

'Ireland and the Hour': Paternalism and Nationality in Standish James O'Grady's *Toryism and the Tory Democracy*

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Standish James O'Grady (Figure 1) is best known for his treatment of Cuchulainn in his two-volume *History of Ireland* – a work which W.B. Yeats viewed as the one which ignited the Irish Literary Revival at the end of the nineteenth century. He was, however, more than a literary practitioner: for over thirty years he was an important political voice in Ireland. Through his pronouncements in *Toryism and the Tory Democracy* (1886), *All-Ireland* (1898), articles in the *Daily Express*, the *Kilkenny Moderator* and in the *All-Ireland Review* (a newspaper he ran almost single-handedly from 1900 to 1906) he contributed to the most important debates of the period – especially the status of the Irish landlords in the context of the Land War and the Home Rule movement. One of the most fascinating aspects of O'Grady's writing is the manner in which he made broad intellectual trends in the British Isles relevant to regional concerns in Ireland. A preoccupation with locale was something that permeated his work; it became a feature which he highlighted to Irish landlords in a country that seemed – during the Land War of the late nineteenth century – generally inimical to their long-term interests.¹ O'Grady's pronouncements on regionalism were rooted in the paternalistic ethos of John Ruskin, as well as that of Thomas Carlyle, whose critique of aristocratic dilettantism O'Grady appreciated.² If the landlords of Ireland were, in O'Grady's view, to survive, they had first to recognize and cultivate a sentimental connection with their land of residence rather than continue to perceive Westminster as the guarantor of their political and economic authority in Ireland. Otherwise, the rise of agrarian radicalism in Ireland and of proletarian radicalism in England could not, in his opinion, be checked; O'Grady believed that this situation would result in a general state of anarchy in society.

A tension runs through O'Grady's political work on account of the unique manner in which he adapts Carlyle's and Ruskin's paternalism to an Irish con-

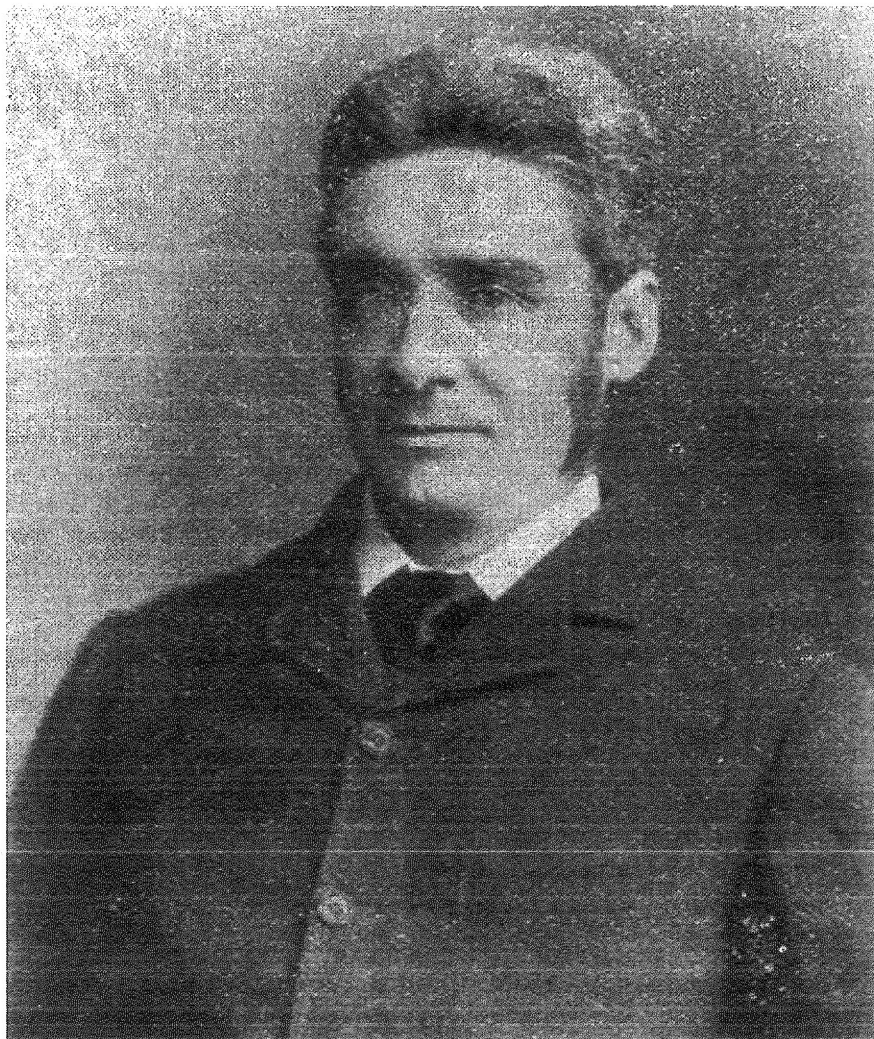
¹ Hubert Butler, a committed regionalist who lived most of his life in Kilkenny, saw O'Grady as an inspiring predecessor, particularly in the light of O'Grady's editorship of the *Kilkenny Moderator* in 1898 and 1899. See Butler's 'The Deserted Sun Palace' in *The Sub-Prefect should have held his tongue and other essays* (London, 1990). ² Carlyle disdained an indifference to region in favour of cosmopolitan pursuits, and of those democratic movements that sought to eradicate the landed gentry and nationalize the great estates.

