

CHAPTER 18

COLONIAL SPACES AND SITES OF RESISTANCE: LANDED ESTATES IN 19TH CENTURY IRELAND

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Introduction

The regional expression of rural protest, agrarian outrage and rebellion in 19th century Ireland has been periodically examined by historians and historical geographers (Bric, 1985; Kiely and Nolan, 1992). One of the contexts within which such events may be re-visited is within a framework of local resistance to colonial domination. Post-colonial perspectives offer a critique of 19th century colonial discourse in which dominant power structures frequently served to 'Other' the colonized, through processes of negative stereotyping and myths of primitive backwardness. Colonial hegemonies generated both subservience and resistance in a variety of strategies by the colonized. Colonialism in its various manifestations throughout the British Empire provides some of the most clear-cut examples of a dominant elite subordinating a colonized 'inferior' native population.

Although the colonial nature of Ireland's relationships in the British Isles and British empire is sometimes ambiguous, they displayed most of the characteristics of colonial society in the 18th and 19th centuries, especially in the role played by the landed gentry. The Irish economy which was largely controlled in the 18th and 19th centuries by the English metropole, developed as an agricultural periphery to the British heartland. The Irish landed estate, which formed the lynch-pin of this economy, lay at the core of the colonial enterprise in Ireland from the 17th century. Estates became progressively contested spaces in the later 18th and 19th centuries, with increasingly unpopular attempts by the dominant elite to reform their properties through regulation. Ironically after 1801 Ireland was part of the United Kingdom and superficially less obviously a colony, though one commentator in 1834 noted the numbers of military garrisons in county Tipperary, as 'an array of bayonets that renders it difficult to believe that Ireland is other than a recently conquered territory, throughout which an enemy's army has just distributed its encampments' (McGrath, 1985). Much of the 19th century was taken up with agitation to remove the union between Great Britain and Ireland, generally in the teeth of opposition from the landed establishment which was predominantly unionist and imperialist in its outlook. The ambivalence and inherent contradictions in Ireland's political and colonial status are captured in the manner in which it was represented in the Great Exhibition in Dublin in 1853. The discursive

logic of an exhibition that was designed to reconfigure Ireland symbolically as a modern progressive nation comfortably located in the United Kingdom and the Empire, in the end only served to emphasize its subordinate colonial status: the organizers of the Exhibition found themselves 'instructing people whom they consider as their own national lower orders in the behaviours appropriate to civilized life, by mobilizing colonial images of Ireland traditionally used to denigrate the island as a backward region of the United Kingdom' (Saris, 2000).

Many of the projects of settlement and survey which were undertaken in Ireland from the 17th century were essential components of colonial enterprise, measuring and mapping a conquered land for appropriation and domination. The construction of the landed estate system was largely a product of such a mapping enterprise. The Civil and Down Surveys in the 17th century, the Ordnance Survey and the General Valuation of the mid-19th century, for example, were all pioneering episodes which were later replicated in outreaches of the empire. Other elements of the 19th century Irish experience, such as the postal system, and the Irish Constabulary (Royal Irish Constabulary from 1867) which were crucial parts of the Irish administration, subsequently became models for colonial practice throughout the empire.

Much of the literature on postcolonialism, orientalism and the British Empire does not initially appear as overtly relevant to Ireland's case. Indeed Ireland itself, especially its landed elite, was involved in the consolidation of many imperial overseas projects. There are, however, parallels in British colonial experiments in 19th century empire and earlier colonial developments in 16th and 17th century Ireland, reflected for instance in plantations of settlers from Britain, transplantations and Cromwellian 'ethnic cleansing' of elements of the native population to the West Indies in the 1650s. Though the nature of colonial experience in Ireland was modified through the 18th century, it persisted in some of the attitudes to and treatment of the native Catholic population, with echoes of colonial domination throughout the 19th century. The Yahoos appear as an ironic satire on colonial perceptions of the native Irish in *Gulliver's Travels* (published in 1726), characteristic of many stereotyped 'others' in classic colonial discourse:

....the Yahoos appear to be the most unteachable of all Animals, their Capacities never reaching higher than to draw or carry Burthens ... For they are cunning, malicious, treacherous and revengeful. They are strong and hardy, but of a cowardly Spirit, and by Consequence insolent, abject, and cruel... the Red-haired of both Sexes are more libidinous and mischievous than the rest (Swift, 1953, p. 285).

Routledge talks of the 'place-specific' character of popular protest and struggles resulting from the manner in which society endows space and its associated resources with a variety of meanings (Routledge, 1997, 1997a). Land ownership and occupation as the ultimate expression of space relations is and has been the focus of tensions and the site of resistance between powerful elites and comparatively powerless landless people in many parts of the world. Ownership and control of land formed the fulcrum of colonial power in Ireland, with increasing proportions of immigrant (Protestant) landowners in the 17th and 18th centuries. The close interrelationship between the ascendancy/gentry and membership of the Anglican Church, British army garrison and Irish administration in Dublin demonstrates this. Lester has also underlined the 'critical spatial dimensions' of colonial discourse (Lester, 1998, p. 3). In Ireland estates can be seen as manifestations of such a discourse, particularly in the case of the more extensive properties of some thousands of acres. More than 95 per cent of the island's land resources were held by around 5000 landowning gentry in the 1770s, much of which incorporated comparatively large extents of territory over which one owner exercised considerable power and control. The owner of such an estate in early 19th century Ireland had 'infinitely more control over its inhabitants than the government ... having it in his power to render the little world of which he is the centre ... miserable or happy according to the principles of management pursued' (Thompson and Tierney, 1975, p. 83).

Such landed estates provide good examples of the operation and application of knowledge and power by dominant elites, reflected in networks of gentry intermarriage, visiting and correspondence within elite circuits, symbiotic linkages with the colonial administration in Dublin and London, estate agency theory and practice, all consolidated by close cultural affinities with England and its gentry elite. Lindsay Proudfoot has recently placed more emphasis on the hybrid nature of gentry identity within Ireland and less on its colonial status, suggesting that gentry/ascendancy elites were not unique to Ireland but were part of a wider European post-enlightenment age (Proudfoot, 2000; 2000a; 2001). It is impossible, however, to ignore the ultimately colonial nature of Ireland's experience within Europe, the reality of England's first colony on its western doorstep in which many of its more distant colonial endeavours were first tested, and its general perception by London as a troublesome colony throughout the 19th century. To Edmund Burke in the later 18th century, Ireland provided 'a metaphor for the world beyond Dover, affording points of comparison which helped to explain events in places as far-flung as India or the Americas' (Kiberd, 1995, p. 19). The ethnic/cultural constitution of Ireland's landed elite (who participated in the European enlightenment largely through the filter of a British gentry) adds a putative colonial dimension to its relations of power in Ireland and to its dominant-subordinate relationship with the mass of the tenant

population. By the second half of the 19th century, it was becoming more and more a discredited, displaced and dispossessed elite.

Being very close to the heart' of empire, there was an intensity and immediacy in impacts of colonial and imperial discourse on Ireland. The central role played by England in 19th century world capitalism meant that the social upheaval which all peasantries have undergone was experienced acutely by the Irish. This exacerbated the dislocations brought about by the modernization of the economy as Ireland was rapidly subsumed within the ambit of discourses of improvement and the new political economy pressuring traditional resources. Landed estates and their farms and townlands were the settings for what Scott has characterised as everyday local resistance, small expressions of dissent, disrespect and protest (Scott, 1990).

Estates as colonial spaces

In terms of origins, a great many of the landed estates were part of an overt colonial enterprise in the 16th and 17th centuries – involving confiscation, plantation and colonization of the land of Ireland by British settlers. Those whose lineages were not grounded in plantation policy (such as Anglo-Norman manors or Gaelic territories of the 16th and 17th centuries) were by the 18th century locked into a transparently colonial world to which they had largely conformed in cultural and religious terms. Whether the owners were English/British (like Devonshire, Lansdowne, Palmerston, Abercorn, Fitzwilliam, Bath or Shirley) or Irish/Anglo-Irish (such as Downshire, Leinster, Leslie, Charlemont, Fingall), they were overwhelmingly part of a class and system which reflected the consequences, and supported the project, of imperial hegemony in Ireland. Members of the ascendancy and gentry commonly sent their children to be educated in schools, universities and law schools in England or to the Anglican environment of Trinity College, Dublin (established by Elizabeth 1 in 1595), and served in the army (especially the Indian army), navy and colonial administrations overseas. 'Insecurity and the England-complex remained with them to the end' (Foster, 1988, p. 194); like many other British colonials, Anglo-Irish gentry like Elizabeth Bowen saw themselves as 'a hyphenated people, forever English in Ireland, forever Irish in England' ... 'locked in misery between Holyhead and Kingstown [Dun Laoghaire],' (Kiberd, 1995, p. 367), a Kingstown whose placenames echoed with imperial ghosts -Wellington, Windsor, Carlyle.

