Introduction

'The old *laissez-faire* Liberalism is dead', declared the progressive liberal thinker J. A. Hobson in 1909. 'Its early demise', he continued, 'might indeed have been predicted from the time when Cobden recognised the necessity of "freeing" the land'.[1] Attempts to 'free the land', Hobson observed, had involved public control and interventions that brought 'in its wake a long series of further enlargements of State activity'.[2] By the early twentieth century, from Hobson's elevated vantage point, the debates over the land question that had dominated the 1880s were simply the stirrings of a more expansive social liberalism. In retrospective analysis by Fabian socialists, too, the arguments over land in the early 1880s, 'while not distinctly socialist', had been the primary driving force of the 'new current of thought', which later crystallised 'into a popular socialist movement'.[3] In his influential early history of socialism, Thomas Kirkup identified the doctrines of Henry George, the American social reformer, combined with the Irish Land War itself, as 'really the beginning of a radical change in English economics'.[4] Yet within a generation, the question of the right to land had gone from being the primary and most fundamental plank of many socialist platforms to a political anachronism, and George himself recast from an inadvertent founding father to an awkward footnote in the histories of democratic socialism and progressive liberalism.[5] Claims of a

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[1] J. A. Hobson, *The Crisis of Liberalism: New Issues of Democracy* (London: P. S. King & Son, 1909), 3.

[2] Hobson, *The Crisis of Liberalism*, 3.

[3] Thomas Kirkup, *A History of Socialism* [1892], 4th ed. (London: Adam and Charles Black, 1909), 328; Sidney Webb, and Beatrice Webb, *The History of Trade Unionism* [1894], 2nd ed. (London: Longmans, Green and Co., 1896), 361; Sidney Webb, *Socialism in England* (London: Swan Sonnenschein, 1890), 21.

[4] Kirkup, *A History of Socialism*, 328.

[5] Henry Fawcett, *State Socialism and the Nationalisation of the Land* (London: Macmillan, 1883), 3; F. M. L. Thompson, 'Changing Perceptions of Land Tenure in Britain, 1750–1914', in Donald Winch, and Patrick O'Brien (eds.), *The Political Economy of British Historical Experience* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2002), 134; Malcolm Chase, *The People's Farm: English Radical Agrarianism, 1775–1840* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1988), 188–189; Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard

popular right to land came to be seen as simply a 'particular brand of devia-
tion' from capitalism, or even, as Marx himself had argued, 'The Capitalists'
last ditch'.[6] Similarly, in Ireland itself, the mass agrarian movement that had
seemed poised to overleap national boundaries and undermine oligarchical
power in 'the grandest battle ever fought for the rights of human beings' would
later contract into a narrower national struggle.[7]

This is a story about the role of land in the dramatic reorientations in liberal
political thought during the late-nineteenth century. It takes as its primary focus
the experiences of the most notorious protagonist within the most notable field
of conflict in this encounter over the land question: Henry George and Ireland.
It is a story of how, in an era most often associated with the growth of the urban
environment, a resurgent agrarianism briefly reclaimed centre stage. While
late-Victorians often attributed political disagreement to an intractable conflict
between individualism and collectivism, the land issue provided a confounding
and disorientating challenge to such assumptions.[8] Hobson's linear narrative that
painted the international struggle over land as the economically naïve kernel of
an incipient progressive liberalism was a misconceived revision; an assumption
it was only possible to make by ignoring the very questions of popular power and
natural right which had really been the animating forces behind the land struggle.

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Built in 1871 at the Laird shipyards in Birkenhead, the steamship *Spain* oper-
ated on the National Line between Liverpool, Queenstown in County Cork,
and New York, connecting Britain and Ireland to continental North America
with a journey time of around a week and a half. With accommodation for
120 first-class and 1,400 third-class passengers, the ship was part of a vast
fleet that served on North Atlantic routes, drawing Europe and North America
into an ever-closer nexus. The huge transfer of people, and the ideas and com-
modities they carried, was reshaping the relationship between these countries,
creating shared political concerns and economic demands, all while solidifying

University Press, 1998), 90; Roy Douglas, 'God Gave the Land to the People', in A. J. A. Morris
(ed.), *Edwardian Radicalism, 1900–1914: Some Aspects of British Radicalism* (London: Routledge
and Kegan Paul, 1974), 148–161.