text. In consciously cultivating a sense of Irish national identity among the landed gentry, he demonstrates an equally strong concern to check any propensity towards ethnic nationalism and the breaking of the union. This curious ambivalence towards regional identity is apparent in his insistence on grounding all appeals to Irish nationality on a loyalty to the British throne – a fact illustrated by his polemical work, *All-Ireland*.³

O'Grady's political doctrine is most vividly expressed in *Toryism and the Tory Democracy*, published in 1886 as a response to the Tory Democracy movement within the Conservative party. The creation of this faction, led by Lord Randolph Churchill, was essentially a vote-winning tactic, designed to respond to the second Reform Act of 1867, which expanded the franchise.⁴ Nevertheless, the movement suggested a reconciliation of the landed interest (the traditional Conservative power-base) with the increasingly threatening British proletariat. O'Grady, who was, perhaps, overly idealistic about the faction's claims, saw it as an opportunity for polemical rebuttal of a Toryism that was couched in the smug presupposition of its political security, and of a radicalism that sought to break up the landed interest. Churchill's Tory Democracy provided O'Grady with an attractive phrase and an immediate context for the elucidation of his own political philosophy which was inspired by Carlyle and Ruskin. 'But for Mr Ruskin and his books,' he writes, 'I should probably not have written this work'.⁵ In the second part of the book he applies his political ideas to a critique of the Irish landlords; his views were marked by intense vituperation, and emphasized the landlords' political ineptitude as a class during the Land War and the popular struggle for Home Rule.

The political credos of the work may be summarized. For O'Grady Tory Democracy essentially consisted of appealing to a perceived traditional sense of loyalty among the subaltern classes, in order to prevent their acquiescence to radicalism and popular revolt. In the light of the franchise reforms of the nineteenth century, O'Grady recognized that if Conservatism was to remain exclusively tied to the landed aristocracy, it could not retain power; yet neither could it abandon that power base without instigating the decline of Britain into anarchy. Considering that O'Grady was himself a member of the Protestant ascendancy in Ireland, it would seem obvious to read his espousal of this idea of Tory Democracy as primarily a polemic aimed at securing the interests of his class.

³ *All-Ireland* was published in 1898, in response to a report of the Financial Relations Committee in which it was revealed that Ireland had been seriously overtaxed since the Act of Union. O'Grady looks to the model of Grattan's parliament as the basis of Irish unity in the face of this exploitation from Westminster. Irish unity, he argues, can only be established through an assertion of constitutional rights ignored by Westminster, but guaranteed by loyalty to the monarch. 'Our Fenians', he writes, 'when they see the great game and understand it, will swear the oath of allegiance to the Throne, and they will keep it' (*All-Ireland* [Dublin, 1898], p. 148). ⁴ Edward A. Hagan, *High Nonsensical Words* (New York, 1986), p. 156. ⁵ Standish O'Grady, *Toryism and the Tory Democracy* (Dublin, 1886), p. 191.



1 Standish James O'Grady, in the *Irish Homestead*, Christmas Issue (Dec 1905), p. 15.

This was, in fact, the case; but the manner in which O'Grady elucidates his political philosophy suggests a complexity that might hitherto not have been expected. Furthermore, it indicates that the most dominant motif of the Irish Literary Revival – that of the noble peasant – partly originates in a political strategy directed against the captains of industry in the rapidly expanding manufacturing sector of the British economy during the nineteenth century.

The key question that emerges in *Toryism and the Tory Democracy* is whether O'Grady's argument is primarily utilitarian – in the sense of aiming at securing his own interests – or whether it is primarily moral, offering itself as a critique of what he sees as a society where interests are replacing ethics. O'Grady clearly recognized that the interests of his class are at stake both in Ireland and England; but because he links those interests to a moral economy that is based on an opposition to the subordination of ethics to utility, the question is not so easy to resolve. He concurs with Marx's assertion that no country contained the conditions for revolution in so striking a manner as England, and he examines this argument in terms of religion and economics. Echoing an argument made by many Victorian thinkers,⁶ he believes the decline of religion as a vital social institution to be the key factor in the problems of his day:

In all past times religion has been the deep centripetal force which has held societies together, compacting them into coherence and solidity. But religion, to act so, to bind together men and classes, the upper with the lower, the rich with the poor, the governors with the governed, must be vital and sincere, vital in the strong, the clear-headed, the well-informed, as among the rude and unthinking many. The strenuously organised hypocrisy of the present day, though never so generously supported, will not do.⁷

This last line – a barely disguised attack on the Established Church – is revealing. It implies that the continued success of the Anglican Church in attracting members during a period of immense social change could be explained in terms of interests rather than moral attachment. As O'Grady sees it, the values of charity and moral rectitude propounded by the Church were no longer internalized in its members; rather they had become mere emblems of social propriety: social relations based on authentically shared values were being replaced by purely pecuniary ones. He believed this was causing individual interests to gravitate away from the social whole towards other smaller groups whose members shared an immediate common interest; the result, he observed, was class solidarity, which, in turn, led to class conflict. O'Grady reads the amorality of a pecuniary-based society in two ways. First, he says, the factory manager, lack-

