whitefeet' or to 'Terry Alt'.

The ubiquitous Captain Rock is found in notices from all parts and addressing issues of both land and labour. The geographic spread of this particular pseudonym has been noted in other studies. Daniel Grace's examination of threatening letters from Tipperary in the years between 1836 and 1843 found that:

> 'The four most prominent names were "Captain Rock", "Captain Terry" (often "Captain Terry Alt"), "Captain Starlight" and "Captain Fearnot", which together comprised two-thirds of all signatures on notices. "Captain Rock" was the most popular and widely distributed of the four and examples abounded in every barony of the county.'[41]

The use of Captain Rock

There are indistinct and shadowy traces of the uses of Captain Rock beyond the scrawled signature of the threatening letters. There is occasional record of the name Captain Rock being invoked in verbal intimidation. In October 1829 a farmer was committed to gaol for desiring another man to 'be sure to get Captain Rock to burn it tonight' referring to hay

---

[39] *Ibid.*
[40] *Ibid.*
[41] Daniel Grace, 'The threatening notice in pre-famine county Tipperary', p. 60.

seized in lieu of rent during a dispute with mine owner and minor landlord Hanlon.[42] Though it should be said the committal was on the evidence of Hanlon to whose word at least one police Chief Constable assigns doubt to. In April 1832 in Newtown in the south-east of the Queen's County, an armed party of ten men knocked on a house door and called for it to be opened in the name of Captain Rock.[43]

There is even some faint suggestion that Captain Rock might have been a persona or role adopted by different individuals. In 1831 in Oldtown near Maryborough, in the Queen's County, an individual named Seale was attacked by a man who described himself as Captain Rock and asked: 'why he had not given up some land to the Widow Duff as he had some time since received a notice on pain of death to that effect.'[44] Such an attack subsequent to the issuing of a notice again highlights the expressive, as opposed to purely instrumental, role of the notice, as discussed in chapter six. Individuals describing themselves as 'Captain Rock' would be in keeping with the occasional indications we have that the totem of the 'captain' was not just something inscribed within notices but which referred to an actual role in whiteboy groups similar to the role of captain in folk rituals (see chapter five).[45]

Though there is a difficulty here in distinguishing between 'captain' as a trope in how subaltern rebels represented themselves and 'captain' as a trope in how subaltern rebels were represented by newspapers and magistrates. A difficulty which demonstrates the value of the notices as a source, the alternative sources have other layers of meaning. Some examples:

---

[42] Chief Constable Clancie to Sir John Harvey, 30 Oct. 1829 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1829/H84/10).
[43] Matthew Singleton to Sir William Gosset, 14 Apr. 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P. /1832/714).
[44] Unclear to Sir William Gosset, 15 Jul. 1831 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1831/S42).
[45] On that note see also Informations of William McKay of Seskin Mountgarret, parish of Aharney, barony of Galmoy, county of Kilkenny, 30 Dec. 1833 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1833/998).

'At Tallerton, in the neighbourhood of the Collieries, on Sunday last, upwards of 300 men, preceded by a young man on horseback, whom they called Captain Rock, when through the country swearing inhabitants against payments of tithes, and insulting every person who they thought were opposed to their principles.'[46]

'A number of armed men went on Sunday night to the house of Richard Hacket, (foreman bleacher to Lewis C. Kinchela, Esq.,) at Dunmore, within half a mile of the Barracks. The "Captain" of the party ordered Hackett to come out. He was told that they came to make him answer for having, in several instances, acted contrary to the regulations of the Whitefeet. The "Captain" then put the following queries to him – "Why did you recommend Mr. Kinchela to send his fire-arms into town for protection ?" "Why did you prevail on him to give a penny a day less to all his workmen?" " Why did you say, when Mr. Greene took up the boys at Dunmore, that you were glad of it, because all the bad characters in that part of the country would then be known ?" After putting some other questions to the man, and consulting together for a shirt time, they went away cautioning him to be more circumspect in future. They expressed their intention of again visiting him, and said, that only for the interference of a friend in his behalf, and his not being very well, they would then have "paid him off".[47]

Dunmore is an area just to the north of Kilkenny city, so the barracks referred to is likely the army barracks on the northern side of Kilkenny city. Bleaching, as in 'foreman bleacher', is a

---

[46] *Kilkenny Moderator*, 4 Apr. 1832.
[47] *Kilkenny Moderator*, 26 May 1832.

process within linen production.[48] The reference 'when Mr. Greene took up the boys at Dunmore' is to the arrest of twenty-six men in a pub in Dunmore by a party led by the stipendiary magistrate Joseph Greene (see chapter one).

A further example of how the figure of the captain can be put to another use in the representations of power-holders is given in a series of letters penned by stipendiary magistrate Mathew Singleton, where he seems to be elevating his status by elevating the status of persons he has arrested. One such, a Brian Donnelly, he refers to first on the 30 September 1832 as 'alias Captain of the Colliery' and later on the 5 November 1832 as 'alias Captain of the Whitefeet'.[49] These titles can be best explained as part of Singleton's efforts to demonstrate his own prowess to his superiors in Dublin Castle more than the actual practice of the Whitefeet insurgency.

---

[48] Incidentally Dunmore still has a road called the 'bleach road' running through it.
[49] Matthew Singleton to Sir William Gosset, Sept. 30 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/1668); Matthew Singleton to Sir William Gosset, Nov. 5 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/1668).

Captain Rock and Terry Alt

The Terry Alt and Captain Rock pseudonyms seem to have had somewhat carnivalesque origins (see chapter seven). Terry Alt was the eponym of a movement mostly based in County Clare and mostly operating in 1830 and 1831,[50] Captain Rock the eponym of the Rockite movement in Munster in the early 1820s.[51] The name Captain Rock originated in Newcastle West, Co. Limerick, in 1821. A local activist and assistant blacksmith, Paddy Dillane, apparently earned the nickname Captain Rock in honour of his sure aim when stoning a party of rival road builders. He claimed to have been literally christened Captain Rock in a ceremony with wine used in place of water and a schoolmaster in place of a priest.[52] The Courtenay estate centred on Newcastle West was riven by conflict at this time, and at least part of that conflict was along client/patron faction lines, with one of the issues being road building contracts and associated employment. Ironically, Dillane later gave evidence in court which convicted several of his erstwhile comrades. The first known threatening letter signed 'Captain Rock' is from October 1821, a few months after the moniker was supposedly taken on by Dillane.[53]

The Terry Alt eponym seems to have had similarly curious origins. Terry Alt was simply the name of a Protestant military veteran and it is suggested it became an insurgent *nom de guerre* as a joke.[54] The pseudonym tradition pre-dates Captain Rock and Terry Alt and was found in various other forms from the 1760s onwards.[55] The mythical figure associated with the Whiteboys of the early 1760s was a mysterious female personage, Queen Sive Oultagh,[56]

---

[50] James S. Donnelly Jr., 'The Terry Alt movement 1829–31', *History Ireland*, 2:4 (Winter, 1994), pp 30-35.

[51] Donnelly, *Captain Rock: The Irish agrarian rebellion*.

[52] *Ibid.* pp. 37-38.

[53] *Ibid.* p. 51.

[54] Michael MacMahon, 'Agrarian conflict in Clare, 1815–1831' in *The Other Clare*, 18 (1994), pp 49-56; pp 52-3.

[55] James S. Donnelly Jr., 'The Whiteboy movement 1761-5', *Irish Historical Studies*, 21:81 (1977-78), pp. 20-54; pp 27-9.

[56] Kelly, 'The Whiteboys in 1762: A contemporary account'.

possibly a Georgian echo of the sovereignty goddesses of Medieval Gaelic polities,[57] and

possibly a precursor of nineteenth-century forms such as Moll Doyle and Molly Maguire.[58] In

the eighteenth-century there were a range of aliases with the figure of 'Captain' becoming a

regular trope, as in Captain Right, the eponym of the Rightboys active in Munster in the

1780s. The 'Captain' motif related to an actual captain role taken on in popular festive rites

such as those of Straw-boys and May-boys, as well as to the highwaymen of popular

literature and oral tradition, social bandits who frequently adopted the title captain (see

chapter five).

Ludd seems to have played a similar part in northern England in the 1811–12 Luddite

movement as Captain Rock did in Ireland, that is, as a mythical leader embodied in

threatening notices. The character of Ludd expressed a common identity between different

occupational groups across the east Midlands, the East Riding of Yorkshire and industrial

Lancashire.[59]

With regard to the use of Terry Alt and Captain Rock in eastern Ireland, there was no

formal or informal organisational links interconnecting relevant individuals, groups, and

movements between the provinces of Leinster and Munster, except where the two

provinces border. There is over 100 kilometres between Clare, the original home of the Terry

Alt pseudonym, and Kildare, where it was to be used two years later. While the original

Rockite movement in the early 1820s did involve persons in Kilkenny, for the most part it was

a Munster-based movement. The Rockite heartland of north Cork and west Limerick is more

than 200 kilometres away from the parts of north Leinster where ten or twelve years later

the Captain Rock pseudonym still had currency. The practice does not seem to have spread

---

[57] Chadbourne, 'Rough music and folkloric elements in the Whiteboy movements'.
[58] Kevin Kenny, *Making sense of the Molly Maguires* (Oxford 1998), pp 22-4.
[59] Kevin Binfield (ed.), *Writings of the Luddites* (Baltimore, 2004); Katrina Navickas 'The search for 'General Ludd': the mythology of Luddism' in *Social History*, 30:3 (2005), pp 281-95.

through contiguous areas.

The use of recurrent pseudonyms such as Captain Rock outside of the times and places with which they were usually associated served to express and create a sense of collective identity. This was a symbolic linking between disparate groups in different parts of the island, an attempt to craft a sense of being one element of a greater whole on the part of the authors of the threatening notices. Collective identity refers to a sense of belonging to a wider body, a sense of *'we-ness'*, perhaps best articulated as an imagined community.[60] The important and fundamental question is why were literary banners from Clare and Limerick raised in Meath and Kildare? What role did this sense of pan-regional common identity play in those local mobilisations whose contours could be measured by townland, estate and parish? What force did collective identity bring to bear in the local conflicts that generated the notices which now reveal to us the sense of identity?

The expression of collective identity through the invocation of these common symbolic figureheads worked to create a sense of being part of a formidable force which ruled the night from one end of the island to the other. The most important effect of this imagined unity was to bolster participants' sense of agency, their belief in their collective efficacy. They needed this belief in their capacity to effect or resist changes in the social environment as fatalism does not make fertile ground for protest or resistance.

Solidaristic aspects

In adopting the Captain Rock or Terry Alt motifs, the producers of threatening notices in Leinster were expressing and creating a sense of commonality with similar groups elsewhere in the country, or, in other words, expressing and creating a collective identity. It would be

---

[60] Scott A. Hunt and Robert D. Benford, 'Collective identity, solidarity and commitment' in David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi (eds), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (Oxford, 2004), pp 434-57; Jeff Pratt, *Class, nation and identity: The anthropology of political movements* (London, 2003).

possible to explain away that adoption as a purely instrumental intimidatory tactic, but there is however other evidence of an expansive viewpoint on the part of movement participants. This is not to say that their activity was necessarily anything other than a ruthless pragmatism around immediate local and often personal material issues, but rather that they linked that with a broader impression of an extra-local crusade for reform and redress and recognition of a common cause. This, I will argue in the next chapter, contributed to a heightened sense of morale which would have directly aided them in their local fights. In this they are not that different from any other participants in subaltern contention.

Outside of the notices we only have the occasional snippet to offer some direct insight into the outlook of people involved in Whitefeet activity or in their wider social milieu. A local newspaper report on the requisition of firearms near Ballyragget in north Kilkenny in March 1832 also tells us something of the conversation between the owner of the guns and the Whitefeet party taking them. The gun-owner remonstrates that he needs his guns to keep crows off his wheat and is met with the retort: 'crows are of little consequence compared to the cause of the country.'[61] The substance of that cause being the suppression of tithe, a tax for the Church of Ireland, and of land-jobbers, people who have taken land from previous occupiers.

Another indication can be taken from the execution of Whitefeet participant Patrick Dunne on 30 June 1832 at Maryborough (present-day Portlaoise). Dunne stated from the scaffold that he loves 'the cause for which I suffer'. [62] Dunne was earlier overheard by a gaoler stating that: 'if I get out I will *Rip for Many Arms*, again, *for it is for my Country'* (emphasis in

---

[61] *Kilkenny Moderator,* 28 Mar. 1832.
[62] *Leinster Express*, 7 July 1832.

original transcription).[63] 'Rip' refers here to the requisitioning of firearms. In addition, loyalties of class were evoked within notices and loyalties of sect conjured within oaths and catechisms.[64] Though as discussed above these identities are much less prominent than the collective identity embodied in the recurrent pseudonyms.

Moreover, analyses of the actions of whiteboy groups reveal solidaristic and extra-local aspects. According to Michael Beames's study of assassinations in Tipperary from 1837 to 1847, groups of assassins were usually a mixture of people who were directly connected to the grievance that occasioned the action and others who had no immediate connection but were habitual militants.[65] James S. Donnelly Jr. found that successive movements attempted to expand into new territories, from the original Whiteboys of the early 1760s,[66] to the later Whiteboy movement of the years 1769-76,[67] and the Rightboy movement of 1785-88.[68]

Finally, both the ballad contained in appendix b which was seemingly widely sung and representative of a broader similar song culture and the reported words of a Tipperary man to the poor law commissioners as contained in appendix c indicate something of a broader subaltern culture supportive of whiteboy actions.

Pan-regional identity
Eleven notices overtly identify with groups elsewhere in the country, which I have coded as 'reference to other part of the country'. One threatening letter from the King's County (present-day Offaly) is signed: 'by order of Mr. Terry Alts Innis in the County of Clare';

[63] John Wilson to Sir William Gossett, 9 May 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/850).
[64] *Ibid*; Fitzgerald R.M. to Sir William Gossett, 5 Jan. 1833 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1833/13/G).
[65] Beames, 'Rural conflict in pre–famine Ireland'.
[66] Donnelly, 'The Whiteboy movement 1761-5', p. 22.
[67] J. S. Donnelly, 'Irish agrarian rebellion: The Whiteboys of 1769-76', p. 295.
[68] Donnelly, 'The Rightboy movement 1785–8'.

another, from near Kilkenny City, opens: 'here i am the bold determined man cald Captain

Rock served to powder and ball from Ben Doyle in the County of Clare'.[69] These two seem to

be in the same format as the use of pseudonyms in settings outside the place with which

they are usually associated with. Only in these instances the link is made more explicit, not

only name-checking Terry Alt but directly referring to Clare, the county whose contemporary

whiteboy movement, the Terry Alts, rose to an earlier prominence than their Leinster

equivalents.

One notice from Meath makes reference to 'Munster laws' and another from Meath reads in

part:

> 'you will rue the consequence for by a solemn mandate you will be the same way
>
> dealt with as the Sheas was in Kilkenny do not think that Meath is to slumber in
>
> ignorance of their persecution any longer or to submit to the burdin of such rents as
>
> is imposed on the poor by such rents as charged for potatoe land'.[70]

Tentatively it could be suggested that this is a case of people in an area which saw relatively

little subaltern violence drawing a degree of inspiration from places which saw much more.

Indeed the notice speaking of 'Munster laws' says of Meath that: 'this part of the Country

was always too humble to such grinding landlords'.[71]

The reference to the Sheas is to an infamous incident, where a farmer, his family, five of his

labourers, and three maid-servants, sixteen people in total, were burned to death.[72] This

happened in November 1821 in Gurtnapisha, county Tipperary, which is on the slopes of

Slievenamon and adjacent to the border with Kilkenny. Patrick Shea had provoked enmity

---

[69] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

[70] *Ibid.*

[71] *Ibid.*

[72] Donnelly, *Captain Rock: Irish agrarian rebellion*, pp 72-4.

both through hiring migrant labour and through dispossessing sub-tenants. Obviously the

Shea incident is foregrounded in the notice for its intimidatory value the point is that before

it could be recounted in the notice it had to be heard of or read of, told and re-told, within

the milieu from whence the issuers of the notice came, bearing in mind the eleven year gap

and approximately 180 kilometre distance between the burning of the Sheas and the issuing

of the notice. For sure all the pan-regional forms discussed here had a instrumental

intimidatory function, they are not called threatening letters for nothing, the case being

made here is that such forms also had an expressive function.

Another sub-set of the code 'reference to other part of the country' is not necessarily

identifying with whiteboy groups elsewhere:

> 'Take notice that whereas a meeting of the brethren at Rock Glin Castle concluded to
>
> be a fair cause that you should resist a fair cause by reducing Mathew and Mich.l
>
> Quin's heir [hire] to ten pence per day as I am the honourable Captain Rock that
>
> never take one short or if not you shall be visited with powder & ball whilst here I am
>
> the man as happy as the King on his Throun and as a good a messenger as any
>
> messenger of mortality while I stand upon firm ground honourable Captain Rock
>
> from Armagh for Mr. Coady to take this as a warning you know you cant go against
>
> the rules of the County I will call on you or those men this night week to no if you
>
> obey my orders and if not them nor any other man shall not work a stroke for you
>
> until you do so'.[73]

---

[73] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

The Armagh location in the phrase 'honourable Captain Rock from Armagh' has no connection to Captain Rock the eponym of the Rockite movement, and it seems more likely that this is derived from the apparent cross-over between Ribbon and Whitefeet oaths discussed above. Armagh is an ecclesiastical centre in the northern province of Ulster. Additionally two notices, one from north-west Kilkenny and one from south-west King's County, both cite Carrickshock, a massacre of twelve policemen and a tithe-proctor during an anti-tithe mobilisation in south Kilkenny in December 1831.[74] The three notices in question do in other ways refer to more classically whiteboy activity.

A related code is that of 'travel' where notices purport to be from some emissary patrolling the country and righting wrongs, a theme which occurs in 15 notices. In coding for 'travel' I aimed for instances where the travel in question was likely of the same order as 'reference to other part of the country'. That is to say the travel in question was not from an adjacent district and gave the impression of being imaginary. This is perhaps different then from the role of militants identified by Beames and Donnelly and cited above. I have always erred on the side of caution with regard to taking notices claims of extra-local organisation at face value and likewise the claims of formal organisational structure.

The following two examples combine a number of the motifs I have been discussing here:

'I Lady Clare, is on my Mission thro this Kingdom and is sorry to find your Tenantry paying you a high rent for your land'.[75]

---

[74] *Ibid.*
[75] *Ibid.*

'John Rock No. 2854 Let us find out or hear tell if any man boy, or cotter, that will work less than one shilling a day or 8 pence and diet we will murder them and destroy them in the clear day daylight I remain in this parish by order of Our Committee for we are more than Legion'.[76]

This notice is from Garryhill, Co. Carlow, which is almost the opposite end of the county from old Leighlin:

'Notice Frances Murphy I give you notice to give up the land to the man that you robbed him of his crop, manure, timber, & turf in the year 1828, in 15 days time you are required to give it up, if not Captain Rock and his Whitefeet will pay you a visit from old Leighlin sooner or later, you cannot tell if you persevere you will be no more, put us not to the trouble of coming to your fall, we are bound to go 15 miles on foot & 21 on horse.

C. Rock'.[77]

The phrase: 'we are bound to go 15 miles on foot & 21 on horse' is in reference to an oath.

The notice which is most explicit in allusion to a pan-regional alignment boldly states: 'the inquisition is established from Cape Clear to the Giant's Causeway and from the Bay of Galway to Wicklow head.'[78] In other words it reached through the entire island of Ireland.

What this was about was building people's belief in their collective capacity to make a

---

[76] *Ibid.*
[77] *Ibid.*
[78] *Ibid.*

difference in their day-to-day lives through common action. The part-mythical/part-actual idea of a powerful combination across the country helped to build this collective self-belief. It was mythical in the sense there was little or no actual formal or informal organisational links uniting disparate groups in different counties; it was actual in that different groups were doing similar things for similar reasons with similar cultural styles and tactical repertoires. Certainly part of all this was about appearing more intimidating and fearsome to the targets of the notices. It shouldn't be overlooked that part was also about gaining inspiration from the actions of others in other parts of the country. We see traces of the authors having heard of, or read of, the Terry Alts, the burnings of the Sheas, or the battle of Carrickshock. As an aside, seemingly much rarer and not occurring in the selection made from the collection being examined here, are occasional mentions of incidents in other countries such as Captain Swing - an agricultural labourers movement in Britain,[79] the Great French revolution and the Greek revolt of the 1820s,[80] as well as unspecified events, probably food riots, in London.[81]

The story of Captain Rock

In *Revolution, rebellion, resistance: The power of story* Eric Selbin claims that: 'when people do choose to resist, rebel, or take up the revolutionary banner, it is in part because they are aware that other people in other places at other times under other circumstances have

---

[79] *Westmeath Journal,* 21 Jun. 1832.
[80] Gibbons, *Captain Rock, knight errant*, p. 131, p. 126.
[81] John Cunningham, *'A town tormented by the sea': Galway, 1790 – 1914* (Dublin, 2004), pp 88-9.

done so';[82] this creates an awareness of 'what is imaginable and thus at least theoretically feasible'.[83]

The vehicles of this perception of other times and places are collective memories and myths making up a popular political culture and allowing a collective mimesis, or more crudely collective imitation. The articulation of compelling stories, either of past rebellions or of far-away popular assertion, creates a new 'sense of possibility'.[84] These stories 'are cobbled together from various bits and pieces in conscious acts of *bricolage*.'[85]

We can consider recurrent aliases like Captain Rock and Terry Alt to be fragments of stories people told about what was happening in particular localities. So first the *nom de guerre* Captain Rock spreads around Limerick and north Cork as people relate the news of what is happening in Newcastle West and later the name and legend spreads and Captain Rock becomes emblematic of what people further afield tell, or remember, of events in Munster more generally.[86] Similarly the use of the 'Captain' title can be considered a fragment of the stories told about highwaymen (see chapter five).

Conclusion

The notices examined for this study do not evince much in the way of either national or sectarian identities. This is not what one would expect from at least some secondary literature. Admitedly, this may simply have been that such identities did not seem particularly pertinent to the contexts in which the notices were produced. It would seem reasonable, for instance, to expect more of a confessional identity in anti-tithe threatening

---

[82] Eric Selbin, *Revolution, rebellion, resistance the power of story* (London & New York, 2010), p. 69.
[83] *Ibid.* p. 75.
[84] *Ibid*. p. 70.
[85] *Ibid.* p. 49
[86] Donnelly makes a similar point on the spread of the news from Newcastle West across the adjoining districts see Donnelly, *Captain Rock: Irish agrarian rebellion*, p. 47.

letters. Similarly, by contrast with what one might expect from some secondary literature

the notices do evince a class identity expressed through a language of class. This is,

however, not a major feature of the notices and is not the primary focus of this chapter.

What I have tried to do in this chapter is to demonstrate that the crafters of the notices

were making reference to their cohorts in other parts of the country by adopting symbols

associated with movements elsewhere or, less commonly, by making direct reference within

the notices to happenings elsewhere. I argue that this is the main form of collective identity

found within the notices. The recurrent pseudonyms are the most salient generic feature of

the notices excepting only threats of violence. Hence 'Rockite notice' becomes synonymic

for threatening letter, and Captain Right, Captain Rock and Terry Alt, amongst others, all

give their names to associated movements. This omnipresence begs explanation as

something other than a perfunctory matter of form. We have to try to understand an

unfamiliar language.

Moreover, I argue that there is an element of solidarity to be found within the subaltern

collective action of the period notwithstanding its often highly localised form. This shouldn't

be surprising given what we know of peasant revolts in late-medieval and early-modern

Europe, that is to say that such revolts were, although based in local communities, capable

of encompassing whole regions.

Finally, by drawing on Selbin's writings on the role of story I presage what I am turning to

address in the next chapter — a more theoretically based exploration of the role of

collective identity within popular mobilisation. In the next chapter I will use the concept of

collective identity to argue that revolt is not a given and that identity is not simply

determined by social structure. I will contend that collective identity is something developed

in the course of contention to address a particular need for a sense of collective efficacy, in

response to structural conditions likely resulting in an inhibited sense of collective efficacy.

Chapter Nine: Collective Identity and Collective Efficacy

This chapter more fully explores the theory behind the concept of collective identity which I have deployed to understand the use of recurrent pseudonyms within the notices. Although collective identity was first used to explain what were called in the 1980s new social movements I will argue that the same concept can be used to understand earlier movements of class and in fact it, and similar concepts, have been successfully applied to them. I will then argue that identity is made, not given, but that it is not conjured from thin air. That is to say,we cannot understand movements simply by reference to social structure, but, on the other hand, an idealism which sees identity as constructed in a discursive space outside the material practice of everyday life is not a viable approach.