6   Theodore W. Adorno, and Max Horkheimer, *Dialectic of Enlightenment* [1944] (London: Verso,
1997), 132; Henry Mayers Hyndman, *The Record of an Adventurous Life* (London: Macmillan,
1911), 281.

7   Matthew Maguire, 'Address Adopted at the Workingmen's "No Rent Rally"', New York, 30
January 1882, *Irish Nation*, 2 February 1882; Edward T. O'Donnell, '"Henry George and the
New Political Forces": Ethnic Nationalism, Labor Radicalism and Politics in Gilded Age New
York City' (PhD dissertation, Columbia University, 1995), 165.

8   Michael Taylor, 'Introduction', in Michael Taylor (ed.), *Herbert Spencer and the Limits of the
State: The Late Nineteenth-Century Debate between Individualism and Collectivism* (Bristol:
Thoemmes Press, 1996).

the structures of transatlantic capitalism. In August 1876, the steamship *Spain* had carried the Baptist minister, abolitionist, and former slave Thomas Lewis Johnson from New York to Liverpool, and eventually to a new life on the south coast of England.[9] In July 1877, the ship carried a twenty-six-year-old mother, Margaret Madden, and her infant daughter Lizzie across in the other direction, where they would travel onwards to be reunited with her husband Matthew in East Boston; just one family among the hundreds of thousands who would make this particular journey.[10]

On 15 October 1881, the *Spain* sailed again for Liverpool from New York, and on board on this occasion was Henry George, his wife Annie, and their daughters Jennie and Anna.[11] George was travelling under the auspices of the *Irish World and American Industrial Liberator*, as an international correspondent for Irish-America's leading newspaper. It was a propitious moment for the self-anointed social philosopher to make the journey to Ireland. George's book, *Progress and Poverty*, which had been published over a year earlier, would soon elevate him to worldwide renown as the prophetic voice of a social revolution; one committed to the collective reclamation of earth's natural resources. In Ireland, where the ongoing revolt against landlordism was entering its third year, George not only saw fertile ground for his ideas, but a springboard for a transformational moment of world-historical proportions. 'What brings this question into peculiar prominence in Ireland', George explained to readers of the *Irish World*, 'is merely that certain conditions there prevail which […] compel people to see a relation between want and landownership which they do not see in other countries, though it no less truly exists'.[12]

George was not alone in seeing the Irish Land War as a portentous and epochal conflict. In many radical imaginations, and indeed the nightmares of conservative observers, the Irish fight against land monopoly was the start of something much more fundamental. George's claim that the Land War was 'greater than either the French or American Revolutions' was typical of his extravagant sermonising, but the sentiment was endorsed by many others who believed they were witnessing the final keystone that would fulfil the emancipatory promise of those late-eighteenth-century political transformations.[13] Heavily reliant on a discourse of natural right, and reaffirming the interdependency between landownership and democratic-republican citizenship, the Land War expressed these popular radical aspirations at a moment when an increasingly positivist and

⁹ Thomas L. Johnson, *Twenty-Eight Years a Slave, or the Story of My Life in Three Continents* (Bournemouth: W. Mate & Sons, 1909).
¹⁰ 1880 US Federal Census: Boston, Suffolk County, Massachusetts, Enumeration district 576, 38; steamship *Spain* manifest, From Liverpool and Queenstown to New York, 9 July 1877.
¹¹ Charles Albro Barker, *Henry George* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1955), 339–340.
¹² Henry George, *Irish World*, 1 May 1880.   ¹³ Henry George, *Irish World*, 9 July 1881.

sociologically minded liberalism appeared to have identified such archaic ambitions as nothing more than dangerous ideological relics.[14] In this way, through its political rhetoric and social practices, the Land War became a proxy conflict, conjoining the small farmer and the labour radical against what they perceived as both the centralising technocratic tendencies and the constricting possessiveness of late-Victorian liberalism. For supporters of Henry George, just as for many other radicals in Ireland and beyond, the Land War offered the brief hope of realising the fractured republican trinity of 'liberty, equality, and fraternity'.[15]