6 Perhaps the most strenuous advocate of the social significance of religion during the Victorian age was Matthew Arnold, who argued vehemently against the individualizing tendencies of Nonconformism in England that produced what he regarded as a provincialism of 'a bitter type and a smug type'. This arose, according to Arnold, because it is not 'in contact with the main current of national life, like the member of an Establishment. In a matter of such deep and vital concern as religion, this separation from the main current of the national life has a peculiar importance' (Matthew Arnold, *Culture and Anarchy* [Cambridge, 1932], p. 14). 7 O'Grady, *Toryism and the Tory Democracy*, p. 105.

ing all sense of responsibility to his employees other than that of maximizing their labour-value, would stop at nothing to increase profit. In the mass society of nineteenth-century industrial England, where labour was cheap and plentiful, this figure had few worries about the supply of workers. O'Grady recognizes that such a scenario could only lead to antagonism among the proletariat, and eventual acquiescence to doctrines of political radicalism.⁸ Second, the traditional respect for authority that O'Grady saw as part of the conditions of pre-modern social relations could no longer be relied upon as a defence against proletarian revolt. Implicit in this analysis is the belief that if sentiment – whether expressed in the moral sense of duty or in the affective sense of spontaneous loyalty – could no longer engender a reaction, then there were no longer any grounds on which the unequal distribution of wealth might be justified to the subaltern classes. This sentiment, ostensibly tenuous in the circumstances of the latter half of the nineteenth century in Britain, was nevertheless regarded by O'Grady as 'the only really powerful defence of the Throne'.⁹

Given this transition from a sentimental to a utilitarian mode of social relations during the British industrial revolution, O'Grady was able to view democratic Toryism as the only credible proposition for the internal protection of the United Kingdom. He proposed that radicalism be tackled by an appeal both to interests and the perceived sentiment of loyalty innate in the subaltern classes. The economic radicalism proposed by such figures as Henry George¹⁰ considered the break-up of the landed interest as a prerequisite to the development of a truly *laissez-faire* society regulated by the rights and duties attaching to the Enlightenment idea of citizenship. O'Grady saw beneath the apparent egalitarianism of this aspiration a determination upon the part of the Whigs to divert proletarian animosity away from the industrial bourgeoisie onto the landed aristocracy.¹¹ Believing, however, that the 'wealth which has been acquired in trade, commerce and manufacture, is actually regarded with more unfriendly eyes by the working-men than that which consists in the ownership of land', he sees an opportunity for opposing democratic radicalism with an alignment of the

⁸ The millenarian attitude that O'Grady adopts to the emergence of a dominant pecuniary ethos in industrial England reveals the influence of Carlyle, particularly in his essay on *Chartism*: 'O reader, to what shifts is poor Society reduced, struggling to give still some account of herself, in epochs when Cash Payment has become the sole nexus of man to man! On the whole, we will advise Society not to talk at all about what she exists for; but rather with her whole industry to exist, to try how she can keep existing!' (Thomas Carlyle, *Critical and Miscellaneous Essays*, vol. iii [London, 1888], p. 293). ⁹ O'Grady, *Toryism and the Tory Democracy*, p. 144. ¹⁰ Henry George (1839–97) was an American political economist and a leading figure in the Liberal land question. His influence stemmed from his book *Progress and Poverty*, published in America in 1879 and in England two years later. He played a significant role in the growth of collectivism because he provided a theoretical basis for Radical anti-landlordism. See Matthew Fforde, *Conservatism and Collectivism 1886–1914* (Edinburgh, 1990), p. 46. ¹¹ O'Grady, *Toryism and the Tory Democracy* p. 117.

landed aristocracy and the subaltern classes, based on a shared hostility to industrial capitalism.¹² To convince his readership of the necessity and the efficacy of such an alignment, he first alludes to the negative consequences that would follow from the break-up of the great estates. Then he introduces the idea of the nation-state, designed simultaneously to reawaken a popular sentiment of loyalty and to undercut the conditions fertilizing proletarian radicalism. With regard to the great estates, he argues that to break them up on the basis of Henry Broadhurst's recent Allotments Bill would, from a national perspective, be an absurdity:

The normal economic tendencies continuing unchanged, the small fee-simple estates would forthwith begin rapidly to aggregate themselves into larger and ever larger estates. It would be no more than baling out a boat whose bottom is pierced. Meantime, in mere idleness, without any public duties or responsibilities, the evicted aristocracy would be consuming, without any return, a gigantic proportion of the national wealth.¹³

In proposing this argument, he has in mind the temptation felt by Tories to follow radical lines, expressed in Lord Randolph Churchill's determination to break up the 'bloated estates'.¹⁴ Besides his contention that the break-up of the estates offered no real economic advantages to the country as a whole, O'Grady warns Churchill that to pursue a radical line would henceforth preclude any appeal to notions such as 'the sacredness of Property, the wickedness of public plunder, the great deeds of the barons, Magna Charta, etc., and appeal to strong human sentiments of sympathy and admiration so commonly felt towards ancient and noble families'.¹⁵ This development would, according to O'Grady, result in the long term victory of Whig radicals. As he saw it, the break-up of the great estates meant the dissolution of the Tory Party; the two events would inevitably, he believed, lead to revolution in England.