 However, the main theoretical argument here concerns how collective identity functions, what purpose it performs, what needs it answers, and what role it plays within movements. It will be argued that identity is central, in that it provides people with the sense that they are a part of something altogether grander than just themselves or their immediate co-workers or neighbours and that this sense is a crucial contribution to feelings and understandings of collective efficacy. Collective efficacy refers to the belief in the ability of one's self and cohort to achieve intended aims. This proposition linking collective identity to collective efficacy is related to another proposition which is that social subordination produces a reduced sense of collective efficacy. Thus an essential part of the collective action of the early-nineteenth-century rural poor was the creation of a sense of collective identity which bolstered their sense of collective efficacy.

Collective identity has been subject to a sort of semantic inflation, where its meaning is stretched to encompass almost all cultural or ideological aspects of a movement. It is a nebulous, mercurial and contested idea. One of the most succinct definitions of collective identity in the literature relating it to social movements is that proffered by Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper:

> 'an individual's cognitive, moral, and emotional connection with a broader community, category, practice or institution. It is a perception of a shared status or relation, which may be imagined rather than experienced directly...'[1]

This, however, has been criticised as defining identity as a property of a particular individual, rather than being a matter of relations between different social actors.[2] In that sense, their definition can be contrasted with that of David Snow, who writes of collective identity that its:

> 'essence resides in a shared sense of "one-ness" or "we-ness" anchored in real or imagined shared attributes and experiences among those who comprise the collectivity and in relation or contrast to one or more actual or imagined sets of "others".'[3]

 Gamson further elaborates the concept of collective identity into 'three embedded layers' which are organisational, movement and solidary.[4] Movement identity refers to the *we* of a movement, the act of collective identification with others based on a shared participation in

---

[1] Francesca Polletta and James M. Jasper, 'Collective identity and social movements' in *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27 (2001), pp 283-305; p. 285.
[2] Cristina Flesher Fominaya, 'Collective identity in social movements: Central concepts and debates' in *Sociology Compass*, 4/6 (2010), pp 393-404.
[3] David Snow, 'Collective identity and expressive forms', *Center for the Study of Democracy Working Papers*, 10-01-2001, online at escholarship.org/uc/item/2zn1t7bj, accessed 5 Sept. 2014.
[4] William A. Gamson, 'Commitment and agency in social movements' in *Sociological Forum*, 6:1 (1991), pp 27–50; p. 40.

a particular movement, series of protests, or similar activities in different locales. Solidary identity refers to a broader *we,* 'constructed around people's social location', these being identities of class, gender and ethnicity. By organisational identity, Gamson means the identity of individual activists based around their particular role as 'movement carriers'. The paucity of the documentary record does not allow for much of an investigation into this form of identity, although its existence is arguably visible in the works of Beames and Donnelly cited in the last chapter. What I am concerned with here is what Gamson classifies with the concepts of movement identity and of solidary identity.

The agenda for the study of social movements through the prism of collective identity can be summed up by quoting Alberto Melucci:

> 'The empirical unity of a social movement should be considered as a result rather than a starting point, a fact to be explained rather than evidence.'[5]

In terms of social movement studies, collective identity was originally advanced as a concept in the context of the new social movements problematic of the 1980s. New social movements apparently featured 'an expressive rather than instrumental motivation'[6] where:

> 'emerging social conflicts in advanced societies have not expressed themselves through political action, but rather raised cultural challenges to the dominant language, to the codes that organize information and shape social practices. The

---

[5] Alberto Melucci, 'The Process of Collective Identity' in Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans (eds), *Social movements and culture* (Minneapolis, 1995), pp 41–63; p. 43.

[6] Paul Byrne, *Social movements in Britain* (London, 1997), p. 36.

crucial dimensions of daily life (time, space, interpersonal relations, individual and group identity) have been involved in these conflicts . . . ' [7]

Crucially, to many the new social movements seemed not to be class movements, and there was not an automatic admission to the collectivity by virtue of one's position in a social structure. Rather, that collectivity had to be created. From this follows the focus on cultural or expressive forms of movement activity. While the newness of new social movements proved questionable and they were, in fact, as prone to bureaucratisation and political instrumentality as any hoary outpost of social democracy, nonetheless, this helped give us a new way of looking at movements. Though there were in fact important antecedents which were also aware of the necessity to create identity. It might be considered that 'old social movements' of nation and class were uncomplicatedly based on identities which were socially structurally given. In fact not only is this not the case, but a considerable amount of scholarship, much of it pre-dating the formulation of collective identity within social movement studies, has analysed identity construction with regard to class movements.

Collective identity and "old social movements"
The contemporary work applying and developing the concept of collective identity in relation to what we might call old social movements I have found most useful is that of Jeff Pratt. After examining Pratt's work I shall turn to what could be called the pre-history of collective identity that is to say earlier appreciations of the cultural construction of identities within and by movements. By 'earlier' I mean those predating the development of collective identity within social movement studies and the application of the concept to new social movements. It is in fact not at all novel to think about nineteenth-century movements through ideas akin to collective identity.

---

[7] Melucci, 'The Process of Collective Identity', p. 41.

In *Class, nation and identity: The anthropology of political movements*, Pratt interrogates three different case studies of class movements, one in a northern Italian industrial town, one in rural Andalusia in southern Spain, and one among share-croppers in Tuscany in central Italy. He argues: 'we need to understand the political work that goes into constructing a class movement, work which has to overcome many kinds of internal division'.[8] There was a process of making collective identities which encompassed both agricultural labourers and artisans in Andalusia and both craft workers and the so-called unskilled or mass workers of industrialisation in northern Italy. Moreover, the process of identity construction had to overcome religious divisions and divisions of language and regional origins as well as forms of economic organisation such as piecework which tended to instil individualism rather than solidarity. Furthermore, a unity was forged which went beyond any particular plant, *pueblo* or estate. To Pratt: 'neither economic reductionism nor (post-Marxist) idealism will reveal the dynamics of class movements'.[9]

To continue with the theme of class as a form of collective identity, we can go back to Marx's and Engel's writings on the development of 'the ever expanding union of the workers' through contests:

> 'carried on by individual labourers, then by the workpeople of a factory, then by the operatives of one trade, in one locality, against the individual bourgeois who directly exploits them.'[10]

---

[8] Jeff Pratt, *Class, nation and identity: The anthropology of political movements* (London, 2003), p. 27.
[9] *Ibid.* p. 88.
[10] Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *The communist manifesto* (London, 1967), pp 89-90.

This is perhaps best known today as the process by which the 'class in itself' becomes the 'class for itself', in the terminology employed in a brief sketch in Marx's *Poverty of philosophy*:

> 'Economic conditions had in the first place transformed the mass of the people into workers. The domination of capital created the common situation and common interests of this class. Thus this mass is already a class in relation to capital, but not yet a class for itself. In the struggle, of which we have only indicated a few phrases, this mass unites and forms itself into a class for itself. The interests which it defends become class interests.'[11]

Furthermore, a major portion of the pre-history of collective identity can be found in the output of the British Marxist historians. This is both the pre-history of collective identity in that a similar concept of class is being used to understand 'old social movements', and a pre-history in that this scholarship predated the formulation of collective identity by the new social movement theorists. The British Marxist history school developed in the mid-twentieth-century, initially as an organisation within the Communist Party of Great Britain and later largely as a New Left split from that party.

Much of the scholarship associated with the British Marxist historians had already transcended the antinomies of structural and discursive determinism prior to the adoption the concept of collective identity by the new social movement theorists. Cultural resources, political contexts, and *mentalités* were all a part of this school's conception of class formation — the development of class-based identities, consciousness, and movements — from a very early stage. Class formation in this conceptualisation represents points in the

---

[11] Karl Marx, *The poverty of philosophy*, online at www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/poverty-philosophy/ch02e.htm, accessed 19 Nov. 2012.

process of movement from the 'class-in-itself' to the 'class-for-itself'. For example, Eric Hobsbawm's 1964 essay on 'Labour Traditions', which addresses the respective influences of traditions of nonconformity (i.e. Protestant sects outside the Church of England) and of traditions of Jacobinism on the British and French labour movements.[12]

As Thompson put it in the previous year in his 'The Making of the English Working Class' with regard to England in the early-nineteenth-century:

> 'it is the political context as much as the steam engine, which had the most influence upon shaping the consciousness and institutions of the working class.' [13]

The next section will in part be concerned with the Thompsonian concept of class and some of the arguments against it associated with the linguistic turn of the 1980s.

Class and identities

Class is used in multiple different senses and can be used to describe many different phenomena. Class can be understood as referring to categories of inequality with people divided up by income, life chances, education, etc. In other words, it can be understood as stratification in the sense employed within neo-Weberian and Functionalist sociology. This is also the most popular understanding of class today and has the imprimatur of official government statistics and much journalism. This, however, is not the meaning of class most relevant to what is being examined in this thesis. Two uses of class are particularly relevant here. Firstly, class as it refers to relations of exploitation and conflict, revolving around appropriation of surplus product over and above what the direct producers get. This appropriation happening either nakedly through feudal rent, or through the capitalist wage and the difference in the value of labour power and the value of what labour produces.

---

[12] Eric Hobsbawm, *Uncommon people: Resistance, rebellion and jazz* (London, 1999), pp 59 – 75.
[13] E.P. Thompson, *The making of the English working class* (Harmondsworth, 1968), p. 216.

Secondly, we have class in a Thompsonian sense – class as an identity and movement based on those relations of exploitation and conflict but not reducible to them.

My case is that class (the relationship), which has class conflict intrinsic to it, exists independently of class, the identity, and class (the identity) does not have to call itself class i.e. doesn't have to use a language of class. Different individuals and groups of people can recognise themselves as in some sense on the same side in what are class conflicts and create an identity of class but not call that identity class. This continues to be a class identity even when it embraces people in a number of different class relationships - that is to say embracing both peasants and farm labourers as the iconography discussed here does or as the campesino identity does in twentieth-century and contemporary Mexico.[14] The letters 'C', 'L', 'A', 'S' and 'S' are entirely arbitrary as a mode of expression of class identity.

The emphasis on creation foregrounds an agentic process mediating between social structure and discourse with the proviso that these are distinctions made only for analytical purposes. That is to say, the forming of class (the relationship) involves class conflict and hence at least the possibility of class (the identity) from the get-go. This agentic process means that class (the identity) exists in inter-relationship with class movements and the micro-politics of resistance.

A further necessary distinction must be made, that between class identity and a language of class. Class identity meaning collective identities developed within class conflict, a language of class referring to a conjunctural sub-set of those class identities – ones which expressly

---

[14] Christopher R. Boyer, *Becoming campesinos: Politics, identity, and agrarian struggle in postrevolutionary Michoacán, 1920-1935* (Stanford, 2003).

use the term class. This is a necessary distinction to make in order to get to grips with the discourse determinism of the post-modern turn in social history, an analogous trend to that of the 'new social movements' in social movement studies. It is a distinction which might be said to be presaged by E.P. Thompson's 1978 journal article *Eighteenth-century English society: Class struggle without class?*[15]

Before turning to interrogate the conceptions of class advanced in Thompson's work I'll use Gareth Stedman Jones's case against Thompson as my baseline for the post-modern turn of the 1980s. However, to understand where Stedman Jones is coming from it is necessary to linger a while longer with Thompson. The preface to Thompson's 1963 *The making of the English working class* puts forward his identity/movement understanding of class, which has agency as central to the development of a class identity:

> '. . .class happens when some men, as a result of common experiences (inherited or shared), feel and articulate the identity of their interests as between themselves, and as against other men whose interests are different from (and usually opposed to) theirs. The class experience is largely determined by the productive relations into which men are born – or enter involuntarily. Class-consciousness is the way in which these experiences are handled in cultural terms : embodied in traditions, value-systems, ideas, and institutional forms. If the experience appears as determined, class-consciousness does not. '[16]

[15] E.P. Thompson, 'Eighteenth-century English society: Class struggle without class?' in *Social History*, 3:2 (May, 1978), pp 133-65.

[16] Thompson, *The making of the English working class*, pp 9-10.

This is the understanding of class which Stedman Jones is responding to in his seminal introduction to his 1983 *Languages of class: Studies in English working class history 1832-1982* where he claims that:

> 'What both 'experience' and 'consciousness' conceal – at least as their usage has evolved among historians – is the problematic character of language itself. Both concepts imply that language is a simple medium through which 'experience' finds expression – a romantic conception of language in which what is at the beginning inner and particular struggles to outward expression and, having done so, finds itself recognized in the answering experience of others, and hence sees itself to be part of a shared experience. It is in some such way that 'experience' can be conceived cumulatively to result in class consciousness. What this approach cannot acknowledge is all the criticism which has been levelled at it since the broader significance of Saussure's work was understood – the materiality of language itself, the impossibility of simply referring it back to some primal anterior reality, 'social being', the impossibility of abstracting experience from the language which structures its articulation.'[17]

The first issue to unpack is the independence of class conflict from a language of class. This will be explored through a consideration of protests carried out by redundant workers in the contemporary Republic of Ireland. The contemporary situation is of particular interest for a number of reasons. Firstly, since the recession of the 1980s and adoption of a formally corporatist model of economic development in the late 1980s, the number of industrial

---

[17] Gareth Stedman Jones, *Languages of class: Studies in English working class history 1832-1982* (Cambridge, 1983), p. 20.

disputes nosedived from a highpoint during the period from the 1960s to the 1980s.[18] Much

of the workforce, or at least that of non-migrant origins, is made up of what we might call a

post-industrial conflict generation. This is especially true in retail, where younger people are

more likely to be employed. Secondly, being both part of the Anglosphere and adjoining

Britain this country has shared in the shift in meanings carried by the sign 'working class'.

This shift is observable in the contrast between what working class meant in the

entertainment media of the 1970s by comparison with the entertainment media of today.[19]

Thirdly, the retreat from class as a means of understanding the world in both academia and

on the left was in Britain congruent with a massive defeat of the workers movement and

concomitant economic re-structuring that could be thought of as a move from the era of

class to the era of new identities. This is not the case in Ireland which, having a relatively

restricted development of capitalism also had a relatively restricted development of a

workers movement. We shouldn't expect therefore the language of class to necessarily

have much purchase.

Looking at the contemporary equivalent of the so-called "threatening notices" which is to

say media produced by the workers in dispute it is the case that the language of class is not

prominent. Figure 9.1 shows the closed down outlet of computer game chain store Game in

Patrick street Cork during the spring of 2012. This shop had been occupied by the people

who formerly worked there, as had the eleven other Game outlets in the Republic of Ireland

(involving in total over one hundred people). The company had been taken into

administration, that is to say was now being run by court-appointed administrators to meet

the demands of creditors. Its stores in the Republic of Ireland were shut down over night,

[18] Anonymous, *Parting company* (Dublin, 2003).
[19] Owen Jones, *Chavs: The demonization of the working class* (London, 2011).

with those in the United Kingdom remaining open, and the former employees were being

refused redundancy payments and had not been paid wages owed to them. The relationship

between the administrators and the staff is a continuation of the employer/employee

relationship. This is clearly a case of class conflict of the most basic kind. It is not an

automatic socially structurally given process. Ex-Game employees were likely influenced by

many factors including for instance knowledge of other people in similar situations who had

been or were taking similar actions. The Vita Cortex manufacturing plant in Cork had been

Figure 9.1 Occupied outlet of computer game chain store Game in Patrick street, Cork (Spring 2012).

occupied since mid-December 2011 by its former workforce, a case which received a good deal of media attention and popular support. Nonetheless this is a process which is independent of a language of class.

The protest-sign in figure 9.1 reads in part: 'Thank you to the local businesses shown below for their support during our protest', listing, among others, 'La Senza representatives'. 'La Senza representatives', far from constituting a local business, actually refers to another group of workers, those formerly employed by multi-national lingerie retail outlet La Senza. La Senza workers were similarly involved in sit-ins in their former workplaces over unpaid Christmas overtime and redundancy payments in the months prior to the Game case.

Clearly there is recognition of some form of commonality between the former employees of Game and the former employees of La Senza being expressed in that sign, but it is very much not being expressed in a language of class. A perusal of the statements on the Facebook pages associated with the campaigns of both the former employees of La Senza and of Game likewise do not reveal much in the way of a language of class.[20] Probably about as much as national identity is to be found in the notices discussed in the previous chapter.

Stedman Jones argues that: 'Language disrupts any simple notion of the determination of consciousness by social being because it is itself part of social being.'[21] But effectively he ejects language from social being. A better formulation, as seen in the section in chapter

---

[20] Official statement from ex Game employees in the Republic of Ireland [13th of April 2012 10pm] (online at www.facebook.com/notes/game-ireland-fight-for-your-rights/official-statement-from-ex-game-employees-in-the-republic-of-ireland-13th-of-apr/219827961451228, accessed 21/08/2014; Official statement from ex Game employees in the Republic of Ireland [31st March 2012 1:00pm] (online at www.facebook.com/notes/game-ireland-fight-for-your-rights/official-statement-from-ex-game-employees-in-the-republic-of-ireland-31st-march-/213485772085447, accessed 21/08/2014)
[21] Stedman Jones, *Languages of class,* pp 21-2.

seven drawing on the writings of Vološinov, is to consider a dialectical process whereby signs are shaped by social conflict and signs also shape social conflict rather than a one-sided determinism.   This, and much of the following, relates back to the structure/agency onotology introduced in the opening pages of this thesis.

To Thompson, using class as referring to relations of production is to turn class into a static thing, Thompson was trying to bring agency back in against a theoretical backdrop where it was imagined that, to quote Sewell: 'factories produced a proletariat almost as mechanically as they produced cloth or nails'; and there was 'little curiosity about what workers actually felt, said, wrote and did'.[22] Apart from the fact that the relations of production are in no sense static, too much of a focus on class as an identity can tend to watering it 'down to the point where it virtually disappears in many situations'.[23] Class is evinced in the basic fact of appropriation of surplus from the direct producers - a relationship within which there are inherent antagonisms and this is best described as class, irrespective of what identities are developed (or not developed) out of the immanent conflict.

To recap: we can have class as referring to relations of production, i.e. what Marx refers to above as the 'class-in-itself'; we can have class as referring to a collective identity, which can be further related to class-based movements; and that this identity/movement meaning of class can use a language of class (i.e. the actual term class) but need not. That is then:

(1) Class as relations of production;

---

[22]William H. Sewell Jr, 'How classes are made: Critical reflections on E.P. Thompson's theory of working-class formation' in Harvey J. Kaye and Keith McClelland (eds), *E.P. Thompson: Critical perspectives* (Philadelphia, 1990), pp 50 – 77; p. 53.
[23] de Ste.Croix, *The class struggle in the ancient Greek world*, p. 57.

(2) Class identity as a collective identity based on conflict within those relations but not using a language of class;

(3) Class identity as a collective identity based on such conflict and which uses a language of class.

Thomspon has an identity, movement and agency-based approach to class. Class struggle is a 'manifest and universal historical process', but class (in Thompson's use of the term) isn't:

'People find themselves in a society structured in determined ways (crucially, but not exclusively, in productive relations), they experience exploitation (or the need to maintain power over whom they exploit), they identify points of antagonistic interest, they commence to struggle around these issues and in the process of struggling they discover themselves as classes'.[24]

On the contrary we should see agency, struggle and culture within the relations of production, and should see these relations as dynamic not static, not just agency in the formation of class identity and class movements but also agency within the so-called static objective economic structure; albeit agency in turn constrained and shaped by structure. In fact, Thompon's more empirical work outstrips his theoretical statements on class and is often times concerned with just this inter-relationship of structure and agency. For instance, his work is replete with examples of proletarianisation as a contested phenomenon shaped by different sets of human actors (an approach congruent with the onotology dicussed in the introduction to this thesis).

With regard to the identity understanding of class, I would argue, as does Thompson, that this identity doesn't have to call itself class at all. This development of a common bond, a

---

[24] Thompson, 'Eighteenth-century English society: Class struggle without class?', p. 149.

collective identity, a sense of *we*, does not necessarily have to go under the name class.

Thompson claims that: 'in the process of struggling they discover themselves as classes';

what if they don't discover themselves as classes in the sense of using a language of class?

What if the process of struggling and discovering produces collective identities expressed in

forms other than a language of class? Thompson argues that class in the sense that develops

in nineteenth-century industrial capitalist societies 'has in fact no claim to universality' there

can be other collective identities coming out of the conflict inherent in antagonistic relations

of appropriation/production.

In terms of Thompson's focus on class as movement/identity and the discovery of

'themselves as classes' 'in the process of struggling' and moreover that class, in the sense of

employed in nineteenth-century industrial capitalist societies 'has in fact no claim to

universality' it follows that collectivities can discover themselves but not call that discovery

class. Hence the possibility of class-based movements, which is to say movements-based in

conflicts within relations of production, forging identities while not using the language of

class, or perhaps only partly using that language. This is observable in instances of working-

class formation outside of nineteenth-century Europe — and hence outside of the particular

contexts that shaped that formation and gave it a language of class, contexts such as the

traditions of the artisanate and the revolutions in France (1787-1799 and 1830).

Hagen Koo's study of working-class formation in late-twentieth-century industrialisation in

South Korea treats of the disparate elements from which was formed the collective identity

at the heart of the workers' movement. It was by no means simply and automatically an

identity as workers – for the reason that physical labour apart from independent farming

carried strongly negative connotations.[25] The elements that fed into identity construction

included *han* which Koo describes as:

> 'an extremely complex concept, difficult to translate into English, but in broad terms
>
> it can be defined as long accumulated sorrow and regret over one's misfortune or a
>
> simmering resentment over injustice one has experienced'.[26]

Another strand was the populist *minjung* intellectual/cultural movement, which involved,

amongst other things, a popular social history, demotic literature, and the revival of

traditional dance.[27]

It is my contention that what we are seeing when we see a common set of aliases used in

notices from opposite ends of the island, and when some notices make positive reference to

events in other parts of the country or purport to be linked to movements elsewhere, can

be considered a class identity. In other words a class identity is to be found within the

Leinster 1832 notices collection but to no great extent is that identity expressed in a

language of class. This is a class identity expressed in an iconographic commonality.

It is worth noting that generally identity formation is conceived in the literature on historic

working class movements as a facet of generalisation, that is to say part of a process of

moving from particular struggles to a more unified movement uniting different 'militant

---

[25] Hagen Koo, *Korean workers: The culture and politics of class formation* (Ithaca, 2001), pp 127-30; works
dealing with the intricacies of class formation in the European context include: Ronald Aminzade, *Ballots and
barricades: Class formation and republican politics in France, 1830 – 1871* (Princeton, 1993); Ira Katznelson and
Aristide R. Zolberg (eds), *Working-class formation: Nineteenth-century patterns in western Europe and the
United States* (Princeton, 1986); Richard J. Evans, *Proletarians and politics: Socialism, protest and the working
class in Germany before the First World War* (New York, 1990).
[26] *Ibid.* p. 136.
[27] *Ibid.* pp 142-6.

particularisms'.[28] This is not what is occurring in early-nineteenth-century Ireland since whiteboyism, was, for the most part, extremely localised — in no way did the usual activity of whiteboy bands necessitate any degree of solidarity beyond their immediate locality. Yet, they still display a form of collective identity. Thus it is necessary to analyse why this is so, what need did this expression of collective identity addressed. This is the main topic of the remaining half of this chapter.

Social subordination and collective efficacy

This section will put forward the hypothesis that the experience of subordination negatively impacts on people's appraisal of their, and their cohorts', capacities, and that part of the process of mobilisation involves the nurturing, both practically and symbolically, of a sense of collective agency.

The first part of the proposition is a plunge into darkness, into the obscurity of innermost psychological states, into emotions which, if they were articulated, were not done so within the fragmentary documentary record available to us. Consequently, we can never know, except in the unlikely event of the discovery of new sources. We can, however, look at the issue sideways, drawing on what we do know of other situations in other places at other times

In his 2006 journal article, *Fear, hatred and the hidden injuries of class in early modern England*, Andy Wood makes the case in regard to plebeian mentalities in early-modern England that:

---

[28] Laurence Cox and Alf Gunvald Nilsen, *We make our own history: Marxism and social movements in the twilight of neo-liberalism* (London, 2014), pp 77-9.