It was not to be. George left Ireland in the summer of 1882, disappointed and deflated by the political compromises of the Land League coalition, but by no means defeated. As his work gained increasing notoriety, his political prominence grew on the other side of the Atlantic. George would become a leading intellectual light among labour radicals in the United States and beyond, a hero for figures as diverse as Leo Tolstoy, José Martí, and Keir Hardie, and his prominence as an ideological totem reached its pinnacle during his 1886 mayoral campaign in New York City, where he stood as an independent labour candidate. *Progress and Poverty*, George's magnum opus, remained the most influential non-fiction book among British Labour Party politicians into the early twentieth century.[16] His unifying role during this early highpoint of the transatlantic labour movement is an indication of the critically overlooked question of land in reshaping political discourse during this ideologically tumultuous period.

[14] Stefan Collini, *Liberalism and Sociology: L. T. Hobhouse and Political Argument in England, 1880–1914* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1979); Daniel T. Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings: Social Politics in a Progressive Age* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998); Dorothy Ross, 'Socialism and American Liberalism: Academic Social Thought in the 1880s', *Perspectives in American History* 11 (1978): 7–79; Mary O. Furner, 'The Republican Tradition and the New Liberalism: Social Investigation, State Building, and Social Learning in the Gilded Age', in Michael J. Lacey, and Mary O. Furner (eds.), *The State and Social Investigation in Britain and the United States* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1993); Sandra den Otter, *British Idealism and Social Explanation: A Study in Late Victorian Thought* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1996); Robert Adcock, *Liberalism and the Emergence of American Political Science: A Transatlantic Tale* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2014).

[15] *Freeman's Journal* 16 January 1883; On the international spread of the land issue, see Andrew G. Newby, *Ireland, Radicalism and the Scottish Highlands, c. 1870–1912* (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 2007); Ewen A. Cameron, 'Communication or Separation? Reactions to Irish Land Agitation and Legislation in the Highlands of Scotland c.1870–1910', *The English Historical Review* 120, no. 487 (2005): 633–666; John D. Wood, 'Transatlantic Land Reform: America and the Crofters' Revolt, 1878–1888', *The Scottish Historical Review* 63, no. 175 (1984): 79–104; Ely M. Janis, *A Greater Ireland: The Land League and Transatlantic Nationalism in Gilded Age America* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2015); Peter d'A. Jones, 'Henry George and British Socialism', *American Journal of Economics and Sociology* 47, no. 4 (1988): 473–491; Anthony Taylor, 'Richard Cobden, J. E. Thorold Rogers and Henry George', in Matthew Cragoe, and Paul Readman (eds.), *The Land Question in Britain, 1750–1950* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2010).

[16] 'The Labour Party and the Books That Helped to Make It', *The Review of Reviews* 33, no. 198 (June 1906), 571.

Taking up the mantle of E. P. Thompson's famous fight against the 'conde-scension of posterity', the historian of Chartism Malcolm Chase once noted that labour historians' attention tended to be drawn towards 'those elements and personalities' that appeared to presage the concerns of the modern movement, ignoring other untaken, abandoned, or obstructed intellectual avenues. 'From this perspective', he continued, 'the land question can seem irrelevant, and working class absorption in it even mildly embarrassing'.[17] This general histo-riographical disinterest has helped to shape assumptions that nineteenth-century arguments over the right to land were intellectual cul-de-sacs.[18] Yet even in the midst of the rapid industrialisation of the 1880s, the land issue had still not been eclipsed and, if anything, became more pronounced as labour radicals on both sides of the Atlantic found that urban poverty simply reinforced 'the connection between alienation from the land and the rigors of the wages system'.[19]

