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Standish James O'Grady: Between Imperial Romance and Irish Revival*

Standish James O'Grady is one of the most enigmatic and influential figures of late-nineteenth-century Irish cultural history. He praised aristocratic values and denounced the aristocracy; Lady Gregory called him a "Fenian Unionist," and Pearse acknowledged his influence. There have been two recent substantial studies;[1] both emphasize his use of saga material. This article analyzes some previously unknown journalism, and relates O'Grady's social criticism and work on Elizabethan Ireland to his attempt to reconcile unionism and nationalism through nineteenth-century British Romantic social criticism and the eighteenth-century Patriot tradition.

Standish James O'Grady was born in Castletownbere, Co. Cork, on 18 September 1846, a younger son of Thomas O'Grady, Church of Ireland Rector of Castletown Berehaven and his wife Susanna (neé Dowe). The O'Gradys were Waterford small gentry. Attorney-General Standish O'Grady, uncle of O'Grady's father, prosecuted Robert Emmet in 1803; he became a judge and was created first Lord Guillamore. Standish James's uncles General Standish O'Grady and Admi-

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1. Edward A. Hagan, "*High Nonsensical Words": A Study of the Works of Standish James O'Grady* (Troy, N.Y., 1986); Michael McAteer, *Standish O'Grady, AE, and Yeats—An Imagined History* (Dublin, 2002). See also Philip L. Marcus, *Standish O'Grady* (Lewisburg, PA, 1970).

ral Hayes O'Grady distinguished themselves in the Napoleonic Wars; the Admiral fathered the Celtic scholar Standish Hayes O'Grady, and the General features in Lever's novel *Jack Hinton*.[2] This contributed to O'Grady's lifelong admiration for the military ethos.

The Dowes arrived during the Munster Plantation and intermarried with McCarthys; Susanna inherited a small estate at Three Castle Head in West Cork. O'Grady's parents are affectionately portrayed in his boy's stories *The Chain of Gold* and *Lost on Du-Corrig*, whose heroes are modeled on his elder brothers. (O'Grady appears as the telepathic youngest son, Charlie.[3]) Susanna inspired the heroine of O'Grady's historical novel *Ulrick the Ready*, whose blending of Planter and Gael through intermarriage reflects O'Grady's pride of ancestry. The boy's stories draw on childhood memories of sea-fishing, bird-shooting, exploring cliffs and caves. Standish played with local children, went to the village school, and visited every cottage on the estate.[4] This contributed to his later sense of brotherhood with the common people and idealization of aristocratic paternalism. Indeed, this was a selective vision. During the Famine Rev. Thomas O'Grady and his friend William Allen Fisher, Rector of Kilmoe (whose parish included Three Castle Head) refused to work with Catholic priests on famine relief and were accused of "souperism."[5]

In 1856 O'Grady became a boarder at Tipperary Grammar School. He distinguished himself as both a scholar and an athlete but found separation from home traumatic. Like many other boarding-school survivors, he idealizes boyhood as a lost paradise.[6] In 1864 O'Grady won an Exhibitionership to Trinity College, Dublin. There he won a classical scholarship and medals for debating, ethics and philosophy, graduating with a B.A. degree in 1868. O'Grady was a successful col-

2. Ruan O'Donnell, *Robert Emmet and the Rising of 1803* (Dublin, 2003), 156; Hugh Art O'Grady, *Standish O'Grady: The Man and the Writer* (Dublin, 1929), 22–24.

3. *Lost on Du-Corrig* (London, 1894); *The Chain of Gold* (London, 1895).

4. Hugh Art O'Grady, *Standish O'Grady*, 26–28.

5. Patrick Hickey, *Famine in West Cork: The Mizen Peninsula, Land and People 1800–1852* (Cork, 2002), provides a general account of Fisher. Thomas O'Grady's conversionist activities are described on pages 68, 96, 231, 239 and 246. Fisher's activities and the controversy surrounding his favorable portrayal in Eoghan Harris's 1985 play *Souper Sullivan* are discussed in Irene Whelan, "The Stigma of Souperism," in Cathal Poirteir, ed., *The Great Irish Famine* (Cork, 1995), 135–54.

6. Hugh Art O'Grady, *Standish O'Grady*, 30–31.

lege athlete and debater, a member of the "hockey" [hurling] team. College friends thought he could have had a brilliant legal career but for his eccentricities.[7]

Trinity further separated O'Grady from boyhood. O'Grady's parents were staunch Evangelicals; in 1900, he still thought the evangelical clerics that his parents admired the finest men in the Ireland of his youth.[8] In 1911 O'Grady compared William Allen Fisher to a saint of the early Irish Church because he dedicated life and fortune to a remote West Cork headland, refusing preferments that would have removed him from the duties God had assigned him.[9]

O'Grady entered Trinity to study divinity but lost his faith at college, later compiling a selection of Shelley's anti-Christian arguments, *Scintilla Shelleiana*.[10] He might then have moved toward the rationalist and élitist liberalism of a Lecky (another former clerical student), but was unwilling to dismiss the beliefs of his family and childhood, even if he no longer shared them. He resembled his younger contemporary Douglas Hyde—a doubting son of the provincial Irish Tory rectory, ill-at-ease with Trinity's metropolitan skepticism, finding emotional integration through developing youthful contacts with the spoken Irish of the Roscommon peasantry.[11] Pantheism enabled O'Grady to retain his parents' sense of supernatural forces underlying the everyday world; he refracted memories and associations of youth through the Romantic social criticism of the lapsed Evangelicals Ruskin and Carlyle. The struggling professional, shocked by the visible poverty of Dublin, adopted Ruskin's denunciations of commercial civilization as aesthetically blind because of its moral bankruptcy and Carlyle's accounts of how beliefs and social systems become shams when they forget the values they are supposed to embody—values periodically recovered through a hero. Like these mentors, O'Grady blended genuine social concern and secular apocalypticism in a vision of society disintegrating through aristocratic decadence, capitalist exploitation, and uprushing

7. Ibid., 32–34, 34–35.

8. *All Ireland Review*, 3 March 1900, 3.

9. Standish O'Grady, "The Parish of Altar," *Cork Constitution*, 3 Aug. 1911. (Hickey misdates to 4 Aug.)

10. Hagan, *High Nonsensical Words,* 14–17; Hugh Art O'Grady, *Standish O'Grady*, 28–29.

11. Dominic Daly, *The Young Douglas Hyde* (Dublin, 1974).

anarchy. He patterned history around the irruption, corruption and apocalyptic destruction of successive classes of saints, heroes, aristocrats, bureaucrats and capitalists—the last two being the lowest, corrupt from beginning to end.

