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Youth, Generations, and Collective Action in Nineteenth-Century Ireland and Italy

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Across nineteenth-century Europe young people inspired both revolutionary optimism and establishment anxieties. The French Revolution, historian Sergio Luzzatto has argued, "inaugurated a political rhetoric around young people that had lasting repercussions: that youth in its liberality and exuberance is a permanent danger to the political and social order."[1] From the radical democrats of Giuseppe Mazzini's Young Italy to the students of populist Russia, the "fathers and sons" paradigm of generational conflict reinforced assumptions about the involvement of young people, particularly males, in radicalism and collective action.[2] Eric Hobsbawm's seminal study *Bandits* highlighted the predominance of unmarried men under the age of twenty-five in rural unrest in Italy, Hungary, Manchuria, and Columbia, and argued that youth was "a phase of independence and potential rebellion. Young men, often united in formal or informal age bands, can move from job to job, fight and rove."[3] When preparing for rebellion in the 1860s, the Irish Republican Brotherhood proclaimed, "Youth of Ireland! All depends on you! Upon your courage and devotion hangs the fate of your country. You are our vanguard." At the same time the *Irish Times* dismissed the movement as nothing more than a lot of "hot-headed Irish youths" with no reasonable objectives.[4]

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[1] Sergio Luzzatto, "Young Rebels and Revolutionaries, 1789–1917," in G. Levi and J. C. Schmitt, eds., *A History of Young People* (Cambridge, Mass., 1997), 174–231, 179; first published as *Storia dei Giovani* (Rome, 1994).

[2] Susan Morrissey, *Heralds of Revolution: Russian Students and the Mythologies of Radicalism* (Oxford, 1998); Franco della Peruta, "I 'Giovani' del Risorgimento," in Angelo Varni, ed., *Il Mondo Giovanile in Italia tra Ottocento e Novecento* (Bologna, 1998), 41–52.

[3] Eric Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, new ed. (London, 2003), 34–39.

[4] *Irish People*, 23 Jan. 1864; *Irish Times*, 20 Sept. 1865.

Depending on one's position, then, youth was something to be celebrated or denigrated.

In the nineteenth century, young people were excluded from the electoral process, held little or no security over their labor, and were tied to rural household economies where jealousies relating to inheritance drew them into family conflicts. The alternative of migration to urban centers for employment disrupted relationships and created difficult adjustments. Young people's circumstances, it would appear, gave them reason to engage in radicalism and protest. Yet whether they did so is far from clear. Assumptions about their involvement regularly rest on, first, broad views associated with evolutionary psychology that see younger men as more likely to be caught up in violence, and second, the records of the authorities who believed lower-class youths were intrinsically prone to lawlessness and who exaggerated their role in unrest. This article examines concepts of youth, maturity, and generations in nineteenth-century Ireland and Italy and the perceived connections between young people and political and social unrest. I will show that, rather than being consistent, the involvement of younger generations in collective action was uneven, and varied significantly according to specific historical contexts.

I explore the participation of different age groups in radicalism during periods of profound social and political upheaval in both countries. The Irish Republican Brotherhood (IRB), also known as the Fenian movement, was a militant secret society that emerged in the wake of the Great Irish Famine, 1845–1852. During these years at least one million people died and over 1.35 million fled. Relative to the island's population, this represented "Europe's greatest natural disaster of the nineteenth century."[5] The Fenians staged an abortive rebellion in 1867 and also played a role in the mass movement for agrarian reform during the Irish Land War (1879–1882) and the Plan of Campaign (1886–1891). In Italy, revolutionary activity in the early 1830s was followed by the uprisings and wars of 1848–1849 and 1859–1870, which created the new Kingdom of Italy. The partial unification achieved in 1861 produced widespread rural unrest in the south of the peninsula that became known as *brigantaggio*, or brigandage, and was repressed with ferocity from 1861–1865.

The comparative approach is fitting here for a number of reasons. First, Mazzini's revolutionary formula for Young Italy provided inspiration for numerous organizations in Germany, Poland, and Russia, and also had an impact in Ireland.[6] Both the Fenians and Risorgimento nationalists consciously appealed to young men and projected a generational struggle with the Old Order. Second, *brigantaggio* erupted against the backdrop of deep-rooted desires for land redistribution and opposition to a state perceived as illegitimate, making it an interesting comparator with Irish agrarian violence.[7] Third, in the past decade youth has attracted considerable attention from Italian historians, and studies have challenged traditional understandings of the generational dimensions of political movements. This sophisticated research can shed comparative light on an under-explored aspect of Irish history.[8]

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[5] Cormac Ó Grada, "Mortality and the Great Famine," in John Crowley, William J. Smyth, and Mike Murphy, eds., *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine* (Cork, 2012), 170–79, 170; William J. Smyth, "The Story of the Great Irish Famine 1845–1852: A Geographical Perspective," in ibid, 4–12.

[6] Roland Sarti, "Giuseppe Mazzini and Young Europe," in C. A. Bayly and E. Biagini, eds., *Giuseppe Mazzini and the Globalization of Democratic Nationalism, 1830–1920* (Oxford, 2008),

To establish a clearer picture of the ages of participants in collective action, and to test assumptions about youth involvement, I employ a variety of sources and records. Investigating age in the nineteenth century presents difficulties since it was not a primary administrative concern; for example, baptismal certificates only began to be registered in Ireland in 1864. Data for the Irish case has been sourced from prison registers, transportation records, and some police files, while information for Italy has been derived from courts martial records for brigandage during the 1860s and the biographical details available for the celebrated "Thousand" volunteers of Giuseppe Garibaldi's 1860 Sicilian expedition. Overall, over four thousand participants in collective action in Ireland and Italy are examined. The focus is on men, and the records consulted for Irish women's roles in agitation for this period are too fragmentary for comparison.

The category of youth is far from homogeneous and presents challenging problems of definition. Studies of youth as an analytical category flourished in the late 1960s and 1970s, but the slipperiness of the concept contributed to its decline in historical writing.[9] The sociologist Shmuel Eisenstadt's caution, "The definition of age differences in general and of youth in particular is always cultural," resonates for the nineteenth century, when perceptions of youth varied significantly.[10] What age is considered young? When he

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272–97; Luzzatto, "Young Rebels and Revolutionaries," 199–200; Francesco Guida, ed., *Dalla Giovine Europa alla Grande Europa* (Rome, 2007).

[7] Salvatore Lupo, *L'Unificazione Italiana: Mezzogiorno, Rivoluzione, Guerra Civile* (Rome, 2011); Franco Molfese, *Storia del Brigantaggio dopo l'Unità* (Milan, 1964).

[8] Arianna Arisi Rota and Roberto Balzani, "Discovering Politics: Action and Recollection in the First Mazzinian Generation," in Lucy Riall and Silvana Patriarca, eds., *The Risorgimento Revisited: Nationalism and Culture in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Basingstoke, 2012), 77–96; Patrizia Dogliani, ed., *Giovani e Generazioni nel Mondo Contemporaneo: La Ricerca Storica in Italia* (Bologna, 2009); Paolo Sorcinelli and Angelo Varni, eds., *Il Secolo dei Giovani: le Nuove Generazioni e la Storia del Novecento* (Roma, 2004); Mary S. Gibson, "The Criminalization of Youth in Late Nineteenth- and Early Twentieth-Century Italy," in L. A. Knafla, ed., *Crime, Punishment and Reform in Europe* (Westport, Conn., 2003), 121–44; Levi and Schmitt, *History of Young People*.

[9] For more recent discussions see Craig Jeffrey, "Geographies of Children and Youth II: Global Youth Agency," *Progress in Human Geography* 36 (2012): 245–53; Stephen Mintz, "Reflections on Age as a Category of Historical Analysis," *Journal of the History of Childhood and Youth* 1 (2008): 91–94.