Centres like Bath, Cowes and Cheltenham,¹ for example, comprised a familiar nexus of socialization for them. London and Dublin were foci of social, cultural and political life -though the Castle balls in Dublin by the

¹ On what is still referred to by many in Northern Ireland today as 'the mainland'.

1850s were 'no great affair' in the lofty (English) opinion of Mrs Shirley.² Gentlemen's clubs, like the Carlton and Garrick in London or the Kildare Street Club in Dublin, were important components in Irish gentry networks. Many Irish landowners maintained a house in London in the 19th century: Sir Charles Powell Leslie's four daughters required 'a spring-board' in London in 1872 and Stratford House was duly leased (Dooley, 2001, p. 48). Evelyn Philip Shirley's daughter wrote to him in Monaghan from their London house in Belgrave Square in 1832 to inform him that the city was beginning 'to fill some coming to attend the Houses of Lords and Commons and others to be ready for the Levy and Drawing Room which take place this week, the Drawing Room on Friday to celebrate the Queen's Birthday'.³ Like their British counterparts, Irish gentry went on Tours of the continent, Persia, Egypt, India, Africa, collecting arts and curios for their mansions. They married strictly within their class and creed, regularly seeking brides in England; London was 'the Mecca for matchmaking' (Leslie in Dooley, 2001, p. 67) and adhered generally to a collective view of the lower (Irish) classes, which generally represented them as 'other' to their morally and culturally superior world.

In much the same way as colonial authority elsewhere in empire was written into extravagant panoplies of landscape and architecture, the houses and landscapes of even the most modest gentry landowner in Ireland reflected a world of privileged extravagance, where the norms of 'civilization' and social order were inscribed in avenue and mansion, parkland, parterre and planted vistas – from the 'crenellated extravaganza' of Lord Gosford's castle in Armagh built during the 1820s to the Romantic landscape created by Frederick Trench at Heywood in Queen's county in the late 18th century (Thompson and Tierney, 1976, p. 8; Proudfoot, 2000a; Friel, 2000). There were also interior 'texts' in plasterwork, art collections and *de rigueur* trophies of the big game hunt: the Duke of Leinster collected speckled cows to ornament his demesne and shells from around the world for his Shell House; all aspired to fashionable Italian art collections. Here were statements in stone or plantation to reflect status and power, to impress neighbouring gentry and to instil deference and respect in the local tenantry: 'there is nothing will keep the Irish in their place like a well-appointed mansion' (Banville in Johnson, 1996, p. 556). Even small county towns managed to reflect a discourse of empire in their monuments and streetscapes, as stages for the politics of performance by landowning county society marching troops, bands, and the flags and bunting of loyalty. The Dawson memorial in Monaghan commemorates Colonel Dawson's death in Inkerman in 1854. The town also contains a monument to Lord Rossmore and in the (Anglican) Church of Ireland there are memorials to

² Public Research Office of Northern Ireland (hereafter PRONI) Belfast, 0353 JIC/212 Shirley papers. Mrs Shirley (Ettington Park) to Evelyn Philip Shirley, 20 April 1856. Papers quoted by kind permission of Major Shirley, Lough Fea.

³ PRONI, CI31114 Frances Shirley to E.J. Shirley, 20 February 1832.

the sons of gentry killed at Ferozeshah (India) in 1845 and Isandula (South Africa) in 1879 (Duffy, 2004).

These architectural and landscape statements were settings for a symbolism in day-to-day relations of power. Turlough House in Mayo for instance had the tenants step through great French doors into the Library to pay the rent, with a doffing of hats and appropriate gestures of subservience. Tenants lined the streets of Maynooth to bow to the Duke of Leinster *en route* to Sunday church. Gatelodgekeepers into the early 20th century bowed to the owners passing through (Somerville-Large, 1995). Evelyn John Shirley held annual tenant dinners in the Great Hall of his house at Carrickmacross at which lectures on frugality and industry were given to the tenants favoured with invitations. The moral and economic improvement of what was often seen as a sluggish and ill-disposed tenantry was the well-intentioned objective of the landed, reflected in one agent's remarks: 'when the beautiful variety of surface, which this country affords, is now observed bleak, dreary, and naked; and then look forward to it covered with well built cottages, well laid out farms, and thriving plantations, with contentment and its natural companions good order, peace, and prosperity reigning around, surely everyone ought to be tempted to put his hand to the work' (Blacker, 1837, p. 63, 66). Vaughan has suggested that there was more to improvements than agricultural innovation; 'They were the means by which landlords justified their existence, imposed their power on the countryside and enhanced their prestige' (Vaughan, 1994, p. 120). Foster's suggestion that they were attempting to legitimize their situation in Ireland more than a century after initial colonization has been comprehensively tested in a number of studies by Proudfoot (1993; 1997). A recent essay by Whelan emphasises the manner in which a colonial imagination is reflected in Anglo-Irish perceptions of ruins in Ireland as 'materialities of the colonized's defeat' and commemorations of the disorder of the pre-colonial world (Whelan, 2004).

Titles and patronage to accompany landed power and landscape display were eagerly sought out and highly regarded by gentry. In a gossipy letter to his son on the home estate in Warwickshire, Evelyn John Shirley reported on the attendance at a ball in his Carrickmacross mansion in 1848, paying special attention to the social status of the guests:

Lord and Lady Farnham and two Miss Stapletons, Lord Worcester and Sir William Russell and Lt. Fraser of the 70th.... Lord and Lady Fingall, and the Lady Plunkets and Lord Killeen, Lord and Lady Louth, Col Pratt and Mr and Mrs Chaloner and the Farrells, Ld Bellingham, Mrs Napier and two sons, Mr and Mrs Singleton came in a party of 21, and brought two beauties Miss Browns with their mother, and Mr and Mrs Coddington, two beautiful daughters etc, Major and Mrs McClintock, Mr and Mrs Olpherts, H

Mitchell and daughter, Ruxtons, Longfields, Mrs Butler, Forsters (not Sir George or his daughter), Lucas's, Archdeacon Beresford and daughters, Lambarts, Winters, Smiths, G Filigate, C Fortescue, Sir P Leslie, Mr P Nicholson, Baronet Lestrangle, Hawkshawe, Wooley, Proby, Foliott, Dillon, Lyle, Tipping, Wilman, Officers Capt Stewart, Lieuts Halfield, Coade, Hutchinson and Wassenbend of the 23rd Dragoons, etc etc.⁴

School, church, military and colonial service formed a network which cemented the solidarity of the landed elite. Towards the close of the 19th century, Castletownsend in west Cork was the setting for a close-knit community of a dozen Anglo-Irish families commemorated in many of the writings of Somerville and Ross: 'all Protestants, all suspicious of strangers and all completely sure of themselves ... Ireland continued to be divided neatly between US and THEM, and the ones who mattered in it, who made the place tick over at all, were undeniably US' (Fleming, in Scott, 2003, p. I). Most of the influential personnel on larger estates, such as estate agents, agriculturists, stewards, clerks and other senior officials were usually recruited from the landed/colonial class, and commonly from Britain (Dooley, 2001). Grooms, gardeners, cooks and other 'loyal retainers' in Carton, in Kildare, for instance, were imported. The behaviour of Leslie's Irish footmen who accompanied the family to London for Queen Victoria's golden jubilee, got drunk and ran down Oxford Street shouting 'to hell with your bloody old Queen' probably confirmed the advisability of selecting employees who empathized with the world of Queen and empire! (Somerville-Large, 1995, p. 335). Cecil Frances Alexander, who married the Anglican bishop of Derry and Raphoe in 1850, was the author of the hymn 'All things bright and beautiful'. One of its verses might be seen as an important paean to imperial order, celebrated by the Established Church and its gentry adherents in the 19th century and sung throughout the empire:

The rich man in his castle/The poor man at his gate
God made them high and lowly/Each to his own estate.