O'Grady harkened back to feudal warrior societies, based on personal allegiance rather than the impersonal cash-nexus. Like Ruskin, O'Grady was "an old Tory of Homer's school, and Sir Walter Scott's." Carlyle strengthened his inclination to see society on a military model, with Elizabethan warrior-adventurers as Carlylean heroes. (O'Grady's agrarianism is not purely Irish; it echoes Ruskin's vision of energetic agrarian colonists reviving a sclerotic imperial metropolis.) In later life the heroes of his contemporary boy's stories migrate to the Australian outback or the American frontier; nationalist critics expressed alarm at his stated desire to inspire Irish children with imperialism.[12] O'Grady subsequently wrote that without encountering Whitman's democratic sentiments he might have become a mere Carlylean admirer of firm government imposed contemptuously from above. There is a Carlylean echo in his prophecies that the Land League reawakened the primal anarch Cairpre Cat-Head.[13]

O'Grady married Margaret Fisher, daughter of William Allen Fisher; they had three sons. Margaret, too, abandoned Evangelicalism for nebulous spiritualities. She told Douglas Hyde in 1892 that she had read "hundreds of hands."[14] Margaret claimed to detect emotional traces where someone had suffered grief or worry.[15] O'Grady came to believe telepathy transcended time and space and the artist made the past live again[16]—a clear reflection of the Shelleyan belief in the ability of will to transform the world, exposing evil as malign illusion. More ominously, this implied that modernity—bureaucratic government, commercial society—was a projection of evil wills that would

12. *United Irishman*, 27 Oct. 1900, 3.

13. O'Grady, *Tory Democracy*, 230–2. In *History* he claimed that plebeian revolts were un-Gaelic, so Cairbre must be a fabrication.

14. Hyde's diary, 24 March 1892, quoted in Daly, *Young Douglas Hyde*, 152.

15. 5th Earl of Desart [Hamilton Cuffe] and Lady Sybil Lubbock, *A Page from the Past* (London, 1937).

16. Cf. his statement that Cuchulainn never died and was still alive (and possibly his remark in *All Ireland* (Dublin, 1899): "God lives. He never died. That was all an English delusion." The hermit in *Chain of Gold* is a malign telepath.

vanish before heroes sufficiently committed to their ideals; in later life O'Grady attributed failure to adopt his political prescriptions to malign mental paralysis emanating from Westminster. O'Grady compared this "Great Enchantment" to the curse which paralyzes the men of Ulster in the *Táin*; this notion may also echo Ruskin's belief that a "Storm-Cloud of the Nineteenth Century" was poisoning the world. Political and religious theories which exalt heroic voluntarism often attribute misfortunes to malign opposing wills (from Mary Baker Eddy's view of illness as illusion imposed by "malicious animal magnetism" to far-left and far-right conspiracy theories).

O'Grady claimed he discovered ancient Ireland through O'Halloran's *History of Ireland* in a country house library. In 1878 and 1880 he produced two volumes of a history of Ireland, centered on a politically and sexually bowdlerized retelling of the Ulster cycle. They were commercially unsuccessful (a friend remarked that O'Grady did an excellent job, "considering that all the materials for his history had been destroyed in the Flood") but crucial in popularizing the Cuchulainn story.[17] O'Grady's reputation as "Father of the Irish Literary Revival" primarily came from the *History*'s impact on Yeats and AE.

The book is written in Miltonic-Carlylean diction with conscious bardic invocations and echoes of the King James Bible. O'Grady insists it is history and not fiction, because he does not distinguish between history and literature. As he wrote later:

> I have always regarded anecdotes as the life of history. It does not distress me to be informed that they are frequently legends. . . . They sum up . . . in a dramatic and picturesque form the essential qualities of historical characters, and the nature of the impression which they made on their contemporaries.[18]

Like Carlyle he saw the historian grasping the inner significance of events to create a unifying epic, rather than engaging in disintegrative rationalistic criticism. In an essay on the seventeenth-century Spanish-Irish historian Philip O'Sullivan Beare, he wrote that State Papers showed the Nine Years War as a stained-glass window from outside;

17. Hugh Art O'Grady, *Standish O'Grady*, 36.
18. *Warder*, 10 Dec. 1892, 5.

O'Sullivan, deploying personal memories and conversation with participants, shows the stained-glass from within.[19] The Irish myths are treated like the Bible and Greek myths, with inspiration submerged by pedantic commentators but recaptured by equally inspired artists. Discreditable episodes are excised as corruptions. In *Lost on Du-Corrig*, Cuchulainn's killing of the Kerry chieftain Curoi appears in distorted folkloric versions. "Curry," sometimes assumed to be an eighteenth-century smuggler, is recalled by the peasantry as a gigantic serpent; "Cuhoolin" had "the power of the Almighty . . . in him" though he lived before St. Patrick. The narrator calls this an allegory of the triumph of good over evil;[20] O'Grady "forgets" that Cuchulainn kills Curoi in treacherous collusion with the chieftain's wife.

O'Grady (a short dark man from the Southwest) asserts that the Irish blend Celtic Aryans and a dark southern race, identified with the Basques.[21] Commercial corruption of bardic and heroic virtues is personified in the usurious and sexually promiscuous sorcerer Cailitin, whom O'Grady presents as a Phoenician.[22] Phoenicians were seen by racial theorists as embodying Semitic commercialism. O'Grady is rarely explicitly anti-semitic (he equates Old Testament prophecy with the prophetic role of the bard)[23] but firmly repudiates older theories of Phoenician origins for the Irish.

Cuchulainn's charioteer Laeg appeals to a freedman for assistance. Aodh, who bought out his feudal obligations by careful saving and commercial calculation, disdains aristocratic generosity and demands payment; Laeg overcomes him by force.[24] Most critics view Aodh simply as a capitalist; O'Grady's Land War writings suggest he is a peasant proprietor.

O'Grady was called to the bar in 1872. His legal practice was slack, though he represented the Unionist Party on electoral cases. In 1900

19. O'Grady, *The Bog of Stars* (London, 1893), 25. The opening scene of the child Philip weeping as he leaves Beara for exile (22) may echo O'Grady's memory of leaving home for school in Tipperary.

20. *Du-Corrig*, 62–64, 74, 127, 232–38, 282–83.

21. O'Grady, *History of Ireland: Critical and Philosophical* (London, 1881), 10–18; cf. Hugh Art O'Grady, *Standish O'Grady*, 10–11.

22. O'Grady, *History of Ireland: Cuchulain and His Contemporaries* (London, 1880), 180–83, 186.

23. Hagan, *High Meaningless Words*, 179.

24. *History of Ireland: The Heroic Period*, 244–50.

O'Grady recalled working as a land agent on the family estate in the Land League winter of 1881–82. While friends and relatives elsewhere lived under siege, his own daring and the weakness of organized local land agitation enabled him to collect several hundred pounds "rent as I called it then—plunder I would call it now." O'Grady wondered what service his family gave for this money, and had no answer. In 1882 he discovered the work of Henry George and recognized its potential to create a cross-class anti-aristocratic alliance.