[10] S. N. Eisenstadt, "Sociology of Generations," in N. J. Smelser and P. B. Baltes, eds., *International Encyclopedia of the Social and Behavioral Sciences*, 26 vols. (Amsterdam, 2001), ix, 6055–61, 6056.

founded Young Italy in 1831, Mazzini stipulated that members should be under forty—born after the French Revolution. In 1846, an Irish peer in the House of Lords repeated a common categorization when he observed that secret societies included "almost all the youthful population of Ireland; all the population between sixteen and twenty-five."[11] By the end of the century, the development of educational and penal institutions contributed to administrative views of youth as those under twenty-one.[12]

Given this variety, fixing age limits for youth during a period when the concept was changing seems arbitrary.[13] Perceptions shifted according to gender, occupation, property, marital status, and ethnicity, and it is advantageous to consider youth in terms of how it related to contemporary understandings of maturity and adulthood among both officials and radicals. They did not necessarily define young in opposition to old, but in opposition to maturity, to people with recognized agency and political rights. Depending on the viewpoint, reaching maturity or "manhood" was distinguished by symbolic markers such as getting married, owning property, completing an education, learning a trade or, for radicals, fighting in a rebellion. Marriage perhaps most commonly signified adulthood in Ireland, particularly when inheritance was concerned, and the average marrying age for males in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland was about twenty-nine to thirty.[14] At the same time, someone who fought in a rebellion, whether he was nineteen or twenty-nine, became an independent adult in the eyes of Irish and Italian nationalists. This achievement of adult status was part of the appeal of volunteering.

Finally, analyzing youth and maturity leads to questions of generational consciousness. Eisenstadt has maintained that "only in special circumstances does historical change become articulated in terms of generational consciousness in general, and youth in particular."[15] Building on Mannheim's work, Turner and Edwards maintain that a generation can be defined "in terms of a collective response to a traumatic event or catastrophe that unites a particular cohort of individuals into a self-conscious age-stratum."[16] In what follows,

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[11] Marquess of Westmeath, *House of Lords* (*HL)*, Debate, 26 Feb. 1846, vol. lxxxiv, cc. 111.

[12] Conor Reidy, *Ireland's 'Moral Hospital': The Irish Borstal System, 1906–1956* (Dublin, 2009), 17–30.

[13] For a summary of how the concept of youth changed in the 1800s, see Joseph Kett, "Adolescence and Youth in Nineteenth-Century America," *Journal of Interdisciplinary History* 2 (1971): 283–98.

[14] C. M. Arensberg and S. T. Kimball, *Family and Community in Ireland* (Cambridge, Mass. 1948), 50, 123–44; Timothy W. Guinnane, *The Vanishing Irish: Households, Migration, and the Rural Economy in Ireland, 1850–1914* (Princeton, 1997), 94–95.

[15] Eisenstadt, "Sociology of Generations," 6055.

[16] "Karl Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," in P. Kecskemeti, ed., *Essays on the Sociology of Knowledge* (London, 1952), 276–322; J. Edmunds and B. S. Turner, eds., *Generational Consciousness, Narrative, and Politics* (Lanham, Md., 2002), 7; Robert Wohl, *The Generation of 1914* (Cambridge, Mass., 1979), 210; J. R. Gillis, *Youth and History: Tradition and Change in European Age Relations, 1770–Present* (New York, 1974).

I investigate how the Famine shaped generational consciousness through an analysis of the participants in nationalist and agrarian violence. In doing so, I engage with a subject that has received little attention from historians of nineteenth-century Ireland, but is slowly beginning to inform perspectives on the Irish Revolution 1912–1923, particularly after Peter Hart's work.[17] Republicans' opponents, Hart observed, regularly associated them with youth and described the War of Independence 1919–1921 as a "rebellion of mere boys."[18] This analysis of the nineteenth century complements Hart's findings, but also argues that official and elite descriptions of radicals and malcontents as young represented a subtle "strategy of exclusion," a means of de-legitimizing or downgrading their significance that intersected with the critically important themes of gender, class, and colonialism.[19]

YOUTH AND IRISH REPUBLICANISM

In the 1840s, the nationalist Young Ireland movement and associated "Confederate Clubs" gave young professionals, artisans, and students opportunities to take part in radical politics. Though initially moderate, revolution in Europe and repression in Ireland pushed the Young Irelanders closer to action. Their rebellion in the summer of 1848, however, collapsed in failure. Fiery calls for peasant insurrection quickly burnt out amongst a drained and hungry population in the midst of the Famine. The *London Times* reported, "The theory of moral force has yielded to the impatience and scepticism of a new generation," and the leadership did represent a new cohort of young nationalists: Charles Gavan Duffy, Thomas Francis Meagher, John Mitchel, John Blake Dillon, and Thomas D'Arcy Magee were all in their mid-twenties and early-thirties in 1848.[20] At the same time, government and newspaper reports did not commonly evoke the image of reckless young men. Although the rank and file of the movement came from middling social backgrounds, the leaders were an intellectual elite of "doctors, merchants, lawyers and priests."[21] This gentlemanly status was frequently commented on in reports of their court trials and perhaps eased establishment concerns about youthful revolt, as a completed education was a marker of maturity.[22] The next generation of nationalists, however, comprised a base of young working-class members and elicited a very different reaction from the press and government.

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[17] Peter Hart, *The IRA and Its Enemies: Violence and Community in Cork 1916–1923* (Oxford, 1998), 165; Roy Foster, "Making a Revolutionary Generation in Ireland," *British Academy Review* 21 (2013): 11–14.

[18] Hart, *IRA and Its Enemies*, 165.

[19] Uday S. Mehta, "Liberal Strategies of Exclusion," in F. Cooper and A. L. Stoler, eds., *Tensions of Empire: Colonial Cultures in a Bourgeois World* (Berkeley, 1997), 59–86.

[20] *Times*, 27 July 1848; See entries in J. Quinn and J. McGuire, eds., *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009).

[21] Marta Ramon, *A Provisional Dictator: James Stephens and the Fenian Movement* (Dublin, 2007), 15; Richard P. Davis, *The Young Ireland Movement* (Dublin, 1988).

[22] *Freeman's Journal*, 16 Aug. 1848. Prison records were insufficient to derive a generational profile of the Young Ireland rank and file.

Despite Young Ireland's name, the IRB became more widely associated with youth after it was established in 1858. Together with the Fenian Brotherhood, founded in New York that same year, the IRB aimed to establish an Irish republic through armed uprising. The explicit goals of Fenianism were political, but the movement's appeal in Ireland and the Irish diaspora also lay in a visceral opposition to landlordism, calls for land redistribution, and as the ballad "Revenge for Skibbereen" suggested, a desire to avenge lives lost in the Famine.[23] Their opponents repeatedly portrayed them as naïve youths who were duped by a handful of wily American conspirators. In 1865 the *Irish Times* asked, "Are the youth of Ireland more subject to mental delusions than the rest of the world?" During the IRB's ill-fated attempt at rebellion in 1867, the *Freeman's Journal* reported that "several young dupes" were amongst the rebels. In a similar vain the head of the Catholic Church in Ireland, Cardinal Paul Cullen, remarked that the IRB sought to "lead astray unwary and inexperienced young men into illegal combinations."[24] When looking back on the rising some years later, one constable wrote that those who took part "in 1867 were young, inexperienced youths that had not the support of the populace, or, in many cases, even of the members of their own family."[25] Overall, it seems there was a consensus that the IRB members were reckless and restless youths.