Though there were tenurial constraints on land ownership in Ireland, especially in the 18th century, landed gentry were ultimately the centres of social, economic and political power and patronage from the 18th and into the 19th centuries. The more influential of them were frequently the objects of respectful dedication of work by authors, publishers, surveyors, architects and artists. Taylor and Skinner's map of County Louth, for instance, was presented 'with gratitude' to Jn Foster Knight of the shire of Louth. Newly published maps of Ireland, or its counties, in the late 18th century, pointedly represented the place of landlord and gentry elite in the developing Irish landscape, by marking the residences

⁴ PRONI, D353/1C/2/1. E.J. Shirley to E.P. Shirley, February 1848.

and mansion houses of gentry. In 18th and 19th century Ireland, as in England, the landed estate and its mansion was regularly used as a device in literary fiction to symbolise order and stability, especially a disorderly 'colonial' world like Ireland from Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent* at the end of the 18th century, to the works of Somerville and Ross in the late 19th century (Edgeworth, 1800; Somerville and Ross, 1920; Bowen, 1942). The society of the estate, privileged by religion and culture, continued to represent an exclusive colonial world-view in the 19th century which reluctantly gave way to the majority colonized/nationalist community in the dying years of that century. But into the early 20th century, the now dispossessed Irish landed gentry continued to hark back to an earlier world, before Elizabeth Bowen's 'golden close of the British 19th century' (Bowen in Scott, 2003, p. 26), with Lady Fingall writing that 'Irish landlords lived within their demesnes making a world of their own, with Ireland outside the gates' (Fingall in Somerville-Large, 1995, 355).

Irish landowner identities were complex and far from 'seamless' (Proudfoot, 1993). In addition, the personalities of individual landowners often emerge as a significant element in topographies of resistance at estate level different owners having different management regimes, often dictated by different lifestyles and expenditures. Vaughan talks about the 'truculent meddling of Lord Leitrim', the 'paternal despotism' of Lord Fitzwilliam, 'hesitant fussiness' of the Gosford estate, the 'conscientious benevolence' of Hamilton, 'unbending integrity' of Mr Joly (Vaughan, 1994, p. 105). Moralistic paternalism, however, would characterize the generality of the landowners and associated gentry class (agents, clergy and military elites), with a growing penchant in the 19th century for regulation and control. Regulation and stricter management of properties was more characteristic of landed estates in the post-war recessionary period from the 1820s, in sharp contrast to the more lackadaisical approach to estate management in the 18th century. William Steuart Trench, the land agent, writing for an English audience in the mid-19th century, noted that if the landlord 'ventures to interfere with old habits, old prejudices or old ways ... he must be prepared to contend with difficulties which none but those who have experienced them could have imagined' (Trench, 1868, p. vii). On the other hand, absentee landlords, like Sir William Palmer with lands in Mayo, who took little interest in their estates and the tenants, left all to agents whose main focus was to get in the rent at all costs: the result was mistrust and antipathy between owners and occupiers.

Throughout the country there were innumerable instances of the estate as the arbiter of power and privilege, and a demonstration of 'civilization' and 'superior moral order' in operation. The law of the land was mediated through the estate's representatives: resident magistrates and justices of the peace were usually landowners or their agents and most landowners had ready access to and contacts in the centre of Irish administration in Dublin Castle like Sir William Palmer who wrote (from Wales) to the

Castle in 1847 seeking the erection of a police barracks on part of his Mayo estates to assist his agent in the collection of his rent (Byrne, 1996). County Grand Juries were composed of the propertied class who administered justice and local government. Throughout the 18th and 19th centuries, political representation (either in Dublin or Westminster) was seen as the automatic entitlement of the landowning classes. Networks of patronage emanating from Dublin Castle lent authority and influence to them, as well as ensuring their support: a typical government memorandum book of 1818 recorded details of patronage in Westmeath: Lieut. Colonel the Hon. H. Pakenham Lord Longford is a Representative Peer; is Custos Rotolorum of the County; is a Trustee of the Linen Board. He is brother-in-law of the Duke of Wellington. His brother, Admiral Thomas Pakenham has £1200 compensation as Master General of the Ordnance' (Jupp, 1973, p. 166). Charles Powell Leslie (also related to the Duke of Wellington), on losing the 1826 election in Monaghan to the pro-Catholic Henry Westenra, thanked his supporters and hoped that they would 'uphold what the state of your country, as well as that of the empire demands, the Protestant ascendancy in church and state'.⁵

Networks of patronage were also replicated at local level: William George Smith, clerk in the Shirley estate office in Carrickmacross sought a 61-year lease in 1839 from the agent for some property on the estate pointing to the benefits of favouring him:

by making this purchase, I have...secured to myself and representatives after me the means of furthering in every possible way, the interest of Mr Shirley and his political friends, ... Should Mr Shirley think it right to consider this favour to me, ... Protestants having capital may by this example be encouraged to bring it to bear on the removal of his opponents and a class of persons might thus be induced to settle on his property who ... might hold in check, not only his enemies but those of the established institutions of the country.⁶

We can talk, therefore, of an estate system that was implicated in many of the predilections of colonialism – 'order', 'improvement', 'civilization', integrity, morality, industry, loyalty, subservience. Shane Leslie, author and landlord, in his novel *Doomsland*, likened the running of the estate to an old watermill: its business proceeded routinely from season to season: 'a hundred cogs moved and clicked in their place ... Agents, clerks, land-stewards, bog-bailiffs, gardeners, gamekeepers carried out dilatory functions. Wages, jointures, salaries, tithes, taxes, pensions, mortgages were paid' (Leslie, 1923, p. 25). Brenda Yeoh (2000) has documented the manner in which colonial governance in Singapore regulated and

⁵ NLI Ms 1420 quoted in A. Doyle (2001, p.37).

⁶ PRONI, 03531 C/3/116. Smith to Mitchell, Oct 1839.

regimented society and space to produce a western British expression of municipal order. Landownership in Ireland saw its role in much the same way as the colonial administration in India for instance, whose duty was 'to impose linearity and order on an ungovernable society' (Chatterjee, 2000, p. 20). It was supported by an increasingly bureaucratic State system which, up until the Great Famine in the late 1840s, largely unquestioningly supported the landowning elite in Ireland, manifested through networks of patronage and political preferment.

As disturbances and resistance increased in a variety of regions in the 19th century, the police and military forces of the state were expected to support the landed establishment. This support also traditionally extended to the Anglican (and what might be characterized as the colonial) church in its collection of tithes: proctors and process servers were backed up by parties of police and militia during the 'tithe war' in 1830s. Fourteen people were killed in Bunclody in County Wexford during tithe agitation in 1831, and 11 policemen were killed in Kilkenny disturbances in 1832 (Kieley and Nolan, 1992). Evictions near Woodford in Galway in 1843 were assisted by a force of 300 of the 5th Fusiliers, a troop of 4th Royal Irish Dragoons, a troop of 10th Hussars, and 200 policemen (Clark, 1979, p. 69). Thomas Drummond, who was appointed Under-Secretary for Ireland in the late 1830s, was a reformer who began the questioning of this alliance of landed elite and state with his observation on property having duties as well as rights. Only gradually, as the 'land war' intensified after the Famine did the State contemplate withdrawing such unconditional support for Irish gentry.

Perspectives On the Colonized

Although like the landowning elite, the largely Catholic farming class was also far from being a seamless community, in general, gentry perspectives tended to simplify and collapse all into a collective colonially-inferior status, usually tinted by anti Catholic prejudice. Into the late 19th century, the gentry had a real horror of intermarriage with Catholics of any hue, reflected in the novels of Somerville and Ross. Indeed the marriage of Shirley's younger son to a Dublin Catholic in the 1850s precipitated a family crisis. Looks, accent, dress and general deportment were seen as important markers feeding into a universal representation of peasantry as other, characterized in recurring terminologies of 'ill-disposed', 'slothful', 'wild', 'wily', 'cunning', feckless etc. Trench's favourite metaphor for managing tenantry was 'harness,' to restrain a population, which he characterized as 'docile and easily led', and generally obedient to their superiors, yet 'when once assembled in masses they become capable of the wildest and most frenzied excitement' (Trench, 1869,70).