'The psychic consequences of labouring people buying into paternalist discourses – however knowingly, cynically or partially – may have been to have chronically impaired their individual and collective identities.'[29]

Wood's argument draws on Richard Sennett and Jonathan Cobb's *Hidden injuries of class* which he interprets as arguing that: 'the experience of social subordination leaves its mark upon the self-confidence, assertiveness and identity of the worker'.[30] However, to me, the Sennett and Cobb thesis seems far more specific than that and really only applicable to the United States during the 1960s and to societies sharing certain commonalities with that society. That is, stratified societies without strong working class counter-cultures and with value systems extolling individualism and equality of opportunity. The crippling of people's sense of self-worth results, according to Sennet: 'from a society in which unequal social strata exist, but in which the lines between the groups are permeable, permeable through the exercise of distinctive personal ability.'[31]

Nonetheless Wood is on to something. The effect of life at the wrong end of a class system upon perceptions of collective efficacy is not an easy issue to approach, most especially when considering circumstances in historic pre-capitalist societies. Nor has the question received a great deal of scholarly attention. But some studies do illuminate the issue in passing. Some insight is offered by Sulamith Heins Potter's and Jack M. Potter's anthropology of Zengbu, a village in Guangdong province in south China, during the later stages of the revolution and the first three decades or so of the People's Republic. A highly

---

[29] Andy Wood, 'Fear, Hatred and the Hidden Injuries of Class in Early Modern England' in *Journal of Social History*, xxxix (2006), pp 803-26; p. 817; see also Andy Wood, '"Poore men woll speke one daye" plebeian languages of deference and defiance in England, c.1520-1640' in T. Harris (ed.), *The politics of the excluded in England, 1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 2001), pp 67-98.
[30] *Ibid.* p. 809.
[31] Richard Sennet and Jonathan Cobb, *The hidden injuries of class* (Cambridge, 1972), p. 248.

tense situation existed in the village when it was on the cusp of land reform in 1951. At least two participants in local anti-landlord actions suffered consequent mental breakdowns from which they never recovered. The impact on their psyches occasioned, it seems, by fear of one-day suffering retribution from figures who were once possessed of both great local power and great capacity for cruelty. These were extreme examples of a more pervasive anxiety. We learn that:

> 'first the poor peasants were loath to speak out directly against the landlords, and it was only with difficulty that the cadres were able to convince them that they would not endanger themselves by speaking out, and that they would actually receive expropriated land from the wealthy.'[32]

Given the villagers previous life experiences this was not necessarily an unreasonable apprehension. The import of that fearful sentiment to the consideration of the impact of social subordination on feelings of efficacy is underlined by the fact that land reform in Zengbu was happening several years after the Red victory in the civil war and, consequently, with the support, and later participation, of the central Chinese state.

John Gaventa's study of Clear Fork Valley, an area in Central Appalachia in the southern United States, and Howard Newby's of the 'deferential worker' of East Anglian farms, both illustrate perfectly how resistance is not a default setting on a human machine. The particular circumstance of Clear Fork valley was an extreme example of mining company dominance, something which was unusually prevalent in southern Appalachia in comparision to mining regions in Ohio, Pennsylvania, Illinois, Indiana and Britain.[33] This

---

[32] *Ibid.* p. 42.
[33] John Gaventa, *Power and powerlessness: Quiescence and rebellion in an Appalachian Valley* (Chicago, 1982), pp 94-5.

company dominance was based on control of all employment, land, housing and civic institutions within the local area and the concomitant power to impose severe sanctions on any opposition. This, Gaventa argues, potentially provokes several different adaptations including 'internalization of the quiescent role' and 'a fading of the conception of action itself'. [34]

According to Newby, mid- and late-nineteenth century rural England saw the development of 'a distinctive rural working-class subculture', a sub-culture 'that contained elements of both conservative deference and radical resistance, but was probably most marked by fatalistic acceptance'.[35] Newby argues that:

> 'Any consideration of the agricultural worker's perceptions of his own subordination must being with a very simple point. Above all the system which has brought about his economic and social subordination is an awesome and apparently irrevocable fact. '[36]

To what extent can we extrapolate from these different times and places to inform a consideration of pre-Famine Leinster? The postulate that the experience of class, in an objective or structural sense, would have an impact on an appraisal of self or group capacities seems reasonable. To what extent this was a factor in the period and place this thesis is concerned with will likely remain unknown. It is possible though to advance some well-grounded speculations. Within recent living memory, in the 1790s and early 1800s, many areas in Leinster saw a great deal of state violence as well as extra-state counter-revolutionary violence. Parts of the counties Longford, Wexford, Wicklow, Carlow, Kildare

---

[34] *Ibid.* pp 92-3.
[35] Howard Newby, *The deferential worker: A study of farm workers in East Anglia* (London, 1979), p. 28
[36] *Ibid.* p. 369

and Meath experienced what can only be called massacres at this time.[37] Likely as not, this slaughter left a realistic appraisal of the state's overwhelming capacity for violence. Secondly, it is worth considering the vast disparities in access to material comforts and in possession of material culture. By no means all of the time, but certainly some of the time, pre-Famine subaltern insurgency involved people who lived in hovels challenging people who lived in neo-classical mansions, with large servant staffs, set amid a landscaped parks and marked off from the surrounding territories by high walls with both symbolic and practical functions. It is impossible to know how these disparities, and less stark ones, affected feelings of collective efficacy, but it seems reasonable to suppose they had some negative impact.

Part of the process of popular mobilisation is the instilling of what can be called a sense of agency, a feeling of efficacy, confidence or empowerment, which is partly an outcome, partly a precondition, which can grow and which can wither and which is linked to collective identity. Collective identity, in its turn, is in part a development out of social conflict and in part it feeds social conflict, and one way in which it can is through helping to create a sense of agency.

There are shades here of Frantz Fanon, theorist of the Third World national liberation struggles of the 1960s, of his analysis of colonial subjects' internalised sense of inferiority and of his sanguine prediction of the instilling of collective identity and confidence through insurrectionary violence:

> 'At the level of individuals, violence is a cleansing force. It frees the native from his
> inferiority complex and from his despair and inaction; it makes him fearless and

---

[37] For example, see the massacre of over 300 captured insurgents at Gibbet Rath in Co.Kildare on 29 May 1798 in Liam Chambers, *Rebellion in Kildare, 1790-1803* (Dublin, 1998), p. 83.

restores his self-respect. Even if the armed struggle has been symbolic and the

nation is demobilized through rapid movement of decolonization, the people have

time to see that the liberation has been the business of each and all and that the

leader has no special merit.'[38]

The inspiring of feelings of collective efficacy as a part of popular mobilisation has received

some scholarly attention. The issue occasionally features in works which could be loosely

placed under broad rubric of social movement studies, sometimes in studies of collective

action from within the social psychology sub-discipline and also in particular researches

within rhetoric studies.

Rhetoric studies, social movement studies and collective efficacy

Regarding rhetoric studies, this issue is foregrounded in examinations of the rhetoric of

movements which, interestingly, were later to be placed in the collective category of

"identity politics", specifically, the Black nationalism and second wave feminism associated

with the American New Left. Notable among these works are Richard B. Gregg's *The ego-

function of the rhetoric of protest* and Gregg's, A. Jackson McCormack's and Douglas J.

Pedersen's *The rhetoric of black power: A street-level interpretation*. The authors had been

involved in an educational program, one outside the academe, with discontented black

youth in the late 1960s and this formed the basis of their research. To Gregg, McCormack

and Pedersen, black power was about 'practical community effort' seeking to address a

range of grievances but also about 'black mystique'.[39] This mystique being:

---

[38] Frantz Fanon, *The wretched of the Earth* (New York, 1963), p. 94.
[39] Richard B. Gregg, A. Jackson McCormack, and Douglas J. Pedersen, 'The rhetoric of Black Power: A street level interpretation' in *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 55:2 (1969), pp 151-60; p. 156

'a faith in the transcendent virtue and power of black identification, and a reordering of the black man's perceptual world so that "black" is a positive value to be sought after rather than spurned.'[40]

This was made necessary by that fact that the 'black man's long historical subjugation in the role of second-class citizen has taken a heavy toll'.[41]

What Gregg calls 'ego-affirmation'[42] may seem particular to these identity movements, which, it could be argued, specifically defined the problem facing the movement being the society-wide negative image foisted on the mobilising groups (i.e. blacks in the U.S. and other ethnic minorities with similar histories of discrimination, women). However, late-nineteenth- and twentieth-century labour movements cultivated a working-class identity, image and pride not dissimilar to the efforts of Black Nationalism. Additionally, Gregg also encompasses New Left student protests in his analysis.

Stephen A. King builds on this approach, applying it to reggae music and Rastafarianism in the West Indies arguing that:

'reggae music serves to develop and maintain a healthy and positive self-image of 'blackness' while, at the same time, intensifying cohesion and 'groupness' within the movement'.[43]

The cultivation of a sense of collective efficacy and of heightened morale has not been a core concern of what can be broadly called social movement studies. It has received some

---

[40] *Ibid.* p. 152
[41] *Ibid.* p. 153
[42] Richard B. Gregg, 'The Ego-Function of the Rhetoric of Protest' in *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 4:2 (1971), p. 85
[43] Stephen A. King, 'Protest music as 'ego-enhancement': reggae music, the Rastafarian movement and the re-examination of race and identity in Jamaica' in Ian Peddie (ed.), *The resisting muse: popular music and social protest* (Aldershot, 2006), pp 105-18; p. 117.

attention though, Francis Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, for example, argued that the 'emergence of a protest movement' involves 'a new sense of efficacy; people who ordinarily consider themselves helpless come to believe that they have some capacity to alter their lot.'[44] There are three particularly relevant studies: firstly, those of Eric L. Hirsch on community groups and South Africa solidarity protests in the U.S. in the late 1970s and early 1980s; secondly, Rick Fantasia's partly autho-ethnographical *Cultures of solidarity*, which treats of shop-floor conflicts and the late twentieth-century American working class;[45] and thirdly, Daniela Issa's writing on the role of *mística* in the contemporary *Movimento dos Trabalhadores Rurais Sem-Terra* (Landless Rural Workers' Movement – MST) in Brazil.

Eric L. Hirsch, in his work on the South Austin Coalition Community Council, an organisation dealing with urban social problems in Chicago's west side circa 1979, found that crucial in generating commitment was 'the creation of feelings of collective political efficacy' through emphasising the benefits produced by the group's victories.[46] This, he argues, is particularly true of individuals transitioning from local block-level participation to a higher community-wide participation. A similar focus on collective empowerment features in Hirsch's research on Columbia University students campaigning for that institution to disinvest in companies doing business in Apartheid South Africa. In this case, he found that a move to more militant tactics attracted new layers of participants precisely because the new tactics were perceived as effective.[47]

---

[44] Francis Fox Piven and Richard A. Cloward, *Poor people's movements: Why they succeed, how they fail* (New York, 1979), pp 3–4.

[45] Rick Fantasia, *Cultures of solidarity: Consciousness, action, and contemporary American workers* (Berkeley, 1988).

[46] Eric L. Hirsch, 'The creation of political solidarity in social movement organizations' in *The Sociological Quarterly*, 27:3 (1986), pp 373–87; p. 384.

[47] Eric L. Hirsch, 'Sacrifice for the cause: Group processes, recruitment and commitment in a student social movement' in *American Sociological Review*, 55 (1990), pp 243–54.

Fantasia gives us a very intimate micro-level account of the dynamics involved in a wildcat walkout from the steel foundry he worked in circa 1975. In his particular section this involved an element of symbolic display on the part of those workers most committed to the action. The display consisted of 'statements of defiance and prominent spatial positioning in relation to the foreman' which served 'to create an appearance of solidarity that quickly became an actual manifestation of it'.[48] Thus 'a group of workers divided by their level of commitment and participation became more unified' as 'circumstances appeared to favor a successful action'.[49] Literally and figuratively, they stood up to the foreman, they argued with him with increasing intensity until joined by their colleagues in walking out and joining the rest of the plant in an unofficial strike. What the individuals most committed to the walkout were doing was representing themselves as powerful and as united with their rank-and-file colleagues while representing the authority of the foreman as diminished and isolated. There was an element of performance as the leading group and their barracking of the foreman was watched by the less committed majority. This process went on for ten to fifteen minutes and served to embolden the onlookers until all the section joined together and walked out. That this was in part theatre does not in any way reduce the seriousness of what was at stake – all participants could have lost their employment. The theatrical display had to inspire confidence that the wildcat would work, the local representative of management authority had to be symbolically undermined.

According to Issa, *mística* has a double meaning referring to both the 'representation through words, art, symbolism, and music of the struggles and reality' of Brazil's landless rural poor organised in the M.S.T. and 'the feeling of empowerment, love, and solidarity

---

[48] *Ibid.* p. 99.
[49] *Ibid.* p. 108.

that serves as a mobilizing force'.[50] There isn't a direct English translation of *mística*, which means both feelings of solidarity and empowerment as well as their expression and creation in art, ritual and symbolism. Issa's analysis of the M.S.T.'s activity highlights symbolic practice, identity, and the construction of a sense of popular agency. These are the elements bound up in the scrawled words Captain Rock.

Social psychology, collective effficacy and empowerment

Studies of collective action from within the social psychology field foreground the necessity for collective action participants to believe in their ability to make a difference. The concept is usually termed perceived self- or group-efficacy, or collective efficacy. [51] Another variation on theme is the concept of empowerment.[52] To Bandura, people's 'shared beliefs in their collective power to produce desired results' constitute a key element of collective agency.[53] This sense of efficacy influences people in terms of 'how much effort they put into their group endeavour, their staying power when collective efforts fail to produce quick results or meet forcible opposition'.[54] The concept of empowerment adds an affective dimension to the cognitive-based approach central to the concept of efficacy. Moreover, empowerment theorising sees collective action itself as contributing to a sense of empowerment. Empowerment is not only a precondition to collective action but can be an outcome. In the

---

[50] Daniela Issa, 'Praxis of empowerment: *Mística* and mobilization in Brazil's landless rural workers' movement', in *Latin American Perspectives*, vol 153 no 34: 2 (2007), pp 124–38; p. 125; see also John L. Hammond, '*Mística*, meaning and popular education in the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement' in *Interface: a journal for and about social movements*, 6:1 (2014), pp 372-91.

[51] Lauren E. Duncan, 'The psychology of collective action' in Kay Deaux and Mark Snyder (eds), *Oxford handbook of personality and social psychology* (New York, 2012), pp 781–803; Albert Bandura, 'Exercise of human agency through collective efficacy' in *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 9:3 (2000), pp 75–8; Viktor Gecas, 'The social psychology of self-efficacy' in *Annual Review of Sociology*, 15 (1989), pp 291–316; p. 310.

[52] John Drury and Steve Reicher, 'Explaining enduring empowerment: A comparative study of collective action and psychological outcomes' in *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 35 (2005), pp 35–58; Atalanti Evripidou and John Drury, 'This is the time of tension: collective action and subjective power in the Greek anti-austerity movement' in *Contention: The Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Protest*, 1, (2013), pp 31-51.

[53] Bandura, 'Exercise of human agency through collective efficacy', p. 75.

[54] *Ibid.* p. 76

field of social movement studies, the work of Colin Barker on the strike wave in Poland in 1980 links the affective and the cognitive together within a conceptualisation of empowerment as a process which is partly pre-condition and partly outcome.[55]

Again connecting collective identity with a sense of efficacy or empowerment, social psychology experiments conducted by Van Zomeren et al. with Dutch students support the proposition that: 'perceiving other group members as willing to take collective action should increase group members sense of group efficacy and promote collective action'.[56]

Specifically, subjects were asked to take part in a bogus survey on their reactions to an apparent proposed increase in the portion of time they would have to spend as lab test subjects as part of their course. The manipulated variable was the provision of information on the willingness of other students to take action over this issue. One sub-section of survey respondents given data showing a propensity for collective action on the part of 80% of their fellow survey respondents went on to demonstrate greater favour for collective action than another sub-section who were led to believe that only 40% of fellow subjects were willing to take action.

Collective identity is in part the sense that other people are standing alongside you in the same fight. The fact that this is shown as an important element of processes of mobilisation in relatively trivial cases like that of the contemporary Dutch students only serves to underline the importance of collective identity in situations where participants face far graver potential consequences.

---

[55] Colin Barker, 'Crises and turning points in revolutionary development: emotion, organization and strategy in Solidarnosc, 1980-81' in *Interface: a journal for and about social movements*, 2:1 (2010), pp 79 – 117.

[56] Martijn van Zomeren, Russell Spears, Agneta H. Fischer and Colin Wayne Leach, 'Put your money where your mouth is! Explaining collective action through group-based anger and group efficacy' in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87:5 (2004), pp 649–664; p. 651.

Conclusion

In this chapter I have tried to blend together debates on class from within social history, discussions on collective identity from social movement studies, and the concept of collective efficacy advanced from with social psychology. The form of identity is not a socially structurally given, but what is such a given is the existence of class conflict and hence the potential for class identities. Class identities are not necessarily formed around a concept of class in the sense of the terminology of nineteenth-century industrial capitalism.

We can then identify several pertinent meanings given to the term 'class'; class as a relationship of exploitation and conflict, class as an identity using a language of class, and class as an identity developed out of class conflict but not using that particular language. Even quite localised and particular class conflicts evince a need for a form of identity. Before that is the obvious need arising from the development of particular struggles to a point of generalising, which is that generalisation requires a process of symbolic unification as addressed by Pratt (i.e. uniting people from different occupational groups or from different localities).

The earlier need for identity revolves around class in the more objective or structural sense of class relationships which have, as a corollary, negative impacts on the sense of collective efficacy. That is to say, life at the wrong end of those relationships will, in myriad ways, lead to an impaired sense of collective efficacy, in terms both cognitively and affectively. Moreover, disparities in the allocation of resources allows agentic strategies which undermine collective efficacy in subordinates, e.g. displays of power and status, ritual humiliation, violence, paternalism and simply the greater capacity to inflict defeat in any contestation.

Collective identity is a sort of myth which inspires a greater sense of collective efficacy. People have to choose how they respond to conditions imposed on them. In doing so they do not choose freely — there will always be a host of structural constraints they have to adapt to. What I have tried to show in this chapter is that collective identity is a part of choosing, in that it can be a resource to facilitate collective action and in turn is created through collective action. Identity expresses possibility. Possibility contained in part, as we saw in the previous chapter, through stories of what has been done elsewhere by "people like us". The cultural resources drawn on to craft collective identity may not be the more familiar ones of a language of class, or of country, or of creed.

Conclusion

At the heart of this study have been so-called threatening notices. These documents are invaluable as it is simply so rare to have a subaltern record. The past is only accessibly through the records the past leaves us, and, for the most part, that means written records, not withstanding what can be done with archaeological evidence in conjunction with written records. Literacy, for almost all of human history, has been an elite technique. A technique often employed in ways directly related to class position — to impress one's rivals, to account for one's trade, to police one's rebellious subjects. Unescapably therefore recorded history means history recorded by elites and this is the case at least until the modern period. We can know very little if anything of the perspective of the tillers of medieval fields, of the servants who staffed the great-houses or of the foot soldiers of Tours or Agincourt. In the Irish context the so-called threatening letters represent the first great departure from this historical silence, an entry-point into a hitherto hidden history, occasioned by the beginnings of mass literacy. The contexts within which the notices were created are also in large part a hidden history. Whiteboyism has never really fitted into the grand narrative of Irish history, in either its academic or popular forms. It has certainly not received a quantity of scholarly attention commensurate with its significance.

The first task of this thesis is to uncover and in the methodology chapter I discuss how I went about uncovering influenced by grounded theory method. In order to be able to treat the notices as representative of more than just their immediate creators I sought out the most generic aspects. Through a process of inductive coding coupled with contextualisation of emergent codes I identified two main themes which I go on to concentrate on in the later

parts of the thesis. I have described these themes as 'coercive regulation' and as 'collective identity'. The main body of the thesis – parts II and III - were organised around these themes.

'Coercive regulation' groups together the forty-seven notices which make reference to captain, which is conceived as an allusion to customary mechanisms of social control, along with the host of different ways in which the notices mirror representations of ruling class authority. There include references to an alternative law, to oaths, the adoption of status titles and the extolling of exemplary punishment. The first chapter in this section sought to explore a customary mode of regulation by looking at practices usually studied under the rubric of folklore. Owing to the paucity of evidence for the earlier period it is necessary to read backwards from the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth- centuries to get a handle on this. Scholarship on other instances in other countries suggests a strong link between folkloric ritual punishment and popular protest. It is likely the same link existed in the Irish case. The existence of this strand within the theme of coercive regulation, one more indigenous to the peasantry, and which I call the discursive genre of *charivari*, underlines the lack of a necessity to adopt ruling-class cultural forms (that is the lack of a necessity born of an absence of alternate modes of expression).

I addressed the appropriation of those ruling-class cultural forms under the heading of the discursive genre of sovereignty. Firstly, it was established that conceiving of the alternative subaltern law as a product of an autonomous plebeian culture is not an apposite approach. Not only was there popular participation in the legal system but much of this appropriation was of symbolic displays of power meant to overawe and establish their holder's authority and all too likely to have been very familiar to the general populace of early nineteenth

century society, see, for example, the role of the ritual of public executions. Nor is an approach based on a particular reading of the Gramscian concept of hegemony apposite. Hegemony is a historically specific concept useful for understanding capitalist societies not feudal societies, still less societies in a transition from feudal to capitalist relations, because in these contexts social relations are nakedly coercive. Rather this was a matter of a struggle over signs related to the sort of iconoclasm seen in Indian peasant revolts and in the Great French Revolution. This was an attempt to annex the symbols of authority which is only explicable in terms of the fact there was what Vološinov calls 'a sign community'.[1] But that common culture does not make for a lack of contention but rather a struggle over meanings given to, and possession of, common modes of expression.

In terms of spatial rather than temporal expansion of the research project the theme of law within subaltern contention as discussed in chapters six and seven has a very broad and at times multi-variant range of occurrence. The invocation of the law and employment of legalistic rituals occurring in different forms in subaltern contention across the early-modern Atlantic being found in at least Ireland, Britain, France and the Caribbean.[2] But as we have seen what is meant by 'the law' takes radically different forms. There is surely scope for comparative research into this feature of early-modern social conflict.

Part III, on collective identity, advances an understanding of the common iconography used in the notices, recurrent pseudonyms which often become the eponym of particular movements, as a form of collective identity. The discussion around the theme of collective identity opens up avenues for potential further research. The de-linking of class identities

---

[1] Vološinov, *Marxism and the philosophy of language*, p. 23.
[2] Yves-Marie Bercé, *Revolt and revolution in early modern Europe: An essay on the history of political violence* (Manchester, 1987), p. 117; Marcus Rediker, *Villains of all nations: Atlantic pirates in the golden age* (London, 2004), p. 86, pp 92-3.

from a language of class, class identities conceived as identities developed within class conflict, foregrounds the possibility of investigating the development of such identities free from the prior assumption that they would be likely to take a particular form (i.e. that they would be expressed in a language of class). The proposition linking collective identity with collective efficacy and with social subordination is also a potential area for further research. This is especially significant in terms of re-casting the understanding of the role of collective identity away from just focusing on the generalisation of a movement and towards a focus on the role of identity prior to such generalisation; that is to say prior to the actual building of an extra-local unity . That role comprises of bolstering a sense of collective efficacy, a sense which is, as has been shown by researches in social psychology, essential to collective action. Moreover, a focus on the forms of collective identity which have a prominence in the notices shows the importance of the notices as a source in terms of understanding early nineteenth-century Ireland — they provide a contrast with traditional interpretations which seem to exaggerate the extent of national and confessional identities. An avenue for future research with regard to collective identities in the particular early-nineteenth-century Irish context might be to compare the land and labour related notices examined for this study with tithe-related notices (where, one would presume, nation and sect might appear with greater prominence).

Another way of thinking about what this thesis has done and can contribute to is to go back to the parameters established in the introduction chapters. In the first place in the section on ontology I discuss the structural conditioning of social interaction but also the shaping of the new structural configuration through social interaction; social interaction including most obviously class struggle. Continuing in this vein in chapter one, two and three I advanced a

set of interlinked propositions which are: firstly, that land occupancy conflicts were at the heart of whiteboyism, most particularly peasant resistance to clearance, a form of primitive accumulation; secondly that this resistance inhibited landlord programs of 'improvement' that is to say clearing land and establishing larger farm-units; and thirdly that this inhibition restricted the growth of the capitalist mode of production. The continuation of the feudal mode of production into the latter portion of the nineteenth-century is then in part determined by the outcome of class struggles.

The socio-economic structure of the early-nineteenth-century midlands is an unstable balance between opposing class forces whereby a situation arises where the maximum rent is extorted from the peasantry, leaving them with a bare subsistence, but on the other hand their possession of the land is maintained. The project of agricultural 'improvement', of larger technologically advanced farms ultimately returning a higher relative rent, is, if not quite defeated then certainly stalled. Some of the processes involved in stalling that project are the processes of representation and identity construction addressed in this thesis. This was a by no means exhaustive examination of early-nineteenth-century whiteboyism but as pointed out in the introduction it is particularly under-researched as a cultural phenomenon or in terms of the subjectivities of the participants.