Having illustrated that the break-up of the landed aristocracy would serve neither the interests of the Tory Party nor those of the urban/rural proletariat, O'Grady introduces the concept of the nation-state as the foundation upon which an alignment of the gentry and the subaltern class could be realized. With

¹² *Ibid.*, p. 117. ¹³ *Ibid.*, p. 140. The Conservative Allotments Bill was proposed in 1886 by Henry Broadhurst MP, parliamentary champion of the Leaseholds Enfranchisement Association, an organization established to promote the policy of giving occupiers the compulsory right to purchase their freeholds. The bill, which proposed that power be given to local authorities to buy land by voluntary or compulsory means and let it out to suitable tenants, initially failed to win the support of the Prime Minister, Lord Salisbury, who was generally suspicious of the Tory Democracy movement. The bill, however, became law through the Allotments Acts of 1887 and 1890. See Fforde, *Conservatism and Collectivism 1886-1914*, pp 46, 69, 76. ¹⁴ O'Grady, *Toryism and the Tory Democracy*, p. 142. ¹⁵ *Ibid.*, p. 143.

his warning against the abandonment of the aristocracy still fresh in mind, he nevertheless insists that Conservatism must embrace the idea of state-employed labour. 'The State, the Nation', he claims, 'will get better work out of its employees than any private individual will get out of his'.¹⁶ Elucidating this idea further, he writes:

If Conservatism does not intend to keep stumbling along the same line of advance [as the Whigs], and is really in earnest in its intention of appealing to the masses for support, it must adopt that other alternative, and enunciate just as distinctly, and with just as fierce an emphasis, as the cardinal principal in its policy, the natural and indefeasible right of labour to employment and maintenance at the hands of the State.¹⁷

His vision is organic – one in which the State becomes the totality whose component parts are interdependent and in which each part is an expression of that totality. 'Not alone to hold society together', he writes, 'but to bind and compact it into a vital whole, is the task towards which democratic Toryism, by the law of its existence, ceaselessly and inevitably tends'.¹⁸ The notion of interdependence is best exemplified in O'Grady's support of Dr Lyons' scheme for the reforestation of Ireland. Lyons proposed that thirty thousand men would be employed by the State in this scheme. The food, clothing, and tools that these men would require, it was argued, would stimulate the flagging industries of the country and the value of the wages invested in them by the State would be reflected in national forests – a growing source of national wealth, according to O'Grady. 'Thirty thousand men,' he concludes, 'of the class most dangerous to the State would be converted into loyal citizens, inasmuch as average human nature is generally true to its salt'.¹⁹ This last comment reveals the dual motive behind his deployment of the nation-state idea. On the one hand he wishes to strengthen the foundations of society by subjugating individualism to the organicism of the State, thereby re-awakening the commonality of interests that was perceived to be the social condition of feudalism; on the other hand, he sees the nationalization of industry as the means by which the 'only real danger to society and the State, ... the unemployed or underpaid masses of men', would be rendered politically ineffective.²⁰

This neutralizing function of the nation-state idea highlights its ideological specificity, which is reinforced by the fact that though it embraces the nationalization of wealth in the industrial sector, agriculture is to remain the private domain of the aristocracy. O'Grady argues that if land is nationalized, then the amount of rent paid to landlords – Henry George claimed that the sum was £200 million per annum – would be diverted into different channels of employment, dislocating not just those dependent on rental income but also industrial

firms affected by the diversion of this sum into new modes of expenditure.²¹ Whatever the effects on the recipients of land rent, the argument was a lame one: it could just as easily be argued that the diversion of this sum into new modes of expenditure offered the opportunity for the creation of new industries and the sharpening of competition among those already in place. However, this did not worry O'Grady since what he aimed at was a polemic unfettered by the constraints of monetary economics.

Given O'Grady's motives of neutralizing a radical proletariat and exempting the landlords from the proposed scheme for nationalizing industries, to conclude that this address to Churchill and the Tory Democrats was anything other than a polemic aimed at securing the economic interests of the aristocracy in the light of an expanded franchise, would invest it with a sophistication it scarcely deserves. Two considerations, however, render such a reading problematic. First, while O'Grady introduces the nation-state idea in the context of a defence of the economic interests of the landed aristocracy, there is no reason for the exclusive reduction of that idea to those interests. Second, O'Grady writes as a member of the Irish landed interest; this allegiance necessarily colours his perspective on nationality and its economic forms. These considerations must be evaluated in order to assess the ideological status of *Toryism and the Tory Democracy* in its geopolitical and historical contexts.