Even in the late-19th century, some of the writings of Somerville and Ross depicted networks of gentry houses sprinkled through landscapes which were the settings for hunts and elite outdoor pursuits and were

peopled by an array of tenantry, distinguished by subservience, humour, slyness, 'blarney' idiosyncratic 'difference' looked down on from the saddles of the Galway Blazers or the Rosscarbery Hunt (e.g. Somerville and Ross, 1901). Social distancing helped to reduce individuals to a uniform mass, invariably seen through a coach window, from horseback, or through the colonial lens of the press. Thomas Carlyle was confirmed in all his imperial prejudices about the Irish during his Famine visit. From the upper platform of the mail boat to Ireland, he observed five or six typical degenerated 'physiognomies' one 'a lean withered slave of a creature with hairy brows, droop nose, mouth corners drooping, chin narrow, eyes full of sorrow and rage', all 'with the air of faculty misbred and gone to waste' (Carlyle from 1882 in Crowley, 2003, p. 163).⁷

Trench while agent on the Lansdowne estate was captivated by a peasant girl in terms which have many of the characterizations of 'Othering', justifying her attraction to him by separating her from his class view of the local peasantry putting her in an altogether more acceptable category:

She had but little of the original Celt in her features. Her beauty was purely Spanish, of which I have seen many perfect specimens in Tuosist and around Kenmare: large soft eyes, with beautiful dark downy eyelashes, the mouth well formed, and cheek of classic mould ... The form which now stood before me was a beautiful specimen of this perfect Spanish type ... her hands were clasped in an attitude of wild supplication ... she was perfectly natural and simple, and ... so intelligent a girl as she was could not possibly look at her reflection in one of her own dark mountain lakes and not see that she was different from her neighbours ... She had watched my countenance with the quickness of an Irish peasant during the whole time she was speaking (Trench, 1868, pp. 76-77).

E.J. Shirley in the mid 19th century held many of these opinions of his Irish tenants. Like many others in Ireland, he was an English landowner with an estate in Warwickshire; his overcrowded and sprawling Irish property with its 20,000 population must have appeared to him as a colonial outpost, many of whose inhabitants he sometimes considered a wild and fickle rabble. On the other hand, it also had an exotic attraction which drew him every summer from the late 1820s, and he commenced to build an extravagant mock Tudor mansion in the 1830s. Like Lord Farnham of Cavan, Lord Roden in Down and many others, Shirley saw himself as superior guardian of his tenantry and the moralistic paternalism of his many utterings were regularly published on handbills and addresses for dispersal throughout his estate, reflecting an outlook

⁷ Thomas Carlyle, *Reminiscences of my Irish journey* (London, 1882) quoted in John Crowley (2003). I am grateful to John Crowley for permission to refer to his doctoral thesis.

expressed by Lord Lansdowne in 1870: 'the longer I live the more firmly do I believe in blood and breeding' (Lyne, 2001, xliii). One of the law officers on the Shirley estate probably fairly represented the gentry perception of the mass of the tenantry at the height of a rent strike in 1843:

people are still hanging back and *skulking* behind the *pretension* of danger to themselves or property if they pay their rent; ... but this feeling has its origins in the *baseness of character* so very prevalent in the *absence of right moral principle* [emphasis added]⁸

Ignorance, sloth and cunning were common traits attributed to Irish tenants by their superiors in the 19th century and may be illustrated by excerpts from private correspondence between members of the landowning gentry, reflecting an essentially internal discourse not intended for public consumption. Writing to Lord Wilburton in 1850, in relation to the management of the neighbouring Bath estate, Shirley suggested that '*vigorous measures* to obtain rent are *absolutely necessary* in dealing with the "Celts of Farney", most of whom only pay by compulsion ... The people are very quick and cunning, ... many of the tenants are idle and reckless and in some instances neglect all improvement.'⁹ Trench in considering the offer of the Bath agency wrote about the principles which he adhered to in running estates: that he would 'place these wild and uncivilized people sufficiently under his command that he can force them by a judicious mixture of firmness and kindness with the duties and responsibilities of some approach to civilized life.'¹⁰ He further emphasized this approach a month later, significantly manifesting some fundamentals of colonial discourse: 'nothing impresses a wild though intelligent and cunning people with more confidence in a superior, than his at once showing them that he is accurately acquainted with the whole subject in hand and nothing tends to anarchy and confusion as even the *appearance* of indecision or ignorance'.¹¹ Thomas Derby an English land agent in Tipperary wrote to Trench about the necessity of assisting emigration off landed estates: 'so as to strip off the *Rubbish* (may God forgive the word, but I speak only in the way of utter want of intelligence, industry and hopelessness of improvement) and preserve a sufficiency of stock of an improvable kind.'¹²

The Ordnance Survey Memoirs, written in most cases by English military officers, contain comprehensive and valuable accounts of rural economy

⁸ PRONI, 0353J1C13/5. Sudden to Trench, 5 May 1843.

⁹ Longleat Library. Bath papers, Irish Box iii. Shirley to Lord Wilburton, 19 September 1850. Quoted by kind permission of the Marquess of Bath.

¹⁰ Longleat Library. Irish Box iii. Trench to Lady Bath (encl.), 21 December 1850

¹¹ Longleat Library. Irish Box iii. Trench to Lady Bath, January 1851

¹² Longleat Library. Irish Box iii. Enclosed with Trench to Lady Bath, 26 February 1851.

and society in the north of Ireland in the 1830s. They often betray the external and elite background of the authors in their frequent representations of local communities as primitive and indolent, indicting them for their tendencies to abandon the harvest for a wake or a wedding or fair. 'Would that the habits of industry and the desire of accumulation, which so generally prevails in the sister kingdoms, could be imparted effectually into the minds and disposition of this wretched and deplorable peasantry' 'A glance at the wretched hovels, scantily covered with straw, surrounded and almost entombed in mire, which everywhere present themselves... sufficiently testify that the total absence of all activity in industry is one source of the wretchedness and misery which almost overwhelms the land' (Day and McWilliams, 1998, Parish of Laragh 44; Parish of Currin 93). Carlyle searched (Europe's) imperial outposts for landscapes analogous to what he saw in the west of Ireland: 'Claddagh as like Madagascar as England. A kind of charm in that poor savage freedom' (Crowley, 2003. p. 165). Outside observers were universally impressed with 'the laziness and idleness' of estate tenants, the 'vivacity of the Celt and a portion of ... sloth and cunning'.¹³

Shirley's annual addresses to his tenants prior to his return to his Warwickshire estate were imbued with well-meaning paternalism which advocated, for example, 'an increased degree of *improvement, comfort and respectability*. To promote this and to encourage a love of *order, tidiness and cleanliness* is the anxious desire of my heart' and deprecated 'the scenes of drunkenness too often exhibited in market and fair days in Carrickmacross'.¹⁴

He was concerned with the general indolence of his tenants:

Now it is my duty to tell you that you do not value your time... I saw numbers of the tenantry lounging and idling about, their turf still in the Bog, their Hay still uncut, and the weeds growing plentifully... Pro. ch XV, verse 19, 'The way of the slothful man is as a hedge of thorns'¹⁵

Like many of his peers, Shirley planned to appoint a Moral Agent (who was an English army officer) for the estate in 1839. Lord Farnham in Cavan had his estate divided into districts in 1830 to facilitate its 'moral management'. William Krause, born in the West Indies but living in England, was his Moral Agent from 1826 and 1838, whose duty it was to 'free Roman Catholics from bondage'. The lives of the tenants were closely monitored by him and illicit distilling of poitín was prohibited on pain of eviction, while bawdy ballads and vices such as swearing, gambling and dancing were forbidden. Evangelical Protestantism was

¹³ Estate agent Barbara Verschoyle to Lord Fitzwilliam, 1801, from W. Nolan and A. Simms (eds), (1998, p. 132); *Greig's Report on Gosford Estates*, p. 104.

¹⁴ PRONI, D3531/C/3/1/7, Shirley draft address, November 1839.