He supplemented his income by leader-writing on the pro-landlord Dublin *Daily Express*. The *Express* and its stable-companion the *Evening Mail* (whose weekly edition absorbed the *Warder*, once edited by Sheridan Lefanu) were the foremost journals of nineteenth-century Dublin Toryism. The editor of the *Express*, Dr. G.V. Patten, influenced British opinion as the *Times*' Dublin correspondent from 1873 to 1898. Many contributors were Trinity graduates, parading classical learning and disdain for the vulgar. The rights of property are taken as self-evident; appeals to humanity are dismissed with brash provocations echoing the London Tory journalism of the *Saturday Review*.[25] Davitt called the eviction of a widow and her family with snow on the ground hideous cruelty. The *Weekly Mail* agreed she was hideously cruel to keep her children in the snow as a political demonstration, instead of taking them to the workhouse supported by landlords' taxes. Why should she live rent-free on someone else's property? The *Weekly Mail* raged that Irish loyalty and property were being sacrificed to a "mud-hut franchise," denounced Gladstone, and hoped for Lord Salisbury.

O'Grady, too, believed that aristocracies, with their historical traditions and honor code, were particularly suited to rule. He saw Gilded Age America and the French Third Republic as proof that "republics are ruled by Mammon."[26] "The bare possibility that Ireland will be justly ruled is taken away when the lowest and most dependent class becomes sovereign," O'Grady wrote in an 1885 exchange with Davitt. "But this class will produce premiers, statesmen, secretaries, &c? Yes; as the boiler sends up scum."[27] O'Grady, however, thought his sophis-

25. John Gross, *The Rise and Fall of the Man of Letters* (London, 1969).

26. Standish O'Grady, *All Ireland* (Dublin, 1882).

27. Yug Mohit Chaudhry, *Yeats, the Irish Literary Revival and the Politics of Print* (Cork, 2001), 71–73.

ticated metropolitan associates failed to recognize their own weakness. Democratic ideas had spread among the poor while Mammon distracted the upper classes from their duties; the modernity that many unionists claimed to incarnate hastened the fall of feudalism in Ireland.

During the Land War O'Grady expected the landlords to produce a great leader to confront the renegade Parnell.[28] O'Grady was secretary to a 22 December 1881 landlords' meeting demanding redress for the 1881 Land Act. (O'Grady favored state-assisted land purchase.) The convention appointed a five-member committee—which never met, fearing to antagonize the Conservative leadership. During the Land Act parliamentary debate, O'Grady saw two Tory backbenchers propose to compensate landlords for the rent reductions imposed. No Irish unionist MPs supported them; O'Grady saw the powerlessness of his class and the folly of relying on British allies.

In November 1882 O'Grady addressed the Workingmen's Club (in York Street, Dublin) on the Landed and Labour Interests in Ireland.[29] The club's membership was made up of radical nationalists. (O'Grady recalled decent, teetotal artisans and clerks, rather than the scum of the streets that unionist associates imagined.) The club was also noticeably Catholic; its President, Fr. John Behan, was vitriolically anti-Parnellite in the 1890s. O'Grady praised the group's generosity and fair play in allowing "a Conservative and friend of the landed interest" to address it. He argued that the landed gentry and "the great labour class, which was the base and foundation of the State, the chief creator of its wealth, and the class which, until of late owned the soil of the country" were natural allies. The landed class now struggled "not for ascendancy, but for existence"; he hoped "they would cease to look beyond the shores of Ireland for support . . . and rely . . . upon the reason, justice, and sense of fair play of their own countrymen." Even if the worst charges against landlords were true, they paled beside urban poverty—for which, he maintained, employers, not landlords, were responsible:

> Were there in the streets no pallid faces with every mark of destitution and want, no uncared for houseless children, no mothers who see their

28. Standish O'Grady, *The Story of Ireland* (London, 1893).

29. *Warder and Dublin Weekly Mail*, 18 Nov. 1882, 8. Unless otherwise noted, the ensuing quotations from O'Grady's speech are taken from the same source.

> babes pine and die for want of nourishment, no brave men . . . whose hearts were bowed with shame and suffering because of the want and privation endured by those who looked to them for support? The sufferings of the poorest class of farmers bear no proportion whatsoever to that which festered and agonized in the heart of this great city.

(O'Grady glosses over Georgist attributions of urban poverty to urban landlords.)

O'Grady highlights tension between aspects of the tenant case; the appeal to customary rights, and the argument that peasant proprietors were more economically rational than aristocrats. He cites sales of tenant right as proving that:

> The landlords did not exercise to the full that absolute power which proprietorship conferred upon them . . . they did not treat their lands as a commercial article and basis of profit . . . as a capitalist employs his capital. Which of the working men of Dublin could sell his position with any employer in the city for £100? . . . No farmer sold his interest in his land at a less rent than was determined by competition. If they converted the farmer into a landlord . . . he would surely take to himself all the benefits that proprietorship gives . . . power to make hard terms with those who had no land, but who wanted land.

O'Grady calculated rent reductions, tenant right, and improvements at £207 million "which the labour interests of Ireland had, in a fit of unexampled humanitarian enthusiasm, conferred at the expense of one class upon a class better off than themselves." He pointed out that Parnell's land purchase proposals employed state credit to benefit a single class. "The State included all classes from Lords of the Realm down to the shoeblack at the Bank of Ireland . . . the national credit . . . should be used for national and common ends, and for the succour of those whom it was the first duty of a Christian to consider—the poor and unemployed." (After Parnell's death, O'Grady praised the scheme as a visionary attempt to satisfy landlord and tenant at the expense of the British Treasury.)[30] O'Grady's peroration claimed that the aristocrats' honor code served the whole nation; the peasant proprietor cared only for his farm.

30. *Story of Ireland*, 210.

> The men who supplied Lever with his heroes, with his types of Irish chivalry and courage—the class that produced Flood and Grattan and fanned the first breath of liberty in this country, and who built the great classic edifices with which this city is adorned, and who now, hidden as it were from public sight and exiled from public life, yet still retain in obscurity and privacy great qualities which this nation may yet sorely need—such to-day we see . . . being effaced, and a new type coming on the scene—a new lord of land, the peasant proprietor, thrifty, maybe, and frugal, but mean in his thrift and selfish in his frugality; with interests adverse to the nation, therefore unpatriotic; his thoughts bounded by the four walls of his farm, or extending their view to mark with joy how, under debts and difficulties, his neighbour's hold on his own land grows slack. . . . Nor will the great landlord, the owner of estates, be absent. Where will he come from? Not now with a sword in his hand, or fresh from the atmosphere of Royal Courts. He will come from the gombeen men and the usurious shopkeepers, or the cunning and successful peasant who lays field to field. Or . . . a soulless company, with profit in one eye-socket and loss in the other . . . Peasant proprietary demoralises the peasant, makes him selfish and unpatriotic, cuts him off from the community, absorbs him in petty gains and mean struggles, and ends by putting him into the gripe of the usurer, of the god Mammon, least erect of the spirits that fell. . . . It is born in folly and dies in suffering, and in its fall drags down nations into its own grave.[31]