The idea of the nation-state as an antidote to the problems of late nineteenth-century Britain was shared by leading Victorian thinkers. Matthew Arnold, who defined the state as 'the representative acting-power of the nation',²² believed it to be the solution to the problems created by the increased democratization of the British electoral system. John Ruskin, in proposing a paternalistic model of social relations, indicated in *The Political Economy of Art* that state intervention ought to take precedence over doctrines of *laissez-faire* in matters of freedom and responsibility, thus making the state the new basis of affective social relations. Ruskin explains: 'The real type of a well-organised nation must be presented, not by a farm cultivated by servants who wrought for hire, and might be turned away if they refused to labour, but by a farm in which the master was a father, and in which all the servants were sons'. He adds that 'in all its regulations', the 'order of expediency' and the 'bond of affection and responsibilities of relationship', should not only be 'sweetened by brotherly concord', but should also be 'enforced by fatherly authority'.²³

Ruskin's paternalistic state differed from Arnold's political philosophy in that it prolonged the notion of social hierarchy. Arnold regarded class hierarchy as anachronistic and, particularly in *Culture and Anarchy*, sought to rid English society of the tendency to ape the mores of the superordinate class.²⁴ It is signifi-

²¹ Ibid., p. 194. ²² Matthew Arnold, 'Democracy' in R.H. Super (ed.), *The Works of Matthew Arnold*, vol. x (London, 1904), p. 26. ²³ John Ruskin, *The Political Economy of Art* (London, 1912), pp 25-6. ²⁴ P.J. Keating, 'Arnold's Social and Political Thought' in Kenneth

cant, however, that both men articulated their responses to the changing political environment of nineteenth-century Britain in terms of an organic concept of the state. It was a concept that became extremely pervasive during the latter half of the century, on both the right and the left of the political spectrum.²⁵ O'Grady's intervention in the political discourse of the late nineteenth century, therefore, carries no stamp of originality; rather it is a variation on an already predominant theme.

To reduce O'Grady's idea of the nation-state as expressed in *Toryism and the Tory Democracy* to the single role of articulating the interests of the landed aristocracy would be to commit, therefore, what Chantal Mouffe terms the 'economistic fallacy' – that is, conceiving of the superstructure as a mechanical reflection of the economic base.²⁶ This observation does not, however, imply that the idea must be read in terms of ethics rather than interests. The concerns of O'Grady's class remain central to his political discourse. The mode of articulation of those interests, however, extends beyond them to the point where this mode itself must be altered so as not to contravene those interests; a pertinent example is O'Grady's exemption of the great estates from his vision of nationalized industry.

If the idea of the nation-state as expressed by O'Grady cannot be explained exclusively in terms of interests or ethics, then a different model must be found to account for it. Antonio Gramsci's theory of hegemony – particularly as articulated by Chantal Mouffe – offers a plausible, if contentious, mode of explanation. Perhaps the most important aspect of this hypothesis was its break with the economistic theory of ideology that marked the discourse of the Second International,²⁷ though this has been criticized as a Hegelianized Marxism by Nikos Poulantzas.²⁸ According to Gramsci, certain revolutionary moments of history bear the hallmarks of real historical development that cannot be disregarded as displays of 'false consciousness' by Marxists. He has in mind here the social realism through which Zhandov and others view the French Revolution

Alcott (ed.), *Matthew Arnold* (London, 1975), p. 223. ²⁵ The all-pervasive influence of statist ideology in the latter half of the nineteenth century is illustrated by the fact that one of Karl Marx's most important statements on the organization of future society was made in his critique of the Gotha Programme. Marx sent this critique to his follower Liebknecht, for private circulation among the members of his party. The Gotha Programme was the product of an agreement, made in May 1875, between two wings of German socialism: Liebknechtiens (disciples of Marx) and Lassalleans. Marx's analysis indicates the extent to which the Gotha Programme was pervaded by statism: 'The German workers' party – at least if it adopts the programme – shows that its socialist ideas are not even skin-deep; in that, instead of treating existing society (and this holds good for any future society), it treats the state rather as an independent entity that possesses its own intellectual, ethical and libertarian bases' (*Karl Marx: Selected Writings* [Oxford, 1977], p. 564). ²⁶ Chantal Mouffe (ed.), *Gramsci and Marxist Theory* (London, 1979), pp 168–204. ²⁷ *Ibid.*, pp 172–6. ²⁸ Nicos Poulantzas, *Political Power and Social Classes* (London, 1973), pp 39, 42, 137–41.

and the Italian *Risorgimento*. Gramsci considered the French Revolution as a real moment of historical transformation by virtue of what he saw as the hegemony established by the Jacobins and then extended from Paris to the country, thus creating a national-popular movement for which the Jacobins were the vanguard. Effective historical development took place, according to Gramsci, because the Jacobins offered real political leadership, and had an 'inflexible will to become the "leading" party'.²⁹ Most importantly, they created a bourgeois state – a synthesis of classes in which the bourgeoisie became 'the leading, hegemonic class of the nation'.³⁰ The French Revolution was, therefore, a case of 'expansive' hegemony, in which the revolutionary class (the bourgeoisie in this case) extended itself beyond its own particular interests, to forge a relationship of dominance with the rural peasantry, thus producing a synthesis that crystallized into the form of a national-popular movement. Gramsci distinguished between this hegemony and the 'transformist' brand promoted by the Action Party during the Italian *Risorgimento* – a phenomenon which was for him reformist rather than revolutionary, because 'the Italian bourgeoisie was incapable of uniting the people around itself, and this was the cause of its defeats and the interruptions in its development'.³¹ The Action Party, led by moderates such as Gioberti and Manzoni,³² was the dominant parliamentary party; it formed alliances, but preserved the interests of the different factions. Gramsci describes this historical process as follows:

In what forms, and by what means, did the Moderates succeed in establishing the apparatus (mechanism) of their intellectual, moral and political hegemony? In forms, and by means, which may be called 'liberal' – in other words through individual, 'molecular,' 'private' enterprise (i.e. not through a party programme worked out and constituted according to a plan, in advance of the practical and organisational action).³³

Gramsci's thesis raises the question as to whether O'Grady's appeal to the landlords of England may be regarded as an invocation of an 'expansive' or a 'transformist' hegemony. On the one hand, there can be no question as to the reactionary nature of O'Grady's polemics – evidenced by his appeals to Magna

²⁹ Geoffrey Nowell Smith and Quintin Hoare (ed. & trans.), *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci* (London, 1971), p. 79. ³⁰ *Ibid.*, p. 80. ³¹ *Ibid.*, p. 53. ³² Vincenzo Gioberti (1801–52) was a leading moderate during the *Risorgimento*. Alessandro Manzoni (1785–1873), an Italian novelist and poet, was brought up on the ideas of the French and Italian Enlightenment, but converted to Catholicism around 1810. These two figures were leading members of a liberal Catholic movement in Italy in the first half of the nineteenth century known as Neo-Guelphism, which had as its goal an Italian federation under the Pope. See *Selections from the Prison Notebooks of Antonio Gramsci*, pp 58, 375, 399. ³³ *Ibid.*, pp 59–60.

Charta and 'the old catch-words and magic phrases and the old traditional policy of the party'.³⁴ Neither can there be any doubt that securing the interests of the landed aristocracy was paramount to him. On the other hand, he insisted that in order to survive, this class must confront the new political circumstances of England. Democratic Toryism was, in O'Grady's view, the only way by which this class could preserve its position in an era of increased democratization. It involved the Tories extending themselves beyond the confines of their particular interests to secure a position of leadership and domination through the ideological form of the nation-state that O'Grady envisaged as practically manifested in nationalized industries. This hegemonic project was expansive rather than transformist, since it proposed a thorough party programme that precluded any negotiation with Whig radicalism. Its limitations are revealed in the fact that O'Grady refused to envisage the great estates as part of a nationalized economy. Nevertheless, in proposing large-scale state intervention in the economy he offered the landed aristocracy a vehicle by which they could transform social relations in order to secure a position of leadership in a mass society without retarding economic progress.

The danger of such a hegemonic project was the potential failure of the landed interest to offer the required level of leadership; this deficiency could result in an ethnic nationalism's hijacking the nation-state idea. In other words, the risk of appealing to British national loyalty was that it could quickly ignite a more regional loyalty – a wholly uninviting prospect from O'Grady's perspective, particularly in the case of Ireland. Indeed, the whole of *Toryism and the Tory Democracy* is essentially concerned with the position of the Irish landlords.³⁵ O'Grady's aim in addressing the Tory Party was ultimately to ensure that they would not abdicate to the radical project of breaking up the great estates: without a politically authoritative landed interest in England, the Irish landlords – already feeling the pressure of the Land War – would find themselves utterly cut off, both from their land of residence and from Westminster, the touchstone of their political security.

This prospect accounts in part for the peculiarly oxymoronic nature of O'Grady's political discourse. His attitude to Charles Stewart Parnell is a case in point. In 'Ireland and the Hour', the address to the Irish landlords included in *Toryism and the Tory Democracy*, he implicitly attacks Parnell in his condemnation of Irish landlords who would compromise with 'the enemy':

Such [landlords] would placate the National League by rent reductions and rent remissions – concessions contrary to justice, and which they know to be so. Like the cowardly pre-Norman Saxons, they would pay

34 O'Grady, *Toryism and the Tory Democracy*, p.145. 35 O'Grady's emphasis on the position of the landlords is particularly striking, since almost half the book is addressed directly to them.

Danegelt to their enemies. In some instances they even join the National League and contribute to its funds, an act of baseness incredible but that we know it to be done.³⁶

Published in 1886 – a year in which the second Home Rule bill passed through the House of Commons and during which the land movement was exercising an immense political influence over the whole country – these remarks are startling in their apparent stubbornness. Yet in 1898 O’Grady looked back on Parnell and his achievement in terms of admiration:

Parnell, wielding only the power of a party, shook the State as he passed, compelled the two Imperial parties to approach him with competitive proposals, and despatched the greatest statesman of the day round England as a preacher of his doctrine ... He was strong because he was a man of purpose in the midst of men of no purpose.³⁷

The contradiction between these attitudes can be partly accounted for by the retrospective nature of his remarks in *All-Ireland*. However, it also indicates the anomalies within O’Grady’s ideology of the nation-state to which he first gives air during the 1880s. His dual perspective on Parnell is indicative of the difficulties that his circumstances bring to bear upon his political position; his attitudes are also evidence of the anomalous nature of Parnellism, which was for O’Grady an object of both reproach and admiration.