This work is an attempt to rectify this imbalance and to allow both the Irish Land War and Henry George to reclaim the position of importance accorded them by contemporaries.[20] It places them at the centre of the intellectual trans-figuration of liberal political thought across the Gilded Age Atlantic World. The moral and material advantages conferred by the possession of land had long been central to most theories of political legitimacy and sovereignty. So too was the issue of land ownership tied at the root to political conflicts over the nature and origins of economic value. The perception, common among many politi-cal economists until the middle of the century, that land should be viewed as a distinct form of property, opened the intellectual space for communitarian con-clusions about its possession to maturate. It was here that George's campaign, and the Land War itself, found their ideological niche. Both suggested indi-vidualised but non-possessive rights to nature which were limited by a broader 'common good' but grounded upon a natural 'right to life'. This was an articula-tion of natural rights framed within a wider cosmology of a harmonious moral universe. In this way, the practical and discursive demand for a right to land tra-versed the uneasy bifurcation of individualism or collectivism that dominated

[17] Chase, *The People's Farm*, 4.
[18] Alex Gourevitch, *From Slavery to the Cooperative Commonwealth: Labor and Republican Liberty in the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2015), 95, 145.
[19] David Montgomery, *Citizen Worker: The Experience of Workers in the United States with Democracy and the Free Market during the Nineteenth Century* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994), 112.
[20] Eric Foner, 'Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism in the Gilded Age: The Land League and Irish America', in Eric Foner, *Politics and Ideology in the Age of the Civil War* (New York: Oxford University Press, 1981), 180; Sean Wilentz, 'Industrialising America and the Irish: Towards the New Departure', *Labor History* 29, no. 4 (1979): 587; David N. Doyle, 'Unestablished Irishmen: New Immigrants and Industrial America, 1870–1910', in Dirk Hoerder (ed.), *American Labor and Immigration History, 1877–1920s: Recent European Research* (Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 1983), 193.

concurrent debates in political economy. George's famous claim that his land plan demonstrated that '*laissez-faire* (in its full true meaning) opens the way to a realization of the noble dreams of socialism' came to seem, by the early twentieth century, like an impenetrable paradox.[21] But not before it animated a movement of remarkable popular appeal and righteous moral ambition.

The notion of paradox runs deeply through this topic. Historians of the Irish Land War have often dwelt on the apparent contradiction of a mass movement demanding 'Land for the People' leading inexorably to a more engrained system of private land ownership through its claims for more secure possession of the soil.[22] It was a tension which many contemporary observers alluded to as well.[23] If Henry George's historiographical ambiguity can be attributed, as Daniel T. Rodgers has suggested, to his liminal place on the political spectrum, a place 'where left and right can no longer easily be distinguished', the same can be said of the Land War itself.[24] Was it a signal moment of radically egalitarian possibilities, a petty-bourgeois land-grab whereby 'one class of Irish capitalists waged economic war against another class of Irish capitalists', or the birthplace of socially liberal state interventionism?[25]

It was only appropriate that Ireland should be the primary site of this incongruity. The country occupied a liminal place in the transatlantic world – variously colonised and coloniser, enlightened and primitive, according to ideological

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

[22] Oliver MacDonagh, *States of Mind: Two Centuries of Anglo-Irish Conflict, 1780–1980* (London: Pimlico, 1983), 51; Gearóid Ó Tuathaigh, 'Irish Land Questions in the State of the Union', in Fergus Campbell, and Tony Varley (eds.), *Land Questions in Modern Ireland* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2013), 17.

[23] William Edward Hartpole Lecky, *Democracy and Liberty*, vol. II [1896] (London: Longmans, Green, and Co., 1913), 228; Robert Wallace, 'The Philosophy of Liberalism', *The Nineteenth Century: A Monthly Review* 9, no. 48 (1881): 320.

[24] Rodgers, *Atlantic Crossings*, 90.