The *Evening Mail* overlooked one incident; O'Grady recalled how, having proven to his own satisfaction that laborers had nothing to gain and much to lose from replacing landlords with peasant proprietors, he asked how they would benefit if all landlords were deported uncompensated to Holyhead. A growl indicated this was desirable for its own sake; O'Grady saw how far landlords were politically and socially isolated.[32]

In *Toryism and the Tory Democracy* (1886), O'Grady argued that the defeat of the Irish aristocracy prefigured a similar attack on the landed interest in Britain. He called on Tory Democrats such as Lord Randolph Churchill to avoid the "defenders of bourgeois property" strategy that they were to adopt, and embrace the social views of Ruskin and Carlyle to avert an atomized commercial society and "a shabby and

31. *Warder and Dublin Weekly Mail*, 18 Nov. 1882, 8.
32. Standish O'Grady, *Toryism and the Tory Democracy* (London, 1886), 225–26.

sordid Irish republic, ruled by corrupt politicians and the ignoble rich."[33] The danger to feudalism does not come only from below, but from longstanding internal corruption. O'Grady satirizes the original union as corrupt, Pitt as a Machiavel piling up debt and inflation while gambling on military victory. Around him members of an effete aristocracy amuse themselves with baubles while dispossessing the poor through Enclosure Acts.

Like earlier Tory patriots (such as Lever) O'Grady presented union as unnecessary; he claims that members of the Irish aristocracy failed to recognize that they defeated the 1798 rebellion by their unaided efforts, and at their moment of greatest triumph abandoned martial self-reliance for vain promises from a centrally controlled bureaucratic state and its security apparatus. He contrasted the landlords' ability to raise fighting forces among their tenants in 1798 with their descendants' social and political isolation in the Land War.[34] Had they spent their vast revenues on land reclamation instead of self-indulgence, members of the Irish aristocracy would not lack defenders; if they had financed the study and publication of the vast manuscript Gaelic literature, it would have captured the public imagination with its aristocratic values.[35] Would those supposed nationalist heroes, the Earl of Desmond and Red Hugh O'Donnell, have tolerated Land Leaguers?[36]

O'Grady held up the military ethos as an alternative to commercialism. He presents unemployment as the great indictment of capitalism, and calls for a vital nucleus of Irish aristocrats to redeem themselves by imitating the martial leadership of their ancestors; not now in battle but in organizing productive work for laborers whose employment would produce neo-feudal solidarity with their masters.[37] (O'Grady echoes Carlyle's call for captains of industry to make society redeem itself through labor.) Like great generals, landlords should share the Spartan lifestyle of their followers, dining with their dependants in a common "mess" like the heroes of the Red Branch (or Lever's boozy landlords and officers; O'Grady relished alcoholic conviviality). He ridicules contemporary landlord-spon-

33. Ibid., 44–45.
34. Ibid., 223–24.
35. Ibid., 252, 275–76.
36. Ibid., 227–28, 238.
37. Ibid., 250–51, 254–70.

sored harvest dinners as hypocritical parodies of feudal hospitality. As Elizabethan adventurers recruited impoverished younger sons as junior officers, the new captains should recruit younger sons of Irish gentry, currently driven to emigrate (like O'Grady's brothers), destroy themselves through "whiskey and Paphos," or vegetate in offices—like O'Grady.[38]

The Elizabethan parallel reflects a longstanding interest, awakened by childhood encounters with Beara traditions of the 1601 siege of Dunboy and the chieftain Donal O'Sullivan Beare. O'Grady claimed that as a boy he asked an old man about the Gaelic chieftains, expecting tales of heroic valor, and was shocked to hear them called tyrants.[39] From the late 1880s O'Grady published on the subject. His arguments provoked unionists and nationalists alike.

O'Grady attacked the view, deriving from seventeenth-century historians such as Philip O'Sullivan Beare and the Four Masters and taken up by contemporary nationalists such as the Sullivan brothers (proud natives of Beara), that the chieftains who opposed Elizabeth led the Irish people in a fight for faith and fatherland against alien tyranny. O'Grady argued that they sought dynastic interests against a centralizing state. Chieftains represented as nationalist heroes pledged loyalty to the crown in the State Papers; he professed dismay that even Brian "of the Battleaxes" O'Rourke, whom O'Grady initially regarded as one of the few disinterested patriots involved, insincerely proffered loyalty to the crown, which executed his father, betraying associates as occasion suited.[40] Many rebellions were negotiating gambits "like a petition to parliament in our own day," recognized as such by the crown if the rebels did not seek foreign aid.[41] O'Grady claimed the majority of the Irish people supported the crown. Trading towns preferred peace and security from a strong state; the common people found it less exacting than warring chieftains; many chieftains supported the crown from hostility to a tyrannical superior or usurping rival.[42] The rebel chieftains lost because they were united by no prin-

38. Ibid., 270–71, 287–89
39. *Pacata Hibernia*, I, 50; *St. Stephen's* (Dec. 1903), 5–6.
40. *Pacata*, I, xxvi–v.
41. Ibid., liv.
42. Ibid., xxxiii–xxxv.

ciple and betrayed one another from opportunism.[43] Hugh O'Neill was their only statesman, no better than his royalist counterparts;[44] Red Hugh O'Donnell (at least in his youthful escapes from captivity) their only hero—and O'Grady pointed out that Red Hugh's title was uncertain and that Nial Garbh O'Donnell, denounced by nationalists as a traitor, might legitimately claim a better right.[45] The priests and Jesuits who sided with the rebels were indeed heroes inspired by an ideal; their histories projected that ideal onto their unworthy allies.[46]

Nationalists found this interpretation disturbing. O'Grady's lecture on Elizabethan Ireland at Alexandra College in 1895 stirred up a lengthy correspondence in the Parnellite *Irish Independent*. Many participants denied that an Irish majority supported Elizabeth; others retorted that a majority supported Gladstone against Parnell.[47] As late as 1938, Michael Tierney protested that Sean O'Faolain's view of the Gaelic tradition as incompatible with modern statecraft revived O'Grady's apologia for conquest.

O'Grady's work could be used in the unionist case that the Irish had not created a state until the British imposed one that only unionists were competent to maintain, and that nationalist political incompetence nullified numerical superiority. In April 1889, when Ireland was convulsed by the Plan of Campaign, O'Grady wrote in the *English Historical Review* on "the Last Kings of Ireland," offering a similar interpretation of Irish dynastic conflicts in the eleventh and twelfth centuries. The *Weekly Mail* commented that the last High King, Roderick O'Connor, subdued Connacht "in a perfectly Balfourian manner," resembling the law enforcement activities of the contemporary RIC in the same province "while hot water and pitchforks are freely allowed to the defenders of 'humble homes'." The editorialist noted how after the Battle of Clontarf Brian Boru's army was ambushed by

> fellow-islanders—fellow-countrymen, it would be ridiculous to call them, for there was no sense of country among the Irish of that day, no

43. *Pacata*, II, 54–55n.
44. *Pacata*, I, xliv–xlv; II, 316–19.
45. *Pacata*, I, xlii–iii; II, 15–17.
46. *Pacata*, lxi–ii.
47. *Irish Daily Independent*, 20 March 1895, 4 (O'Grady's lecture); 25 March 1895, 4 (O'Grady defends his thesis). The controversy lasted several weeks.