Parnell’s relationship to the movement he led has proven problematic for historians. Conor Cruise O’Brien concludes that Parnell undoubtedly desired ‘a united self-governing Ireland’ that would be ‘a willing partner in the British Empire’. He sought, according to O’Brien, ‘not to break the connexion with England, but to make it more flexible, more efficient, and more acceptable’.³⁸ To achieve this, however, he had to enlist the ‘residues’ of Irish revolutionary tradition in the service of his parliamentary political project. O’Brien claims that this could only be effected through a cult of the leader:

But the driving force of the ‘residues’ could be successfully directed in the sense of the ‘combinations’ [parliamentary strategies] only under one condition. This was that *the ambiguity of the system must be crystallized in terms of personality*. The leader, in short, had to become a mysterious and awe-inspiring figure.³⁹

R.F. Foster casts Parnell and Parnellism in a similar light when he points out that even after the land movement had been ‘clericalized and radicalized’ under

36 O’Grady, *Selected Essays and Passages* (Dublin, 1918), p. 231. 37 O’Grady, *All-Ireland*, p. 11. 38 Conor Cruise O’Brien, *Parnell and His Party* (Oxford, 1957), p. 349. 39 *Ibid.* p. 350.

his direction, Parnell still invited to his shooting-lodge in Aughavannagh members of the Conservative element in the Home Rule movement: Thomas Esmonde, John Redmond and W.J. Corbet.⁴⁰ Foster explains:

Schizophrenia, as a concept if not a word, recurs in contemporary descriptions of Parnell's position. But he certainly makes sense as a pragmatic, Tory-inclined landlord, just as much a figure in the tradition of Lord Edward Fitzgerald, Erskine Childers, Maud Gonno or Bridget Rose Dugdale; the zeal of the convert is not appropriate. Carson is nearer the type, or Bismarck (whom he admired).⁴¹

It is difficult to discern the nature of Parnell's role in the land movement. The views offered above illustrate that it is possible to draw a parallel between Parnell's role and that which O'Grady advocates for the landlords in *Toryism and the Tory Democracy*. It is also possible to read it as an example of what happens if the Conservatives adopt radical policies in an attempt to win votes after the expansion of the franchise – a strategy opposed by O'Grady. This argument suggests that any evaluation of the hegemony promoted in *Toryism and the Tory Democracy* must include O'Grady's concept of nationality, in relation to both Ireland and the United Kingdom.

Nationalism is an infamously difficult concept to theorize; yet it is one that has proven resilient in the field of contemporary intellectual discourse, despite the attempts of postmodernists such as Jean Baudrillard to render it obsolete, along with all other metanarrative offshoots of the Enlightenment. The writings of Ernest Gellner, A.D. Smith, Eric Hobsbawm, Immanuel Wallerstein and Etienne Balibar⁴² indicate the persistence of the concept and the difficulties it presents. Of these difficulties, the most pertinent to O'Grady's politics is the question of ethnic and civic understanding of nationhood. Broadly speaking, two positions are discernible here: one, most strongly advocated by Smith, in which the distinctiveness and integrity of ethnic communities is affirmed, and the other, articulated by Balibar, where ethnicity is seen as the product of the nation-

⁴⁰ R.F. Foster, *Paddy and Mr Punch* (London, 1993), p. 63. ⁴¹ *Ibid.*, p. 71. Opinion on this issue is, unsurprisingly, far from consensual. For example, George Boyce writes that although Parnell was a member of the Anglo-Irish ruling class – the majority of whom were Unionist – 'that did not prevent Parnell (like Jonathan Swift before him) possessing that hearty contempt for the English establishment that any well-connected Irish Protestant worth his salt was capable of harbouring' (George Boyce, *Nationalism in Ireland* [London, 1995], p. 208). See also F.S.L. Lyons, *Charles Stewart Parnell* (London, 1977), pp 608–25, and Paul Bew, *Charles Stewart Parnell* (Dublin, 1980). ⁴² Anthony D. Smith, *The Ethnic Revival* (Cambridge, 1981); Etienne Balibar and Immanuel Wallerstein, *Race, Nation, Class: Ambiguous Identities* (London, 1991); Eric Hobsbawm, *Nations and Nationalism since 1780* (Cambridge, 1990); Ernest Gellner, *Nations and Nationalism* (Oxford, 1983).

alisation of social formations – a strategy particular to the needs of the world-economy as articulated by Immanuel Wallerstein.⁴³ From O'Grady's perspective ethnic nationalism, particularly in Ireland, threatened the civic idea of nationality he believed to be grounded in the constitutional integrity of the British throne. Given the extent to which O'Grady immersed himself in Ireland's mythology and legends, it may seem that ethnicity was a central consideration in his politics; however, if it is argued that his engagement with Gaelic mythology produces a discourse of tradition and community (rather than reviving inert cultural residues), then an appeal to ethnicity becomes untenable. This alternative view is evident in the problems that arise in John Hutchinson's application of Smith's theory of ethnicity to the Irish Literary Revival:

I intend to show ... that cultural nationalism is a movement quite independent of political nationalism. It has its own distinctive aims – the moral regeneration of the national community rather than the achievement of an autonomous state – and a distinctive politics. In this enterprise, I will argue, historical memory rather than language *as such* serves to define the national community.⁴⁴

'Regeneration of the national community' is a phrase emblematic of the complexity, if indeed the confusion, of Hutchinson's basic proposition, because it suggests both an intrinsic connection between nation and community, and a national community that has an unbroken, if currently inert, existence.