The above is in line with the Cox and Nilsen understanding of social movements as the developing, through conflictual dialogic processes, agencies of social classes, and this approach crucially involves both 'social movements from below' and 'social movements from above' (i.e. the developed collective agency of dominant groups). The emergent conflict (rather than resultant as the development of class and the development of a movement are present at any moment where we might "freeze" the process) shapes social

structure.[3] In part this conception of social movements from below and from above is not unlike that of class projects as put forward by Peillon.[4]

Moving forward from this would mean looking at how social movements altered the social structure, and that 'how' includes modes of organising and world-views, and how movements were constrained by social structure and defeated by structural preconditions, but also how different movements, or different collective agencies, interrelated. Most obviously in these terms we can consider the late-nineteenth- and early-twentieth-century agrarian movements principally those of the Land War, Plan of Campaign and Ranch War, as pivotal to the downfall of the feudal mode of production and its replacement with the petty commodity mode of production. More than that in view of the concept of the social movement from above we can conceive of improvement itself as a social movement embracing an amorphous collection of agriculturalists, farmers, landlords and government ministers all of whom were at times divided against each other. This movement to transform the nature of agricultural production is, as discussed above, constrained by whiteboyism and ultimately undone by the changing terms of colonial trade with Britain.

Finally, we can consider a social movement from below which likewise does not result in the sort of social transformation associated with the Land War and its successors. The movement of agricultural workers and workers in agricultural processing in the 1917 to 1923 period is remarkable both for its relative militancy and for its fleetingness. It notably

---

[3] Laurence Cox and Alf Gunvald Nilsen, ''The Bourgeoisie, Historically, Has Played a Most Revolutionary Part': Understanding social movements from above' in *Proceedings of the eleventh international conference on alternative futures and popular protest*, (2006), online at eprints.nuim.ie/458/, accessed 07/09/14; Alf Gunvald Nilsen and Laurence Cox, '"At the heart of society burns the fire of social movements": What would a Marxist theory of social movements look like?' in *Proceedings of the tenth international conference on alternative futures and popular protest*, (2005), online at academia.edu/download/30859920/AFPP_X_redux.pdf, accessed 07/09/14; Cox and Nilsen, *We make our own history* (London, 2014).
[4] Michel Peillon, *Contemporary Irish society: An introduction* (Dublin, 1982), pp 53-9, pp 76-7.

does not appear to have created significant change. This begs explanation as the impact of the labour movement in similar peripheral and largely rural parts of Europe was at this time much greater.

This thesis can become one part of an analysis of how collective agencies interact with other collective agencies and with the structural preconditions which both determine them and are re-shaped by them through class struggle and of the social movements which are developed out of that struggle. That analysis can encompass rural Ireland over a long nineteenth-century meant as a case which can produce insights applicable to other times and places. That *how* must of necessity include the sort of cultural aspects of social movements foregrounded in this thesis.

Bibliography

Primary sources

Manuscript Sources:

National Archives of Ireland

Chief Secretary Office Registered Papers 1826 – 1833

OPW 10 Records of the Grand Canal Company

Charles Bailey's summary report on the valuation of the Midleton estates, 6 Apr. 1840

Trinity College Dublin Manuscripts and Archives Research Library

Hartpole Bowen Papers

National Library of Ireland

Prior-Wandesforde Papers

Stacpoole Kenny papers

Inchiquin papers

Lismore papers

National Folklore Commission Archive

Main Manuscript Collection

Published Primary Sources:

Newspapers:

Carlow Morning Post

Carlow Standard

Carlow Sentinel

Kilkenny Journal

Kilkenny Independent

Kilkenny Moderator

Leinster Express

Leinster Journal

Westmeath Journal

Individual Newspaper Issues:

Irish Press, 21 Oct. 1933.

Anglo-Celt, 28 Oct. 1933.

Official Publications:

PP 1825 (200) Minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committee of the House of Lords, appointed to examine into the nature and extent of the disturbances which have prevailed in those districts of Ireland which are now subject to the provisions of the Insurrection Act, and to report to the House.

PP 1831-32 (271) Minutes of evidence taken before the Select Committee of the House of Lords appointed to inquire into the collection and payment of tithes in Ireland, and the state of the laws relating thereto, and to report their observations thereon to the House; and who had leave also to report from time to time to the House.

PP 1831-32 (177) Report from the Select Committee on Tithes in Ireland.

PP 1831-32 (677) Report from the Select Committee on the State of Ireland; with the minutes of evidence, appendix and index.

PP 1833 (80) Offences, Ireland. A return of the number of offences against the law, which have been committed in Ireland, during the years 1831 and 1832, so far as returns of such offences have been made to the Irish government; specifying the general nature of the offences, and the counties or places in which they have occurred.

PP 1833 (634) Population, Ireland. Abstract of answers and returns under the Population Acts, 55 Geo. III. Chap. 120. 3 Geo. IV. Chap. 5. 2 Geo. IV. Chap. 30. 1 Will. IV. Chap. 19. Enumeration 1831.

PP 1834 (459) Papers relating to the state of Ireland.

PP 1845 (657) Evidence taken before Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the state of the law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland. Part III.

PP 1845 (672) (673) Appendix to minutes of evidence taken before Her Majesty's Commissioners of Inquiry into the state of the law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland. Part IV.

1876 (C.1492) Land owners in Ireland. Return of owners of land of one acre and upwards, in the several counties, counties of cities, and counties of towns in Ireland, showing the names

of such owners arranged alphabetically in each county; their addresses--as far as could be ascertained--the extent in statute acres, and the valuation in each case; together with the number of owners in each county of less than one statute acre in extent; and the total area and valuation of such properties; and the grand total of area and valuation for all owners of property in each county, county of a city, or county of a town. To which is added a summary for each province and for all Ireland.

Digest of evidence taken before her majesty's commissioners of inquiry into the state of the law and practice in respect to the occupation of land in Ireland: Part I (Dublin, 1847).

Contemporary Printed Works:

Barrington, Sir Jonah, *Personal sketches of his own times* (London, 1869).

The journals of Sir John Benn-Walsh relating to the management of his Irish estates, 1823 – 64, ed. James S. Donnelly Jr. (Cork, n.d.).

Carbery Mary, *The farm by Lough Gur: The story of Mary Fogarty* (Dublin, 2010).

Carleton, William, *The tithe-proctor: The works of William Carleton, volume two* (New York, 1881).

Carleton, William, *The autobiography of William Carleton* (London, 1968).

Carleton, William, *The black prophet: A tale of Irish famine* (Shannon. 1972).

de Cervantes Saavedra, Miguel, *The ingenious Hidalgo Don Quixote de la Mancha* (London, 2000).

Coote, Sir Charles, *General view of the agriculture and manufactures of the Queen's county: with observations on the means of their improvement , drawn up in the year 1801: for the consideration, and under the direction of the Dublin Society* (Dublin, 1801).

Cornewall Lewis, George, *On local disturbances in Ireland, and the Irish church question* (London, 1836).

Cosgrave, J., *The lives and actions of the most notorious Irish highwaymen, tories and rapparees ... to which is added The Goldfinder, or The history of Manus Maconiel* (Dublin, n.d.)

Croker, T. Crofton, *Researches in the South of Ireland*, ed. Kevin Danaher (Shannon, 1969).

Dunton, John, *Teague land: or a merry ramble to the wild Irish (1698)*, ed. Andrew Carpenter (Dublin 2001)

Farnham, John Maxwell Barry, *A statement of the management of the Farnham estates* (Dublin, 1830)

Voice of rebellion Carlow 1798: The autobiography of William Farrell, ed. Roger McHugh (Dublin, 1998).

Finlay, John, *A treatise on the law of landlord and tenant in Ireland* (Dublin, 1835).

Life & Adventures of James Freney: Written by himself, ed. Frank McEvoy (Kilkenny, 1998).

Griffith, Richard Jr., *Geological and mining report on the Leinster coal district* (Dublin, 1814).

Inglis, Henry David, *A journey throughout Ireland during the spring, summer and autumn of 1834*, Michael Hurst (ed.), Contemporary observations of Ireland from Grattan to Griffth Volume 2 (Bristol, 2000).

Kickham, Charles J., *Knocknagow or the homes of Tipperary* (Dublin, 1978).

Merriman, Brian, *The midnight court: A new translation of 'Cúirt an mheán oíche'*, ed. Ciaran Carson (Oldcastle, 2005).

de Moleyns, Thomas, *The landowner's and agent's practical guide* (Dublin, 1860).

Mongan, James, *A report of trials before the right hon. The Lord Chief Justice and the Hon. Baron Sir W.M. C. Smith, Bart. At the Special Commission, at Maryborough, commencing on the 23rd May, and ending on the 6th June* (Dublin, 1832).

Mooney, James, *The holiday customs of Ireland* (Philadelphia, 1889).

Moore, Thomas, *Memoirs of Captain Rock : the celebrated Irish chieftain with some account of his ancestors written by himself* (Dublin, 2008).

Nun, R. and Walsh J., *The powers and duties of the Irish justice of the peace* (Dublin, 1844).

O'Connor, Roger, *Letters to his majesty, King George the fourth, by Captain Rock* (London, 1828).

O'Sullivan, Rev. Mortimer, *Captain Rock detected: by a Munster farmer* (Dublin/Edinburgh, 1824).

The Petrie collection of the ancient music of Ireland, ed. David Copper (Cork, 2002).

Rabelais, François, *The histories of Gargantua and Pantagruel* (Harmonsworth, 1955).

Shaw Mason, William (ed.), *A statistical account or parochial survey of Ireland*, *Volume II* (Dublin, 1816).

Smythe, Hamilton, *The law of landlord and tenant in Ireland* (Dublin, 1841).

Sommerville, Alexander, *Letters from Ireland during the Famine of 1847*, ed. D.K.M. Snell (Dublin, 1994).

Swift, Jonathan, *Selected poems* (Manchester, 1990).

Tighe, William, *Statistical observations relative to the county of Kilkenny* (Dublin, 1802).

Tonna, Charlotte Elizabeth, *Irish recollections*, ed. Patrick Maume (Dublin, 2004).

Alexis de Tocqueville's journey in Ireland July-August 1835, ed. Emmet Larkin (Dublin, 1990).

Trench, William Steuart, *Realities of Irish life* (London, 1869)

Cinnlae Amhlaoibh Uí Shúileabháin, ed. Michael McGrath (4 vols, Irish Texts Society, xxx-xxxiii, London, 1936-7).

Wilde, W. R., *Irish popular superstitions* (Shannon, 1972).

Literature on nineteenth-century Ireland

Theses:

Breathnach, Colm, 'An historical geography of social class in early nineteenth-century Dun Laoghaire' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Dublin Trinity College, 2005).

Bric, Maurice J., 'Captain Right: with particular reference to his activities in Co. Cork' (M.A. thesis, University College Cork, 1977).

Canavan, A., 'The Hearts of Steel: agrarian protest in Ulster, 1769-1773' (M.A. thesis, Queen's University Belfast, 1982).

Crossman, Virginia, 'The politics of security: A study of the official reaction to rural unrest in Ireland 1821-41' (D.Phil., Brasenose College University of Oxford, 1989).

Gibbons, S.R., 'Rockites and Whitefeet Irish peasant secret societies, 1800 – 1845' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Southampton, 1982).

Johnston, John Nicholas, 'The armed forces and the suppression of agrarian disorder during the Wellesley administration, 1807-09' (M.A. thesis, University College Dublin, 1993).

MacMahon, Michael, 'Ribbonism in Co. Clare 1815-1831' (M.A. thesis, University of Limerick, 2002).

McCabe, Desmond, 'Law, conflict and social order in County Mayo 1820-1845' (Ph.D. Thesis, University College Dublin, 1991).

Moulden, John Pointon, 'The printed ballad in Ireland: a guide to the popular printing of songs in Ireland, 1760 – 1920, in four volumes: Volume one' (Ph.D. thesis, National University of Ireland – Galway, 2006).

Murphy, Mary B., 'John Trant of Dovea, county Tipperary : an improving landlord 1838 – 87' (M.A. thesis, University of Limerick, 2004).

O'Brien, M.G. 'The Lalors of Tenakill 1767 – 1893' (M.A. thesis, St. Patrick's College Maynooth, 1987).

O'Neill, James Warner, 'Popular culture and peasant rebellion in pre-famine Ireland' (Ph.D. thesis, University of Minnesota, 1984).

Shankleman, Jill, 'Agricultural change and rural conflict in Co. Tipperary, 1800 to 1845' (Ph.D. thesis, Essex University, 1978/79).

Whooley, Finbarr, 'The Rockite movement in North Cork 1820 – 1825' (M.A. thesis, University College Cork, 1986).

Publications:

Aalen, F. H. A., 'The Irish Landscape: synthesis of habitat and history' in F. H. A. Aalen, Kevin Whelan, Matthew Stout (eds), *Atlas of the Irish rural landscape* (Cork 2011), pp 4-30.

Adams, J. R. R., *The printed word and the common man: popular culture in Ulster 1700 – 1900* (Belfast, 1987).

Alter, Peter, 'Symbols of Irish Nationalism' in *Studia Hibernica*, 14 (1974), pp 104-23.

Andrews, J.H., 'The struggle for Ireland's public commons' in Patrick Ó Flanagan, Paul Ferguson and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Rural Ireland 1600 – 1900: Modernisation and change* (Cork, 1987), pp 1-23.

Barry, Colm, 'The police and protest in Dublin: 1786 – 1840' in John McEldowney and Paul O'Higgins (eds), *The common law tradition: Essays in Irish legal history* (Dublin, 1990), pp 157-84.

Beames, M.R., 'Rural conflict in Pre-Famine Ireland: Peasant assassinations in Tipperary 1837-1847' in *Past and Present*, 81 (1978), pp 75-91.

Beames, M. R., 'The Ribbon societies: Lower-class nationalism in pre-famine Ireland' in *Past and Present*, 97 (1982), pp 128-43.

Beames, Michael, *Peasants and power: The whiteboy movements and their control in pre-famine Ireland* (Brighton, 1983).

Beiner, Guy, *Remembering the year of the French: Irish folk history and social memory* (Wisconsin, 2007).

Bell, Christine, 'Alternative justice in Ireland' in Norma Dawson and Desmond Greer (eds), *One hundred and fifty years of Irish law* (Belfast, 1996), pp 145-67.

Bell, Jonathan and Mervyn Watson, *A history of Irish farming, 1750 – 1950* (Dublin 2008).

Bell, Jonathan and Mervyn Watson, *Rooted in the soil: A history of cottage gardens and allotments in Ireland since 1750* (Dublin, 2012).

Blackstock, Allan, 'Tommy Downshire's Boys: Popular protest, social change and political Manipulation in Mid-Ulster 1829-1847' in *Past and Present*, 196 (2007), pp 125-72.

Bolger, Garrett, 'More on the Coolnogue eviction' in *Carloviana,* 44 (1996), pp 60-2.

Bonsall P., *The Irish RMs: the resident magistrates in the British administration in Ireland*

(Dublin, 1977).

Boyce, D. George, *Nineteenth-century Ireland: the search for stability* (Dublin, 1991).

Bradley, Dan, *Farm labourers: Irish struggle 1900 – 1976* (Belfast, 1988).

Breathnach, Colm, 'Working-class resistance in pre-Famine County Dublin: the Dalkey quarry strikes of the 1820s' in *Saothar*, 30 (2005), pp 9-19.

Brennan, Brian, *Máire Bhuí Ní Laoire: A poet of her people* (Cork, 2000).

Bric, Maurice J., 'The Whiteboy movement in Tipperary 1760 – 80' in William Nolan and Thomas G. McGrath (eds), *Tipperary: History and society, interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin, 1985), pp 148–84.

Broeker, Galen, *Rural disorder and police reform in Ireland, 1812-36* (London, 1970).

Brynn, Edward, *Crown and castle: British rule in Ireland, 1800-1830* (Dublin, 1978).

Buckley, Ciaran and Ward, Chris, *Strong farmer: The memoirs of Joe Ward* (Dublin, 2007).

Burke, Helen, *The people and the Poor Law in nineteenth-century Ireland* (West Sussex, 1987).

Burke, Mary, 'Society and settlement on the Drogheda estate in County Kildare, 1750-1840' in William Nolan and Thomas McGrath (eds), *Kildare: History and society, interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin, 2006), pp 349-85.

Butler, Richard, 'Cork's court houses, the landed elite and the Rockite rebellion: architectural responses to agrarian violence, 1820-27' in Kyle Hughes and Don MacRaild (eds), *Crime, violence and the Irish in the nineteenth-century* (Liverpool, forthcoming – pre-publication draft).

Callan, Charles, *Painters in Union: The Irish National Painters' & Decorators' Trade Union and its forerunners* (Dublin, 2008).

Campbell, Fergus, *Land and revolution: Nationalist politics in the West of Ireland 1891 – 1921* (Oxford, 2008).

Carroll, Michael P., 'Popular Catholicism in pre-famine Ireland' in *Journal for the scientific study of religion*, 34:3 (1995), pp 354-65.

Cashman, Ray, 'The heroic outlaw in Irish folklore and popular literature', in *Folklore*, 111 (2000), pp 191 – 215.

Chadbourne, Kate, 'Rough music and folkloric elements in the Whiteboy movements', in *Proceedings of the Harvard Celtic Colloquium*, 16/17 (1996/97), pp 176-94.

Chambers, Liam, *Rebellion in Kildare, 1790-1803* (Dublin, 1998).

Clare, Liam, *Enclosing the commons: Dalkey, the Sugar Loaves and Bray, 1820 – 1870* (Dublin, 2004).

Clark, Frank, 'Everyday life in Ireland in the 1830s' in *Carloviana*, 48 (2000), pp 57-68.

Clark, Samuel, and James S. Donnelly, Jr. (eds), *Irish peasants: violence and political unrest, 1780-1914* (Madison, 1983).

Clohosey, T.J., 'Carrickshock' in *Old Kilkenny Review*, 5 (1952), pp 10-5.

Coakley, Maurice, *Ireland in the world order: A history of uneven development* (London, 2012).

Connell, K. H. , *Irish peasant society: four historical essays* (Oxford, 1968).

Connell, Peter, *The land and people of County Meath 1750 – 1850* (Dublin, 2004).

Connolly, James, *Labour in Irish history* (Dublin, 1983).

Connolly, Sean J., 'The 'Blessed Turf': cholera and popular panic in Ireland: June 1832' in *Irish Historical Studies,* 23:91 (1983), pp 214-32.

Connolly, S. J., 'The Houghers: Agrarian Protest in Early Eighteenth-Century Connacht' in C.H.E. Philpin (ed.), *Nationalism and popular protest in Ireland* (Cambridge, 1987), pp 139 – 62.

Connolly, S.J. 'Albion's fatal twigs: Justice and law in the eighteenth century' in Rosalind Mitchison and Peter Roebuck (eds.) *Economy and society in Scotland and Ireland 1500 – 1939* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp 117 – 25.

Connolly, Sean J., *Religion, law and power: the making of Protestant Ireland* (Oxford, 1992).

Connolly, Sean, 'Approaches to the history of Irish popular culture' in *Bullán: An Irish studies journal*, 2:2 (1996), pp 83 -100.

Connolly, Sean J., 'Jacobites, Whiteboys and republicans: varieties of disaffection in eighteenth-century Ireland' in *Eighteenth-century Ireland: Iris an dá chultúr*, 18 (2003), pp 63-79.

Connolly, Sean J., *Priests and people in pre-famine Ireland, 1780-1845* (Dublin, 2010).

Conry, M. J., 'The soils of County Carlow' in *Irish Geography*, 5: 3 (1966), pp 204-13.

Corish, Patrick J., *The Catholic community in the seventh and eighteenth centuries* (Dublin, 1981).

Corkery, Daniel, *The hidden Ireland: a study of Gaelic Munster* (Dublin, 1925).

Cowman, Des, 'Combination, conflict, and control: colliers and quarrymen in Tipperary, 1825-45' in *Saothar*, 26 (2001), pp 27-34.

Cullen, L. M., *An economic history of Ireland since 1660* (London, 1972).

Cullen, L. M., *The emergence of modern Ireland, 1600-1900* (London, 1981).

Cullen, L. M. (ed), *The formation of the Irish economy* (Cork, 1969).

Cullen, Patricia, 'The Woollengrange petition to Parliament in 1832' in *In the Shadow of the Steeple*, 9 (2009), pp 16-33.

Cunningham, John, *'A town tormented by the sea': Galway, 1790 – 1914* (Dublin, 2004).

Cunningham, John, 'Popular protest and a "moral economy" in provincial Ireland in the early nineteenth century' in Francis Devine, Fintan Lane and Niamh Puirséil (eds), *Essays in Irish labour history: A festschrift for Elizabeth and John W. Boyle* (Dublin, 2008), pp 27-48.

Cunningham, J, '"Compelled to their bad acts by hunger": three Irish urban crowds, 1817-45,' *Éire-Ireland*, 45:1-2 (2010), pp 128-51.

Cunningham, John, 'Recovering the cargo of the Julia: salvage, law, and the killing of "wreckers" in Connemara, 1873', William Sheehan and Maura Cronin (eds), *Riotous assemblies: Rebels, riots and revolts in Ireland* (Cork, 2011), pp 127-52.

Cunningham, John, ''A Class Quite Distinct': The Western Herds and their Defence of their Working Conditions' in Carla King and Conor McNamara (eds), *The West of Ireland: New perspectives on the nineteenth century* (Dublin, 2011), pp 137 – 60.

Curtin, Nancy J., *The United Irishmen: Popular politics in Ulster and Dublin, 1791-1798* (New York, 1994).

Cronin, Denis A., *Who killed the Franks family? : Agrarian violence in pre-Famine Cork* (Dublin, 2009).

Cronin, Maura, *Country, class or craft: the politicisation of the skilled artisan in nineteenth-century Cork* (Cork, 1994).

Cronin, Maura, 'Popular Memory and Identity: Street Ballads in North Munster in the Nineteenth Century' in L. Irwin (ed.), *Explorations centenary essays* (Limerick, 1998), pp 125-45.

Cronin, Maura, *The death of Fr John Walsh at Kilgraney: community tensions in pre-famine Carlow* (Dublin, 2010).

Cronin, Maura, *Agrarian protest in Ireland, 1750-1960* (Dublin, 2012).

Crossman, Virginia, *Local government in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Belfast, 1994).

Crossman, Virginia, *Politics, law and order in nineteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 1996).

Crotty, Raymond D., *Irish agricultural production: its volume and structure* (Cork, 1966).

Danaher, Kevin, *In Ireland long ago* (Dublin, 1962).

Danaher, Kevin, *A year in Ireland* (Cork, 1972).

D'Arcy, F. A., 'The Murder of Thomas Hanlon', in *Dublin Historical Record*, 24:4 (1971), pp 89 – 100.

D'Arcy, Fergus A. 'The Irish trade union movement in the nineteenth century' in Donal Nevin (ed.), *Trade union century* (Cork, 1994), pp 9 – 18.

Delany, Ruth, *The Grand Canal of Ireland* (Dublin, 1995).

Devine, Tom M., 'Unrest and Stability in Rural Ireland and Scotland, 1760-1840' in Rosalind Mitchison and Peter Roebuck (eds), *Economy and society in Scotland and Ireland, 1500-1939* (Edinburgh, 1988), pp 126-39.

Dickson, Charles, *The Wexford rising in 1798: its causes and its course* (London, 1997).

Dickson, David, *New foundations: Ireland, 1660-1800* (Dublin, 1987).

Dickson, David (ed.), *The gorgeous mask: Dublin 1700 – 1850* (Dublin, 1987).

Dickson, David, *Arctic Ireland: the extraordinary story of the great frost and the forgotten famine of 1740-41* (Belfast, 1997).

Dickson, David, *Old world colony: Cork and South Munster 1630-1830* (Cork, 2005).

Dickson, David, Dáire Keogh, and Kevin Whelan (eds), *The United Irishmen: radicalism, republicanism and revolution* (Dublin, 1992)

Dooley, Terence, *The big houses and landed estates of Ireland: A research guide* (Dublin 2007).

Dooley, Terence, *The murders at Wildgoose lodge: Agrarian crime and punishment in pre-Famine Ireland* (Dublin, 2007).

Donnelly, James S. Jr., *The land and the people of nineteenth century Cork* (London, 1975).

Donnelly, James S. Jr., 'The Rightboy Movement 1785 – 8' in *Studia Hibernica*, 17 – 18, (1977 – 78), pp 120 – 202.

Donnelly, James S. Jr. 'The Whiteboy movement, 1761 – 5' in *Irish Historical Studies*, XXI:81, (1977-8), pp 20-54.

Donnelly, James S. Jr., 'Hearts of Oak, Hearts of Steel' in *Studia Hibernica*, 21 (1981), pp 7 – 73

Donnelly, J. S., 'Irish agrarian rebellion: the Whiteboys of 1769-76' in *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy. Section C: Archaeology, Celtic Studies, History, Linguistics, Literature*, 83C (1983), pp 293-331.

Donnelly, James S. Jr., 'Pastorini and Captain Rock: Millenarianism and Sectarianism in the Rockite Movement of 1821-4' in Samuel Clark and James S. Donnelly, Jr. (eds), *Irish peasants : violence and political unrest, 1780-1914* (Dublin, 1983), pp 102-39.