> more than there is at present among the rent-thieving farmers who return the Irish vote to Westminster . . . a set of Kerns and petty dynasts, who, with local patriotism on their lips, desired nothing better than to resurrect the "buried glories" of the old anarchy with its limitless opportunities of plunder and license. But Donough survived the ordeal, as perhaps another Irish minority will survive the present attempts made to extinguish and exterminate it.

The paper emphasized O'Grady's conclusion that Turlough O'Connor and Brian Boru unintentionally assisted the Norman conquest, since Irish dynasts found the English King no more alien than provincial rivals. This view underlies O'Grady's attempt to rehabilitate Dermot MacMurrough as harsh but brave, no worse than his rivals, commanding sincere loyalty.[48]

"From an Irish point of view" commented the *Weekly Mail*:

> the Imperial Government has carried on the work done by such Irish Ard Ris as TURLOUGH . . . consolidating the Irish tribes into a "people." But that work is not yet accomplished. You do not make a people or a nation by luring a "vast majority" . . . into schemes of plunder and lawless domination, subversive of every social and civilising institution. When the Irish are fit to manage their own affairs—as fit, say, as the Scotch are—they will have but to ask for the privilege and they will get it, as the Scotch would get it now, if they asked for it.[49]

In 1889 O'Grady also published *Red Hugh's Captivity* (later revised as *The Flight of the Eagle*). The *Weekly Mail* discovered parallels for O'Grady's description of how Brian O'Rourke, after attending Oxford "visited Red Hugh in prison . . . headed a desperate rebellion and committed the most dreadful atrocities . . . Nana Sahib, who flung two hundred English ladies and children down the well of Cawnpore, was the intimate friend of the upper class English in Oude, and was better versed than most of them in Shakespeare and all the English literature. At the present day the Maharajah Dhuleep Sing[h] is busy fomenting a rebellion against our Empire in India, and he has been for twelve or

48. *Story of Ireland*, 94–96; "Dermot's Spring," *All-Ireland Review*, 24 March 1900, 6. *The Departure of Dermot* (Dublin, 1917) first appeared in the *Warder and Weekly Mail,* 27 Aug. 1898, 1.

49. *Warder and Dublin Weekly Mail*, 27 April 1889, 4.

fifteen years an English country gentleman with a fine mansion in Sussex or Berkshire . . . associating on the friendliest terms with the gentry of the county."[50]

O'Grady's depiction of treachery and oppression by Elizabethan bureaucrats recalled contemporary parallels, thought the reviewer. "The statesmen of the large time of Queen Elizabeth must be judged, [O'Grady] contends, by standards different from ours. Perhaps even this excuse is superfluous. Political crimes are as venial, in certain quarters, now as they were then; and it is not in "O'Connell"-street [National League headquarters] alone they are so. They have been pronounced venial, nay inevitable . . . absolutely blameless, by great people who have sat in Downing-street, and who want very badly to sit there again." [Gladstone]

O'Grady's interpretation of the Elizabethan wars subverts unionist as well as nationalist interpretations. He targets Froude, who set his historical novel, *The Two Chiefs of Dunboy*, in eighteenth-century Beara. O'Grady ridicules Froude's claims that the crown conquered the chieftains through Saxon moral superiority over the Catholic Celt. He notes the corruption of crown officials, mocks Froude's attempts to minimize their sponsorship of assassination and treachery,[51] and quotes contemporary complaints about the poor quality of the troops recruited in England to argue that the crown relied on locally raised Irish troops and "floated to victory on a tide of Celtic valour."[52] (He notes that Froude presents the eighteenth-century outlaw Murty O'Sullivan boasting of the heroic defense of Dunboy; the ancestors of the historical Murty fought for the crown against their dynastic rival at Dunboy.[53]) O'Grady does agree with Froude that loyalty to an abstract crown served as a moral binding-force enabling royal forces to overcome opponents more numerous but disunited and demoralized. (He notes that Carew, though a murderous Machiavel, never betrayed his sworn allegiance as the rebel chieftains did.[54]) Such loyalty, however,

50. Ibid., 30 March 1889, 6. For Duleep Singh, see Christy Campbell, *The Maharajah's Box* (London, 2000); Michael Alexander and Sushila Anand, *Queen Victoria's Maharajah* (London, 1980).

51. *Pacata* I, xxvii–xxx.

52. Ibid., 54–58, 190–91;

53. *Pacata*, II, 151.

54. *Pacata*, I, 273.

has long-term costs. The state brings temporary peace and tranquility, but crushes freedom and sets up an exploitative tyranny; it replaces the genuine personal leadership of a Henry VIII (whom O'Grady, like Froude, admired),[55] with a powerless symbol in whose name those capable of personal leadership—like Sir John Perrot, whom O'Grady saw as a successful ruler of Ireland and thus a menace to Westminster bureaucrats—are frustrated and destroyed.[56]

O'Grady's 1893 *Story of Ireland*, which Roy Foster recently highlighted as a provocative counter-narrative of Irish history,[57] evolved from a column of historical anecdotes, "Scintillae Hiberniae" conducted by O'Grady in the *Warder and Weekly Mail* from 10 December 1892 (5). One sequence of articles not included in the book, "Lord Burghley [Burghley] and his Contemporaries," emphasizes the corruption and treachery of Elizabethan bureaucrats and the extent to which English historians gloss over it. (O'Grady implicitly warns Irish Conservatives against Burghley's descendant, Lord Salisbury.) He argues that loyalty to Elizabeth could not unite Ireland because she had been reduced to helplessness:

55. Ibid., xxi. O'Grady's laudatory portrait of Perrot in *Flight of the Eagle* suggests he inherited kingly qualities from Henry, his supposed father, and suggests that the admiration he commanded from the Gaelic chiefs reflected the Gaelic view that illegitimacy was no bar to kingship.

56. *Pacata,* II, 312.

57. R.F. Foster, *The Irish Story: Telling Tales and Making it up in Ireland* (London, 2001), 14–16: "I do not intend to shackle myself by any hard and fast rule, but shall write from time to time about men and books and things, treating them from a local and Irish point of view. Irish history, too, so far as certain aspects of it are interesting in themselves, and can be presented in an interesting manner, the reader will occasionally find in this column." (This anecdotal approach is also adopted by A.M. Sullivan, supporting Foster's view that O'Grady intended his *Story* as a riposte.) The series begins with anecdotal single articles on "the witty Earl of Kildare" or "the humours of Mannan Mac Lir" 28 December 1893, 2), but rapidly develops extended episodes stretching over several issues, and (from May 1893) a consecutive narrative. The Cromwell material appeared in December–January 1892–93 [interrupted by "Round the Christmas Tree," 31 December 1892, 5], before the book was planned—hence its disproportionate length, even with the omission of one installment devoted to reproducing Cromwell's self-justificatory manifestos. The column ends in December 1893 with a dispute over O'Grady's newspaper publication of chapters which had appeared in the book. His opening article expresses a desire not to offend any Irishman, and the *Warder* placed advertisements in the *Independent* urging the paper's Parnellite audience to "Read Standish O'Grady's Column."