Nationhood in both the British and Irish senses are inextricably linked in Standish O'Grady's *Toryism and the Tory Democracy*; his polemic on Tory Democracy can only be read in terms of his appeal to the landlords of Ireland to integrate more profoundly into Irish culture and tradition, and vice versa. Ethnicity, therefore, cannot form the basis of his ideology of nationhood. Were it to do so, then it would be impossible to marshal both poles of his political thought. Yet neither can he be viewed as an imperial ideologist, because his nation-state idea required the integration of both Irish and English landed classes into the fabric of the national community in a manner that made their political authority answerable to national sentiment. According to O'Grady, the English landed interest should, through their political representative, the Conservative Party, assimilate themselves into a broad national movement on the pretext that the imaginative currency of that movement would embody sentiments of tradition and loyalty that would secure them as a class against radical egalitarianism. O'Grady also implored the Irish landed interest to pursue a

⁴³ Hugh Kearney provides an illuminating examination of this thorny question of the relationship between civic and ethnic nationalism. See 'Contested Ideas of Nationhood 1800-1995' in *Irish Review*, xx (1977), pp 1-22. ⁴⁴ John Hutchinson, *The Dynamics of Cultural Nationalism* (London, 1987), p. 9.

similar line on the pretext that Irish history and culture were replete with sentiments of tradition and loyalty – values whose presence he sought to illustrate in his two-volume *History of Ireland* (1878, 1880). It may be seen, therefore, that during the 1880s O'Grady saw nationality primarily in terms of class, that is, as an ideological mode by which proletarian radicalism (which he believed was born out of bourgeois liberalism) could be curbed. This observation goes some way towards explaining why the Literary Revival sentimentalized the peasant as the organic prototype of Irishness. Such codification bears witness to the discursive influence exercised by O'Grady in his adaptation of British paternalist ideology to late nineteenth-century Ireland – an influence felt strongly even by those who would wish to distance themselves from what they regarded as O'Grady's imperialism.⁴⁵ Organic political discourse, however, has historically entailed the risk of transforming social relations to the point of transcending the specific interests for which it was originally invoked. The evolution of O'Grady's political discourse – evident in the concept of the National Being promoted by A.E. (George W. Russell), in Yeats's communitarianism, as well as in O'Grady's own movement towards utopian communalism – is indicative of the degree to which this risk was actualized. By the early 1900s, the position of the Irish Landlords, particularly after the failure of the Landlords Convention of 1902 to unite them as a coherent group, was such that O'Grady became disillusioned with his vision of an Ireland revitalized under the leadership of the gentry and solidly loyal to the English throne. Increasingly, he became absorbed by the ideas of Christian communism, where all concern for practical economics was ignored.⁴⁶ This shift to a peculiarly ethereal social philosophy, for someone as pragmatic and forceful in temperament as O'Grady, was indicative of the extent to which his twin fears of an emergent ethnic nationalism and of an aristocracy in decay in Ireland, had been realized. However, the sustenance of his vision was taken up by A.E. in his involvement with the Irish Co-operative Movement during the 1900s. Russell, who regarded O'Grady as the major influence in his work,⁴⁷ personified the ideal of an Ireland transformed by a regenerated sense of identity, achieved both through a new awareness of its regional folklore and through a new sense of communal identity based on the idea of citizenship that

45 W.B. Yeats disagrees with O'Grady's 'conclusions too constantly and sees the armed hand of nationality in too many places where he but sees the clash of ancient with modern institutions' (William Butler Yeats, 'Irish National Literature, II' in *Bookman* [Sept. 1895], p. 369). In making this criticism, Yeats conveniently ignores the debt to which his aesthetics of the idealized Irish peasant owes to the intellectual position articulated by O'Grady. 46 In the New Order that O'Grady envisaged, women, children, the weak and the insane will dominate society, and, as he said, 'The strong will be perpetually confounded' (*All-Ireland Review* [13 Jan. 1906], p. 491). 47 For Russell's acknowledgement of the deep influence of O'Grady on his own work, see his introduction to the 1919 edition of O'Grady's *The Coming of Cuculain*. See also *The National Being* (Dublin, 1916), pp 12–19, 128, for O'Grady's influence on Russell's ideology of co-operation.

the Co-operative Movement sought to implant. The revitalization of rural communities in the west of Ireland, encompassing the spheres of both unionist and separatist politics, was the primary objective behind Russell's Co-operative work. To this extent he perpetuated the political tradition of O'Grady's *Toryism and the Tory Democracy*, even if the decline of the landed gentry as a class had become an irreversible process.