¹⁵ Handbill, November 1838, quoted in Broehl (1965), p. 44.

instinctively linked with social and economic progress, in the same way that Irish Catholic culture was associated with backwardness and inefficiency (Hill, 2002, pp. 78-79). A similar concern with moral welfare drove Trench, while agent on the Lansdowne estate in Kerry, to eject a tenant who had moved in with the daughter of a neighbour and married her a year later: as well as contravening the marriage law of the estate, they were condemned because they had 'committed fornication together'.¹⁶

The Marquis of Downshire kept himself well informed on his tenants' behaviour, frequently engaging in tours of inspection: 'Wilson the Master of B.macbrennan School does not do enough for his Wageshe seems sleepy and has few Scholars, Schoolroom dirty and full of dust and very untidy.' 'Two persons named Orr live in a wretched hole with four acres The man came out to me without his breeches. They should not hold land' (Maguire, 1974, p. 141). In the age of Malthus and Darwin, natural science provided Downshire and others with ready metaphors for lessons on moral and economic improvement, with references to weeds and corn being suitably biblical in tone: 'Luxuriant as is the Growth of Good Crops, as well as noxious Weeds, the plant Truth is of dubious growth & its offspring, plain dealing and openness are often stifled in the Birth' (Maguire, 1974, pp. 153-54). Trench and others frequently reached for animal analogies to depict the state and character of many of their tenants 'superabundant rabbits' 'locusts,' whose campaign of protest against the Lansdowne estate was dampened by cold and wet weather by which they were 'daily driven into their burrows' (Lyne, 2001, p. 301).

Regulated Space

Power and authority produces and regulates space and place and its occupants, surveying and territorializing it, and imposing discipline through, for instance, controlling movement within it. Space thus becomes the setting and catalyst within which authority may be challenged or resisted. One of the great preoccupations of estate management in the 19th century, especially in the years after the end of the European war, arose from pressure on land and questions of population control, management and regulation of access to land. This formed a universal context for 19th estates as contested landscapes in 19th century Ireland. Although for a great proportion of the peasantry and small tenants, it was the larger (middleman) farmer who sublet land to them, the 19th century saw the gentry owners of the land intervening to reorganize and re-establish order in landholding relations.

From the perspective of landowners and land agents, regulations were aimed at rent control and payment, shortening leases, subdivision and subletting of farms, restrictions or control of access to other local

¹⁶ Kenmare estate minute book, quoted in G. O'Connor, *The Lansdowne estate, 1848-58: the Poor Law, emigration and estate management*, unpublished MA thesis, University College Dublin, 1994, p. 121.

environmental resources (such as woodland, bogland, rivers, lakes, mountain), sale and transfer of farms, improvements in farms such as enclosures and squaring of fields, improvement in houses, as well in some cases as the education and general moral behaviour of the tenantry. At local estate level, manor courts frequently operated to implement estate rules and regulations, and fines and punishments designed to order society and landscape within its boundaries.

Most of the proactive intervention took place as early as the mid-18th century on the best land, with some belated interest in the marginal western lands in post-famine years. Estates with the most active intervention in lives and landscapes of their tenants reaped a legacy of hostility especially in post 1820s and were subsequently execrated in folk memory. Agents like Mitchell, Trench and Morant on the Shirley estate, or Lord Palmer or Lord Lucan in Mayo enforced estate rules and earned a reputation as exterminating landlords. It was Trench's somewhat exaggerated belief that the 'careless, spendthrift, good-for-nothing landlord, who hunts and shoots, and drinks and runs into debt, who ever exacts the most exorbitant rents from his tenants, provided only he does not interfere with their time-honoured customs of subdividing, squatting ... and reckless marriages, may live in peace ... in high favour with the surrounding peasantry' (Trench, 1868, p.47).

Rural population growth expanded rapidly in the poorer regions where there had been little 'colonial' interest or commercial incentive to manage properly and on less supervised spaces such as back lanes, bog edges or roadsides where squatting prevailed: on the Middleton estate in Cork in the 1840s, for example, a subtenant of 37 acres had allowed 45 cabins on the side of the road; on another 60 acre farm, the tenant had allowed 98 cabins to be 'thrown up' on the sides of the road (Donnelly, 1975, p. 13). Shirley's 26,000 acre estate in Monaghan had a population of some 20,000 in 1841 approximately 3000 tenants and 600 cottiers. Palmer's 80,000 acres in Mayo supported 23,000 in 1841. Lord Lansdowne's 96,000 acres in Kerry had a population of approximately 17,000. In these regions and places, landowners who were by inclination and politics doctrinaire Malthusians by the 1820s, were keen on relieving their properties of the burdens of excessive numbers of people.

'The tenants big and little are too much in the habit of subdividing their holdings, selling and setting, chopping and changing as their will leads them, defying me and my regulations' (Maguire, 1974, p. 142). Subdivision of farms among family members and subletting portions of farms to cottiers were prohibited outright on most landed estates. The Devon Commission of enquiry into agrarian conditions in Ireland (1843-45) was heavily preoccupied with the enforcement of rules about subdivision, which even on the most well managed estates were more honoured in the breach than the observance. Most leases had clauses prohibiting these practices on pain of eviction but until the 1820s and

1830s strict enforcement was rare:-references to 'nests' and 'swarms' of cottiers are regular occurrences in contemporary estate correspondence. But by the mid-19th century a great many landowners were unable or unwilling to provoke the hostility of the local population by intervening in cases of subdivision. The 'cold fear of provoking agrarian outrage' restrained many landlords in their regulation of tenantry (Donnelly, 1975, p. 54). In many cases it was difficult to police the enormous populations on the larger estates. Advisors like Blacker and Trench suggested that estate managers undertake thorough surveys of their properties including details on the circumstances of each tenant and the condition of their farms, houses, offices and stock, as well as the numbers and ages of their children. Regular reviews would help to 'distinguish and encourage the deserving' (Blacker, 1837, p. 4).

The links between tenant marriages, demographic growth and farm structures were well known to have repercussions on the future well-being of estates. Subdivision of farms, for instance, inevitably followed marriages of family members and many proprietors assumed rights to oversee the marriages of their tenants. Elizabeth Smith, lately arrived from Scotland, was aghast in 1839 at the careless manner in which tenants in Ireland married without reference to their landlord, frequently setting up home in outbuildings (Trant, 1997, p. 49). Shirley in the 1830s ineffectually admonished his tenants for subdividing ... 'abstain from leaving in your wills what is not yours to leave', and on both the Shirley and Bath estates marriage regulations, by which licences had to be obtained from the agent before going to the clergyman, were in place up to the 1860s. In 1842 Shirley had a handbill posted throughout his estate addressing the marriage issue in strident Malthusian terms:

The necessity of consideration before engaging in marriage is self-evident... remember that you injure your neighbours by throwing upon them the burthen of supporting those whom you ought yourself to support.....taking employment and food from those who already have not enough...Keep animal impulses under the control of reason.¹⁷

Lord Palmer also enforced rules regarding marriage and families sharing houses in the post Famine period, in one case demolishing a house and confiscating crops in 1864 for contravention of the rules (Byrne, 1996, p. 61). From the Famine onwards there was growing local resentment and resistance to these interventionist policies.

The organization of surveillance and information networks on estates became increasingly repressive in the 19th century. Local informants such as 'keepers' and 'watchers' were responsible for informing the estate on

¹⁷ PRONI, D3531/B/1. Farney Bubble Book,, printed handbill September 1842.

the progress of tenants' crops and other activities, preventing some from selling off at harvest time and absconding without paying rent, as well as searching the premises of defaulting tenants. Tenants were alert to the presence among them (in chapel congregations, for instance) of landlord-favoured tenants, employees or others such as gamekeepers and Royal Irish Constabulary men who acted as the 'eyes and ears' of the estate. The Bath tenants petitioned the agent in 1849 for the abolition of the 'odious system of placing keepers on their property'.¹⁸ Many estates with absentee owners, however, such as Crown estates, did not have as effective a knowledge of their tenants' affairs (Scally, 1995).