> The chieftains were right, at least, insofar as they attributed to their Queen the utmost goodwill towards them. Whenever the Queen intervened in that stormy and intricate controversy of the chieftains *versus* the officials . . . it was to reprove the latter in language of the utmost severity. . . . And yet the fountain-head of all this tyranny and greed was much nearer to that august lady than she ever imagined, or perhaps, had the power openly to declare, for she was held in a net from which revolution only, as is probable, could have set her free; the whole bureaucracy of the Empire, from the roots in her own council to the utmost twig of the great Upas tree in the west, was charged with the poison of bribery, and all that bribery means.[58]

Later events showed that O'Grady was also thinking of Queen Victoria.

The victory of the crown did not bring lasting peace; without personal obligation to its swordsmen, it cast them off when no longer required. Hence, O'Grady notes, rebel leaders of 1641 descended from loyalist chieftains of the Nine Years War.[59] The crown only guarded the liberties of the towns while they were useful, and then crushed them with taxes. O'Grady presents the Elizabethan bureaucracy evolving into gothic tyranny under the Stuarts, calcified and bureaucratized until broken by Cromwell (presented as a merry and heavy-drinking warrior hero; O'Grady taking issue not only with nationalists but also with the introspective nonconformist respectability of Carlyle's Cromwell).[60] The Jacobite "Norman-Irish" aristocrats gave to an abstract crown the personal loyalty due only to individual heroes, fought liberty in the name of loyalty, and sailed into the shadows with Sarsfield at the helm.[61]

58. *Warder*, 15 April 1893, 1; 22 April 1893, 3; 29 April 1893, 1.
59. *Pacata*, I, 190–91; II, 60.
60. *Story of Ireland*, 123–40 (for a critique of Carlyle, 126–27); *Tory Democracy*, 275.
61. *Tory Democracy*, 237; *Story of Ireland*, 141–42, 159–61. O'Grady suspected that a cause which commanded idealistic and self-sacrificing loyalty could not have been altogether bad. This ambivalence recurs in his most sustained fictional treatment of Jacobitism, *In the Wake of King James* (1896) where the Gothic tyranny of decadent Connaught Jacobite aristocrats coexists with the passionate loyalty of the heroine to her idealized image of the king. The (Irish) Williamite hero maintains an aristocratic honor code and displays the Protestant virtues of straight talk and honest dealing, but is stolid and slow on the uptake; neither he nor the uninformed English reader discovers why she and an equally sympathetic cousin sing of "a certain Kathleen, with a surname which I can not recall, a lady . . . of unimpeachable behaviour and wondrous beauty" (188–89).

O'Grady's accounts of the Elizabethan wars find heroism only among the ordinary members of the warrior class as brave and honest pawns sacrificed to the intrigues of their self-seeking leaders. His edition of *Pacata Hibernia* argues that such feats as the defense of Dunboy and O'Sullivan's march to Ulster were not performed by ordinary clansmen, but by sworn warriors loyal to their lords.[62] The hero of *Ulick the Ready* (1896) is such a swordsman who by maintaining honor escapes ruin amidst the downfall of O'Sullivan Beare and the treacherous intrigues of Carew, to be incorporated into the Protestant community through marriage.

Only for sheer fighting ability and physical bravery, O'Grady suggests, can the rebel chieftains be admired—this, for him, is not inconsiderable. What might they and their Irish Royalist counterparts have achieved if united around a focused will? The other major *Scintillae Hiberniae* sequence not included in *The Story of Ireland*, "The Rape of O'Rourke's Milch Cows—An Account of the Outbreaking of the Nine Years' War," describes the consequences of Lord Deputy Fitzwilliam's unjustified seizure of the cattle of an Ulster chieftain. "Without unity, without even a cause which they dare exhibit to the world" proclaims O'Grady in the summation, "this handful of Irish gentlemen did surely maintain a most gallant strife against mighty odds—against four-fifths of their own countrymen, backed by the might of England, and supplied thence with unity, organisation, finance, and a common direction."[63] Earlier Irish "Tory patriots" like Lever responded to nationalist-Whig alignments by presenting themselves as defenders of Irish identity, and nationalists as the deluded pawns of a ruthlessly centralizing government; O'Grady implicitly compares the landlords facing British land acts with the chieftains facing a centralizing crown allied with restless plebeians,[64] and finds them wanting. A closer parallel is suggested in his comment that the undertakers of the Munster Plantation fled to England when rebellion broke out, expecting others to fight to retrieve their lands for them.[65]

62. *Pacata*, I, 48; II, 37, 205, 283.

63. *Warder*, 6 May 1893, 2; 13 May 1893, 1–2; 20 May 1893, 1; 27 May 1893, 1–2; 3 June 1893, 1–2.

64. *Pacata*, I, xxxix–xl; II, 224.

65. *Pacata*, I, 102, 182.

In 1896 O'Grady thought a cause had appeared around which Ireland could unite, and thereby regenerate the whole empire. The report of the Childers Commission, arguing that Ireland had been systematically overtaxed under the union, led a section of unionist landlords to join nationalists in a campaign for financial concessions. (The minority Parnellites and Healyites, seeking allies, were more responsive than the Dillonites, who believed coquetting with unionists would further weaken nationalist cohesion.) O'Grady saw a last chance for the aristocracy to reclaim leadership of the Irish nation. In a series of articles reprinted as *All Ireland* (1898), he sought to supplement the protestors' statistical case with an appeal to the imagination of Ireland. O'Grady called on the aristocracy to shake off the "Great Enchantment" imposed by a government that exploited both Ireland and the crown whose name it exploited. He proclaimed that the country could not afford parties; the Land War had harmed the country, but Parnell's accomplishments showed what could be achieved by a united nation. Ireland had only once been united, between 1782 and the foolish factionism of the United Irishmen—and that was before the Act of Union (so shortsightedly undervalued by nationalists) admitted her to the central citadel of the empire by giving her MPs at Westminster. O'Grady produced various fanciful suggestions about potential British allies to argue that a united Ireland could take over the empire—provided that her leaders realized that the game they played was for their lives and that beyond a certain point the malign genius of the Westminster bureaucracy would reject constitutional means rather than concede to their demands; they must be prepared with a new Volunteer movement like that of 1782. A triumphant Ireland would support a sturdy population of twenty million; the victory of the Great Enchantment would reduce the Irish to half-a-million flunkeys serving tourists.