The IRB itself sought to appeal primarily, not to a particular class or confession, but to disaffected, younger men. The first editorial of the IRB's newspaper the *Irish People* declared a "boundless" optimism in the patriotic potential of Irish people, but "especially in the young men: never have the youth been moved and persuaded by a nobler spirit of patriotism—never been more compact of the stuff of martyrs and heroes." In a direct appeal, the editor lyrically proclaimed, "Youth of Ireland!—you on whom we rest our faith as on a rock—come with us in the Mat blooms to Lough Lein."[26]

Youth was central to the Fenians' vision of revolution, both metaphorically and physically, but the question remains: how young were they? The leaders were generally in their thirties, had attended university or served scientific apprenticeships, and came from provincial urban families of middling to high social status. At the time of the 1867 rising, the head of the IRB, James Stephens, was a forty-two-year-old civil engineer, and John O'Leary was thirty-seven and had attended Trinity College Dublin, as had Thomas Clarke Luby, forty-five. Charles Kickham was thirty-nine and came from a propertied middle-class family, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa was a thirty-six-year-old shop clerk, and John Devoy was twenty-five and studied as a trainee teacher in a Dublin model school.[27]

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[23] Ramon, *Provisional Dictator*, 141–59; Kerby A. Miller, "Emigration to North America in the Era of the Great Famine, 1845–55," in John Crowley, William J. Smyth, and Mike Murphy, eds., *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine* (Cork, 2012), 214–27. Some studies have argued that "Fenian" was a pejorative label, though the term was widely used by IRB members themselves. See James McConnell and Fearghal McGarry, eds., *The Black Hand of Republicanism: Fenianism in Modern Ireland* (Dublin, 2009); Owen McGee, *The IRB: The Irish Republican Brotherhood from the Land League to Sinn Fein* (Dublin, 2005), 33–37.

[24] *Freeman's Journal,* 9 and 15 Mar. 1867; *Irish Times*, 5 Sept. 1865.

[25] *Irish Times*, 1 Nov. 1881.

[26] *Irish People*, 28 Nov. 1863.

Yet the backgrounds of the leadership contrasted significantly with the grassroots. Historian R. V. Comerford established that the average age of the IRB volunteers arrested under the 1866 suspension of Habeas Corpus was "just 27 years in fact."[28] The average age gives some indication of the IRB's generational profile, but does not give us a comprehensive perspective. In order to better understand the role of different age groups, two profiles are outlined below in Tables 1 and 2. These tables are derived from detailed lists of imprisoned Fenians compiled by police, which frequently included age. Table 1 combines records of 494 Fenians arrested nationwide between 1866–1872 with a list of 242 members arrested in Dublin in the immediate wake of the 1867 rising. Table 2 details only those arrested after the rising, giving us a clearer picture of the urban rank and file who took part in the fighting, or at least were prepared to do so.

The *Irish People's* appeals to the "young men of Ireland" were successful. From the nationwide records presented in Table 1 we see that 23 percent of males arrested for Fenian activities were under twenty-one, and just over half were under twenty-five. Table 2 reveals that 40 percent of those arrested during the 1867 rising were under age twenty-one and 69 percent under twenty-five. It is immediately obvious that the IRB was a different movement to Young Ireland. Few members were old enough to have been active in the 1840s, demonstrating that the IRB held a different appeal for different people in the 1860s. To put these figures in national demographic context, in 1861, 11.5 percent of the Irish male population were ages sixteen to twenty, and 17.5 percent were in their twenties.[29] These profiles highlight that, like most military organizations, the IRB drew disproportionately from the young.

The relationship between age cohorts, emigration, and unrest in Ireland has attracted considerable scholarly attention. For example, Joe Lee noted how the constriction of Irish emigration to the United States after the Panic of 1873 slowed the flow, creating "a pool of potential activists" that contributed

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[27] *Dictionary of Irish Biography* (Cambridge, 2009); see also Tom Garvin, "The Anatomy of a Nationalist Revolution: Ireland, 1858–1928," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 28 (1986): 468–501, 477.

[28] R. V. Comerford, "Patriotism as Pastime: The Appeal of Fenianism in the Mid-1860s," *Irish Historical Studies* 22 (1981): 239–50, 242.

[29] *Census of Ireland, 1861*, "Part II, Summary of Ireland," 922–23.

TABLE 1.
Irish Republican Brotherhood Members Arrested from 1866–1872[a]

Age	*16–20*	*21–24*	*25–29*	*30–34*	*35–39*	*40–49*	*50–59*	*60+*
Number	172	211	181	79	44	34	13	2
Percent	23%	29%	24.5%	11%	6%	4.5%	1.7%	0.3%

Total: 736

TABLE 2.
Prisoners Arrested for Complicity in Fenianism, Dublin Special Commission, April 1867[a]

16–20	*21–24*	*25–29*	*30–34*	*35–39*	*40–49*	*50–59*	*60+*
96	70	41	15	10	6	3	1
40%	29%	17%	6%	4%	2.5%	1.2%	0.3%

Total: 242
Note: [a]Tables 1 and 2 are based upon ages gathered from National Archives of Ireland (hereafter NAI), Fenian Photographs, 4 vols, FP 1–509; NAI, CSO/ICR/16/1–46, Descriptions and Photographs of Fenian Suspects; NAI, Fenian Papers, Arrests and Discharges, 1866–9. No. 1. Alphabetical list of prisoners arrested for complicity in fenian conspiracy, Dublin special commission, April 1867. One significant file was missing: NAI, Fenian Papers, Arrests and Discharges, 1866–9, No. 15, "List of persons in custody under LL's warrant, includes ages, summary of ages."

to the beginning of the Land War in 1879. Similar hypotheses have been drawn about the closing off of emigration during World War I and the Irish War of Independence from 1919–1921.[30] In the 1860s, however, high levels of emigration did not tail off until 1868, after the uprising. It is tempting to turn the argument around and suggest that the likelihood of emigration meant younger people planned unclear futures in other countries, and participation in rebellion may have been carried out in the knowledge that they could soon be beyond the law, and would not have to face long-term personal consequences for their actions. Some Fenians were already preparing for life in America by practicing a type of "impudence toward the 'respectable' classes that they believed to be part of the American way of life."[31]

The predominance of artisans, shopkeepers, teachers, and clerks in the IRB's ranks has been well documented, and this urban occupational background contributed to the Fenians' younger generational profile.[32] Membership of the IRB, Comerford has argued, filled an Irish vacuum since it created opportunities for social interaction in the absence of the organized recreational culture that was developing contemporaneously in Britain.[33] The IRB certainly provided a new and dynamic space for associational culture, yet at the same time all revolutionary movements and political parties have a strong social aspect and group camaraderie that does not appeal only to the young. This explanation is limited, and to better understand the role of youth in Irish nationalism, the important concepts of adulthood, maturity, and gender are considered in the following pages. First, it is especially useful to situate Fenianism in a comparative European perspective.

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[30] Joe Lee, *The Modernization of Ireland*, new ed. (Dublin, 2008), 68; David Fitzpatrick, "Emigration, 1871–1921," in W. E. Vaughan, ed., *A New History of Ireland: Volume VI: Ireland under the Union, II: 1870–1921* (Oxford, 1989), 631–32.

[31] R. V. Comerford, *The Fenians in Context: Irish Politics and Society, 1848–82* (Dublin, 1998), 114.

GENERATIONAL CONSCIOUSNESS AND "MANHOOD" IN ITALY AND IRELAND

During the Italian Risorgimento, the actions of Giuseppe Garibaldi's "Thousand" volunteers captured the popular imagination and represented one of the most symbolic moments of the wars of unification. In May 1860 they seized two steamships in Genoa and sailed to Sicily, landing at Marsala. They quickly overran the city and subsequently captured almost the entire island in the name of the Italian king, Victor Emmanuel. From Sicily, they launched an invasion of the south of the peninsula that resulted in the capture of Naples and the collapse of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies that September.[34]

The "Thousand" were actually 1089 volunteers who hailed mainly from cities and provincial towns in the north and center of the peninsula. Most of the southern contingent was Sicilian. Many were students, professionals such as lawyers, doctors, ex-officers, artisans, and shopkeepers. Others were "refugees hoping to return to Sicily, poets out for romance, unemployed with nothing to do, a number of common wastrels and roughnecks, but the majority were patriotic idealists."[35] The volunteers' response to Garibaldi's call to arms, Lucy Riall argues, was "proof of their political and emotional engagement with the Risorgimento ideals represented and pursued by him."[36] The following table sets out a generational profile for 1057 of these volunteers. We should not over-generalize on the basis of this group, but it nonetheless provides an important window on the age profile of Risorgimento volunteers.[37]

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[32] Shin-Ichi Takagami, "The Dublin Fenians, 1858–79," PhD diss., Trinity College, Dublin (1990), 81–88; Leon Ó Broin, *Revolutionary Underground: The Story of the Irish Republican Brotherhood 1858–1924* (Dublin, 1976).