Bailiffs, grippers and process servers applied the rules of the estate, driving off the livestock of defaulting tenants or making arrests. Trench, land agent at different times on the Shirley, Lansdowne and Bath estates, made it his business to become acquainted with every aspect of the estate he was on and regularly boasted in the 1850s that: 'a mouse can hardly move [or a dog cannot bark] on the estate without my knowledge.' Indeed Trench himself had earlier considered the application of some of the regulations in 1843 to be rather too rigorous on the Shirley estate, provoking a rent strike and other disturbances. He highlighted a range of penalties all aimed to keep the tenants, as he put it, 'tightly to their traces'. Decrees were taken out at the quarter sessions against defaulting tenants, and if the rent was not paid promptly, arrest and imprisonment followed, with 'ruinous expenses and loss', ensuing for the tenant.¹⁹ This period of increasing imposition of regulations and reform on estates coincided with post-war depression, rising arrears, falling rents and Poor Law taxation increasing pressure on tenants. And it resulted in rising opposition and resistance, with sporadic and largely uncoordinated outbreaks of violence, burnings and maiming of cattle being extensive in the 1840s. Regular 'outrage reports' were made to the government by the constabulary from the counties concerned.

With the intensification of modernization processes, the century thus witnessed a collision of the small tenant farmers' 'moral economy' and its traditional and customary relations with the land, with the expanding market economy of Britain into which the landed estates were locked. Restrictions on such ancillary resources as turbary or woodland, with fines for what Trench referred to as 'misconduct and disobedience' (see also Lyne, 2001, p. 262) became common, as estates determined to extract maximum value for all aspects of the property. The attitude of management to goats, for example, regarded as an animal of the poor and marginal, sums up the clash between poverty and improvement. The capacity of goats to eat newly-planted hedges, usually given gratis by interested landowners as an encouragement to tenants to enclose newly-squared fields, led to regulations to restrict them. Lord Leitrim, Shirley

¹⁸ Longleat Library, Irish Box iii. Kennedy to Lady Bath, 5 July 1849.

¹⁹ PRONI, D35311S155 Shirley papers, Trench's report, reproduced in Duffy (1997).

and others, prohibited many of their tenants from keeping goats. These restrictions of marginal economic activities of tenants were regarded with hostility by tenants and Shirley was still remembered as a 'bad landlord' by schoolchildren in 1938 for this reason.²⁰

Economic change which followed colonialism in southeast Asia in the early 20th century had precedents in 18th and 19th centuries Ireland, where all the resources of the land which had traditionally been part of communal ownership, commonages, wastelands, woodlands, fisheries, and in Ireland's case turbarry and rundale farming in the western regions - were appropriated by landlord estates, whose property rights were enforced by the colonial state's militia and courts (Scott, 1976; Kiely and Nolan, 1992, pp. 472-474). In South East Asia, as in Ireland a century earlier, this inequality in access to land resources was exacerbated by rural population growth leading to everyday forms of resistance organised on a kinship and territorial basis - boycotting, strikes, assaults, rioting, destruction of property (Brass, 2000, p. 133; Clark and Donnelly, 1983, p. 7). Modernization of agriculture on Irish estates in the 19th century involved improvements designed to eliminate joint tenancies, rundale settlements, consolidation of tenant holdings, prevention of subletting, restriction of access to turbarry, woodlands, game, generating resistance by tenants which echoed agitation and repeated the practices of earlier generations of rural protesters: 'we, levellers and avengers for the wrongs done to the poor, have unanimously assembled to raze walls and ditches that have been made to enclose commons' (Bric, 1985, p. 153).

Estate management regulations were devised to compel acquiescence by a sometimes recalcitrant tenantry and formed the context for resistance on more and more estates during the mid-19th century. Such growing resistance meant that estates had to be judicious in dealings with tenants, lest as Trench expressed it in terms of traces and harness, 'that they must needs go steadily forward, or else by some violent plunge break through all restraint' (Duffy, 1997, p. 116). By the 1870s, tenant resistance in much of the country disabled many management initiatives: on one estate in Limerick the bailiff refused to serve notices to quit in 1878 because he was afraid that the tenants 'would do away with him' (Donnelly, 1975, p. 196).

Strategies of Resistance

Most features of agitation and protest evident on Irish landed estates reflect closely the various stratagems of subordinate resistance examined by Scott (1990). The public performance of subservience, putting on a show of humility, masking true feelings or flattering to deceive as rituals of subordination are characteristic responses by the comparatively powerless, 'the colonized native who understands that because his

²⁰ Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants*, p. 104; Irish Folklore Department, Schools Collection, Magheracloone parish schools.

security depends upon compliance with the system he needs to display total loyalty' (McLoughlin, 1999, p. 202). And this confirmed elite perceptions of the subordinate other/natives as innately deceitful, evasive, fickle, and cunning. In this way what was characterized as 'oriental inscrutability' made the real Burman discourse inaccessible to the British (Scott, 1990, p. 35). (Similarly the intentions and attitudes of the colonial world, as exposed in the private correspondence of the Irish landowning elite, for instance, were equally unknown to the local community.) Disguise and anonymity, therefore, are the hallmarks of subordinate protest: use of anonymous threats and intimidation in circumstances 'where any open, identified resistance to the ruling power may result in instant retaliation', means that the regulations of the powerful can most effectively be countered by the anonymous threat of violence intended, for example, to 'chill the spine of gentry, magistrates' (E.P. Thompson in Scott, 1990, pp. 148-149). Coded signals of resistance, especially in songs, ballads and folktales, where the real object of protest is mocked with irony or satire, represent another form of hidden resistance which has been used in Ireland. Universally, pressure by dominant classes on traditional rights with restrictions on local access to resources, are countered in a range of 'down-to-earth, low-profile stratagems designed to minimize appropriation' (Thompson in Scott, 1990, p. 188; see also Brass, 2000, p. 130): theft, pilfering, shirking, evasion, foot dragging, sabotage of crops and livestock, arson, flight, poaching, squatting, beating gamekeepers and other representatives of authority, for example. In the eyes of the dominant/colonial elite, many of these stratagems of resistance are not the consequences of application of arbitrary power but 'of the inborn characteristics of the subordinate group itself who are by nature lazy, lying and unreliable (Scott, 1990, p. 37).

Passive resistance in 19th century Ireland was most classically exemplified in the 'boycott', which characterised the climax of the breakdown in gentry-tenant relations during the Land League disturbances in 1880. Captain Boycott was the land agent on Lord Erne's estate in county Mayo who was ostracized by the local tenantry ('boycotted') during a rent dispute. He imported some hundreds of Orangemen from south Ulster to assist with his harvest, guarded by some 1000 troops in an ultimately futile demonstration of landlord power. 'Combinations' such as this were a flagrant challenge to the authority of the landowning establishment: 'it is always the spectre of an open rebellion by the peasantry which haunts the conscience of the dominant classes in agrarian societies and shapes their exercise of domination' (Chatterjee, 2000, p. 22).

Between 1800 and the Great Famine, the government passed 35 Coercion Acts to control lawlessness in Ireland, mostly collective violence in rural areas (Clark, 1979, pp. 66-67). In 1827 for example, magistrates in Tipperary petitioned the government on two occasions to

implement the Insurrection Act which imposed curfew from sunset to dawn (McGrath, 1985, p. 275). The estate which increasingly controlled and restricted access to land was at the coalface of these local resistance strategies. They ranged from passive non-cooperation, through anonymous night-time protests, rent strikes, intimidation of estate employees, to the murder of landlords and agents. Earlier practices of protest were resurrected cropping of horses and maiming of cattle, destroying crops, firing shots, attacking and burning houses, levelling fences, burning turf stacks, administering oaths to secret societies, as well as erecting gallows, digging open graves, and despatching threatening letters and placards.