O'Grady looked for leadership to the eccentric Gaelic League aristocrat and tax campaigner Lord Castletown. He later insisted that Castletown had not deserted the nation but was deserted when the malign "Great Enchantment" spread dissension among the campaigners.[66] The Parnellite *Irish Independent* compared O'Grady's manifesto to the *Drapier's Letters*.[67]

66. *Irish Daily Independent*, 19 Dec. 1896; *All-Ireland Review*, 24 Feb. 1900, 1.
67. *Irish Daily Independent*, 5 March 1898, 4; 8 March 1898, 2.

In 1898 O'Grady left the declining *Express* and moved to Kilkenny at the invitation of Otway Cuffe ("the noblest and knightliest man I have ever met")[68] and Ellen, Dowager Countess of Desart; O'Grady's writings encouraged them to start craft industries and fund the local Gaelic League. O'Grady edited the *Kilkenny Moderator* from 1898 to 1900, but left festooned with libel writs after informing the Marquess of Ormonde, the Bishop of Ossory, and other local notables that their support for an ex-officer accused of defrauding the fourth Earl of Desart reflected the malign "Great Enchantment." O'Grady, bailed out financially by his patrons, concentrated on the *All-Ireland Review*, which he founded in 1900.[69]

In *All Ireland* O'Grady proclaims that he prefers an Imperial Ireland to a "little peasant and pauper Republic with a toy Parliament."[70] His version of imperialism is expressed in a 1900 novel, *The Queen of the World* (as by "Luke Netterville," serialized in the *Kilkenny Moderator* and *Irish Weekly Independent* 1899 as *The Tyranny*). Hugh De Lacy, explorer and student of the occult, grows tired of contemporary life. Harnessing the minds of fellow-magicians, he transports himself to 2174, when America and the British Empire have been united under a line of great warrior-kings, with Africa and South America colonized by English-speaking settlers.[71] (The fate of the indigenous populations is unspecified. Different races mingle socially, including "Africans of those noble Arabianized types which flourish on the east coast of the Dark Continent,"[72] but they do not seem to intermarry; at the same time we are informed that the "Aryan" English as a whole are racially superior to "Asiatic pagans and polygamists".)[73] Of those who ruled before the Imperial expansion of the twentieth century, only Alfred, William I, Henry II, Elizabeth, and Cromwell are remembered; Gladstone is entirely forgotten.[74] Scientists have overcome the distinction between

68. *Irish Times*, 5 January 1912, 6.

69. J.L. McAdams, *Ellen, Countess of Desart and Captain the Hon. Otway Cuffe* (Kilkenny, n.d. [?1958]). Hubert Butler, "Otway Cuffe" in *Grandmother and Wolfe Tone* (Dublin, 1990), 3–16; "Anglo-Irish Twilight," in *Escape from the Anthill* (Mullingar, 1985).

70. *All-Ireland*, 8.

71. *Queen*, 178–85.

72. Ibid., 101.

73. Ibid., 154.

74. Ibid., 119.

mind and matter; flying-ships are driven by the mental impulses of psychics,[75] and air-battles are jousts between rival captains with blades protruding from their machines.[76] The British Empire, hindered by hereditary love of disputation (unfortunately encouraged by residual parliamentary institutions),[77] was vanquished by a Chinese dynasty which had previously conquered Russia and enjoyed the support of Chinese migrants who had poured across Eurasia in previous decades. The global Chinese Empire, initially ruled by brave and capable warriors, has become decadent; a network of corrupt viceroys sustained by spies and bureaucrats rule a sickly and secluded boy-emperor. Rebels led by a descendant of the British Royal House, Alfred of Tanganyika, harass the Tyranny from a secret base beneath Antarctica. The servants of the Tyranny include descendants of English adventurers who received fiefs for loyal service in its days of glory;[78] De Lacy befriends one of these and persuades him to renounce the Tyranny. After various adventures (involving the rescue of the lost heiress to the throne, whom de Lacy loves) the Tyranny collapses; de Lacy, precipitated back to his native time, ends as a mournful recluse.

This seems a straightforward *fin de siècle* imperial fantasy of lost worlds and the Yellow Peril. The bureaucratic Tyranny, however, resembles O'Grady's denunciations of the British government during the Financial Relations agitation. ("The Great Imperial Vampire whose wings, wide-waving, from Manchuria to Vancouver's Island, deepen while they prolong her fatal trance.")[79] O'Grady also accused the government of standing between the crown and its subjects; he published open letters calling on Queen Victoria to relegate Parliament to an advisory role and resume power![80] De Lacy remarks that the Tyranny lasted so long because the English, hereditarily obsessed with money, tolerate outrageous corruption and arbitrary rule so long as their commercial activities are permitted.[81] In this future world the

75. Ibid., 184, 190.
76. Ibid., 61–62, 171–73.
77. Ibid., 130–32, 182.
78. Ibid., 181. An adventurer called Pollexfen conquered India for the Chinese—an in-joke on Yeats?
79. *All-Ireland Review*, 3 Feb. 1900, 1; compare *Queen*, 153.
80. *All-Ireland Review*, 3 Feb. 1900, 2.
81. *Queen*, 89–90, 133–34.

Irish are distinguished for their loyalty to the British crown; an Irish rebellion against the Tyranny was crushed so savagely that "Remember Ireland" became proverbial (a sardonic reference to Gladstone's "Remember Mitchelstown!").[82] The unwitting heiress to the British crown accompanies herself on a harp as she sings rebel songs.[83] De Lacey's relationship with the young nobleman (the older man exerts some form of telepathic dominance)[84] echoes O'Grady's hope to inspire the rising generation of aristocrats and his suggestion that if the Irish knew their own psychic strength they might take over the British Empire; the Saxon would be their "beast of burden," as great Irishmen like Roberts commanded armies of Englishmen.[85] Alfred of Tanganyika and his followers represent the "Anglo-Irish Empire" of O'Grady's dreams; the Tyranny was the British Empire as O'Grady himself perceived it. His ambivalence about Empire increased with the Boer War. He favored the Boers as armed peasants resisting commercialist aggression, while reminding nationalists that the Boers derived their fighting spirit from the Bible![86]

O'Grady's new hero was the eighteenth-century millennialist Francis Dobbs, who helped organize the Volunteers of 1782. Defending the 1782 Volunteers against admirers of 1798, O'Grady maintained that "Wolfe Tone made 1798 out of Tom Paine, but Dobbs made 1782 out of the Bible."[87] (The Gaelic Leaguer Margaret Dobbs pointed out that while her ancestor predicted that 144,000 saints of Revelation would fight the Battle of Armageddon at Armagh, he had not believed they would all be Irish saints, as O'Grady suggested.)