[33] Comerford, "Patriotism as Pastime," 245; Comerford, *Fenians in Context*, 111–14.

[34] Lucy Riall, *Garibaldi: Invention of a Hero* (New Haven, 2007), 207–25; Christopher Duggan, *Force of Destiny: A History of Italy since 1796* (London, 2008), 207–11.

[35] Denis Mack Smith, *Garibaldi: A Great Life in Brief* (Westport, Conn., 1956), 92; Riall, *Garibaldi*, 183.

[36] Riall, *Garibaldi*, 184.

Contemporary observations that "nearly half of them were less than twenty years old" were exaggerated, as Table 3 shows, but the Thousand were still undoubtedly young;[38] 31 percent were under twenty-one, while over 55 percent were under twenty-five. The Italian national demographic context in 1861 was not dissimilar to Ireland's: 19 percent of Italian males were teenagers and 17 percent were in their twenties.[39] The Thousand drew disproportionately on the young and an even younger profile was evident in 1867 when Garibaldi attempted to capture the Papal States. Then, over 70 percent of the volunteers were between ages fourteen and twenty-five.[40] The ages of Italian nationalist volunteers demonstrate that the Fenians were not exceptionally young in comparative terms in the 1860s, but hailed from similar age cohorts.

The Fenians and the Risorgimento volunteers both understood their actions to be those of an army of a nation-state-in-the-making, and similar to most national armies, their ranks were made up of young males, those physically fittest to fight. Yet more explanation is necessary to clarify what drew volunteers into republican movements. Over the past decade, historians have turned a new focus on the question of youth and the Risorgimento. The volunteer tradition of the Garibaldini of 1860 stretched back to the mid-nineteenth century and, according to Eva Cecchinato, "was shaped in a context formed by the experiences of Mazzinians and their revolutionary formula."[41] Youth and *virilità* (manhood) were central to this formula. The upheaval caused in the Italian peninsula by the French Revolution and Napoleonic wars encouraged Giuseppe Mazzini to believe that rapid change, a complete break with old Italy, was possible and he asserted the equation of youth with renewal—a new society. Fighting for, and realizing, this new society marked the transition from youth to maturity. Mazzini founded "Young Italy" in 1831, and in the movement's manifesto he summoned young Italian patriots to "regenerate" the country after the failures of past generations. The manifesto marked a turning point in the emotional and ideological appeal of nationalism to young Italians. With the birth of the republican movement, Mazzini wrote, "The divorce is complete between Young Italy and the men of the past."[42]

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[37] Over twenty thousand volunteers had joined Garibaldi by the end of his southern campaign in 1860.

[38] Mack Smith, *Garibaldi: A Great Life in Brief*, 91–92.

[39] *Sommario di Statistiche Storiche 1861–2010*, Istituto Nazionale di Statistica (Rome, 2011), Table 2.2, 1861, 99.

[40] Eva Cecchinato, "Stagioni e svolte della 'Giovane Italia,'" in Patrizia Dogliani, ed., *Giovani e Generazioni nel Mondo Contemporaneo: La Ricerca Storica in Italia* (Bologna, 2009), 78–80.

[41] Ibid., 73–83, 74.

[42] Giuseppe Mazzini, "Manifesto della Giovine Italia," in *Scritti Editi ed Inediti*, 18 vols. (Milan, 1861), I, 127.

TABLE 3.
Ages Cohorts for the "Thousand," 1860

10–20	*21–24*	*25–29*	*30–34*	*35–39*	*40–49*	*50–9*	*60+*
328	261	187	121	73	70	14	3
31%	24.5%	18%	11.5%	7%	6.5%	1.3%	.02%

Total: 1057. Compiled from the "Elenco dei Mille di Marsala: Supplemento al N. 266 della Gazzaetta Ufficiale del Regno D'Italia, 12 November 1878," Archivio Centrale dello Stato, Rome. Ministero dell'Interno, b. 38, f. u.

In mid-nineteenth-century Italy, a sense of generational belonging developed among men who considered themselves to be young in terms of their progressive outlook and who consciously played a role different to the "men of the past."[43] Roberto Balzani and Arianna Arisi Rota argue that the "phase of discovering politics" in the movement was "able to activate group consciousness and generational identity."[44] The discovery of politics, as Clara Lovett demonstrated, occurred among those "in their late teens or twenties" in schools, universities, and among those undertaking apprenticeships, "the locus of recruitment for the secret societies."[45] Through political engagement, young Italian patriots saw their personal experiences woven into Italy's national story, and both individual and national histories moved toward fulfillment in rebellion and war. Through this collective process of politicization, "Mazzini was able to offer his age group a new horizon, a historical and social identity which proved to be an extraordinary stimulus for political engagement."[46] This discourse also remained central to volunteer campaigns after 1848, even if many republicans were opposed to Garibaldi's association with King Victor Emmanuel. Youth, Eva Cecchinato argues, became "a synonym for what was politically potent and capable of bearing fruit," and involvement in political and military campaigns was viewed as part of the transition to manhood.[47]

Mazzini's brand of republicanism held less influence in Ireland relative to some European countries, but his writings did have a greater impact on the IRB than Young Ireland. Mazzini himself was unconvinced by Ireland's claims to nationhood and offered no support for the 1867 rising when approached by

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[43] Robeto Balzani, "I Giovani del Quarantotto: Profile di una Generazione," *Contemporanea* 3 (2000): 403–16, 405–9. The volunteers' youth was an aspect of exhibitions marking the 150th Anniversary of Italian Unification in 2011. At: http://www.150anni-lanostrastoria.it/index.php (accessed 18 May 2012).

[44] Rota and Balzani, "Discovering Politics," 89.

[45] Clara Lovett, *The Democratic Movement in Italy* (Cambridge, Mass., 1982), 87, 90.

[46] Rota and Balzani, "Discovering Politics," 91.

[47] Cecchinato, "Stagioni e svolte," 76, 78–80; Eva Cecchinato, *Camincie Rosse: i Garibaldini dall'Unitá alla Grande Guerra* (Rome, 2007).

Fenian emissaries. The IRB leader James Stephens, however, was an admirer of Mazzini and recounted how, when planning the structures of the organization, he had studied "continental secret societies, and in particular those which had ramifications in Italy."[48] Beyond the arts of conspiracy, clear parallels with Italian nationalism are also found in the Fenians' discussion of youth. Pleas to the "Youth of Ireland!—you on whom we rest our faith as on a rock," repeated Mazzini's "Manifesto of Young Italy" and his calls for young Italians to "rise up!"[49] The language of the *Irish People* and the IRB's generational profile indicated a break with the "men of the past" and a conscious effort to design a new, modern Ireland.

The IRB volunteers formed what Mannheim described as an active "generation unit," a united section of an age cohort that articulates shared attitudes and responses to special historical circumstances, or generational consciousness. Turner and Edwards contend that this consciousness "arises in response to a major event such as warfare or a natural catastrophe," to periods of accelerated social change.[50] The Great Famine, arguably the "main event in modern Irish history," was a period of historical trauma that "set in motion a social and economic revolution."[51] Over the past two decades historians and economists have increasingly interpreted the Famine as a period of major discontinuity. During the years 1845–1852, a number of deep ruptures occurred in Irish society that shaped the development of generational consciousness in the following decades. Given the number of dead and extent of mass emigration, Kirby Miller has argued that by the 1850s "an entire generation was virtually swept from the land: only about one out of every three Irishmen and Irishwomen born around 1831 died at home of old age—in Munster only one out of four." Widespread changes in attitudes to property, labor, marriage, and emigration occurred in the decades immediately following the Famine, which modified rural networks and relationships, not just between tenant farmers and landowners, but between all tiers of the social hierarchy. The Irish language was already in decline, but between 1845 and 1852 the number of speakers dropped rapidly from over three million to under two million, contributing to generational discontinuities within Irish-speaking cultures.[52] Many Irish people who grew up in the aftermath of the Famine, it is argued here, held a different worldview to their parents, and this contrast was significantly greater than what occurred between other generations across the nineteenth century.