Donnelly, James S. Jr., 'The social composition of agrarian rebellions in early nineteenth-century Ireland: the case of the Carders and Caravats, 1813 – 16' in Patrick J. Corish (ed.), *Radicals, rebels and establishments* (Belfast, 1985), pp 151-69.

Donnelly, James S. Jr., 'Factions in pre-Famine Ireland' in Audrey S. Eyler and Robert F. Garratt (eds), *The uses of the past: essays on Irish culture* (Newark & London, 1988), pp 113-30.

Donnelly James S. Jr., 'The Terry Alt movement 1829 – 31' in *History Ireland*, 2:4 (Winter, 1994), pp 30-5.

Donnelly James S. Jr., 'Mass eviction and the Great Famine' in Cathal Póirtéir (ed.), *The great Irish Famine* (Cork, 1995), pp 155-73.

Donnelly, J. S., 'Captain Rock: Ideology and Organization in the Irish Agrarian Rebellion of 1821-24' in *Éire-Ireland*, 42:3-4 (2007), pp 60-103.

Donnelly James S. Jr., *Captain Rock: The Irish agrarian rebellion of 1821 – 1824* (Cork, 2009).

Dowling, Martin W., *Tenant right and agrarian society in Ulster, 1600-1850* (Dublin, 1997).

Dowling, Patrick J., *The hedge schools of Ireland* (Cork, 1968).

Dudley Edwards, Ruth, *An atlas of Irish history* (London, 1973).

Duffy Seán (ed.), *Atlas of Irish history* (Dublin, 2000).

Dunne, Mildred and Brian Phillips, *The courthouses of Ireland: A gazetteer of Irish courthouses* (Kilkenny, 1999).

Dunne, Tom, 'The darkside of the Irish landscape: Depictions of the rural poor, 1760-1850' in Peter Murray (ed.), *Whipping the herring: Survival and celebration in nineteenth-century Irish art* (Cork, 2006), pp 46-59.

Earl of Midleton K.P., *Records and reactions 1856-1939* (New York, 1939).

Edwards, Robert Dudley, and T. Desmond Williams (eds), *The great famine: Studies in Irish History, 1845-52* (Dublin, 1994).

Elliot, Bruce, 'Emigration from South Leinster to Eastern Upper Canada' in Kevin Whelan and William Nolan (eds), *Wexford, History and society: Interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin, 1987), pp 422-46.

Elliott, Marianne, *Partners in revolution: the United Irishmen and France* (New Haven, 1982).

Evans, E. Estyn, *Irish Folk Ways* (London, 1957).

Feehan, John, *Farming in Ireland: history, heritage and environment* (Dublin, 2003).

Flaherty, Eoin, 'Geographies of Communality, Colonialism, and Capitalism: Ecology and the World-System' in *Historical Geography*, 41 (2013), pp 59-79.

Fletcher, Alan J., *Drama, performance, and polity in pre-Cromwellian Ireland* (Cork 2000).

Frame, Robin, *Colonial Ireland* (Dublin, 2012).

Freeman, T. W., *Pre-famine Ireland: a study in historical geography* (Manchester, 1957).

Furlong, Nicholas, *Fr. John Murphy of Boolavogue* (Dublin, 1991).

Gahan, Daniel, *The people's rising: Wexford 1798* (Dublin, 1995).

Gailey, Alan, and Dáithí Ó hÓgáin (eds), *Gold under the furze: studies in folk tradition presented to Caoimhin Ó Danachair* (Dublin, 1982).

Garvin, Tom, 'Defenders, Ribbonmen and others: Underground political networks in pre-famine Ireland' in *Past and Present*, 96 (Aug., 1982), pp 133-55.

Gibbons, Stephen Randolph, 'Captain Rock in the Queens County' in Pádraig Lane and William Nolan (eds), *Laois: History and society, Interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin, 1999), pp 487 – 512.

Gibbons, Stephen, *Captain Rock, knight errant: the threatening letters of pre-famine Ireland* (Dublin, 2004).

Gillespie, Raymond (ed.), *Lest we forget: the famine in County Kildare* (Naas, 1995).

Gillmor, Desmond A., and J. T. Coppock, 'The Cattle Trade Between Ireland and Great Britain' in *Irish Geography*, 5 (1967), pp 320-26.

Gough, Hugh, and David Dickson (eds), *Ireland and the French revolution* (Dublin, 1990).

Glassie, Henry, *All silver and no brass* (Dingle, 1983).

Glassie, Henry, *Passing the time in Ballymenone: culture and history of an Ulster community* (Bloomington, 1995).

Grace, Daniel, 'The threatening notice in pre-famine county Tipperary' in *Tipperary Historical Journal*, (2009), pp 47–70.

Grant, Adrian, 'Landed estate records as a resource for the study of the rural Irish worker' in *Saothar*, 38 (2013), pp 169-73.

Gray, Peter, *Famine, land and politics: British government and Irish society, 1843-50* (Dublin, 1997).

Gray, Peter, *The making of the Irish poor law, 1815-43* (Manchester, 2009).

Griffin, Brian, *Sources for the study of crime in Ireland, 1801-1921* (Dublin 2005).

Hazelkorn, Ellen, 'Some Problems with Marx's Theory of Capitalist Penetration into Agriculture: the Case of Ireland' in *Economy and Society*, 10:3 (1981), pp 284 – 315.

Henry, Brian, 'Industrial violence, combinations and the law in late eighteenth century Dublin' in *Saothar*, 18 (1992), pp 19-33.

Hickey, Éanna, *Irish law and lawyers in modern folk tradition* (Dublin, 1999).

Higgins, Noreen, *Tipperary's Tithe War 1830 – 1838: Parish accounts of resistance against a church tax* (Tipperary, 2002).

Huggins, Michael, *Social conflict in pre-Famine Ireland: The case of County Roscommon* (Dublin, 2007).

Hughes, T. Jones, 'The large farm in nineteenth century Ireland' in Kevin Danaher and Alan Gailey (eds), *Gold under the furze: studies in folk tradition presented to Caoimhín Ó Danachair* (Dublin, 1982), pp 93-100.

Hoppen, K. Theodore, *Elections, politics and society in Ireland, 1832-1885* (Oxford, 1984).

Hoppen, K. Theodore, *Ireland since 1800: conflict and conformity* (London, 1999).

Jackson, T.A., *Ireland her own* (London, 1991).

Kavangh, Myles, 'The Bantry commons case: people v landlord' in *Carloviana,* 50 (2001), pp 66-7.

Katsuta, Shunsuke. 'The Rockite movement in county Cork in the early 1820s' in *Irish Historical Studies*, 33:131, (2003), pp 278-96.

Kelly, James, 'The Whiteboys in 1762 : a contemporary account' in *Journal of the Cork Historical & Archaeological Society*, 94 (1989), pp 19-26.

Kelly, James, 'The abduction of women of fortune in eighteenth-century Ireland' in *Eighteenth-Century Ireland/Iris an dá chultúr*, 9 (1994), pp 7 – 43.

Kelly James, *Gallows speeches from eighteenth-century Ireland* (Dublin, 2001).

Kelly, James, *The Liberty and Ormond Boys: Factional riot in eighteenth-century Dublin* (Dublin 2005).

Kelly, Jennifer, *'The Downfall of Hagan' Sligo Ribbonism in 1842* (Dublin 2008).

Kennedy, Liam and Paul S. Ell, E.M. Crawford and L.A. Clarkson, *Mapping the Great Irish Famine: A survey of the Famine decades* (Dublin, 1999).

Kennedy, Liam and Peter M. Solar, *Irish agriculture: A price history from the mid-eighteenth century to the eve of the First World War* (Dublin, 2007).

Kenny, Kevin, *Making sense of the Molly Maguires* (New York, 1998).

Kettle, Laurence J., *Irish coal and coalfields* (Dublin, 1920).

Kiely, Karel, 'Poverty and famine in County Kildare, 1820-1850' in William Nolan and Thomas McGrath (eds), *Kildare: History and society, interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin, 2006), pp 493-533.

Lafferty, Séamus, P. Commins, and James A. Walsh, *Irish agriculture in transition: a census atlas of agriculture in the Republic of Ireland* (Maynooth, 1999).

Lane, Padriag G., 'Rathvilly farm labourers in the 1880s' in *Carloviana*, 56 (2007), pp 32-6.

Lane, Fintan, *In search of Thomas Sheahan: Radical politics in Cork 1824 – 1836* (Dublin 2001).

Lane, Fintan, 'Envisaging labour history: Some reflections on Irish historiography and the working class' in Francis Devine, Fintan Lane and Niamh Puirséil (eds), *Essays in Irish labour history: A festschrift for Elizabeth and John W. Boyle* (Dublin, 2008), pp 9 – 25.

Lee, Joseph, 'The Ribbonmen' in T. Desmond Williams (ed.), *Secret societies in Ireland* (Dublin, 1973), pp 26-35.

Lightbown, Ronald W., 'Impressions of nineteenth-century Kilkenny (1800-50)' in *Old Kilkenny Review,* 48 (1996), pp 57- 80.

Logan, Patrick, The Holy Wells of Ireland (Buckinghamshire 1980).

Luddy, Maria, *Women in Ireland, 1800 – 1918: A documentary history* (Cork, 1995).

Luddy, Maria, *Prostitution and Irish Society, 1800 – 1940* (Cambridge, 2007).

Lyng, Tom, *Castlecomer connections* (Castlecomer, 1984).

Magennis, Eoin, 'The Hearts of Steel and agrarian crowds in the Armagh/Down borderlands in 1772' in Allan Blackstock and Eoin Magennis (eds), *Politics and political culture in Britain and Ireland, 1750-1850: Essays in tribute to Peter Jupp* (Belfast, 2007), pp 242-61.

Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels, *Ireland and the Irish question* (Moscow, 1971).

Mathur, Chandana, and Dix, Dermot, 'The Irish Question in Karl Marx's and Friedrich Engels's writings on capitalism and empire' in Seamas O'Siochain (ed.), *Social thought on Ireland in the nineteenth century* (Dublin, 2009), pp 97-107.

MacLochlainn, Alf, 'Social life in County Clare, 1800-1850' in *Irish University Review*, 2:1 (1972), pp 55-61, 63-78.

MacMahon, Michael, 'Agrarian conflict in Clare, 1815-1831' in *The Other Clare*, 18 (1994), pp 49-56.

McCabe, Desmond, 'Open court: law and the expansion of magisterial jurisdiction at petty sessions in nineteenth-century Ireland' in N. M. Dawson (ed.), *Reflections on law and history: Irish Legal History Society discourses and other papers, 2000-2005,* (Dublin, 2006), pp 126-62.

McCabe, Desmond, 'Magistrates, peasants and the petty sessions courts, Mayo 1823 – 1850' in *Cathair na Mart: Journal of the Westport Historical Society*, 5:1 (1985), pp 45 – 53.

McCabe, Desmond, ''The part that laws or kings can cause or cure': Crown Prosecution and Jury Trial at Longford Assizes, 1830-45' in Raymond Gillespie and Gerard Moran (eds), *Longford: Essays in county history* (Dublin, 1991), pp 153-72.

McCartney, Donal, 'The Tenant Rights Struggle in Ireland' in Michael O'Dwyer (ed.), *Callan Tenant Protection Society* (Callan, n.d.), pp 26 – 41.

McCartney, Donal, *The dawning of democracy: Ireland, 1800-1870* (Dublin, 1987)

McDonald, Tom, 'The wild justice of revenge: agrarian unrest in County Wexford' in *Journal of the Wexford Historical Society*, 23, (2011-12), pp 73-89.

McDonough, Terrence, 'A million of the Irish toilers: A Marxist approach to the Great Irish Famine' in *Review of Radical Political Economics*, 30:3 (1998), pp 56-63.

McDowell, R.B., *Social life in Ireland 1800-45* (Dublin 1957).

McGrath, Thomas, *Politics, interdenominational relations and education in the public ministry of Bishop James Doyle, 1786-1834* (Dublin, 1999).

McGrath, Thomas, *Religious renewal and reform in the pastoral ministry of Bishop James Doyle, 1786-1834* (Dublin, 1999).

McGrath, Thomas, *The pastoral and education letters of Bishop James Doyle, 1786-1834* (Dublin, 2003).

McHugh, Roger J., 'The Famine in Irish oral tradition' in R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams (eds) *The Great Famine: Studies in Irish history 1845-52* (Dublin, 1994), pp 391 – 436.

McManus, Antonia, *The Irish hedge school and its books, 1695-1831* (Dublin, 2002).

McMahon, Richard, 'Manor courts in the west of Ireland before the Famine' in D. S. Greer and N. M. Dawson (eds), *Mysteries and solutions in Irish legal history : Irish Legal History Society discourses and other papers, 1996-1999* (Dublin 2001), pp 115-59.

McMahon, Michael, *The murder of Thomas Douglas Bateson, County Monaghan, 1851* (Dublin, 2006).

Mirala, Petri, *Freemasonry in Ulster 1733 – 1813: A social and political history of the Masonic brotherhood in the north of Ireland* (Dublin, 2007).

Moody, T. W. and W. E. Vaughan (eds), *A new history of Ireland, Volume IV: Eighteenth-century Ireland, 1691-1800* (Oxford, 1986).

Mokyr, Joel, *Why Ireland starved: a quantitative and analytical history of the Irish economy, 1800-1850*   (London, 1983).

Mooney, Desmond, 'The origins of agrarian violence in Meath 1790-1828' in *Ríocht na Mídhe*, VIII:1, (1987), pp 45-67.

Mooney, Desmond, 'A society in crisis: agrarian violence in Meath 1828-1835' in *Ríocht na Mídhe*, VIII:2, (1988-89), pp 102-28.

Mooney, Desmond, 'A new order established - agrarian violence in Meath 1835-1844' in

Ríocht na Mídhe VIII:3, (1990-91), pp 118-33.

Morley, Vincent, 'George III, Queen Sadhbh and the historians' in *Eighteenth-century Ireland: Iris an dá chultúr*, 17,(2002), pp 112-20.

Munck, Ronnie, *Ireland: Nation, state and class struggle* (Boulder 1985).

Munck, Ronnie, *The Irish economy: Results and prospects* (London 1993).

Murphy, James, *Ireland: a social, cultural and literary history, 1791-1891* (Dublin, 2002).

Murphy, R.P., 'Some aspects of Carlow in the 1830s' in *Carloviana,* 46 (1998), pp 71-3.

Murphy, Tony, 'The Saint Mullin's riots 1839' in *Carloviana,* 56 (2007), pp 26-9.

Murray, A.C., 'Agrarian violence and nationalism in nineteenth-century Ireland: The myth of Ribbonism' in *Irish Economic and Social History*, XIII (1986), pp 56-73.

Murray, Peter (ed.), *Whipping the herring: Survival and celebration in nineteenth-century Irish art* (Cork, 2006).

Newark, F.H., *Notes on Irish legal history* (Belfast, 1960).

Nicholls, K. W., *Gaelic and Gaelicized Ireland in the Middle Ages* (Dublin, 2003).

Nolan, Emer, Introduction to 2008 edition of 'Memoirs of Captain Rock' (Dublin, 2008), pp xi – li.

Nolan, William, 'The land of Kildare: valuation, ownership and occupation 1850-1906' in William Nolan and Thomas McGrath (eds), *Kildare: History and society, interdisciplinary essays on the history of an Irish county* (Dublin, 2006), pp 549-84.

Norton, Desmond, 'On Viscount Frankfort's Kilkenny estates in the 1840s' in *Old Kilkenny Review,* 54, (2002), pp 18-40.

O'Brien, Helen, *The famine clearance in Toomevara, County Tipperary* (Dublin, 2010).

Ó Ciardha, Éamonn, 'The early modern Irish outlaw: the making of a nationalist icon' in James Kelly, John McCafferty and Charles Ivar McGrath (eds), *People, politics and power: essays on Irish history in honour of James I. McGuire* (Dublin, 2009), pp 51 – 69.

Ó Ciosáin, Niall, 'Review Immortal Dan' in *Irish Historical Studies*, 30:118 (Nov., 1996), pp 282-84.

Ó Ciosáin, Niall, 'The Irish Rogues' in James S. Donnelly Jr. and Kerby A. Miller (eds), *Irish popular culture 1650 – 1850* (Dublin, 1998), pp 78-96.

Ó Ciosáin, Niall, *Print and popular culture in Ireland 1750 – 1850* (Dublin, 2010).

Ó Ciosáin, Niall, *Ireland in official print culture, 1800 – 1850: A new reading of the Poor Inquiry* (Oxford, 2014).

O'Connor, Emmet, *A labour history of Ireland 1824 – 1960* (Dublin, 1992).

Ó Cuív, Brian 'The Wearing of the Green' in *Studia Hibernica*, 17/18 (1977/1978), pp 107-19.

Ó Danachair, Caoimhín, 'Faction Fighting in County Limerick' in *North Munster Antiquarian Journal*, X:1, (Limerick, 1966), pp 47 – 53.

Ó Danachair, Caoimhín, 'The Bothán Scóir' in Etienne Rynne (ed.), *North Munster studies: essays in commemoration of Monsignor Michael Moloney* (Limerick, 1967), pp 489-98.

O'Donnell, Ruan, *Aftermath: insurgent Wicklow, 1799-1803* (Dublin, 1998).

O'Donnell, Ruan, *1798 Diary* (Dublin, 1998).

O'Donoghue, Patrick, 'Opposition to tithe payments in 1830-31' in *Studia Hibernica*, 6 (1966), pp 69-98.

O'Donoghue, , Patrick, 'Opposition to tithe payment in 1832-3' in *Studia Hibernica*, 12 (1972), pp 77-108.

O'Donnell, Patrick, *The Irish faction fighters of the 19th century* (Dublin, 1975).

O'Dwyer, Michael, 'Three East Limerick fairs' in Etienne Rynne (ed.), *North Munster studies: essays in commemoration of Monsignor Michael Moloney* (Limerick, 1967) pp 481-88.

O'Ferrall, Fergus, *Catholic Emancipation: Daniel O'Connell and the birth of Irish democracy 1820 – 30* (Dublin, 1985).

Ó Giolláin, Diarmuid, *Locating Irish folklore: Tradition, modernity, identity* (Cork, 2000).

Ó Gráda, Cormac, *Ireland before and after the Famine: Explorations in economic history 1800-1925* (Manchester, 1993).

Ó Gráda, Cormac, *Ireland: A new economic history, 1780-1939* (Oxford, 1994).

Ó Gráda, Cormac, *Black '47 and beyond: The Great Irish Famine in history, economy, and memory* (Princeton, 1999).

Ó Gráda, Cormac, 'Famine, Trauma and Memory' in *Béaloideas*, 69 (2001), pp 121-43.

Ó Gráda, Cormac, 'Poverty, population, and agriculture, 1801-45' in W.E. Vaughan (ed.), *A new history of Ireland Volume V: Ireland under the union 1801-70* (Oxford, 2010), pp 108-57.

O'Hearn, Denis, 'Ireland in the Atlantic Economy' in Terrence McDonough (ed.), *Was Ireland a colony? economics, politics and culture in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2005), pp 3 – 26.

O'Kennedy, Leon, 'Irish Mummers' in *Ireland's Own* (Apr. 21, 1951).

Ó Maitiú, Séamas, *The humours of Donnybrook: Dublin's famous fair and its suppression* (Dublin 1995).

O'Malley, Eoin, 'The Decline of Irish Industry in the Nineteenth Century' in *Economic and Social Review*, 13:1 (Oct., 1981), pp 21-42.

Ó Murchadha, Ciarán, *Sable wings over the land: Ennis, County Clare and its wider community during the Great Famine* (Ennis, 1998).

Ó Murchadha, Ciarán, 'Paphian nymphs and worshipers of the Idalian Goddess: Prostitution in Ennis in the mid-Nineteenth century' in *The Other Clare*, 24 (May, 2000), pp 32-6.

O'Neill, James W., 'A look at Captain Rock: Agrarian rebellion in Ireland, 1815-1845' in *Eire-Ireland*, 17 (1982), pp 17-34.

O'Neill, Thomas P., 'The famine in Kilkenny' in *Old Kilkenny Review,* 10 (1958), pp 1-5.

Ó hÓgáin, Dáithí, *The hero in Irish folk history* (Dublin, 1985).

O hOgáin, Dáithí, 'Folklore and literature: 1700 – 1850' in Mary Daly and David Dickson (eds), *The origins of popular literacy in Ireland: Language change and educational development* (Dublin, 1990), pp 1-13.

O'Rourke, Kevin, 'Did the Great Irish Famine Matter?' in *Journal of Economic History*, 51:1 (Mar., 1991), pp 1-22.

Ó Súilleabháin, Seán, *Irish folk custom and belief* (Dublin, n.d.).

Ó Súilleabháin, Seán, *Irish wake amusements* (Cork, 1967).

Ó Tuathaigh, Gearoid, *Ireland before the famine, 1798-1848* (Dublin, 2007).

Ó Tuairisg, Lochlainn, 'Whiteboys and faction fighters in pre-famine Ireland' in Michael S. O'Neill, Clara Cullen, Coleman A. Dennehy (eds), *History matters: Selected papers from the school of history postgraduate conferences, 2001-3,* (Dublin 2004), pp 97 – 106.

Osborough,W.N., *Studies in Irish legal history* (Dublin, 1999).

Owen, Trevor M. (ed.), *From Corrib to Cultra: folklife essays in honour of Alan Gailey* (Belfast, 2001).

Owens, Gary, ''A Moral Insurrection': Faction fighters, public demonstrations and the O'Connellite campaign, 1828' in *Irish Historical Studies*, 30:120 (1997), pp 513-41.

Owens, Gary, 'The Carrickshock incident 1831: social memory and an Irish cause célèbre' in C*ultural and Social History*, 1 (2004), pp 36-64.

Owens, Gary, 'Social History' in Laurence M. Geary and Margaret Kelleher (eds), *Nineteenth-century Ireland: A guide to recent research* (Dublin, 2005), pp 27 – 42.

Palmer, Stanley H., *Police and protest in England and Ireland, 1780-1850* (Cambridge, 1988).

Patterson, Tony, 'The reform of Kilkenny Corporation in the Repeal Year of 1843' in *Old Kilkenny Review*, 51 (1999), pp 112-27.

Patterson, James G., ''Educated Whiteboyism': the Cork tithe war, 1798–9' in *History Ireland*, 12:4 (Winter, 2004), pp 25-9.

Patterson, James G., *In the wake of the great rebellion: republicanism, agrarianism and banditry in Ireland after 1798* (Manchester, 2008).

Poirteir, Cathal (ed.), *Famine echoes* (Dublin, 1995).

Poirteir, Cathal (ed.), *The great Irish famine* (Cork, 1995).

Pomfret, John E., *The struggle for land in Ireland 1800–1923* (Princeton, 1930).

Power, Thomas P., and Kevin Whelan (eds), *Endurance and emergence: Catholics in Ireland in the eighteenth century* (Dublin, 1990).

Proudfoot, Lindsay J., 'Spatial transformation and social agency: Property, society and improvement, c. 1700 to c. 1900' in Brian J. Graham and Lindsay J. Proudfoot (eds), *An historical geography of Ireland* (Dublin, 1993), pp 219-57.

Roberts, Paul E. W., 'Caravats and Shanavests: Whiteboyism and Faction Fighting in East Munster, 1802 – 11' in Samuel Clark and James S. Donnelly, Jr. (eds), *Irish peasants: Violence and political unrest 1780 – 1914* (Dublin, 1983), pp. 64 – 101.

Rothery, Sean, *A field guide to the buildings of Ireland: Illustrating the smaller buildings of town and countryside* (Dublin, 1997).

Ryan, David, ''Ribbonism' and agrarian violence in County Galway 1819-1820' in *Journal of the Galway Archaeological and Historical Society*, 52 (2000), pp 120-34.

Ryan, W.P., *The Irish labour movement from the twenties to our own day* (Dublin, 1919).

Scally, Robert, *The end of hidden Ireland: rebellion, famine and emigration* (New York,

1994).

Scott, John F., 'The elections in Carlow in 1830' in *Carloviana,* 44 (1996), pp 36-40.

Silverman, Marilyn and P. H. Gulliver, *In the valley of the Nore: A social history of Thomastown, County Kilkenny, 1840 -1983* (Dublin, 1986).

Silverman, Marilyn, 'The non-agricultural working class in 19th century Thomastown' in *In the Shadow of the Steeple*, 2 (1990).

Silverman, Marilyn, 'From Fisher to Poacher: Public Right and Private Property in the Salmon Fisheries of the River Nore in the Nineteenth Century' in Marilyn Silverman and P. H. Gulliver (eds), *Approaching the Past: Historical anthropology through Irish case studies* (New York, 1992).

Silverman, Marilyn, 'Custom, Courts, and Class Formation: Constructing the Hegemonic Process Through the Petty Sessions of a Southeastern Irish Parish, 1828 – 1884' in *American Ethnologist*, 27:2 (May, 2000), pp 400-30.