Protests on the Shirley and Bath estates in the middle decades of the 19th century involved many of these kinds of tenant resistance to the management regime on these two extensive properties. The agents on both estates were long aware of the potential for tenant protest, as far back as 1795 warning that to guard against a 'combining disposition in the tenantry', leases should not be allowed to expire at the same time over the two estates.²¹ There was a constant awareness on the part of the estate administration in the mid-19th century of the presence of a stratum of insubordinate tenantry: in 1850 Shirley's visit to the agricultural show was a measure of his (un)popularity - 'some tried to give me a cheer on going into the show ground which was so poor an attempt I may say it failed. There were not enough Tenants and the *rabble* of course did not care about joining'.²² Trench reported to Lord Bath in 1853 on the 'mob of reckless paupers' on the estate.²³

In the 1830s, Shirley's commitment to improving the general education of the tenantry was evident in his public exhortations to improve their moral and social behaviour. With the help of the Kildare Street Society, which was actively committed to proselytism, he established a number of schools, which emphasized bible reading, on his estate:

the word of God is important. For this end I have provided for the Protestant the authorised and for the Roman Catholic youth, the Rhemish version ... I hope the time is not distant when the native Irishman will be brought to obey the divine command to 'search the scriptures' and to consider it his right as a human being, his duty as a Christian and his *privilege* as a *British subject*.²⁴

The reaction by the tenants demonstrated the effectiveness of 'combination' in protest, as well as the role of the priest as leader. The

²¹ PRONI, D3531/A/4. Observations on future letting of estate by Norroan Steel, November 1795.

²² PRONI, D3531/C/2/1. EJS to EPS, 1 September 1850.

²³ Longleat Irish papers, Bath estate annual report, 1853.

²⁴ PRONI, D3531/C/3/1/7. Draft address of E.J. Shirley, 14 November 1839.

Roman Catholic clergy were opposed to what was perceived as proselytism by the estate. One of the schools, held in a Catholic sacristy by the clerk of the chapel who was paid a salary by the estate agent, was abandoned by most tenants. Schoolmaster and priest brought their case to the petty sessions in Carrickmacross where both magistrates, agents of the Shirley and Bath estates, supported the continuance of the school. In consequence, the local community, in the words of the priest, 'took the law into their own hands, came at night in a body and levelled the sacristy to its foundations ... scattering to the winds all the bible and proseletyzing tracts' (Ó Mearáin, 1981, p. 409). Several other estate schools were attacked in similar fashion and their (predominantly Catholic) teachers beaten. Such demolitions were not uncommon in other parts of the country in the 19th century. In 1839 when the parish obtained a grant to establish a national school in the chapel yard, the land agent initially prohibited the supply of building materials from any part of the Shirley estate. Neighbouring parishes, however, provided assistance with a convoy of carts during the night and, in the words of the parish priest, 'on the following day as much stones, sand and lime were left on the ground as built the schoolhouse' (Ó Mearáin, 1981, p. 409). Soon after, Shirley cooperated in the granting of sites for a number of national schools on the estate.

Alexander Mitchell's agency of the Shirley estate from 1830 was accompanied by the gradual tightening up of management and control of the property. Rents were enforced by impounding the livestock of defaulters, or by putting them in gaol. Fuel rights from turf bogs were an increasing concern to Irish landowners especially where cottier populations had escalated. Bog rents were imposed on the Shirley estate in the early thirties and bog tickets had to be purchased in the estate office. Furthermore, lime rents for limestone burnt in kilns on the estate were enforced. 'Raising the coppers' was a book-keeping practice adopted by the office in which rents and other charges to the tenants were rounded up to the shilling. Both practices Trench later agreed, represented 'close shaving' by the estate to boost income, which only served to aggravate the tenants (Duffy, 1997, p. 114).

These impositions were the cause of an outbreak of protests in 1843 following Mitchell's sudden death. His death was signalled by a rash of celebratory bonfires on the hills of the estate. Bonfires were universal signals of dissent and protest in many parts of rural Ireland. A large public demonstration was arranged to meet the new agent William Steuart Trench, demanding a reduction in rent: 'down with the coppers', 'we'll stand the grippers no longer', 'we'll hang the keepers' (Trench, 1869, p. 79). In April and May of 1843 the disturbances continued on the estate with a rent strike and bog protest by the tenants. Anonymous placarding took place throughout the estate, the police informing the office that one had been posted on the chapels: 'On Tuesday the ninth of May let each person go to his Bog to cut his Turf, it is the advice of John Lattitat (sic)

-let there be a water pool ready for the bog trotter'.²⁵ Latitat was a legal device, bog trotter was the bog ranger. Anonymous placarding was a popular medium of protest on the Lansdowne estate in the 1850s as well as in many other estates (Lyne, 2001, pp. 294-296; Kiely and Nolan, 1992, p. 468).

The estate retaliated vigorously with notices to quit and impoundment of the cattle of defaulters. Shirley found himself the centre of national attention in defending landlord rights. On application to Dublin Castle, a troop of horse and company of infantry were despatched to Carrickmacross to support the estate. Attempts to post ejection notices on a chapel in the estate by estate officials, accompanied by police and military, were signalled by bonfires and accompanied by jeering crowds. More troops were sent from Carrickmacross, the Riot Act was read, and soldiers opened fire killing a tenant.²⁶ Driving in the cattle of rent defaulters, accompanied by police, bailiffs, the agent and three or four magistrates turned into a farce, as Trench described it in his memoirs: 'Not a hoof nor a horn was left in the countryside', as all the cattle had been spirited away by the tenants, and a forlorn little heifer was all that they succeeded in driving to the pound to the 'jeers and laughter of the populace' (Trench, 1869, p. 85).

In the following months, the agitation escalated with violent attacks on bailiffs and other officials connected with the estate. Drivers were threatened in anonymous posters: 'We will dissect you alive – life is sweet'.²⁷ At night the Molly Maguires took to the roads compelling the support of the tenantry and intimidating bailiffs and drivers. In Trench's words, the Molly Maguires were:

stout active young men, dressed up in women's clothing, with faces blackened; or otherwise disguised; sometimes they wore crape over their countenances, sometimes they smeared themselves in the most fantastic manner with burnt cork ... to suddenly surprise the unfortunate grippers, keepers or process-servers, and either duck them in bog-holes, or beat them in the most unmerciful manner (Trench, 1869, p. 85).

The terror imposed by such groups, often recruited from neighbouring estates, is well reflected in a plaintive letter to the estate from a tenant seeking arms for his defence against what he called the Bundoran Girls:

I take the liberty to inform you of the dangerous state I am in. On Monday I went down to Coraghy to see Mr Shirley's house, as I was proceeding home I espied ...

²⁵ PRONI, D3531/C/3/5. Gibson, 8 May 1843.

²⁶ Based on Trench, *Realities*; Broehl, *Molly Maguires*; and PRONI. Shirley papers, C/3/5.

²⁷ From Farney Bubble Book, Shirley papers, cited in Broehl, *Molly Maguires*, p. 54.

some women looking earnestly at me one of them started up the road before me ... When she came some distance, I saw a number of women standing along with her. But they were men in women's clothes. Were it not how I proceeded in haste through the country I really believe I would have been murdered for the Bundoran girls were marching through Cornenty the same day. The reason I would be beat is it is reported that I am one of your Honor's bog bailiffs.²⁸

In the end, on Trench's advice, Shirley conceded most of the demands of the tenants – many of the impositions and charges were removed or reduced.

In 1849 Shirley embarked on a series of evictions which, attracted the attention of the Nation newspaper and became a *cause célèbre* in Britain and Ireland. Offers of passage to America were made to some of these tenants, but the evictions were frequently resisted by barricades and pailfuls of boiling water thrown at bailiffs from inside the houses.²⁹ In these post-famine years, as pressure was exerted on the tenantry by the landowners, agitation and intimidation spread throughout the region with the result that the county was proclaimed and subject to special police provisions. Disturbances spread to the neighbouring Bath estate in 1851, coinciding with the arrival of a new agent (Trench once more), who embarked on a programme of ejections, assisted emigration and clearance of rent arrears. A handbill was posted, according to Trench, on every Catholic chapel on the estate:

To Landlords, Agents, Bailiffs, Grippers, process-servers,
and usurpers or underminers who wish to step into the
evicted tenants property, and to all others concerned in
Tyranny and Oppression of the poor on the Bath Estate

TAKE NOTICE

That you are hereby (under pain of a certain punishment
which will inevitably occur) prohibited from evicting
tenants, executing decrees, serving process, distraining for
rent, or going into another's land, or to assist any tyrant,
Landlord, Agent in his insatiable desire for
depopulation.... (Trench. 1868, p. 126)³⁰

Many of the Bath estate officials were in constant danger during the 1850s from unknown elements in the tenantry. Trench and his son

²⁸ PRONI, D3531/P/3, undated, [c.1844].