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[48] *Weekly Freeman*, 6 Oct. 1883; Niall Whelehan, *The Dynamiters: Irish Nationalism and Political Violence in the Wider World, 1867–1900* (Cambridge, 2012), 91–92; Nicholas Mansergh, *The Irish Question, 1840–1921* (Toronto, 1975), 95–102.

[49] Mazzini quoted in Rota and Balzani, "Discovering Politics," 80.

[50] Mannheim, "The Problem of Generations," 307; Turner and Edwards, *Generational Consciousness*, 180.

[51] Smyth, "Story of the Great Irish Famine 1845–1852," 5, 12.

[52] Miller, "Emigration to North America," 214; Cormac O'Grada, *Black '47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy and Memory* (Princeton, 1999); Kevin O'Rourke, "Emigration and Living Standards in Ireland since the Famine," *Journal of Population Economics* 8 (1995): 407–21; Garret FitzGerald, "The Decline of the Irish Language, 1771–1871," in M. Daly and D. Dickson, eds., *The Origins of Popular Literacy in Ireland* (Dublin, 1990), 59–72.

After the Famine, clerics and moderate nationalists provided leadership for older, middle-class Catholics and voiced opposition to British rule without calling for widespread social change. The secular Fenians promised revolution and land redistribution, and appealed to younger, lower-class workers who grew up with the radical nationalist John Mitchel's politicized reading of the Famine and James Fintan Lalor's assertion that the people of Ireland were the rightful owners of the land.[53] Most of the 736 Fenians surveyed in Table 1 were born during the Famine. Many were too young to have direct memories of it, although it would certainly have shaped their political and emotional attitudes to rebellion. They were part of the first post-Famine generation that came of age seeking explanations for a collective grievance. Republican concepts of universal citizenship encouraged them to challenge social hierarchies and assert their "manhood," their right to political participation. To be a member of the brotherhood was to be disciplined, honorable, and above all, sovereign, free from dependence on landlords, priests, or parents.

In special historical circumstances, Eisenstadt argued, generational consciousness becomes articulated in terms of youth symbolism and is "orientated at the reconstruction of the centers and symbols of their respective societies."[54] The Fenians were attentive to the importance of history, folklore, and tradition, but they saw themselves as the first citizens in a new Ireland and their identities were bound up with the construction of a new, national collective. The generation unit was consolidated by concurrent engagement with republican ideas of citizenship, anticlericalism, and conspiracy. Employment in similar occupations in towns and villages across Ireland heightened the sense of the collective.

Fighting in a rebellion promised the achievement of manhood, or adult-status, without crossing the traditional thresholds of maturity such as marriage or acquiring property. The volunteer who was typically viewed as a young man, and therefore denied social status and excluded from politics, could attain a level of agency through joining the IRB. Individual coming of age through fighting in a rebellion would also see the nation come of age. The volunteers' move from youth to manhood, from dependence to autonomy, was equated with Ireland's move from subjugation to independence. The physical and moral assertion of manhood by young volunteers was imagined as a means to reclaim the honor and the sovereignty of both the nation and its citizens. Ireland was enslaved, Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa maintained, and "Until Irishmen have manhood to remove that slavery, the name of their language or their land will not have a respected place among the nations."[55]

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[53] L. Fogarty, *James Fintan Lalor: Patriot & Political Essayist, 1807–1849* (Dublin, 1919), 47–48; John Mitchel, *Jail Journal* (Dublin, 1914).

[54] Eisenstadt, "Sociology of Generation," 6058–59.

In 1868 three Fenian prisoners—Larkin, Allen and O'Brien—were publicly executed for their part in a botched prison break. The Manchester Martyrs, as they became known, quickly entered the nationalist pantheon and their final speeches were published in *Speeches from the Dock*, which saw seven new editions between 1868 and 1916. The book described how, when standing in the dock, the nineteen-year-old Allen demonstrated a "natural independence of spirit and manly disposition," and O'Brien "seemed the impersonation of vigorous manhood. Frank, fearless and resolute, with courage and truth imprinted on every feature." A code of honor was also central to notions of manliness. In his final letter to his brother, O'Brien wrote, "I should feel ashamed of my manhood if I thought myself capable of doing anything mean to save my life, to get out of here."[56]

Manhood was not defined in contrast to womanhood, but rather to youth. It symbolized maturity, the independent citizen who thought for himself, was willing to fight and be martyred for freedom. Fenian conceptions of gender identity echoed those of the Irish Volunteers of the 1780s, when, Padhraig Higgins has observed, "conceptions of masculinity, or manhood, were central to militia forces, with masculinity associated with both individual independence and collective participation in the defence of liberty."[57] At the same time, Fenian ideas of manliness were crucially informed by mid-nineteenth-century circumstances. They took shape in opposition to the stereotypes of Irish indolence and lack of discipline and agency that came to the fore during the Famine as an explanation for the catastrophe. In 1847, an English visitor to Galway maintained, "Strength for endurance combines with weakness for resistance to render the Irish peasant dependent, poor, and reconciled to poverty." His observations repeated widely held assumptions about Irish national character throughout the United Kingdom, not least in government, where a supposed Irish incapacity for self-help and industry influenced policy making during the Famine.[58]

The Fenians sought to define themselves in opposition to these stereotypes, but also in contrast to nationalist passivity before and during the Famine. In 1854 John Mitchel, who was transported to a penal colony in 1848 for seditious activities, blamed "forty years of 'moral and peaceful agitation'" for Ireland's disastrous circumstances during the Famine.[59] The failed attempt at insurrection in 1848 often provoked disdain in the 1860s, and IRB leaders John O'Mahony and Michael Davitt labeled it a "disgrace" and a "fiasco," respectively. Davitt was particularly harsh about what he referred to as the "complete surrender of all the ordinary attributes of manhood by almost a whole nation, in the face of an artificial famine … the wholesale cowardice of the men who saw food leave the country."[60] The Fenian generation sought to overcome the perceived submissiveness of the Famine years.

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[55] Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa, *Rossa's Recollections* (New York, 1898), 11.

[56] T. D. Sullivan, A. M. Sullivan, and D. B. Sullivan, eds., *Speeches from the Dock, or, Protests of Irish Patriotism* (New York, 1904), 251, 253, 277.

[57] Padhraig Higgins, *A Nation of Politicians: Gender, Patriotism, and Political Culture in Late Eighteenth-Century Ireland* (Madison, 2010), 18, 160.

[58] Enda Delaney, *The Curse of Reason: The Great Irish Famine* (Dublin, 2012), 126, 154.

New virtues were expressed by not partaking in traditional shows of manliness like drinking and recreational violence. Joining the IRB's ranks and reading the *Irish People*, Charles Kickham contended, meant "drunkenness and faction-fighting are disappearing. Our young men are becoming more intelligent and manly, and, consequently, more moral every day."[61] His observations chimed with Victorian notions of masculinity and good citizenship. Scholars of gender in Victorian Britain have argued that a manly character indicated self-denial, restraint, self-help, and independence.[62] In Ireland the development of these virtues also prepared youths for the coming rebellion. Denouncing the maxim, "England's difficulty is Ireland's opportunity," the leader of the IRB James Stephens asserted, "Ireland's trained and marshalled manhood alone can ever make—could ever have made—Ireland's opportunity."[63] The achievement of a republic by force was central to conceptions of gender identity among the Fenians, in contrast to emasculating parliamentary means. O'Donovan Rossa declared, "To say that she [Ireland] cannot be freed by force is something that no manly Irishman should say," and he regularly referred to the "milk-and-water" men of constitutional nationalism.[64] At O'Donovan Rossa's funeral in 1915, Patrick Pearse returned to similar ground, eulogizing "the young men of a former generation" and the "proud manhood" of the dead man.[65] In the 1916 Proclamation, Pearse declared that the IRB "organised and trained her [Ireland's] manhood," reproducing the Fenian image of Irish manhood serving the feminized Ireland, symbolized by the figure of Hibernia, comparable to other national allegories such as Italia, Marianne, and Britannia.

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[59] Mitchel, *Jail Journal*, 16.