After the closure of the *All-Ireland Review* in 1907 O'Grady suffered physical and psychological breakdown. His financial position was eased by a Civil List pension.[88] O'Grady now saw both the aristocracy and modern civilization as hopelessly corrupt. He turned to the labor movement. In 1908 he wrote for W.P. Ryan's *Peasant* telling urban

82. Ibid., 118–19.
83. Ibid., 28–29.
84. Ibid., 176–77, 186–87, 208–13.
85. *All-Ireland Review*, 17 March 1900, 6; 24 March 1900, 4.
86. Ibid., 3 Feb. 1900, 6; 17 Feb. 1900, 6.
87. Ibid., 3 Feb. 1900, 2. *Tory Democracy* was more critical of Dobbs—"a good officer though a bad theologian" (9–10).
88. Hugh Art O'Grady, *Standish O'Grady*, 46–47.

workers to return to the land in Spartan-style self-sufficient communal colonies which would expand by reclaiming waste land. (O'Grady tried to recruit Dublin clerks for such a scheme.) In 1911–12 O'Grady published letters modeled on Ruskin's *Fors Clavigera* in Larkin's *Irish Worker*, calling for a "Great Trek" (reflecting his admiration for the Boers) out of the cities to rural communes;[89] he also advocated Guild Socialism in A.R. Orage's *New Age*. During the Ulster Crisis he sympathized with William O'Brien's All-for-Ireland League (supported by Castletown), which sought an alliance between moderate unionists and nationalists. (O'Grady's son Guillamore edited O'Brien's *Cork Free Press*;[90] O'Grady himself characteristically urged O'Brien to propose that an Irish Parliament should be divided equally between Protestants and Catholics.)[91]

The littérateurs who found in O'Grady's heroes a focus for their discontent with the snobberies and limitations of Edwardian Ireland included physical-force intellectuals. Northern poets Alice Milligan and Ethna Carbery drew on O'Grady in invoking a coalition of gods, peasants and heroes against industrial Belfast and a corrupt, skeptical, anglicized bourgeoisie.[92] Bulmer Hobson encountered O'Grady's works through Milligan and recalled how they "opened up for me new ranges of hitherto unimagined beauty . . . Cuchulainn and Ferdia became my constant companions . . . far more real than the crude town in which I lived."[93] (Hobson's later monetary reform ideas, like those expressed in Eimar O'Duffy's satirical depictions of an O'Gradyesque Cuchulainn in suburban Dublin, may reflect O'Grady's anti-Mammonism.) Arthur Griffith maintained wary respect for O'Grady, frequently responding to the *All-Ireland Review* in his own journal. He shared O'Grady's respect for the Patriot tradition (mediated to Griffith through Young Ireland) but highlighted O'Grady's expressed wish to harness the Gaelic Revival to neo-feudalism. Griffith

89. Ed Hagan, ed., *Standish O'Grady, To the Leaders of Our Working People* (Dublin, 2002).

90. *Irish Weekly Independent*, 13 Sep. 1952, 3 (Guillamore O'Grady obituary).

91. William O'Brien Papers, University College Cork, AS 78; O'Grady to O'Brien, 16 March 1914. Quoted in Brian Girvin, *From Union to Union: Nationalism, Democracy and Religion in Ireland—Act of Union to EU* (Dublin, 2002), 31.

92. Terence Brown, *Northern Voices: Poets from Ulster* (Dublin, 1975), 59–61.

93. Bulmer Hobson, *Ireland Yesterday and Tomorrow* (Tralee, 1968), 1.

presented O'Grady as an honest unionist aware of British oppression but still naïvely thinking the union could serve Ireland's best interests. (O'Grady was also a handy stick to beat other unionists).[94] Eoin McNeill blamed O'Grady for infecting Pearse with an unhistorical imagery of self-regarding Celtic pagan heroism.[95]

O'Grady and his wife left Ireland in 1918 for health reasons (encouraged by hostile reaction to his indiscreet praise for the British Empire in an American newspaper). After living in France and Northamptonshire, the O'Gradys moved to the Isle of Wight. O'Grady was working on a final exposition of his ideas when he died suddenly on 18 May 1928.[96]

O'Grady is often difficult to take seriously; he mocked the gap between nationalist and unionist self-idealizations and grubbier realities, but until his 1907 breakdown he displayed a subliminal lack of awareness that his heroic urgings were susceptible to the same mockery. Joseph Holloway described a March 1909 speech delivered by O'Grady at St. Enda's as:

> one of the most deliciously fresh impractical speeches I have ever heard. The men of old in Ireland did nothing only enjoyed "a simple life" and he hoped that Ireland would . . . take to the hills and open air and sunshine like Fionn and his companions. Imagine such advice being given by one of our leading literary men . . . with all conviction and in an air of seriousness.[97]

O'Grady's critique of landlord powerlessness rests on the belief that aristocratic rule and estate ownership are ends in themselves; by purely commercial criteria, Irish landlords made a fighting retreat and extracted themselves on favorable terms.[98] However, aspects of O'Grady's

94. See, for example, *United Irishman*, 9 June 1900, 5 (contrasts T.W. Rolleston with O'Grady).

95. Michael Tierney, *Eoin MacNeill: Scholar and Man of Action, 1867–1945* (Oxford, 1980), 68–69.

96. Hagan, *High Nonsensical Words,* 173–81; Hugh Art O'Grady, *Standish O'Grady*, 47–48.

97. Ruth Dudley Edwards, *Patrick Pearse: The Triumph of Failure* (London, 1977), 121–2.

98. L.P. Curtis, "Landlord Responses to the Irish Land War, 1879–1887," *Eire-Ireland* 38:3–4 (Fall–Winter 2003), 134–88.

social critique may be taken very seriously indeed. His argument that the aristocracy undermined its own position by reliance on Britain glosses over the sectarian divisions of eighteenth-century Ireland but does reflect an awareness of how the élite withdrew from popular culture as they assimilated metropolitan standards. W.E. Vaughan's analysis of the fall of landlordism bears some resemblance to O'Grady's; Vaughan argues that landlords were not so much tyrannical as irrelevant, demanding rent without providing many visible services. Vaughan even makes the mildly O'Gradyesque suggestion that landlords might have strengthened their position by posing as defenders of customary paternalism rather than commercial rationalizers.[99] Despite his contempt for teetotalism, O'Grady was too much a product of Evangelical social norms to grasp the violent and earthy nature of the ethos he mourned. A society where landlords mobilized private armies rather than depending on state law enforcement sounds more akin to feudal Sicily than O'Grady's idealized *Fianna*.

O'Grady echoed a wider late nineteenth-century European reaction against positivism and liberalism. In an important work, Bill Kissane applies Barrington Moore's social theory to argue that the survival of Irish democracy was due not so much to the new state's founders as to the earlier non-appearance of a defensive alliance of lord and peasant as the social basis for "reactionary modernization."[100] Perhaps if Irish history had taken a different course O'Grady might be remembered not as an eccentric, fundamentally generous popularizer of Celtic saga, but the prophet of an Irish fascism.

99. W.E. Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants in Mid-Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1994), 221–24.

100. Bill Kissane, *Explaining Irish Democracy* (Dublin, 2002).