²⁹ See Broehl, (1965), p. 66.

³⁰ Trench, 1869, p. 126. As Kevin Kenny (1998, p. 15) has suggested the text of this notice was probably edited by Trench.

usually moved about the property (as they also did in their land agency in the King's County) with 'a brace of pistols' and a police patrol; Trench was convinced of what he called a conspiracy of Ribbonmen determined to assassinate him. His *Realities of Irish Life* contains a reconstruction of his mock trial by disaffected inhabitants of the estate.

By the late 1840s the tenantry were beginning to resort to democracy in their campaign of resistance throughout the country. Lords Palmer and Londonderry issued eviction notices to tenants who had refused to vote in the 1852 election in accordance with the instructions of the estate administration (Byrne, 1996, pp. 57-59). Poor Law guardians were elected to the workhouse by rate paying tenants who increasingly ignored the estates' directions to support their candidates. The Shirley correspondence from 1850 is preoccupied with this shift in the balance of power, E.J. Shirley fulminating in August about the election of Guardians 'who can hardly write their names and who cannot read'. In January he complained indignantly about the election of a national schoolmaster as Master of the workhouse. His agent George Morant was there 'and exclaimed against this election but of course that was of no use ... as he was the only dissident. Kennedy of course [the Bath agent until late 1850] voted with the mob, no gentleman but George was present, he now is about to write to the Commissioners to ... try to get them not to sanction the election'.³¹ The hostile *Dundalk Democrat* summarized the changing balance of power, noting that Shirley,

had no power in the workhouse of Carrickmacross, for you have deprived him of all authority. His agent, when he storms and threatens in it, is only laughed at; and it is but a few weeks since a vote of censure was passed on him for his unmannerly conduct and English insolence to those guardians whom you have returned to protect your interests.³²

A petitioning system, introduced during Trench's agency on the Shirley estate in 1843, represents an important formal encounter between tenant and landlord and illustrates many of the elements of subaltern relations with a dominant elite. Apart from its value as a record of the extreme poverty of many of the tenantry in the 1840s, the petitions also demonstrate a degree of naive ingenuity on the part of tenants in the context of the rigour of estate regulations. One tenant sought permission in March 1845 to build a house:

As your petitioner is now cast on the benevolence of the world without a Cabin to shelter him his cousin with your

³¹ PRONI, D3531/C/2/1. See Lyne, *Lansdowne Estate*, 611-614 for similar trends in Kerry in 1858.

³² Longleat Library, Bath papers, printed notice from editor, *Dundalk Democrat*, September 1850.

honour's permission offers him a spot to build on. That your petitioner humbly hopes that your honour will take his distressed state into consideration and graciously please to grant permission?³³

Most of the petitions depict universal attitudes of subordination, particularly in the frequency of 'your honour' as a form of servile address, though in some cases one suspects a mask of subservience in the certain knowledge of the espionage system which kept the estate informed of their circumstances. Palmer's recalcitrant tenants petitioned against their threatened eviction in 1852, 'humbly hoping' that 'your honour will still continue them as tenants' (Byrne, 1996, pp. 56-57). Ruth-Ann Harris has suggested that many of the women on the estate used the petitions as a means of subverting the patriarchal authority of fathers, brothers and sons by appealing to estate regulations when it suited their circumstances (Harris, 2000).

Satirical songs and ballads were part of a long tradition in Ireland and many were employed as vehicles of resistance, indicting and lampooning the landlord class. At the annual dinner in Shirley's mansion in October 1850, some of the tenants sang in Irish for the assembly: the *Dundalk Democrat*, which was hostile to Shirley and Bath, suggested that they were abusing Shirley and his officials to their faces (Broehl, 1965, p. 68). Numerous ballads and humorous verses marked popular hostility to the Trenches on the Lansdowne estate in 1858 (Lyne, 2001, pp. 297-298). Estate 'marriage laws' were particularly satirized in song, as for instance on the Bath estate in the 1860s:

O girls of Farney is it true/That each true-hearted wench
Before she weds must get consent/From pious Father Trench?
O search green Erin through and through/And tell me would you
find
Match-maker and land agent too/In one small farm combined?³⁴

Overarching all of these strategies of resistance universally is language and what has been significantly characterized in colonial situations as 'native cunning', both fundamental in the armoury of the powerless. This is well illustrated in a confusion of language and landscape which was associated with many landed estates and the relations between tenant and colonial elite. In describing the densely-populated rundale landscapes of the west of Ireland, Estyn Evans suggested that the 'word used to describe the confusion of innumerable scattered plots and tortuous access ways ... was 'throughother' [*trína chéile* in Irish], a word which has

³³ PRONI. D3531/P/box 1. Tenants petitions

³⁴ *Dundalk Democrat* 12 June 1869. A year after Trench's death in 1872, his ornate headstone was broken under cover of darkness. A recent restoration attempt was similarly destroyed.

often been applied to other aspects of Irish life'. This confusion of landscape was exacerbated by nicknames for numerous families sharing surnames in the locality. Most landowners and agents saw 'the townland and their settlements as merely another obstinate obstacle to any rational management ... an occult device that muddled responsibilities between master and tenant, perpetuated the old listless ways, and bred conspiracy' ... 'Its very incoherence was their protection ... Their means of resistance -conspiracy, pretence, foot-dragging, and obfuscation -were the only ones available to them, 'weapons of the weak' like those employed by defeated and colonized people everywhere' (Evans, 1973, p. 60; see also Scally, 1995, pp. 12-13). These intricately occupied, named and fragmented landscapes containing elaborate federations of kin groups confused many colonial prescriptions for neatness, order and civilization, especially in situations where there was no resident landlord.

Language as the expression of cunning, especially if not the language of the colonist, was a powerful weapon, masking true intentions and feeding into the 'oriental inscrutability' of colonial discourse. Hiberno-English, and its comic or 'charming' convolutions in 'blarney,' for example, may be seen as having a subtle objective of obfuscating or subverting the language of the colonial elite. 'Lying to the landlord' is part of local folklore in many parts of the country, playing on the understanding that the landowning elite assume the same rules of 'civilized' behaviour apply to all (McLoughlin, 1999, p. 192). Mimicry, mockery and satire also fall into the same strategic use of language as a weapon of resistance. However, as estate correspondence and official colonial archives elsewhere show, many of the dominant elite were aware of such tactics. Trench knew that the tenants on the various estates he managed were, as he suggested, 'servile and fawning whilst under restraint'. As he informed Lady Bath in 1851, he had no intentions of being 'humbugged' by outward signs of welcome.

'Native cunning' is perhaps the best manifestation of the 'Other' in colonial situations, a term which has been transmitted through estate records and formal narratives of the Irish landed elite, deeply signifying many of the elements and dispositions of colonial discourse. With the authority of the [extensive] written record of the landed gentry preserved today in public and private archives, the mindset behind 'cunning' still echoes down to us as a righteous term demonstrating the rectitude of the rulers and the intransigence and deviousness of the ruled. Some researchers may unquestioningly or unconsciously appropriate the outlook of the dominant class who wrote the narrative and shaped the story. Alternative perspectives, aimed at restoring the integrity of the original insubordinate presence however, are difficult to access. There are more than a dozen Patrick Duffys in the 19th century records of the Shirley, Bath and neighbouring estates, whose voices are silent. A critical reading of the records suggests that for these weak and absent witnesses,

innate cunning was an important part of an armoury of resistance and survival in a world where the chips were generally stacked against them.

It may be argued that the system of landed estates was a fundamental component of the colonial project in Ireland from the 16th to the 19th centuries. Its owners and managers aimed for order and progress, articulated generally as 'improvement' and 'civilization' in estate landscape and society in the 18th and 19th centuries. Many of the struggles in 18th but especially 19th-century rural Ireland can be seen as a collision between the top down intentions of the powerful landowning elite for neat and ordered landscapes, neat and docile tenantry, regulation, control and asset management, and local, impoverished and untidy tenant resistance. Resistance ranged from anonymous conspiracy, assaults and murder, to a more general practice of feigned subservience and obfuscation, often characterized by the landowning class as fecklessness, wiliness or 'native cunning' the ultimate weapon of the powerless.

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