Silverman, Marilyn, 'One continual warfare: law, land and confrontation on the Shee estate, 1839-44' in *In the Shadow of the Steeple*, 8 (2003) pp 39-62.

Slater, Eamonn and Terrence McDonough, 'Colonialism Feudalism and the Mode of Production in Nineteenth-Century Ireland' in Terrence McDonough (ed.) *Was Ireland a colony? Economics, politics and culture in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin, 2005), pp 27 – 47.

Slater, Eamonn, and Terrence McDonough, 'Marx on nineteenth-century colonial Ireland: analysing colonialism as a dynamic social process' in *Irish Historical Studies*, 36:142 (2008), pp 153-72.

Smyth, Heather, 'Mollies Down Under: Cross-Dressing and Australian masculinity in Peter Carey's True History of the Kelly Gang' in *Journal of the History of Sexuality*, 18.2 (2009), pp 185 – 214.

Strauss, E., *Irish nationalism and British democracy* (Westport, 1975).

Thuente, Mary Helen, 'Violence in pre-Famine Ireland: the testimony of Irish folklore and fiction' in *Irish University Review*, 15:2, (1985), pp 129-47.

Vaughan, W. E. 'Farmer, Grazier and Gentleman: Edward Delany of Woodtown, 1851-99' in *Irish Economic and Social History*, IX (1982), pp 53 – 72.

Vaughan, W. E., *Landlords and tenants in mid-Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1994).

Vaughan, W. E. (ed.), *A new history of Ireland V: Ireland under the Union, I: 1801-70* (Oxford, 2010).

Vesey, Padraig, *The murder of Major Mahon, Strokestown, County Roscommon, 1847* (Dublin, 2008).

Walker, Linus, *Beneath Slievemargy's brow* (Portlaoise, 2001).

Wall, Maureen, 'The Whiteboys' in T. D. Williams (ed.), *Secret societies in Ireland* (Dublin, 1973) pp 13-25.

Walsh, Pat, 'Eighteenth century Kilkenny' in *Old Kilkenny Review,* 17 (1965), pp 38-45.

Walsh, Pat, 'Kilkenny in the 19th century' in *Old Kilkenny Review,* 19 (1967), pp 52-9.

Whelan, Kevin, *The tree of liberty: Radicalism, Catholicism and the construction of Irish identify 1760-1830* (Cork, 1996).

Whelan, Kevin, The cultural effects of the Famine in Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly (eds), *The Cambridge companion to modern Irish culture* (Cambridge, 2005), pp 137-54.

Whelan, Kevin, 'The Modern Landscape: From Plantation to Present' in F. H. A. Aalen, Kevin Whelan, Matthew Stout (eds), *Atlas of the Irish rural landscape* (Cork 2011), pp 73 – 111.

Zimmermann, Georges-Denis*, Songs of Irish rebellion: Political street ballads and rebel songs 1780- 1900* (Dublin, 1967).

Theoretical and comparative literature

Abrahams, Ray, 'Vigilantism: order and disorder on the frontiers of the state' in Olivia Harris (ed.), *Inside and outside the law: Anthropological studies of authority and ambiguity*, (London 1996), pp 33-44.

Abrams, Philip, *Historical sociology* (Ithaca, 1982).

Adamson, Hoebel E., *The law of primitive man: A study in comparative legal dynamics* (Cambridge Massachusetts, 1967).

Alford, Violet, 'Rough music or Charivari' in *Folklore*, 70 (1959), pp 505-18.

Aminzade, Ronald, *Ballots and barricades: Class formation and republican politics in France, 1830 – 1871* (Princeton, 1993).

Anderson, Benedict, *Imagined communities: Reflections on the origin and spread of nationalism* (London, 1983).

Anderson, Perry, *Passages from antiquity to feudalism* (London, 1974).

Anderson, Perry, *Arguments within English Marxism* (London, 1980).

Anonymous, *Parting company* (Dublin, 2003).

Arnold, David, 'Gramsci and Peasant Subalternity in India' in Vinayak Chaturvedi (ed.), *Mapping Subaltern Studies and the postcolonial* (London, 2000), pp 24-49.

Avineri, Shlomo, *The social and political thought of Karl Marx* (Cambridge, 1970).

Babcock, Barbara A. (ed.), *The reversible world: symbolic inversion in art and society* (Ithaca, 1978).

Bakhtin, M.M., *The dialogic imagination: Four essays* (Austin, 1981).

Bakhtin, Mikhail, *Rabelais and his world* (Bloomington 1984).

Bakhtin, M.M., *Speech genres and other late essays* (Austin, 1986).

Bandura, Albert, 'Exercise of human agency through collective efficacy' in *Current Directions in Psychological Science*, 9:3 (2000), pp 75–8.

Bandura, Albert, 'Toward a Psychology of Human Agency' in *Perspectives on Psychological Science*, 1:2 (2006), pp 164-80.

Barker, Colin, 'Crises and turning points in revolutionary development: emotion, organization and strategy in Solidarnosc, 1980-81' in *Interface: a journal for and about social movements*, 2:1 (2010), pp 79 – 117.

Barker, Colin, Laurence Cox, John Krinsky, and Alf Gunvald Nilsen (eds), *Marxism and social movements* (London 2013).

Basu, Deepankar, and Debarshi Das, 'The Maoist Movement in India: Some Political Economy Considerations' in *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 13:3 (2013), pp 365–81.

Bennett, Tony, Graham Martin, Colin Mercer and Janet Woolacott (eds), *Culture, ideology and social process: a reader* (London, 1981).

Beik, William, *Urban protest in Seventeenth Century France: The culture of retribution* (Cambridge, 1997).

Beik, William, 'The Violence of the French Crowd from Charivari to Revolution' in *Past & Present*, 197:1 (2007), pp 75-110.

Bercé, Yves-Marie, *Revolt and revolution in early modern Europe: An essay on the history of political violence* (Manchester, 1987).

Bernstein, Henry, *Class dynamics of agrarian change* (Winnipeg/Sterling 2010).

Bernstein, Henry, and Byres, Terence J., 'From Peasant Studies to Agrarian Change' in *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 1:1 (Jan. 2001), pp 1 – 56.

Binfield, Kevin (ed.), *Writings of the Luddites* (Baltimore, 2004).

Blackledge, Paul, 'Political Marxism' in Jacques Bidet and Stathis Kouvelakis (eds), *Critical companion to contemporary Marxism* (Leiden, 2008), pp 267-84.

Blackledge, Paul, 'British Marxist history' in Jacques Bidet and Stathis Kouvelakis (eds), *Critical companion to contemporary Marxism* (Leiden, 2008), pp 333-51.

Blok, Anton, 'The Peasant and the Brigand: Social Banditry Reconsidered' in *Comparative Studies in Society and History*, 14:4 (Sep., 1972), pp. 494-503.

Bloch, Marc, *French rural history: an essay on its basic characteristics* (London, 1966).

Boggs, Carl, *Gramsci's Marxism* (London, 1976).

Bottomore, Tom, Laurence Harris, V.G. Kiernan and Ralph Miliband (eds), *A dictionary of Marxist thought* (Oxford, 1991).

Bourdieu, Pierre, *Algeria 1960* (Cambridge, 1979).

Boyer, Christopher R., *Becoming campesinos: Politics, identity, and agrarian struggle in postrevolutionary Michoacán, 1920-1935* (Stanford, 2003).

Brandist, Craig, *Gramsci, Bakhtin and the semiotics of hegemony*, in *New Left Review*, I/216, (1996).

Brandist, Craig, *The Bakhtin circle: Philosophy, culture and politics* (London, 2002).

Brandist, Craig and Katya Chown (eds), *Politics and the theory of language in the USSR 1917-1938: The birth of sociological linguistics* (London, 2010).

Brenner, Robert, 'The Agrarian Roots of European Capitalism' in *Past & Present*, 97 (Nov., 1982), pp 16-113.

Brewer, Anthony, *Marxist theories of imperialism: A critical survey* (London, 1990).

Brewer, John and John Styles (eds), *An ungovernable People: the English and their law in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries* (London, 1980).

Buechler, Steven M., *Social movements in advanced capitalism: The political economy and cultural construction of social activism* (Oxford, 2000).

Buckley, Anthony D. (ed.), *Symbols in Northern Ireland* (Belfast, 1998).

Bumke, Joachim, *Courtly culture: Literature and society in the high middle ages* (Berkeley, 1991).

Burke, Peter, *Popular culture in early Modern Europe* (Aldershot, 1994).

Burke, Peter, *What is cultural history?* (Cambridge, 2008).

Bushaway, Bob, *By rite: Custom, ceremony and community in England 1700 – 1880* (London, 1982).

Byres, Terence, J., *Capitalism from above and capitalism from below: An essay in comparative political economy* (Basingstoke, 1996).

Byres, Terence J., 'Paths of capitalist agrarian transition in the past and in the contemporary world' in V.K. Ramachandran and Madhura Swaminathan (eds), *Agrarian studies: Essays on agrarian relations in less-developed countries* (London, 2003), pp 54 – 83; p. 63.

Byres, Terence, J., 'Differentiation of the Peasantry Under Feudalism and the Transition to Capitalism: In Defence of Rodney Hilton', in *Journal of Agrarian Change,* 6:1 (Jan. 2006), pp 17 – 68.

Byrne, Paul, *Social movements in Britain* (London, 1997).

Cabrera, Miguel A., and Marie McMahon, 'Linguistic Approach or Return to Subjectivism? In Search of an Alternative to Social History' in *Social History*, 24:1 (1999), pp 74-89

Callinicos, Alex, *Making history: Agency, structure, and change in social theory* (Leiden, 2004).

Callinicos, Alex, 'The Limits of 'Political Marxism'' in *New Left Review*, 184 (1990), pp 110-15.

Cashman, Ray, 'The heroic outlaw in Irish folklore and popular literature' in *Folklore*, 111 (2000), pp 191 – 215.

Chakrabarty, Dipesh, 'A Small History of Subaltern Studies' in Henry Schwarz and Sangeeta Ray (eds), *A companion to postcolonial studies* (Malden, 2005), pp 467-85.

Chambers, J.D., and G. E. Mingay, *The agricultural revolution 1750 – 1880* (London, 1966).

Chalcraft, John, 'Labour Protest and Hegemony in Egypt and the Arabian Peninsula' in Sara C. Motta and Alf Gunvald Nilsen (eds), *Social movements in the Global South: Dispossession, development and resistance* (Basingstoke 2011), pp 35 – 58.

Charlesworth, Andrew (ed.), *An atlas of rural protest in Britain 1548 – 1900* (London, 1983).

Charlesworth, Andrew, David Gilbert, Humphrey Southall and Chris Wrigley (eds), *An atlas of industrial protest in Britain 1750 - 1990* (Basingstoke, 1996).

Chartier, Roger, 'Culture as Appropriation: Popular Cultural Uses in Early Modern France' in Steven L. Kaplan (ed.), *Understanding popular culture: Europe from the Middle Ages to the nineteenth century*, (Berlin 1984), pp 229-53.

Chartier, Roger, *The cultural origins of the French revolution* (Durham, 1991).

Chatterjee, Partha, 'More on modes of power and the peasantry' in Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies II: Writings on South Asian history and society* (New Delhi, 1993).

Chibber, Vivek, 'What Is Living and What Is Dead in the Marxist Theory of History' in *Historical Materialism*, 19:2 (2011), pp 60–91.

Chibber, Vivek, *Postcolonial theory and the specter of capital* (London, 2013).

Clark, Katerina, and Michael Holquist, *Mikhail Bakhtin* (Harvard, 1984).

Cohn, Norman, *The pursuit of the millennium* (London, 2004).

Collins, Chik, 'To concede or to contest? Language and class struggle' in Colin Barker and Paul Kennedy (eds), *To make another world: Studies in protest and collective action* (Aldershot, 1996), pp 69-91.

Collins, Chik, *Language, ideology, and social consciousness: Developing a sociohistorical approach* (Aldershot, 1999).

Comaroff, John and Jean Comaroff, *Ethnography and the historical imagination* (Boulder 1991).

Comninel, George C., *Rethinking the French revolution: Marxism and the revisionist challenge* (London, 1987).

Corbin, Juliet and Anselm Strauss, *Basics of qualitative research* (Los Angeles, 2008).

Cox, Laurence, *Building counter culture: the radical praxis of social movement milieu* (Helsinki, 2011).

Cox, Laurence and Alf Gunvald Nilsen, ''The Bourgeoisie, Historically, Has Played a Most Revolutionary Part': Understanding social movements from above' in *Proceedings of the eleventh international conference on alternative futures and popular protest*, (2006), online at eprints.nuim.ie/458/, accessed 07/09/14.

Cox, Laurence and Alf Gunvald Nilsen, *We make our own history: Marxism and social movements in the twilight of neo-liberalism* (London, 2014).

Creaven, Sean, *Marxism and Realism: A materialistic application of realism in the social science* (London, 2000).

Crehan, Kate, *Gramsci, culture and anthropology* (London, 2002).

Crompton, Rosemary, *The Development of the Classical Inheritance* in Patrick Joyce (ed.), *Class* (Oxford, 1996), pp 43 – 55.

Davidson, Alastair, 'Gramsci, the peasantry and popular culture' in *Journal of Peasant Studies,* 11:4 (1984) pp 139-154.

Davidson, Neil, 'The Scottish Path to Capitalist Agriculture 1: From the Crisis of Feudalism to the Origins of Agrarian Transformation (1688–1746)' in *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 4:3 (2004) pp 227-68.

Davidson, Neil, 'The Scottish Path to Capitalist Agriculture 2: The Capitalist Offensive (1747–1815)' in *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 4:4 (2004), pp 411-60.

Davidson, Neil, 'The Scottish Path to Capitalist Agriculture 3: The Enlightenment as the Theory and Practice of Improvement' in *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 5:1 (2005), pp 1 – 72.

Davis, John A., 'Socialism and the working classes in Italy before 1914' in Dick Geary (ed.), *Labour and socialist movements in Europe before 1914* (Oxford, 1992), pp 182-230.

Desan, Suzanne, 'Crowds, Community, and Ritual in the Work of E. P. Thompson and Natalie Davis' in Victoria E. Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (eds), *The new cultural History: Studies on the history of society and culture,* (Berkeley 1989), pp 47 – 71.

Della Porta, Donatella and Mario Diani, *Social movements: An introduction* (Malden, 2006).

Dentith, Simon, *Bakhtinian thought: An introductory reader* (London, 1995).

Devereux, Eoin, 'Negiotiating Community: The Case of a Limerick Community Development Group' in Chris Curtin, Hastings Donnan, and Thomas M. Wilson (eds), *Irish urban cultures,* (Belfast, 1993), pp 63 – 77.

Devine, T.M., *The Scottish nation 1700 – 2000* (New York, 1999).

Donovan, James M., *Legal anthropology: An introduction* (Lanham, 2008).

Dobb, Maurice, *Studies in the development of capitalism* (London, 1963).

Drury, John and Steve Reicher, 'Explaining enduring empowerment: A comparative study of collective action and psychological outcomes' in *European Journal of Social Psychology*, 35 (2005), pp 35–58.

Duncan, Lauren E., 'The psychology of collective action' in Kay Deaux and Mark Snyder (eds), *Oxford handbook of personality and social psychology* (New York, 2012), pp 781–803.

Duncan, Lauren E., 'Motivation for Collective Action: Group Consciousness as Mediator of Personality, Life Experiences, and Women's Rights Activism' in *Political Psychology*, 20:3 (1999), pp 611-35.

Eagleton, Terry, *Ideology: an introduction* (London, 1991).

Eley, Geoff and Keith Nield, 'Starting over: The Present, the Post-Modern and the Moment of Social History', in *Social History*, 20:3 (1995), pp 355-64.

Escobar, Arturo, 'Identity' in David Nugent and Joan Vincent (eds), *A Companion to the anthropology of politics*, (Malden, 2007), pp 248-66.

Evans, Richard J., *Proletarians and politics: Socialism, protest and the working class in Germany before the First World War* (New York, 1990).

Evans, Richard J., *Rituals of retribution: Capital punishment in Germany 1600-1987* (Oxford, 1996).

Evans, Richard J., *In defence of history* (London, 1997).

Evripidou, Atalanti and John Drury, 'This is the time of tension: collective action and subjective power in the Greek anti-austerity movement' in *Contention: The Multidisciplinary Journal of Social Protest*, 1 (2013), pp 31-51

Fanon, Frantz, *The wretched of the earth* (New York, 1963).

Fanon, Frantz, *Black skin white masks* (London, 1968).

Fantasia, Rick, *Cultures of solidarity: Consciousness, action, and contemporary American workers* (Berkeley, 1988).

Femia, Joseph V., *Gramsci's political thought: Hegemony, consciousness and the revolutionary process* (Oxford, 1981).

Field, Daniel, *Rebels in the name of the Tsar* (Boston, 1976).

Fiori, Giuseppe, *Antonio Gramsci: Life of a revolutionary* (London, 1990).

Fine, Ben and Alfredo Saad-Filho, *Marx's Capital* (London, 2004).

Flesher Fominaya, Cristina, 'Collective Identity in Social Movements: Central concepts and debates' in *Sociology Compass*, 4:6 (2010), pp 393-404.

Foster-Carter, Aidan ,'The Modes of Production Controversy' in *New Left Review*, 107 (1978) pp 47 – 77.

Foucault, Michel, *Discipline and punish: The birth of the prison* (London, 1991).

Fox Piven, Francis and Cloward, Richard A., *Poor people's movements: Why they succeed, how they fail* (New York, 1979).

Fox-Genovese, Elizabeth and Genovese, Eugene D., *The mind of the master class: History and faith in the Southern slaveholders' worldview* (Cambridge, 2005).

Gamson, William A., 'Commitment and Agency in Social Movements' in *Sociological Forum*, 6:1 (Mar., 1991), pp. 27-50.

Gardiner, Michael, *The dialogics of critique: M.M. Bakhtin and the theory of ideology* (London, 1992).

Gatrell, V.A.C., *The hanging tree: Execution and the English people 1770 – 1868* (Oxford 1994).

Gaventa, John, *Power and powerlessness: Quiescence and rebellion in an Appalachian valley* (Chicago, 1982).

Gecas, Viktor, 'The social psychology of self-efficacy' *in Annual Review of Sociology*, 15 (1989), pp 291–316

Ghosh, Jayati, 'Differential and absolute land rent' in *Journal of Peasant Studies,* 13:1 (1985) pp 67-82.

Glavanis, Pandeli and Kathy Glavanis, *The rural Middle East: peasant lives and modes of production* (London 1990).

Gillis, John R., 'Memory and Identity: The History of a Relationship in Commemorations', in John R. Gillis (ed), *The politics of national identity* (Princeton, 1994), pp 3 – 24.

Ginzburg, Carlo, *The cheese and the worms: The cosmos of a sixteenth-century miller* (Baltimore, 1980).

Goodman, David and Michael Redclift, *From peasant to proletarian: Capitalist development and agrarian transitions* (Oxford 1981).

Goody, Jack, 'Restricted Literacy in Northern Ghana' Jack Goody (ed.), *Literary in traditional societies* (Cambridge, 1968), pp 199 – 264.

Goody, Jack, *The Power of the written tradition* (Washington, 2000).

Gordon, Robert, 'Popular justice' in David Nugent and Joan Vincent (eds), *A companion to the anthropology of politics* (Malden, 2007).

Gottlieb, Roger S., *Marxism: Origins betrayal rebirth, 1844 – 1990* (New York, 1992).

Gupta, Akhil, and James Ferguson, *Culture, power, place: Explorations in critical anthropology* (Durham and London, 1997).

Gramsci, Antonio, *The Modern Prince and other writings* (London, 1957).

Gramsci, Antonio, *Selections from the prison notebooks* (New York, 1971).

Gramsci, Antonio, *Pre-prison writings* (Cambridge, 1994).

Gregg, Richard B. and A. Jackson McCormack, ''Whitey' goes to the ghetto: a personal chronical of a communication experience with black youths' in *Today's Speech*,16:3 (1968), pp 25-30.

Gregg, Richard B., A. Jackson McCormack & Douglas J. Pedersen, 'The rhetoric of black power: A street-level interpretation' in *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 55:2 (1969), pp 151-160.

Gregg, Richard B., 'The Ego-Function of the Rhetoric of Protest' in *Philosophy & Rhetoric*, 4: 2 (Spring 1971), pp 71 – 91.

Grünewald, Thomas, *Bandits in the Roman Empire: Myth and reality* (London, 2004).

Guha, Ranajit (ed.), *Subaltern Studies I: Writings on South Asian history and society* (New Delhi, 1982).

Guha, Ranajit (ed.), *Subaltern Studies II: Writings on South Asian history and society* (New Delhi, 1983).

Guha, Ranajit (ed.), *Subaltern Studies III: Writings on South Asian history and society* (New Delhi, 1984).

Guha, Ranajit and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak, *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York, 1988).

Guha, Ranajit, 'On some aspects of the historiography of colonial India', in Ranajit Guha and Gayatri Chakravorty Spivak (eds), *Selected Subaltern Studies* (New York, 1988), pp 37 – 44.

Guha, Ranajit, *Dominance without hegemony: History and power in colonial India* (Cambridge Mass., 1997).

Guha, Ranajit, *Elementary aspects of peasant insurgency in colonial India* (Durham, 1999).

Hall, Stuart, The Rediscovery of 'Ideology': Return of the Repressed in Media Studies' in John Storey (ed.), *Cultural theory and popular culture: A reader* (Harlow, 2006), pp. 124-55.

Hall, Stuart, 'Cultural Studies: two paradigms', in Tony Bennett, Graham Martin, Colin Mercer and Janet Woollacott (eds), *Culture, ideology and social process: A reader* (London, 1981), pp 19 – 37.

Hammersley, Martyn and Paul Atkinson, *Ethnography: Principles in practice* (London, 2007).

Hammond, John L., '*Mística*, meaning and popular education in the Brazilian Landless Workers Movement' in *Interface: a journal for and about social movements*, 6:1 (2014), pp 372-91.

Harris, Lorelei, 'Class, Community and Sexual Divisions in North Mayo' in Chris Curtin, Mary Kelly and Liam O'Dowd (eds), *Culture and ideology in Ireland* (Galway, 1984), pp 154-71.

Hay, Douglas, Peter Linebaugh, and E.P Thompson (eds), *Albion's fatal Tree: Crime and society in eighteenth-century England* (London, 1975).

Hay, Douglas, 'Crime and justice in Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century England' in *Crime and Justice*, 2 (1980), pp 45 – 84.

Hardiman, David, 'Adivasi Assertion in South Gujarat: the Devi Movement of 1922-23', Ranajit Guha (ed.), *Subaltern Studies III: Writings on South Asian history and society* (New Delhi, 1984), pp 196 – 230.

Heinrich, Michael, *An introduction to the three volumes of Karl Marx's Capital* (New York, 2012).

Hindess, Barry and Paul Q. Hirst, *Pre-capitalist modes of production* (London, 1975).

Hilton, R H., 'Capitalism--What's in a Name?' in *Past & Present*, 1 (1952), pp 32-43.

Hilton, R H., 'The origins of Robin Hood' in *Past & Present*, 14 (1958), pp 30-44.

Hilton, Rodney, *Bond men made free: Medieval peasant movements and the English rising of 1381* (London, 1973).

Hilton Rodney (ed.), *The transition from feudalism to capitalism* (London, 1978).

Hilton, Rodney, 'Feudalism in Europe: Problems for Historical Materialists' in *New Left Review*, 147 (1984), pp 84 – 93.

Hirsch, Eric L., 'The creation of political solidarity in social movement organizations' in *The Sociological Quarterly*, 27:3 (1986), pp 373–87.

Hirsch, Eric L., 'Sacrifice for the cause: Group processes, recruitment and commitment in a student social movement', in *American Sociological Review*, 55 (Apr. 1990), pp 243–54.

Hobsbawm, E.J., *Bandits* (Harmondsworth, 1972).

Hobsbawm, Eric and Terence Ranger (eds), *The invention of tradition* (Cambridge, 1983).

Hobsbawm, E.J., 'Marx and History' in Bob Jessop with Charlie Malcom-Brown (eds), *Karl Marx's social and political thought, critical assessments: Volume II social class and class conflict* (London, 1990), pp 1 – 16.

Hobsbawm, Eric, *Uncommon people: Resistance, rebellion and jazz* (London, 1999).

Hobsbawm, E. and G. Rudé, *Captain Swing* (London, 2001).

Hogg, Michael A. and Graham M. Vaughan, *Social psychology* (Harlow, 2008).

Humphrey, Chris, *The politics of carnival: festive misrule in medieval England* (Manchester, 2001).

Hunt, Scott A. and Robert D. Benford, 'Collective identity, solidarity and commitment' in David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi (eds), *The blackwell companion to social movements* (Malden, 2004), pp 433-57.