[60] Michael Davitt, *Fall of Feudalism in Ireland* (London, 1904), 41, 83; John O'Mahony quoted in Desmond Ryan, *The Fenian Chief* (Dublin, 1967), 53.

[61] Quoted in John O'Leary, *Recollections of Fenians and Fenianism*, 2 vols. (London, 1896), 2, 153.

[62] Matthew McCormack, ed., *Public Men: Masculinity and Politics in Modern Britain*, (Basingstoke, 2007); Joseph Valente, *The Myth of Manliness in Irish National Culture, 1880–1922* (Chicago, 2010).

[63] James Stephens to John O'Mahony, 25 Nov. 1861, New York Public Library, Maloney Collection, 4, 64.

[64] O'Donovan Rossa, *Rossa's Recollections*, 252.

[65] Padraic Pearse, *An Oration at the Grave of O'Donovan Rossa* (Dublin, 1984).

Similar to the Fenians, Risorgimento nationalists identified foreign government as emasculating, and fighting for its removal took on a moral character, symbolizing the renewal of both personal and national manhood, or *virilità*. Demonstrations of manliness in war aimed to overturn external stereotypes of Italian men as effete, lazy, and corrupt. The Garibaldini came to represent what Lucy Riall has referred to as a sort of "personification of the Italian nation." Descriptions of the moral and physical bravery of the volunteers, and Garibaldi in particular, "represented a way of imagining and depicting an Italy that had re-conquered its manhood," challenging stereotypes of Italian indolence and decadence.[66] The *fratellanze*, or brotherhoods, in Italy as in Ireland offered a new space for associational culture and politics, and members' social and political status as men was directly linked to their fighting in defense of the patria, and their willingness to become martyrs. They did not see themselves as exceptional individuals, but were "of the people," bringing the masses closer to national fulfillment.

In contrast, radicalization revolved around universities to a much greater extent in Italy than in Ireland, where only a minority of IRB leaders attended universities.[67] Until mid-century, access to third-level education presented considerable difficulties for Catholics in Ireland. Non-denominational colleges were established in 1845, but the Catholic hierarchy encouraged the laity to avoid them and the question of a Catholic university remained a highly charged political issue until the twentieth century.[68]

There are also differences between the longevity of generational consciousness in the two countries. Engagement in Risorgimento politics ebbed and flowed with the emergence of new generations. Historians of Italy have observed how "total commitment lay in the juvenile dynamic of politics," and that the volunteers' willingness to rebel faded in their older years. New generations were at the forefront of successive waves of revolutionary actions in the early 1830s, 1848, 1859/1860, and 1867. Small groups of older veterans connected each wave, but many others retreated and made way for the next generation.[69] In Ireland, however, it is possible to trace the Fenian generation's sustained and reinvigorated political engagement through to the Land War of 1879–1882.

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[66] Lucy Riall, "Eroi Maschili, Virilità e Nazione," in A. M. Banti and P. Ginsborg, eds., *Storia d'Italia, Annali 22: Il Risorgimento* (Turin, 2007), 253–88, 259–63, 287; Silvana Patriarca, *Italian Vices: Nation and Character from the Risorgimento to the Republic* (Cambridge, 2010), 20–50.

[67] Lovett, *Democratic Movement in Italy*, 83–89, 241–45.

[68] Senia Pašeta, *Before the Revolution: Nationalism, Social Change and Ireland's Catholic Élite, 1879–1922* (Cork, 1999), 7–9.

[69] Rota and Balzani, "Discovering Politics," 90; Cecchinato, "Stagioni e Svolte," 81.

RURAL VIOLENCE AND RADICALISM

From the 1760s, secret societies in rural Ireland employed intimidation, property destruction, and murder to regulate matters relating to land occupation, rents, and jobs. With names like Whiteboys, Defenders, and Ribbonmen, these underground societies saw themselves as the upholders of unwritten country law in the face of transgressors. By the nineteenth century, politicization was visible in the Ribbon society and it began to overlap with the nationalist movement, displaying an ideology that Tom Garvin has described as "a virulent mixture of Catholic revanchism and French revolutionary radicalism."[70] During the years 1879 to 1882, pervasive agrarian unrest broke out in Ireland, prompted by the 1877 crisis in European agricultural prices. In 1879 the Irish National Land League was founded and developed into a mass movement for land reform that incorporated rural secret societies on the fringe of an alliance between Fenians and constitutional nationalists. Their actions entailed civil disobedience such as boycotting and resisting evictions, but also Ribbon-style violence against landlords, their agents, and tenants who rented land from which others had been evicted. Widespread agrarian unrest again erupted in 1886, this time in the Plan of Campaign, which entailed tenants on a select number of estates collectively withholding rents when landlords refused to reduce rates. Traditional Ribbon-style tactics again featured and by 1887 unrest was deemed serious enough to warrant emergency legislation.

When agrarian violence flared up in Ireland, government officials, the clergy, and the gentry primarily blamed young males. When the British poor law commissioner George Cornewall Lewis traveled Ireland in the 1830s to investigate conditions of poverty, he maintained that the perpetrators of agrarian violence were "frequently young unmarried men."[71] Similar comments abounded in the following decades. When questioned by the 1852 parliamentary Select Committee into agrarian outrages, James McMeel, a Catholic priest in Monaghan, maintained, "It is the youth generally of the parish who join a society of the kind." In fact the committee members operated from the assumption that young men were predominant, asking one witness, "Is it generally not the case, that those who take an active part, and have been proved to have been guilty of those outrages, are young men?"[72] At a similar Select Committee in

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[70] Garvin, "Anatomy of a Nationalist Revolution," 474; James S. Donnelly, *Captain Rock: The Irish Agrarian Rebellion of 1821–1824* (Cork 2009), 20–21, 174, 365; C.H.E. Philpin, ed., *Nationalism and Popular Protest in Ireland* (Cambridge, 1987); Samuel Clark and James S. Donnelly, eds., *Irish Peasants: Violence and Political Unrest 1780–1914* (Madison, 1983).

[71] George Cornewall Lewis, *On Local Disturbances in Ireland, and on the Irish Church Question* (London, 1836), 179.

[72] *Select Committee on Outrages (Ireland)*, 19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, XIV, 1852, 291, 18.

1870, the Catholic Bishop of Meath Thomas Nulty condemned the Ribbonmen as "a lot of thoughtless boys under the rule of one head villain," while the resident magistrates believed Ribbonmen were "generally servant boys."[73] During the Land War of 1879–1882, the moderately nationalist *Freeman's Journal* sometimes sought to downplay violence by arguing it was largely the "product of idle boys or mischievous but thoughtless young men," and not the adults that constituted the branches of the Land League.[74] In the subsequent Plan of Campaign, one Kerry clergyman maintained, "What you call disorder, disturbance and outrage, all that has been and is confined exclusively to a number of young men, young farmer's sons and labourers, young labourers."[75] A consensus existed among the authorities that agrarian agitators were restless young men.

How young were agrarian agitators? One of the few sources for investigating this question are Irish prison and transportation records, which systematically recorded ages when police and court records only did so haphazardly. These records may give us a profile of a particular type of agitator, at the front line and perhaps of a lower rank, but in a study of this nature this is beneficial because it gives us a profile of those closer to the unrest. Table 4 is compiled from people transported to Australia for agrarian crimes in the period 1836–1853, and "Ribbonmen" imprisoned under the 1871 Westmeath Act, which suspended habeas corpus in the Irish midlands in response to intensified agrarian violence. Prison clerks did not always identify crimes as agrarian in the records, but details can be established for 170 men nonetheless, giving us a representative picture.

For the Land War, ages are derived from men committed to prison in various parts of Ireland under the Protection of Persons and Property Act (1881) from March 1881 to July 1882, after which the act was superseded. This period witnessed the most intense violence of the Land War. The act was designed to quell unrest by permitting the imprisonment without trial of persons involved in "treasonable practices … violence or intimidation, and tending to interfere with or disturb the maintenance of law and order."[76] The profile in Table 6 is determined from people imprisoned without trial under the Criminal Law and Procedure Act (1887), or "Coercion Act," in Limerick, Galway, and Cork prisons from July 1887 to December 1888. As in the case of the Land War, imprisonment resulted from a range of activities including

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[73] *Report from the Select Committee on Westmeath, &c. Unlawful Combinations*, 19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, XIII, 1871, 19, 118.