[25] R. V. Comerford, *The Fenians in Context: Irish Politics & Society 1848–82* (Dublin: Wolfhound Press, 1985), 234; see also, Samuel Clark, *The Social Origins of the Irish Land War* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1979); Paul Bew, *Land and the National Question in Ireland, 1858–82* (Atlantic Highlands, NJ: Humanities Press, 1979); F. S. L. Lyons, *Charles Stewart Parnell* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1977); Donald E. Jordan, Jr., *Land and Popular Politics in Ireland: County Mayo from the Plantation to the Land War* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994); Philip Bull, *Land, Politics and Nationalism: A Study of the Irish Land Question* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1996); Barbara L. Solow, *The Land Question and the Irish Economy, 1870–1903* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1971); T. W. Moody, *Davitt and the Irish Revolution, 1846–82* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1982); P. J. Drudy (ed.), *Ireland: Land, Politics and People* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1982); Samuel Clark, and James S. Donnelly, Jr. (eds.), *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest, 1780–1914* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 1983); Andrew W. Orridge, 'Who Supported the Land War? An Aggregate Data Analysis of Irish Agrarian Discontent, 1879–1882', *Economic and Social Review* 12 (1980–81): 203–233.

preference – a multivalence which allowed utopian and oppositional political ideas about land to be projected on to and incubated within the country.[26] An agricultural fringe to the British metropole, Ireland was also a central node in transatlantic networks through its vast and powerful diaspora. Viewed in this way, Ireland was both the known and the unknown in the Atlantic world: its geographical proximity to Britain placed it at the frontier of capitalist modernity; its religion, language, and culture provided a contrasting perspective which formed a dialogue with these new capitalist social forms.[27] Ireland was able, in Joe Cleary's words, to perform as a 'sublime periphery to the European mainstream', and therefore its effect on contemporary political thought was a consequence of its position of 'overlap and coexistence between two incommensurable realities'.[28] It was precisely this situational anomaly that provided the potency for Irish critiques of British power and of liberal capitalism.

The question of land, too, had long shaped the distinctiveness of Irish political economy. Throughout the nineteenth century, radicals in Britain and the United States had looked to Ireland as an example of the worst effects of landed oligarchy.[29] No event could have more forcefully and catastrophically reinforced this concern than the Famine, which, if it did not immediately undermine, fatally destabilised the absolutist commitment to the notion that markets and morals always aligned. Due to their proximity to the worst excesses of mid-century *laissez-faire* in the case of the Great Famine, many Irish economists were much more ambivalent about the moral authority of the market than their counterparts nearer the imperial capital.[30] Ireland's predominantly rural complexion and its

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[26] Deirdre Ní Chuancháin, *Utopianism in Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2016).

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

[28] Joe Cleary, 'Ireland and Modernity', in Joe Cleary, and Claire Connolly (eds.), *The Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 9; Frederic Jameson, 'Modernism and Imperialism', in Terry Eagleton, Fredric Jameson, and Edward W. Said (eds.), *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature* (Minneapolis, MN: University of Minnesota Press, 1990), 59.

[29] Thomas Hodgskin, *The Natural and Artificial Right of Property Contrasted* (London: B. Steil, 1832), 44–45; Wendell Phillips, *Daniel O'Connell: The Irish Patriot*, 6 (Archives of Irish America, 047, New York University); Jamie L. Bronstein, 'Land Reform and Political Traditions in Nineteenth Century Britain and the United States', in Mark Bevir, and Frank Trentmann (eds.), *Critiques of Capital in Modern Britain and America: Transatlantic Exchanges 1800 to the Present Day* (Basingstoke: Palgrave Macmillan, 2002), 33–34.

[30] R. D. C. Black, *Economic Thought and the Irish Question, 1817–1870* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1960); Peter Gray, 'Irish Social Thought and the Relief of Poverty', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society* 20 (2010): 1–23; Boyd Hilton, *The Age of Atonement: The Influence of Evangelicalism on Social and Economic Thought, 1785–1865* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1986); Thomas A. Boylan and Timothy P. Foley, *Political Economy and Colonial Ireland: The Propagation and Ideological Function of Economic*

semi-colonial relationship with Britain added vivid emphasis to the contention that land ownership was central to realising personal, political, and economic liberty. Critically, not only had the question of Irish nationality and independence been tied up with the ownership of Irish soil, but the millions of sons and daughters of Ireland that coursed though America's cities, the blood in its industrial veins, ensured that Irish land would become an international issue. It was not surprising then that during the economic and political crises of the 1880s, when rapid technological advance was accompanied by both economic convulsions and social disquiet, Ireland assumed a prominent position in both international geopolitics and political thought.