Hussain, Athar and Keith Tribe, *Marxism and the agrarian question, volume I: German Social Democracy and the peasantry, 1890 – 1907* (New Jersey, 1981).

Hutton, Ronald, *The stations of the sun: a history of the ritual year in Britain* (Oxford, 2001).

Ingram, Martin, 'Ridings, rough music and the "reform of popular culture" in early modern England' in *Past & Present*, 105 (1984), pp 79 – 113.

Issa, Daniela, 'Praxis of empowerment: Mística and mobilization in Brazil's landless rural workers' movement' in *Latin American Perspectives*, 34:2 (Mar. 2007), pp 124–38.

Jasper, James M., 'The Emotions of Protest: Affective and Reactive Emotions in and around Social Movements' in *Sociological Forum*, 13:3 (Sep., 1998), pp 397-424.

Joll, James, *Gramsci* (Glasgow, 1977).

Johnston, Hank and Bert Klandermans (eds), *Social movements and culture* (Minnesota, 1995).

Johnson, Loretta T., 'Charivari/Shivaree: a European folk ritual on the American plains' in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 20:3 (1990), pp 371-87.

Jones, David J, *Before Rebecca: popular protests in Wales 1793-1835* (London, 1973).

Jones, Owen, *Chavs: The demonization of the working class* (London, 2011).

Joseph, Gilbert M., 'On the Trail of Latin American Bandits: A Reexamination of Peasant Resistance' in *Latin American Research Review*, 25:3 (1990), pp 7-53.

Joseph, Jonathan, *Marxism and social theory* (Basingstoke, 2006).

Joyce, Patrick, 'The Imaginary Discontents of Social History: A Note of Response to Mayfield and Thorne, and Lawrence and Taylor' in *Social History*, 18:1 (Jan., 1993), pp 81-85.

Joyce, Patrick, 'The End of Social History?' in *Social History*, 20:1 (Jan., 1995), pp 73-91.

Kaplan, Steven L., *Bread, politics, and political economy in the Reign of Louis XV* (The Hague, 1976).

Kaplan, Temma, *Anarchists of Andalusia 1868 – 1903* (Princeton, 1977).

Katznelson, Ira and Aristide R. Zolberg (eds), *Working-class formation: Nineteenth-century patterns in western Europe and the United States* (Princeton, 1986).

Kautsky, Karl, *The agrarian question, volume I* (London 1988).

Kaviraj, Sudipta, 'On the Construction of Colonial Power: structure, discourse, hegemony' in Dagmar Engels and Shula Marks (eds), *Contesting colonial hegemony: State and society in Africa and India* (London 1994), pp 19 – 54.

Kaye, Harvey J., *The British Marxist historians: An introductory analysis* (New York, 1995).

Kertzer, David. I., *Ritual, politics and power* (New Haven, 1988).

Kierans, Ciara and Philip McCormack, 'Elmdale: a search for an understanding of community through protest and resistance' in *Irish Journal of Anthropology*, VI (2002), pp 113-29.

Kiernan, V. G., 'The Emergence of a Nation' in C.H.E. Philpin (ed.), *Nationalism and popular protest in Ireland* (Cambridge, 1987), pp 16 – 49.

Kiernan, V.G., *Imperialism and its contradictions* (New York, 1995).

King, Peter, 'Edward Thompson's Contribution to Eighteenth-Century Studies. The Patrician: Plebeian Model Re-Examined' in *Social History*, 21:2 (May, 1996) pp 215-28.

King, Stephen A., 'Protest music as 'ego-enhancement': reggae music, the Rastafarian movement and the re-examination of race and identity in Jamaica' in Ian Peddie (ed.), *The resisting muse: popular music and social protest* (Aldershot, 2006), pp 105-18.

Klandermans, Bert and Conny Roggeband (eds), *Handbook of social movements across disciplines* (Amsterdam, 2007).

Koo, Hagen, *Korean workers: The culture and politics of class formation* (Ithaca, 2001).

Korch, Karl*, Karl Marx* (New York, 1938).

Krinsky, John, *Free Labor: Workfare and the contested language of neoliberalism* (Chicago, 2007).

Lachmann, Richard, *What is historical sociology?* (Cambridge, 2013).

Laclau, Ernesto, 'Feudalism and Capitalism in Latin America' in *New Left Review 1:67* (May-Jun. 1971), pp 19 – 38.

Lake, Peter and Michale Questier, 'Agency, appropriation and rhetoric under the gallows: puritans, romanists and the State in early modern England' in *Past and Present*, 153:1 (1996), pp 64-107.

Lake, Randall A., 'Enacting red power: The consummatory function in Native American protest rhetoric' in *Quarterly Journal of Speech*, 69:2 (1983) pp 127-42.

Lane, Christel, *The rites of rulers: ritual in industrial society: the Soviet case* (Cambridge, 1981).

Langness, L.L., *The study of culture* (Novato, 2005).

Lawrence, Jon and Taylor, Miles, 'The Poverty of Protest: Gareth Stedman Jones and the Politics of Language: A Reply' in *Social History*, 18:1 (Jan., 1993), pp 1-15.

Lerche, Jens, Alpa Shah, and Barbara Harriss-White, 'Introduction: Agrarian Questions and Left Politics in India', in *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 13:3 (July 2013), pp 337–50.

Linebaugh, Pete, *The London hanged: Crime and civil society in the eighteenth century* (London, 2006).

Loyal, Steven, *The sociology Of Anthony Giddens* (London, 2003).

Lucas, Colin, 'The Crowd and Politics between *Ancien Régime* and Revolution in France,' in *Journal of Modern History*, 60:3 (1988), pp 421-57.

Ludden, David (ed.), *Reading Subaltern Studies: Critical history, contested meaning and the globalisation of South Asia* (London, 2002).

Lumley, Bob, *Gramsci's writings on the state and hegemony, 1916 -35: a critical analysis* (Birmingham, n.d.).

Macey, David, *Frantz Fanon: a life* (London, 2000).

MacDonnell, Diane, *Theories of discourse* (Oxford, 1986).

MacRalid, Donald M., and Avram Taylor, *Social theory and social history* (Hampshire, 2004).

Magraw, Roger, 'Socialism, syndicalism and French labour before 1914' in Dick Geary (ed.), *Labour and socialist movements in Europe before 1914* (Oxford, 1992), pp 48 – 100.

Mann, Susan A., and James M. Dickinson, 'Obstacles to the Development of a Capitalist Agriculture' in *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 5:4 (1978), pp 466-81.

Marx, Karl, *Capital: A critique of political economy, volume III* (London, 1959).

Marx, Karl, *Capital: A critique of political economy, volume I* (New York, 1967).

Karl Marx, *The poverty of philosophy*, online at www.marxists.org/archive/marx/works/1847/poverty-philosophy/ch02e.htm, accessed 19 Nov. 2012.

Marx, Karl and Frederick Engels, *The communist manifesto* (London, 1967).

Marx, Karl, and Friedrich Engels, *The German Ideology Part One*, ed. C. J. Arthur (London 1974).

Mattoni, Alice, 'The potentials of grounded theory in the study of social movements' in Donatella della Porta (ed.), *Methodological practices in social movement research* (Oxford, 2014), pp 21 – 42.

Mayfield, David, and Susan Thorne, 'Social History and Its Discontents: Gareth Stedman Jones and the Politics of Language' in *Social History*, 17:2 (May, 1992), pp 165-88.

Mayfield, David, Susan Thorne, and Ann Arbor, 'Reply to 'The Poverty of Protest' and 'The Imaginary Discontents'' in *Social History,* 18:2 (May, 1993), pp 219-33.

McGowen, Randall, 'The body and punishment in eighteenth-century England' in *Journal of Modern History*, 59 (December 1987), pp 652-79.

McGowen, Randall, 'Making examples' and the crisis of punishment in mid-eighteenth-century England' in David Lemmings (ed.), *The British and their laws in the eighteenth century* (Woodbridge, 2005), pp 182 – 205.

McNeill, Tom, *Castles in Ireland: Feudal Power in a Gaelic World* (London, 1997).

Meiksins Wood, Ellen, 'Falling through the cracks: E.P. Thompson and the debate on base and superstructure' in Harvey J. Kaye and Keith McClelland (eds) *E.P. Thompson: Critical perspectives* (Philadelphia, 1990), pp 125-52.

Meiksins Wood, Ellen, *Democracy against capitalism: Renewing historical materialism* (Cambridge, 1995).

Meiksins Wood, Ellen, 'The Non-History of Capitalism' in *Historical Materialism*, 1:1 (1997), pp 5-21.

Meiksins Wood, Ellen, 'The Separation of the Economic and the Political in Capitalism', in *New Left Review*, 1:127 (1981), pp 66-95.

Meiksins Wood, Ellen, *The origin of capitalism: A longer view* (London, 2002).

Mills, Sara, *Discourse* (London, 2004).

Melucci, Alberto, 'The Process of Collective Identity' in Hank Johnston and Bert Klandermans (eds), *Social movements and culture* (Minneapolis, 1995), pp 41–63.

Mouffe, Chantal, and Anne Showstack Sassoon, 'Gramsci in France and Italy-a review of the literature' in *Economy and Society*, 6.1 (1977): 31-68.

Mouffe, Chantal, 'Hegemony and ideology in Gramsci' in Chantal Mouffe (ed.), *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (London, 1979), pp 168 – 204.

Mouzelis, Nicos, *Modern Greece: facets of underdevelopment* (New York, 1978).

Mouzelis, Nicos, 'Modernization, Underdevelopment, Development: Prospects for a Theory of Third World Formations' in *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 7:3 (1980), pp 353-74.

Muchembled, Robert, *Popular culture and elite culture in France 1400 – 1750* (Baton Rouge, 1985).

Munck, Ronaldo, *Politics and dependency in the Third World: The case of Latin America* (London, 1985).

Navickas, Katrina, 'The search for 'General Ludd': the mythology of Luddism' in *Social History*, 30:3 (2005), pp 281-95.

Neocosmos, Michael, 'Marx's third class: Capitalist landed property and capitalist development' in *Journal of Peasant Studies,* 13:3 (1986), pp 5-44.

Newby, Howard, *The deferential worker: A study of farm workers in East Anglia* (London, 1979).

Nilsen, Alf Gunvald and Laurence Cox, '"At the heart of society burns the fire of social movements": What would a Marxist theory of social movements look like?' in *Proceedings of the tenth international conference on alternative futures and popular protest*, (2005), online at academia.edu/download/30859920/AFPP_X_redux.pdf, accessed 07/09/14.

O'Keeffe, Tadhg, *Medieval Ireland: An archaeology* (Stroud, 2001).

Paige, Jeffery M., 'Political orientation and riot participation' in *American Sociological Review*, 36 (1971), pp 810-20.

Paige, Jeffrey M., *Agrarian revolution: Social movements and export agriculture in the underdeveloped world* (New York, 1975).

Palmer, Bryan D. 'Charivaris and Whitecapping in Nineteenth-Century North America' in *Labour / Le Travail*, 3 (1978), pp 5-62.

Patnaik, Utsa, 'Class Differentiation within the Peasantry: An Approach to Analysis of Indian Agriculture' in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 11:39 (Sep. 25, 1976), pp 82-101.

Peillon, Michel, *Contemporary Irish society: An introduction* (Dublin, 1982).

Perelman, Michael, *The Invention of capitalism* (Durham, 2000).

Peters, Ina, 'Too Abstract to Be Feasible? Applying the Grounded Theory Method in Social Movement Research', *GIGA Working Paper*, 247 (2014), online at www.giga-hamburg.de/en/publications/working-papers, accessed 27/10/14.

Pettitt, Thomas, ''Here Comes I, Jack Straw:' English Folk Drama and Social Revolt' in *Folklore,* 95:1 (1984), pp 3-20.

Pionke, Albert D., 'I do swear': Oath-Taking among the Elite Public in Victorian England' in *Victorian Studies*, 49:4 (2007), pp 611 – 33.

Polletta, Francesca, 'It Was like a Fever ...' Narrative and Identity in Social Protest in *Social Problems*, 45:2 (May, 1998), pp 137-59.

Polletta, Francesca and. Jasper, James M., 'Collective Identity and Social Movements' in *Annual Review of Sociology*, 27 (2001), pp 283-305.

Polletta, Francesca, 'Culture and Movements', in *The Annals of the American Academy of Political and Social Science*, 619:1 (Sept. 2008), pp 78-96.

Poole, Robert, 'The march to Peterloo: Politics and festivity in late Georgian England' in *Past & Present*, 192 (2006), pp 109-53.

Post, Charles, 'The agrarian origins of US capitalism: The transformation of the northern countryside before the civil war' in *The Journal of Peasant Studies*, 22:3 (1995), pp 389-445.

Pratt, Jeff, *Class, nation and identity: The anthropology of political movements* (London, 2003).

Randall, Adrian, 'Foreword' in Kevin Binfield (ed.), *Writings of the Luddites* (Baltimore 2004), pp xiii – xviii.

Richards, Eric, 'Patterns of Highland Discontent, 1790 – 1860' in R. Quinault and J. Stevenson (eds), *Popular protest and public order: Six studies in British history 1790 – 1920* (London, 1974), pp 75-114.

Reckord, Mary, 'The Jamaica Slave Rebellion of 1831' in *Past & Present,* 40 (1968), pp 108-25.

Rediker, Marcus, *Villains of all nations: Atlantic pirates in the golden age* (London, 2004).

Rey, Pierre-Philippe, and James F. Becker, 'Class alliances' in *International Journal of Sociology*, (1982), pp i-120.

Roseberry, William, 'Rent, differentiation, and the development of capitalism among peasants' in *American Anthropologist*, 78:1 (1976), pp 45-58.

Roseberry, William, *Anthropologies and histories: Essays in culture, history, and political economy* (New Brunswick, 1989)

Roseberry, William, 'Hegemony and the Language of Contention' in Gilbert M. Joseph and Daniel Nugent (eds), *Everyday forms of State formation: Revolution and the negotiation of rule in modern Mexico* (Durham, 1994), pp 355-66.

Rude, George, *Ideology and popular protest* (North Carolina, 1995).

Sahlins, Peter, *Forest Rites: The war of the Demoiselles in nineteenth-century France* (Cambridge Mass., 1994).

Sardar, Ziauddin and Borin Van Loon, *Introducing cultural studies* (Royston, 2004).

Sarkar, Sumit, 'The conditions and nature of subaltern militancy: Bengal from Swadeshi to Non-Co-operation, c. 1905 – 22', in Ranajit Guha (ed), *Subaltern Studies III: Writings on South Asian history and society* (New Delhi, 1984), pp 271 – 320.

Sarkar, Sumit, *Modern India, 1885 – 1947* (Hampshire, 1989).

Sarkar, Sumit, 'Hegemony and historical practice' in Dagmar Engels and Shula Marks (eds), *Contesting colonial hegemony: State and society in Africa and India* (London 1994), pp 277 – 81.

Sarkar, Sumit, *Writing social history* (Delhi, 1997).

Sayer, Andrew, *Realism and social science* (London, 2000).

Sayer, Derek, *The Violence of abstraction: The analytic foundations of historical materialism* (Oxford, 1987).

Schindler, Norbert, *Rebellion, community and custom in early modern Germany* (Cambridge, 2002).

Scott, James C., 'Protest and profanation: Agrarian revolt and the little tradition, part I' in *Theory and Society*, 4:1 (1977), pp 1-38.

Scott, James C., 'Protest and profanation: Agrarian revolt and the little tradition, Part II' in *Theory and Society*, 4:2 (1977), pp 211-246.

Scott, James C., *Weapons of the weak: Everyday forms of peasant resistance* (New Haven, 1985).

Scott, James C., 'Everyday Forms of Peasant Resistance' in *Journal of Peasant Studies,* 13:2 (1986), pp 5 – 35.

Scott, James C., *Domination and the arts of resistance: Hidden transcripts* (New Haven, 1990).

Seal, Graham, 'Tradition and Agrarian Protest in Nineteenth-Century England and Wales' in *Folklore*, 99:2 (1988), pp 146-69.

Seal, Graham, *The outlaw legend: A cultural tradition in Britain, America, and Australia* (Cambridge, 1996).

Seal, Graham, 'The Robin Hood principle: folklore, history and the social bandit' in *Journal of Folklore Research*, 46:1 (2009), pp 67-89.

Selbin, Eric, 'Revolution in the Real World: Bringing Agency Back in' in John Foran (ed.), *Theorising revolution* (London, 1997), pp 123-36.

Selbin, Eric, *Revolution, rebellion, resistance the power of story* (London, 2010).

Sennet, Richard and Cobb, Jonathan, *The hidden injuries of class* (Cambridge, 1972).

Sewell, W. H., *Work and revolution in France: The language of labor from the Old Regime to 1848* (Cambridge, 1980).

Sewell Jr., William H.,' Language and Practice in Cultural History: Backing Away from the Edge of the Cliff', in *French Historical Studies*, 21:2 (1998), pp 241-54.

Sewell Jr., William H., 'How classes are made: Critical reflections on E.P. Thompson's theory of working-class formation' in Harvey J. Kaye and Keith McClelland (eds), *E.P. Thompson: Critical perspectives* (Philadelphia, 1990), pp 50 - 77.

Shah, Alpa, 'The Agrarian Question in a Maoist Guerrilla Zone: Land, Labour and Capital in the Forests and Hills of Jharkhand, India' in *Journal of Agrarian Change,* 13:3 (Jul. 2013), pp 424–50.

Shakesheff, Timothy, *Rural conflict, Crime and protest: Herefordshire, 1800 to 1860* (Suffolk 2003).

Sharpe, J.A., *Crime in early modern England 1550-1750* (London, 1999).

Sharpe, James, *Dick Turpin: The myth of the English highwayman* (London, 2005).

Showstack Sassoon, Anne (ed.), *Approaches to Gramsci* (London, 1982).

Showstack Sassoon, Anne, 'Hegemony, war of position, and political intervention' in Anne Showstack Sassoon (ed.), *Approaches to Gramsci* (London, 1982), pp 94 – 115.

Showstack Sassoon, Anne, *Gramsci's politics* (London, 1987).

Springer, Simon, 'Illegal evictions? Overwriting possession and orality with law's violence in Cambodia' in *Journal of Agrarian Change*, 13:4 (2013), pp 520-46.

Simon, Bernd, *Identity in modern society: A social psychological perspective* (Oxford ,2004).

Simon, Roger, 'Gramsci's concept of hegemony' in *Marxism Today*, 21:3 (Mar. 1977), pp 78 – 86.

Simon, Bernd and Bert Klandermans 'Politicized collective identity: A social psychology analysis' in *American Psychology*, 56:4 (2001), pp 319-31.

Simpson, Jacqueline and Roud, Steve, *A dictionary of English folklore* (Oxford, 2000).

Skaria, Ajay, 'Writing, orality and power in the Dangs, Western India, 1800s-1920s' in Dipesh Chakrabarty and Shahid Amin (eds), *Subaltern Studies Vol. IX* (Delhi, 1996), pp 13-58.

Skocpol, Theda*, States and social revolutions* (Cambridge, 1979).

Smith, Dennis, *The rise of historical sociology* (Cambridge 1991).

Smith, Gavin, A. 'Socio-Economic Differentiation and Relations of Production among Rural-Based Petty Producers in Central Peru 1880 to 1970', in *Journal of Peasant Studies,* 6:3 (1979), pp 286 – 310.

Smith, Gavin, *Livelihood and resistance: Peasants and the politics of land in Peru* (Berkeley, 1989).

Smith, Gavin, *Confronting the present: Towards a politically engaged anthropology* (Oxford, 1999).

Snow, David, 'Collective identity and expressive forms', Center for the Study of Democracy Working Papers, 10-01-2001, online at escholarship.org/uc/item/2zn1t7bj, accessed 5 Sept. 2014.

Spinner-Halev, Jeff and Theiss-Morse, Elizabeth, 'National Identity and Self-Esteem', in *Perspectives on Politics*, 1:3 (2003), pp 515-32.

Starn, Orin, '"I dreamed of Foxes and Hawks": Reflections on Peasant Protest, New Social Movements, and the Rondas Campesinas of Northern Peru' in Arturo Escobar and Sonia E. Alvarez (eds), *The making of social movements in Latin America: Identity, strategy and democracy* (Boulder, 1992), pp 89 – 111.

Starr, June, and Jane Fishburne Collier (eds), *History and power in the study of law: New directions in legal anthropology* (Ithaca, 1989).

de Ste.Croix, G. E. M., *The Class Struggle in the Ancient Greek World from the Archaic Age to the Arab Conquests* (Ithaca, 1981).

de Ste.Croix, G. E. M., 'Class in Marx's Conception of History, Ancient and Modern', in *New Left Review*, 146 (1984), pp 94 -111.

Stedman Jones, Gareth, *Languages of class: Studies in English working class history 1832-1982* (Cambridge, 1983).

Steinberg, Marc W., 'The Re-Making of the English Working Class?' in *Theory and Society,* 20:2 (1991), pp 173-97.

Steinberg, Marc W., 'The Dialogue of Struggle: The Contest over Ideological Boundaries in the Case of London Silk Weavers in the Early Nineteenth Century' in *Social Science History*, 18:4 (1994), pp 505-41.

Steinberg, Marc W., 'Culturally Speaking: Finding a Commons between Post-Structuralism and the Thompsonian Perspective' in *Social History*, 21:2 (1996), pp 193-214.

Steinberg, Marc W., *Fighting Words: Working-Class Formation, Collective Action, and Discourse in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Ithaca, 1999).

Steinberg, Marc W., 'The Talk and Back Talk of Collective Action: A Dialogic Analysis of Repertoires of Discourse among Nineteenth-Century English Cotton Spinners' in *American Journal of Sociology*, 105:3 (1999), pp 736-80.

Steinberg, Marc W., 'Toward a More Dialogic Analysis of Social Movement Culture in David S. Meyer, Nancy Whittier and Belinda Robnett (eds), *Social movements: Identity, culture, and the state* (Oxford, 2002), pp 208-25.

Storey, John (ed.), *Cultural theory and popular culture* (Hertfordshire, 1984).

Sugarman, David (ed.), *Legality, ideology, and the state* (New York, 1983).

Taylor, John G., *From modernization to modes of production: A critique of the sociologies of development and underdevelopment* (London, 1979).

Taylor, John G., 'Underdevelopment and Modes of Production: A Reply to Nicos Mouzelis', in *Journal of Peasant Studies*, 8:3 (1981), pp 381 – 393.

Taussig, Michael T., *The devil and commodity fetishism in South America* (Chapel Hill, 1980).

Therborn, Goran, *The ideology of power and the power of ideology* (London, 1980).

Thompson, Edward P., 'Time, work-discipline, and industrial capitalism' in *Past & Present*, 38 (1967), pp 56-97.

Thompson, E. P., *The Making of the English Working Class* (Harmondsworth, 1968).

Thompson, Edward P., 'The moral economy of the English crowd in the eighteenth century' in *Past & Present*, 50 (1971), pp 76-136.

Thompson, E. P., 'Patrician Society, Plebeian Culture' in *Journal of Social History*, 7:4 (1974), pp 382-405.

Thompson, E. P., *Whigs and Hunters: the origin of the Black Act* (London, 1975).

Thompson, E. P., 'The crime of anonymity' in Douglas Hay, Peter Linebaugh, John G. Rule, E. P. Thompson, and Cal Winslow (eds), *Albion's fatal tree: crime and society in eighteenth-century England* (Harmondsworth, 1977), pp 255-344.

Thompson, E.P., 'Eighteenth century English society: Class struggle without class?' in *Social History*, 3:2 (1978), pp 133-65.

Thompson, E.P., 'Rough music reconsidered' in *Folklore*, 103:1 (1992), pp 3-26.

Thompson, E. P., *Customs in common* (London, 1993).

Thorner, Alice, 'Semi-Feudalism or Capitalism? Contemporary Debate on Classes and Modes of Production in India' (in three parts), in *Economic and Political Weekly*, 17:49 (Dec. 4, 1982), pp 1961-68; 17:50 (Dec. 11, 1982), pp. 1993-99; 17:51 (Dec. 18, 1982), pp. 2061-66.

Tikhomirov, Alexey, 'Symbols of power in rituals of violence: The personality cult and iconoclasm on the Soviet empire's periphery (East Germany, 1945–61)' in *Kritika: Explorations in Russian and Eurasian History*, 13:1 (2012), pp 47–88.

Tilly, Charles, *Popular Contention in Great Britain 1758 - 1834* (Cambridge Mass., 1995)

Tilly, Charles, 'The Web of Contention in Eighteenth-Century Cities', in Louise A. Tilly and Charles Tilly (eds), *Class conflict and collective action* (Beverly Hills, 1981), pp 27 – 52.

Tilly, Louise A., 'The Food Riot as a Form of Political Conflict in France' in *Journal of Interdisciplinary History*, 2:1 (1971) pp 23-57.