[74] *Freeman's Journal*, 13 Jan. 1881.

[75] *Report of the Royal Commission on the Land Law (Ireland) Act, 1881, and the Purchase of Land (Ireland) Act, 1885*, 19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, XXVI, 1887, 490.

[76] *Bill for Better Protection of Persons and Property in Ireland*, 19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, V, 1881, 1.

TABLE 4.
Ages of Men Arrested for Agrarian Crime in Ireland, 1836–1871

16–20	*21–24*	*25–29*	*30–34*	*35–39*	*40–49*	*50–59*	*60+*
35	33	34	26	14	17	5	6
20.5%	19.5%	20%	15.5%	8%	10%	3%	3.5%

Total: 170. Sources: NAI, Ireland-Australia Transportation Registers (1836–1867); NAI, Official Papers, 1872 3/1–15, "List of persons imprisoned under 1871 Westmeath Act."

murder, assault, unlawful assembly, forceful possession, obstructing a bailiff, and boycotting.

These profiles demonstrate that the perpetrators of agrarian violence were not consistently younger men. If we briefly accept the Marquess of Westmeath's 1846 definition of young to be aged sixteen to twenty-five, Table 4 reveals that this cohort represented just two-fifths of those arrested for involvement in secret societies. Together, the tables indicate that participation in secret societies was often an older man's game. In Table 5, the most notable aspect is the even distribution across most age groups, indicating that the Land War was not a conflict between fathers and sons. Land Leaguers were not "young men" in the same sense that the 1867 rebels were. The national demographic context in 1881 more or less resembled that of 1861: 11 percent of males were ages sixteen to twenty, 15.5 percent were in their twenties, and 10 percent in their thirties. Men over twenty-five made up 43.5 percent of the population.[77] In Table 5, a mere 7.5 percent were under twenty-one and the vast majority, 76.5 percent, were over twenty-five, with the largest cohort in their thirties.

A more youthful profile is found for those arrested under the 1887 Coercion Act, with 46 percent under twenty-five. The different age profiles between the Land War and the Plan of Campaign suggest a rapid restructuring of social linkages between younger and older generations in the period between 1882 and 1887. The generational profile for the Land War points to complex alliances across different age and class groups, but the Plan of Campaign indicates a broader group of agitators aged sixteen to twenty-five and fewer in their thirties and forties. Overall, however, it is clear from these tables that younger men were not disproportionately involved in agrarian violence. Keep in mind also that prison records reflect the authorities' capacity to apprehend offenders. Younger men, during the 1867 rebellion or the Land War, may have been targeted more due to an official desire to control them, but also because they were easier to arrest than older men of social standing in their

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[77] *Census of Ireland, 1881: General Report, Maps and Diagrams, Tables, Appendix*, 19th Century House of Commons Sessional Papers, LXXVI, Part II, Table 76, 224.

TABLE 5.
Ages for men arrested for involvement in the Land War, 1881–1882

15–20	*21–24*	*25–29*	*30–34*	*35–39*	*40–49*	*50–59*	*60+*
40	82	84	88	92	79	44	11
7.5%	16%	16%	17%	18%	15%	8.5%	2%

Total: 520. Sources: NAI, Prison Registers, 1881–1882 for Kilmainham (167), Galway (133), Limerick (102), Naas (95), and Cork (21). The prisoners in Kilmainham jail came from diverse geographical areas of Ireland. Data for Cork is taken from NAI, "Police and Crimes, Protection of Persons and Property Act 1881, List of Persons whose Arrest is Recommended under the PPPA Act 1881."

communities, particularly during times when habeas corpus was suspended. Prison records, then, may accentuate the involvement of younger men.

In nineteenth-century Ireland, marital status was an important marker of adulthood, with marriage transferring "the boy into the adult farm-owning man, the farm father into the old man."[78] The average marrying age for men was about thirty, and if we take this as the threshold to adulthood, the picture does not change dramatically. Table 7 reveals that, across the three periods combined, the under-thirty age cohort represented 52.5 percent of those arrested for agrarian unrest, but they did not dominate.

An established social consequence of the Famine was a reduction in marriage rates and an increase in the number of rural bachelors. It is possible that the aforementioned descriptions of agitators as "young" referred to unmarried men who remained living at home with their parents, regardless of their years. Yet this was simultaneously a means of highlighting their lack of status. From the perspective of the Land Leaguers, assuming a leadership role in the movement provided an alternative means to marriage to achieve mature status. In an 1880 speech, John Dillon demanded that "leaders be got up amongst the young men of every townland."[79] This was not simply an appeal to men of a particular age, be it under eighteen or twenty-five; it also reflected conscious efforts to mobilize those who had not crossed the traditional markers of maturity, perhaps due to their social class, and were therefore excluded from politics in their localities.

The generational profile for the Land War mirrored that of the Dublin IRB in the 1880s, which also held an appeal across generations.[80] The same was true of the Invincibles, the notorious faction on the fringes of Fenianism that, in

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[78] Arensberg and Kimball, *Family and Community*, 131; K. H. Connell, "Peasant Marriage in Ireland: Its Structure and Development since the Famine," *Economic History Review* 14 (1962): 502–23.

[79] Special Commission Act, 1888, 41–42.

[80] M. J. Kelly, *The Fenian Ideal and Irish Nationalism, 1882–1916* (Woodbridge, 2006), 21.

TABLE 6.

Ages for Men Arrested for Involvement in the Plan of Campaign 1887–1888

16–20	*21–24*	*25–29*	*30–34*	*35–39*	*40–49*	*50–59*	*60+*
104	109	87	49	29	46	25	16
22.5%	23.5%	19%	10.5%	6%	10%	5.5%	3.5%

Total: 465. Source: NAI, Prison Registers, Cork, Galway, Limerick, 1887–1888.

May 1882, assassinated the Irish chief secretary and undersecretary in Dublin. They were Ireland's most senior officials, after the lord lieutenant, and their deaths were almost universally condemned, and provoked the most oppressive coercion act of the nineteenth century, which applied to the whole country and gave the lord lieutenant extensive powers to interfere in the legal system.[81] For contemporaries, and often historians, the affair represented the most violent excesses of nineteenth-century Irish separatism, but youth was not a factor. Of the twenty-seven Invincibles tried in 1883, just two were under twenty-one, nine were under twenty-five, and eighteen were over twenty-five, a profile that further problematizes the view that younger men are more disposed toward secret societies.[82]

The older profile for agrarian unrest complicates Lee's influential analysis of the Land War, mentioned earlier, in which he drew attention to constricted emigration and declining marriage rates in county Kerry in the 1870s. These demographic factors, he argued, swelled the numbers of unsettled younger men who were more receptive to radicalism.[83] Yet the records consulted here reveal high levels of activity across many age groups, suggesting that, along with social and demographic aspects, political and cultural factors were in play. The involvement of those longer in the tooth suggests agrarian agitators were integrated members of their communities. The diverse age profile also reveals the broad appeal and complex mobilizing power of the Land League's blend of visceral anti-landlordism, land redistribution, and separatism.

Compared to the Fenians of 1867, the Land Leaguers were a gang of old timers, but this contrast obscures continuities between the two groups, who may be considered as the same generation unit. Many Fenians were ideologically attracted to the Land League and the movement incorporated urban-based shopkeepers, clerks, and schoolteachers who had formed the membership of the

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[81] Tom Corfe, *The Phoenix Park Murders: Conflict, Compromise and Tragedy in Ireland, 1879–1882* (London, 1968), 135–45.

[82] Derived from Kilmainham prison register 1883, and the *Freeman's Journal*.

[83] Lee, *Modernization of Irish Society*, 85.