However, this centrality has not often been fully appreciated. For a long time, historians of nineteenth-century Ireland have largely rejected the admittedly grandiose view of the Land War put forward by its radical and international supporters and its most anxious critics, noting that the partial and incremental victories it won were hardly suggestive of such high-minded claims.[31] Others have viewed the political language used during the Land War as obfuscation, a way to disguise what was really 'an exclusive form of historical regression, based on the economic expectation of an anti-urban, small tenant class intent on promoting the glorification of their own status'.[32] Domestic perspectives on the conflict have dominated, making it harder to observe how the ideological issues thrown up by the Land War were contested in a wider context. As a consequence of this, the ideas articulated by the Irish Land League and its supporters have often been seen as secondary to its actual ambitions; a rhetorical veneer on a bourgeois nationalist revolt.[33] In returning the focus to the ideas which orientated and directed the conflict, this work is an attempt to pay serious attention to Irish intellectual history, which has, at least in regard to the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, been comparatively neglected.[34]

Discourse in the Nineteenth Century (London: Routledge, 1992); Thomas Boylan, Renee Prendergast, and John D. Turner (eds.), *A History of Irish Economic Thought* (Abingdon: Routledge, 2011).

[31] R. V. Comerford, 'The Politics of Distress, 1877–82', in W. E. Vaughan (ed.), *A New History of Ireland, vol. VI* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1989), 47.

[32] Padraig G. Lane, 'Poor Crayturs: The West's Agricultural Labourers in the Nineteenth Century', in Carla King, and Conor McNamara (eds.), *The West of Ireland: New Perspectives on the Nineteenth Century* (Dublin: History Press Ireland, 2011), 46.

[33] For instance, Thomas N. Brown, *Irish American Nationalism, 1870–1890* (Philadelphia: J. B. Lippincott, 1966), 53–54; Comerford, 'The Politics of Distress'. Tom Garvin, 'Republicanism and Democracy in Ireland', *Studies: An Irish Quarterly Review* 102, no. 406 (2013): 181–189.

[34] The case for greater attention has been made by Colin Reid, 'Democracy, Sovereignty and Unionist Political Thought during the Revolutionary Period in Ireland, c. 1912–22', *Transactions of the Royal Historical Society*, 27 (2017): 211–232; Richard Bourke, 'Languages of Conflict and the Northern Irish Troubles', *Journal of Modern History* 83, no. 3 (2011): 544–578; Iseult Honohan, 'Introduction: Putting Irish Republicanism in a Wider Context', in Iseult Honohan (ed.), *Republicanism in Ireland: Confronting Theories and Traditions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 1–20.

When it comes to questions of land and democracy in particular, the spectre of 'republicanism' hangs uncomfortably over the historiography. This complex term acquires darker hues in an Irish context, and historians have been generally resistant to applying the label to distinctive modes of thought in order to avoid conflating Irish republicanism with the history of republican political thought, thereby allowing it to stagnate as a simple synonym for nationalism.[35] As Fearghal McGarry and James McConnel have reflected, the assumption remains 'that the real importance of Fenianism lay in its attitude rather than its ideas'.[36] Excavating these dormant intellectual histories is a guiding ambition of this book.

More than any other issue, the land question opens the most promising avenues for this. For one thing, it was deeply implicated in broad and far-reaching questions of political economy, individual personality, theology and morality, community and nationality, and citizenship and democracy. At the same time, it was also a more mundane and prosaic issue, one that directly shaped daily lives, and which fostered particular social practices. In this way, the land question can provide a connecting thread between popular attitudes and political thought, sewing together the concerns of social historians and those of intellectual historians. It opens up the possibility of a properly social history of ideas, recognising 'that complex systems of ideas and knowledge also lodge within every sociological division of society', even if there remain significant challenges in decoding and elaborating political claims that are not distilled in careful prose, but formed and articulated through social action and practice.[37] This present study involves reading social practices themselves as emergent non-textual articulations of political ideas and connecting them to more familiar textual analyses of political theory with the ambition of constructing a workable intellectual history from below that can best represent the complex interplay between linguistic and material influence.[38]

[35] Margaret O'Callaghan, 'Reconsidering the Republican Tradition in Nineteenth Century Ireland', in Iseult Honohan (ed.) *Republicanism in Ireland: Confronting Theories and Traditions* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2008), 31–44.