Tosh, John, with Sean Lang, *The pursuit of history: Aims, methods and new directions in the study of modern history* (Harlow, 2006).

Touraine, Alain, *The voice and the eye* (Cambridge, 1981).

Tovey, Hilary, 'Rural Sociology in Ireland: a review' in *Irish Journal of Sociology*, 2 (1992), pp 96 – 121.

Todorov, Tzvetan, *Mikhail Bakhtin: The dialogical principle* (Manchester, 1984).

Urquhart, Cathy, *Grounded theory for qualitative research: A practical guide* (London, 2013).

Veltmeyer, Henry, 'New social movements in Latin America: The dynamics of class and identity' in *Journal of Peasant Studies,* 25:1 (1997), pp 139-69.

Vice, Sue, *Introducing Bakhtin* (Manchester, 1997).

Viola, Lynne, *Peasant rebels under Stalin: Collectivization and the culture of peasant resistance* (Oxford, 1996).

Vološinov, V.N., *Marxism and the philosophy of language* (New York, 1973).

Wickham-Crowley, Timothy P., 'Structural Theories of Revolution' in John Foran (ed.), *Theorising revolution* (London, 1997), pp 38 – 72.

Wilf, Steven 'Imagining Justice: Aesthetics and Public Executions in Late Eighteenth-Century England' in *Yale Journal of Law & the Humanities,* 5:1 (1993), pp 51 – 78.

Williams, David, *The Rebecca riots: a study in agrarian discontent* (Cardiff, 1955).

Williams, Gwyn A., *Proletarian order: Antonio Gramsci, factory councils and the origins of communism in Italy 1911-1921* (London, 1975).

Williams, Raymond, *Culture* (London, 1981).

Williams, Raymond, *Marxism and literature* (Oxford, 1977).

Williams, Raymond, *The Long Revolution* (Harmondsworth, 1965).

Williams, Rhys H., 'The Cultural Contexts of Collective Action: Constraints, Opportunities, and the Symbolic Life of Social Movements' in David A. Snow, Sarah A. Soule, and Hanspeter Kriesi (eds), *The Blackwell companion to social movements* (Malden, 2004), pp 91 – 115.

Wolf, Eric R., *Peasant wars of the twentieth century* (London, 1971).

Wolf, Eric R., *Europe and the people without history* (Berkeley, 1982).

Wood, Andy, 'Poore men woll speke one daye' plebeian languages of deference and defiance in England, c.1520-1640' in T. Harris (ed.), *The politics of the excluded in England, 1500-1850* (Basingstoke, 2001).

Wood, Andy, 'Fear, Hatred and the Hidden Injuries of Class in Early Modern England', in *Journal of Social History*, xxxix (2006), pp 803-26.

Wood, Andy, 'Collective violence, social drama and rituals of rebellion in late medieval and early modern England' in Stuart Carroll (ed.), *Cultures of violence: Interpersonal violence in historical perspective* (Hampshire, 2007), pp 99-116.

Zemon Davis, Natalie, 'The reasons for misrule: youth groups and charivaris in sixteenth-century France' in *Past & Present,* 50 (1971), pp 41-75.

Zemon Davis, Natalie, *The return of Martin Guerre* (Cambridge Mass., 1983).

Zemon Davis, Natalie, *Society and culture in early modern France: eight essays* (Cambridge, 1987).

Zemon Davis, Natalie, *A passion for history: conversation with Denis Crouzet* (Kirksville Missouri, 2010).

van Zomeren, Martijn, Russell Spears, Agneta H. Fischer and Colin Wayne Leach, 'Put your money where your mouth is! Explaining collective action through group-based anger and group efficacy' in *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, 87:5 (2004), pp 649-64.

Internet sources

Online Resources:

Placenames Database of Ireland, www.logainm.ie

Tithe Applotment Books, 1823-37, titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie

Griffith's Valuations, www.askaboutireland.ie/griffith-valuation/

OSI historic maps - Ordnance Survey Ireland maps.osi.ie/publicviewer/

Individual Webpages:

Seomra Ranga – Map of Ireland www.seomraranga.com/2010/08/map-of-ireland/, accessed 29/10/14.

Official statement from ex Game employees in the Republic of Ireland [13th of April 2012 10pm] www.facebook.com/notes/game-ireland-fight-for-your-rights/official-statement-from-ex-game-employees-in-the-republic-of-ireland-13th-of-apr/219827961451228, accessed 21/08/2014.

Official statement from ex Game employees in the Republic of Ireland [31st March 2012 1:00pm] www.facebook.com/notes/game-ireland-fight-for-your-rights/official-statement-from-ex-game-employees-in-the-republic-of-ireland-31st-march-/213485772085447, accessed 21/08/2014.

Appendices

Appendix A: Examples of notices

Tullogher, Co. Kilkenny notice

The following notice was posted up outside the chapel in Tullogher, in the south-east of
Kilkenny, on 30 September 1832:

> 'Let the Undernamed unfeeling oppression take that as soon as I shall find myself
> disengaged from other affairs, I shall without mercy terminate your Existence you
> have heretofore got Notices at your Houses & elsewhere which you have heedlessly
> slighted. Now in Order to shew you that I thirst not after your Blood take this as the
> last Notice to quit and clear away Yourselves & Propertys from off the lands of
> Mullinakill, whilst in your power to do so for if you persist in your obstinacy so that I
> am necessitated to pay you a Visit yourselves and properties will surely suffer for
> rely on it that you will not Exist and hold it. I am yours & Rock in Co. Regulator'.[1]

The notice goes on to name five men Andrew Keefe and Paric Walsh of Coolnaha, Richard
Murphy of Mullinakill and William Freeney and Andrew Kirwins both of Glanpipe.

A William Freeney in Glanpipe holds 8 acres in 1833 Tithe Applotment Book for civil parish
of Jerpoint West,[2] but another William Freeney, likely the same person, holds a further 11
acres in the adjoining townland of Mullinakill in the same civil parish and Freeney is a joint

---

[1] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.
[2] Tithe applotment book, townland of Glanpipe, parish of Jerpoint West, diocese of Ossory, 1833 (online at
titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/reels/tab//004587451/004587451_00082.pdf, accessed 14/10/14).

tenant of a further 32 acres with a Neal Dallon also in Mullinakill.[3] An Andrew Keefe has 40 acres at the second highest quality in Mullinakill,[4] and 37 acres of more mixed quality in Coolnaha.[5] There is no Paric Walsh listed in Coolnaha but there is a Pierce Walsh with 68 acres in a joint holding.[6] A Pierce Walsh also had 13 acres in Mullinakill,[7] and 16 acres in Garrandara.[8] There is no Richard Murphy recorded in Mullinakill but there is a possibly related Thomas Murphy with 42 acres.[9]

Clough, Co. Kilkenny notice

A notice from the opposite end of county Kilkenny from March 1832 reads:

> 'David Campion I hope you will excuse my long silence or staying so long but as I came in to the County if you will be so good as to give up the farm that in short belongs to the Mahers you know Campion that i have A severe And blody Likeing for you Dont be accesry to your own death for as shure as potts is ded I will Leave you in Like manner before this Day week Beware of yourself for i will take you short Also the Labouring men and Woman and Children to rise of from working for Campion untill he Complies with this or I will put yous to Death Beware of this ye all Also Darby Browne [?] to Do the same he got warning Be fore Let him Look sharp
>
> Yous have 7 Days loock out

[3] Tithe applotment book, townland of Mullinakill, parish of Jerpoint West, diocese of Ossory, 1833 (online at titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/reels/tab//004587451/004587451_00080.pdf, accessed 14/10/14).
[4] *Ibid.*
[5] Tithe applotment book, townland of Coolnaha, parish of Jerpoint West, diocese of Ossory, 1833 titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/reels/tab//004587451/004587451_00079.pdf, accessed 14/10/14).
[6] *Ibid.*
[7] Tithe applotment book, townland of Mullinakill, parish of Jerpoint West, diocese of Ossory, 1833 (online at titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/reels/tab//004587451/004587451_00080.pdf, accessed 14/10/14).
[8] Tithe applotment book, townland of Garrandara, parish of Jerpoint West, diocese of Ossory, 1833 (online at titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/reels/tab//004587451/004587451_00082.pdf, accessed 14/10/14).
[9] Tithe applotment book, townland of Mullinakill, parish of Jerpoint West, diocese of Ossory, 1833 (online at titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/reels/tab//004587451/004587451_00080.pdf, accessed 14/10/14).

Captain Rock'.[10]

A David Campion was holding 147 acres in the townland of Aughatubbrid, civil parish of

Castlecomer,[11] County of Kilkenny, in the year 1823, the second largest holding in the

townland; this townland is very close to the village of Clough where this notice is reported

as coming from. Additionally the 1826 Tithe Applotment Book for the Civil Parish of

Rathaspick has a Mr. David Campion (and note most people do not get the 'Mr.' title in this

document) with a number of different plots of 46, 14, 10, 14 and 4 acres respectively.[12] On

the night of Saturday the January 7 1832 there was an assembly on the farm of a Campion in

Slatt, and the townlands of Slatt Lower and Slatt Upper are both in the civil parish of

Rathaspick; a small distance from Clough over the border into the Queen's County. The

assembled party levelled some newly erected ditches and posted notices threatening

Campion with death if he did not surrender the lands which he had just recently taken the

lease of from the Parnell estate. [13]

Furthermore a further notice pertaining to lands in Aughatubbrid, or Chatsworth as it was

also known,[14] acquired by David Campion is contained in another collection,[15] this was from

north-east Kilkenny from March 1832. It reads:

'Notice

---

[10] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

[11] Tithe applotment book, townland of Aughatubbrid, civil parish of Castlecomer, county of Kilkenny, 1823 (online at titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/reels/tab//004587414/004587414_00140.pdf, accessed 14/10/14).

[12] Tithe applotment book, townland of Slatt, parish of Rathaspick, Queen's county, 1826 (online at titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/reels/tab//004625709/004625709_00472.pdf, accessed 14/10/14).

[13] Towlerton: Robert Wright to Sir John Harvey, 12 Jan. 1832 (Police reports for Jan. 1832)(N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/233).

[14] Placenames database of Ireland, online at www.logainm.ie/1401019.aspx, accessed 14/10/14.

[15] D. T. Osborne to Sir William Gosset, n.d. (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/608).

The land held formerly by Widow Brennan in the towns land of Chatsworth now in the possession of David Campion is required to be given to the right Owner or otherwise Captain Rock will justify the Case March 24th 1832'.

Taghmon, Co. Wexford notice

A letter addressed to 'Mr. James Walsh Coolcul Taghmon', which is in county Wexford, illustrates how the targeting of tenants can ultimately be intended to bring pressure to bear on the landlord. The alternatives put forward in this notice are either the restoration of the former tenant or leaving the land untenanted thereby cutting off a revenue stream. It reads as follows:

'Monday 18th 1832

Dr. sir,

after the receipt of this I request that you will give up & surrender that part of the lands of Coolaul unto the Landlord or the former tenant your instructions are as follows, hold the land until you get your crop thereof, pay no rent on any account, & let us see where is the man who will sase or cant suspend all work at present on it Give the land up or by God you will be consumed in your house, together with that other Land ferrit, robbing roage your brother. dont think yous are forgot, that yous are to plunder honest natures of there just rights, yous could live without that land, yous think nothing of putting out a poor man & wife, & six children under the

inclemency of the air without eighter food or covering would yous take such

treatment yourself I say give up & surrender after you get your crop or there wont

be one of your breed left alive in one hour after we pay yous visit. I will answer the

question for yous, we will give it up, or not Death without redemption to your breed

Death, Death

We remain the poor mans friends'.[16]

The 1833 Tithe Applotment Book for the parish of Taghmon has a James Walsh holding 34

acres in the townland of Coolcull.[17] The evocative passage 'yous could live without that land,

yous think nothing of putting out a poor man & wife, & six children under the inclemency of

the air without eighter food or covering' is suggestive of a clash between on one side a

production orientated towards subsistence coupled with a cash-crop meeting the rent and

on the other side a more commercially expansive production.

[16] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.
[17] Tithe applotment book, townland of Coolcull, parish of Taghmon, diocese of Ferns, 1833 (online at titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/reels/tab//004625720/004625720_00094.pdf, accessed 14/10/14).

Wexford micro-holdings

The following notice, also from county Wexford, was put up on the gable end of a forge. Its contents are more suggestive of the conflict within and between families, in this case perhaps between different groups of in-laws over inheritance (see chapter eight). Sure enough comparisons with the Tithe Applotment books reveal this to have been likely a conflict over micro-tenancies.   It reads:

> 'Take Notice James Shaw and the Widow Durie [?] for to raplace the Widow Shaw in her land again and if not we will make yous abide by the consequence for we will visit yous when you wont beware we will consume your Places into dust and feed your Bodies with cold led so we hope that you wont put us to that trouble let yous not think that Police will frighten us – no my dear for we will make but the one night of it for to do all these things so here is the form of your last habillment [which is French for clothing perhaps there was meant to be a picture of a coffin here?]
>
> White Feet Lodge
>
> N.B. This is the first notice
>
> cold balls [and little picture of balls i.e. the then equivalent of bullets]'.[18]

Both a James Shaw and a Widow Shaw recorded in the 1824 Tithe Applotment Book in the townland of Tottenhamgreen, civil parish of Horetown, County Wexford as holding a little over one acre and a little over three acres respectively.[19]

---

[18] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

Listerlin, Co. Kilkenny Notice

The following notice was issued to a 'Mr. Forristal of Listerlin' in the county of Kilkenny:

'Notice

Be it known to the publick and particularly to those whom it may concern, that we the Regulators of Ireland do now for the last time warn Mr. Forristal of Listerlin, to give up and deliver the possession of that land for which he was heretofore checked (?) and warned. Also to get the sledges for the owner, or else payment to equal the full value of the same. A public acknowledgement of having complyed with these warning we desire to have posted on the Chappel door of Ballinaharagle on next Sunday the 23rd instant, or else if not, and because of his behaviour as to the Sledges (for this above testified what he is) both himself, and family, house and property shall be massacked and Consumed to ashes. We permit and advise the Revd. Mr. Armstrong to come home to his dwelling place, and go on with his business as he formerly had done, for he need not dread us nor neither need any, honest person, and as such we have aways found him, for we are only Regulating the Country and shewing Justice to every oppressed honest person. We also caution the police who resort near this place to beware of us and have nothing at all to do concerning any business but to behave friendly and justly to us, and so shall we do the same to them so whilst this they do they need not dread us but if they act the Contrary they will have occation to do so, let them not think that either themselves

---

[19] Tithe applotment book, townland of Tottenhamgreen, parish of Horetown, county Wexford, 1824 (online at titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/reels/tab//004587448/004587448_00501.pdf, accessed 14/10/14).

or their laws will be able to daunt or put us down, not not ever we despise them in

that point & & &

December 14th 1832} Yours & & Capt. and Co. of the Regulators'.[20]

There are townlands of Ballynaraha South and Ballynaraha North near Listerlin. Richard

Forristal in the Tithe Applotment Book for the civil parish of Listerlin for the year 1825 is

listed as holding in 51 acres in the townland of Ballalog,[21] and another 28 acres in the

townland Ballalogue.[22] Additionally the window Forristal holds 27 and 51 acres are held in

partnership by a Patrick Forristal (possibly in partnership with Richard and possibly the same

51 acres as listed earlier). Ballalog and Ballalogue are probably the same place.

[20] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.
[21] Tithe applotment book, parish of Listerlin, barony of Ida (online at
titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/reels/tab//004625694/004625694_00455.pdf, accessed 14/10/14).
[22] Tithe applotment book, townland of Ballalogue, barony of Ida (online at
titheapplotmentbooks.nationalarchives.ie/reels/tab//004625694/004625694_00458.pdf, accessed 14/10/14).

Appendix B: Whitefeet ballad

Last Saturday night as I lay in my bed or Captain Carder.

The following song text – collected in Carlow in the mid-1830s – was given the name 'Last Saturday night as I lay in my bed' by song collector and antiquarian George Petrie and has been performed in the present day by Seán Corcoran using the title 'Captain Carder'.[23]

'Last Saturday night as I lay in my bed,

The neighbours came to me, and this 'twas they said:

Are you Captain Lusty? – I answered them – no!

Are you Captain Carder? – Indeed I am so.

Get up Captain Carder, and look thro' your glass,

And see all your merry men just as they pass;

The clothing they wear, 'tis rare to be seen,

With their Liberty jackets bound over with green.

Success to Moll Hayden, and long may she reign,

For instead of cold water, she gave us pure cream,

---

[23] Captain Carder, online at www.youtube.com/watch?v=ZY7Tgce2F28, accessed 12/08/2014.

To put strength in our bodies, and speed in our feet,

And make us be able *to whale the black sheep.*

Here's luck to Kilkenny, and sweet Ballyroan –

As for Timahoe town, we may call it our own;

In Timahoe town we may march up and down,

And at Billy Dunne's corner we'll make them lie down.

Success to the Whitefeet – there's a few of them here;

We'll toast their good health in both whiskey and beer;

And long may they reign over country and town'

For they are the boys that *keep land jobbers down!'*[24]

The lyrics about Captain Carder are of course a parallel to the captain motif within the

notices as addressed in chapter four. Carder is in reference to carding, an early stage in the

processing of sheep's wool, in which was used a rectangular piece of wood with sharp

points or nails on one side. This tool was also used as an instrument of torture so carding

also comes to refer to this torture and it gives its name to the Carders, a whiteboy

movement circa 1813-16. The line 'Liberty jackets bound over with green' is likely as not

---

[24] *The Petrie Collection of the Ancient Music of Ireland*, ed. David Copper (Cork, 2002), pp 132-3.

alluding to the symbolism associated with republicanism in the 1790s. That said I have not found mention of 'liberty jackets' in the relevant secondary literature, as opposed to say liberty trees. Green is the traditional colour used to represent Ireland, something which dates back at least to the eighteenth-century or perhaps into earlier Gaelic literature.[25] 'Moll Hayden' is likely akin to the female personages featured in the notices, who are on occasions Molls or similar. The line 'make us be able *to whale the black sheep'* is possibly an error in transcription with 'quell the blackfeet' being the original. The Blackfeet being a fighting faction involved in a rivalry with the Whitefeet, largely before the Whitefeet name, and most likely the associated body of people, become involved in whiteboy-style activity.[26] The fourth verse's extolling of Timahoe town, a small town in the south-east of the Queen's County, just above the northern perimeter of the coal-mining district, is of interest. This village was, according to a local Catholic clergyman, an early organising hub of the Whitefeet in the autumn of 1828.[27] While much of the reported activity of the Whitefeet was clandestine, as discussed earlier in Chapter One, the openness suggested by parading is not unheard of. There seems to have been such going on in Athy, in County Kildare and about twenty kilometres east of Timahoe, in the summer of 1832, of where one magistrate reports:

> 'large groups of persons calling themselves Whitefeet shouting and parading the streets, to the great dread and terror of the peaceable inhabitants, in fact the town presented the appearance of being completely in the hands of those ruffians'.[28]

---

[25] Peter Alter 'Symbols of Irish Nationalism' in *Studia Hibernica*, 14 (1974), pp. 104-123; Brian Ó Cuív 'The Wearing of the Green' in *Studia Hibernica*, 17/18 (1977/1978), pp. 107-119

[26] ; Hugh Boyd Wray to Sir John Harvey, 14 June 1832 (N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/1039); Wray, *State of Ireland*, p. 218.

[27] Delaney, *State of Ireland*, p. 251.

[28] James Tandy to Sir William Gosset, 9 May 1832 (N.A.I. C.S.O./R.P./1832/1091).

Finally, the final line's reference to 'land jobbers' is a reference to persons taking land

illegitimately; i.e. taking land from which others had been evicted or taking land over the

heads of existing tenants. This land-taking motif occurs within twenty notices studied for

this thesis and within them several epithets are used to describe persons taking land

including land jobber, land taker, 'Land ferrit' and land pirates.[29]

---

[29] N.A.I., C.S.O./R.P./1832/2267.

Appendix C: Tipperary evictee

The following is from a footnote in that section of the Poor Law inquiry report concerning the 'Consolidation of farms and dislodged tenantry' and recounts an encounter between Poor Law inquiry commissioners and an evicted man.[30]

> The Assistant Commissioners were accosted one day by a man, who stated he was glad he met them, as he was anxious to ask how he should act under the following circumstances ; "I held that farm (pointing to some ground near the road-side) at a deal higher rent than the land could make ; and, of course, I got into arrear. I was immediately turned out by the landlord, and my wife and children are now beholden to the neighbours. Of course no one *dare* take it until they got my *good-will* of it, and I'm waiting until Government passes the Corporation Bill, to see if I would get it back then, as it is what is called *corporation land* ; and I believe the landlord turned me out unjustly, as he himself has no real title in it, only he is *rich* and I am *poor*."

> The Assistant Commissioners then asked him what feeling he would entertain against any man who might chance to take it. He replied, "To be sure I would have a bad feeling to him, and why should not I? The devil a much of the world's bread he would eat after it any way, as I would die to have his life, or any one like him, that would step in to *take the bread out of my wife's and children's mouths*."

> The Assistant Commissioners then asked him with what feelings would the peasantry look on the family of a man who was hanged for "*beating a man to death*" (The man appeared to dislike calling it murder, and those are the words he used) under such

---

[30] *Poor law inquiry appendix f*, p. 119.

circumstances? He replied, "His wife and family would be *regarded*, and why not? I would take the bit out of my wife's or children's mouths before I would see his, the *poor* things! want it; because didn't he lose his life for the good of the people, and did in the *'cause?'* And I'll tell you what is more, gentlemen, that although the people may 'fault' and abuse the 'Whitefeet,' and boys that go round at night with the '*black faces,*' that only for them the whole country would be in a *rising* ; the poor would have no protection at all, the landlords would hunt them out, like rats out of a corn-stack, without any sort of compunction, only they know the ground would be left on their hands, as any man that would take it *'knows his fate;'* and sure if in doing that any boy should *suffer* (*i.e.*, be hanged), why should not we succour the poor things left behind them? Sure was not it to prevent us and the likes of us being turned adrift on the wide world that they *came to the pass*?"

In asking what would be the feeling towards an "informer," he replied, "Faith, he should quit that moment, or '*God help him ;*' and, more than that, the people would *'disgust'* even his family and every one belonging to him, because he would be nothing better than a *'blood-seller.'*"

Appendix D: Glossary

Liberal movement coalescing in the 1820s around such issues as removing the form of oath which precluded Roman Catholics from sitting in the House of Commons or the House of Lords (a.k.a. Catholic Emancipation), on related issues such as the need for multi-denominational graveyards, for reform of local government and inclusion of more Catholics in offices of state, against the tribute (or tithe) paid to the Church of Ireland and for franchise reform, culminates in agitation for the Repeal of the Union in the 1840s – that is to say for the restoration of the pre-1801 Irish parliament.

O'Connellite referring to followers of Daniel O'Connell – a major figure in the liberal movement.

Whig-liberal a less radical version of the above, affiliated to the British Whig party.

Rebellion of 1848, a small insurrection mounted by a more militant and more nationalist breakaway from the liberal movement.

Tory, a member of the Conservative party which had been in government almost exclusively from the early 1790s to the early 1830s. In the Irish context Tories are associated with what they regard as defence of the 'Protestant interest'.

Covenanters, religious dissidents and ancestors of modern Presbyterianism who were involved in the War of the Three Kingdoms 1639-51 and were the *de facto* government of Scotland during much of that period while making interventions into Ireland and England. Much persecuted in the later part of the seventeenth-century.

Jacobites/Jacobean, supporters of the House of Stuart's claim to the Scottish, English and Irish thrones. This dynasty ruled Scotland from 1371 to 1688-92 and Ireland and England from 1603 to 1688-92. Following their overthrow in 1688-92 they attempted to re-gain their position from exile supported by France, Spain, the Roman Catholic Church and a not inconsiderable number of their erstwhile subjects.

Williamite, the opponents, in the context of the 1690s, of the Jacobites and supporters of William of Orange's claim to the throne, a claim whose appeal mostly revolved around him not being a Catholic.

1798, a miscarried republican insurrection supported by the French Republic, with considerable violence along the eastern seaboard and a small French landing in the West. Best understood its context of broad popular politicisation between 1791 and 1803. The insurrection involved a coalition of the United Irishmen and Defender organisations.

Second Reformation, refers to a major attempt to proselytise the Catholic Irish carried on circa 1820 by activists from a variety of Protestant denominations as part of a wider religious revival in Europe (and in some European settler colonies). This was a contributing factor to sectarian conflict in this period.

National Schools, a system of free primary (elementary) education introduced from 1832 onwards.

Parliamentarian, is an affiliate of the English parliament during the War of the Three Kingdoms 1639-51.

Fenian rising of 1867, an insurrectionary attempt carried out by the Irish Republican Brotherhood.