[36] Fearghal McGarry, and James McConnel, 'Introduction', in Fearghal McGarry, and James McConnel (eds.), *The Black Hand of Republicanism: Fenianism in Modern Ireland* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008), xiv.

[37] Daniel T. Rodgers, 'Paths in the Social History of Ideas', in Joel Isaac, James T. Kloppenberg, Michael O'Brien, and Jennifer Ratner-Rosenhagen (eds.), *The Worlds of American Intellectual History* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2017), 310.

[38] E. P. Thompson, 'The Poverty of Theory or an Orrey of Errors', in E. P. Thompson (ed.), *The Poverty of Theory and Other Essays* (London: Merlin Press, 1978), 3; Eric Hobsbawm, 'History from Below – Some Reflections', in Frederick Krantz (ed.), *History from Below: Studies in Popular Protest and Popular Ideology in Honour of George Rudé* (Montréal: Concordia University Press, 1985), 64. Mark Bevir, *The Logic of the History of Ideas* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1999), 312.

The land question undoubtedly opens an important window into the non-textual social world, enabling popular attitudes about the distinctiveness of property in land to be observed and interpreted as political thought. In this way, praxiographic analysis can provide a complimentary corrective to a contextual and discursive analysis.[39] A specific ontology of value tended to emerge from beliefs about the distinctness of land, itself a result of proximity to and reliance upon agriculture, and upon which a number of corollary assumptions often rested. These epistemic structures of agrarian life laid significant moral value on natural processes such as fertility and labour, as well notions of holistic harmony, and although these beliefs translated into political commitments in myriad ways, they dovetailed closely with typical republican commitments. Malcolm Chase has described this as an 'ethos of a pre-industrial natural order' which was 'borne of continuing proximity (spatial and psychological) to the land'.[40] Within this ideological context, land unavoidably socialised and restricted the question of possession, preventing rights claims from slipping into an acquisitive individualism. This was the fertile ideological ground that allowed George's ideas to take root.

The structure of this book is thematic rather than chronological and adopts a number of different methodological approaches. George's own intellectual background, alongside the wider context of the 1880s, is examined more fully in Chapter 1, which takes as its title the sarcastic yet revealing moniker of 'our American Aristotle', bestowed on George by a Catholic cleric.[41] Thinking of the North Atlantic as a semi-integrated whole during this period, as is argued in this first chapter, clarifies Ireland's centrality in this chaotic decade, as well as the remarkable influence of the United States, and Irish-America in particular, on Irish political life. It also facilitates a contextual analysis of George's most famous work, *Progress and Poverty*. Chapter 2 examines the role of land in the history of political thought, specifically with regard to the concepts of value, productivity, natural harmony and independence, and how, via the notion of the body as a universal materialist foundation, these have been conceptualised in the history of land reform agitation, both in Ireland and beyond. With these contexts established, the next chapter provides an account of the course and development of the Land War itself, and how the ideas discussed in Chapter 2

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[39] See Christian Bueger, 'Pathways to Practice: Praxiography and International Politics', *European Political Science Review* 6, no. 3 (2014): 383–406; Theodore R. Schatzki, 'Introduction', in Theodore R. Schatzki, Karin Knorr Cetina, and Eike von Savigny (eds.), *The Practice Turn in Contemporary Theory* (London: Routledge, 2001), 10–23; Inanna Hamati-Ataya, 'The Sociology of Knowledge as Postphilosophical Epistemology: Out of IR's "Socially Constructed" Idealism', *International Studies Review* 20 (2018): 3–29.

[40] Chase, *The People's Farm*, 15.

[41] Rev Henry A. Brann, *Henry George and His Land Theories* (New York: The Catholic Publication Society, 1887), 10.