TABLE 7.
Total Percentages for Age Cohorts for Irish Agrarian Violence 1836–1888

16–20	*21–24*	*25–29*	*30–34*	*35–39*	*40–49*	*50–59*	*60+*
15.5%	19%	18%	14%	11.5%	12.5%	6.5%	3%

Total: 1,155

IRB in the 1860s. Artisans in provincial towns were socially and economically connected to farmers, as described by Clark's "challenging connectivity" thesis, and these alignments not only crossed occupations and classes, but also generations.[84] In county Kerry, known "Fenians from the 1867 rising such as J. D. Sheehan were suspected of organising Fenianism in the region during 1878–9," and historians have long observed continuities between the 1860s and the Land League through leadership figures such as Michael Davitt, John O'Connor Power, or William O'Brien.[85] Yet continuities at the grassroots, the subject of analysis here, have been neglected. In Table 1 we see that 52 percent of the Fenians imprisoned in the late 1860s comprised ages from sixteen to twenty-four. This generation of Fenians would have been between thirty and thirty-nine in 1881–1882, which was the largest age cohort in the Land War agitation. One is tempted to conclude that this was the same generation, politicized by republicanism in the 1860s and retaining generational consciousness into their older years.

It seems likely that the first post-Famine generation continued to be politically active during the Land War, contributing to the older profile of those imprisoned. Historians of Italian nationalism have identified waves of youth political engagement in the 1800s, with one generation passing to make way for the next. Once youth faded, older men were less likely to volunteer. Yet the data collected here suggests that things were different in Ireland, where, despite the failure of rebellion and subsequent inactivity in the 1870s, the 1867 Fenians remained active, or were remobilized during the Land War.[86] Their expectations for Ireland's political and social transformation in 1867 and 1879–1882 were bound up in a collective generational identity and sense that their destiny was tied to that of Ireland. These continuities indicate that participation in the 1867 uprising was not simply a manifestation of a youthful frustration or a willingness to take risks. Comerford has emphasized the importance of the IRB as a social outlet for frustrated young men in the 1860s, but the enduring activism of this generation points to the importance of political factors in the process of mobilization and development of generational consciousness.[87]

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[84] Samuel Clark, *The Social Origins of the Irish Land War* (Princeton, 1979); Donald Jordan, *Land and Popular Politics in Ireland* (Cambridge, 1994), 166–69, 196.

[85] D. S. Lucey, *Land, Popular Politics and Agrarian Violence in Ireland: The Case of County Kerry, 1872–86* (Dublin, 2011), 57; Garvin, "The Anatomy of a Nationalist Revolution," 479; Paul Bew, *Land and the National Question, 1858–1882* (Dublin, 1979), 97, 103.

[86] McGee, *IRB*, 66–102.

Given the proximity of the Land War and Plan of Campaign, the difference in participants' generational profiles is striking. Rather than being two separate parts of one agrarian movement, there is a rupture between them. The continuities that were evident between the Fenians and the Land War are absent here, indicating the limits of one generational dynamic and the beginning of another. This rupture gives an indication of the impact of the 1884 Representation of the People Act and the enlargement of the Irish electorate from 4.4 to 16 percent of the population.[88] Some small farmers now held the vote and directed their energies to the Irish Party, whose political leverage was decisively strengthened by the franchise reform. Impressed by Charles Stewart Parnell's achievements in securing the first Home Rule legislation, although the bill was defeated, some Fenians developed a new confidence in the long-term prospects of constitutional nationalism. Others concentrated on cultural organizations such as the Gaelic Athletic Association.

Radical Fenians were marginalized by the moderate Irish Party and the leadership of the National League, and although they were undoubtedly active at a local level, they were less prominent than six years before. Michael Davitt branded the National League a "counter-revolution," and one study has observed how parish priests "became leaders of the community once more instead of the nationalists or republicans."[89] The higher numbers of young males imprisoned in 1886–1887 appears to represent a new generation of agrarian agitators, different from the Land War agitators and marginalized from the Irish Party leadership.

The nineteenth-century context contributes to our understanding of the Irish Revolution of 1912–1923. "The boys" was a common name for IRA volunteers, reflecting a camaraderie among members rather than an actual description of their youth, evident when IRA leader Dan Breen observed without contradiction, "the boys from the mountain districts, from Galbally and Ballylanders. They were men of steadfast heart."[90] Peter Hart's work also drew attention to how the IRA's enemies perceived them as very young men. He calculated the average age of an IRA volunteer to have been around 24.5, with less than 5 percent over forty years old. The "real revolution," Hart argued, was between generations. To be young meant there was "more to rebel against. A man's position in his community depended as much upon age as upon income, land, or occupation."[91]

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[87] Comerford, *Fenians in Context*, 112.
[88] Alvin Jackson, *Ireland, 1798–1998* (Oxford, 1999), 126–27.
[89] McGee, *IRB*, 104; Laurence Geary, *Plan of Campaign, 1886–1891* (Cork, 1986).
[90] Dan Breen, *My Fight for Irish Freedom* (Tralee, 1981), 71.

Hart discerned continuities between the age profile of the IRA and the traditional roles played by young men in agrarian secret societies and charivari groups such as the "Wrenboys" and "Strawboys," who on festival days would engage in "rowdiness, anonymous intimidation, the settling of old scores, and confrontations with rivals or the police."[92] Yet Tables 4 and 5 suggest this influence may have been less significant, since they reveal no discernable abundance of young men who might have made the step from charivari rituals to agrarian violence. The actions of agrarian agitators served the interests of people with perceived entitlements to land, and they were more likely to be older men rather than the stereotypical marginalized and frustrated youth. Hart also referred to "adolescent" rebels and the IRA's "extreme youth," words that hardly seem accurate for volunteers whose average age he found to be 24.5.[93] His contention, however, that there was a more significant correlation between the War of Independence and the Plan of Campaign than with the Land War is supported by Table 7, which suggests the presence of generational tensions in the period 1886–1891 that were not present in 1879–1882, but which find parallels in the revolutionary era.[94]

AGRARIAN VIOLENCE IN COMPARATIVE PERSPECTIVE: BRIGANDAGE

The peculiarities of Irish rural violence pose a challenge for comparative analysis. With the possible exception of Captain Swing in early nineteenth-century Britain, there is not an abundance of rural movements that held similar traditions and repertoires of action to the Irish secret societies. At the same time, rural unrest was a common phenomenon across the European Mediterranean and Russia, and during periods of agrarian unrest in Ireland contemporaries drew comparisons with European brigands. When explaining agrarian violence during the Irish Land War, Friedrich Engels described it as an "organised brigandage practised with support of the peasants."[95] To understand Italian brigandage, the *Times* observed in 1863, one had only to think of Ireland: just as "The Italian peasant will take to the mountains as a brigand; the Irishman will plan an assassination, and both will be sure to find sympathy."[96] For some contemporaries, rural violence in Ireland and Italy were similar phenomena.

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[91] Peter Hart, *The I.R.A. at War* (Oxford, 2003), 121; Hart, *IRA and Its Enemies*, 165–86, 170; Regional studies of the Irish Revolution found similar age patterns: Fergus Campbell, *Land and Revolution: Nationalist Politics in the West of Ireland, 1891–1921* (Oxford, 2005), 261; Joost Augusteijn, *From Public Defiance to Guerrilla Warfare: The Experience of Ordinary Volunteers in the Irish War of Independence 1916–1921* (Dublin, 1996), 354–56; John O'Callaghan, *Revolutionary Limerick: The Republican Campaign for Independence in Limerick, 1913–1921* (Dublin, 2010), 187–90.

[92] Hart, *IRA and Its Enemies*, 178.

[93] Ibid., 165, 171.

[94] Hart, *I.R.A. at War*, 49–50.

[95] F. Engels to E. Bernstein, 26 June 1882, in Karl Marx and Frederick Engels, *On Ireland* (Moscow, 1971), 333–37, 333.

Soon after Garibaldi's 1860 expedition and the collapse of the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies, widespread violence erupted in the south of the peninsula that came to be labeled *brigantaggio*. The new Italian government feared there was a political agenda behind the violence, either in support for the restoration of the defeated Bourbon monarch, or for Mazzinian democrats disillusioned with the constitutional monarchy. From 1862, however, these elements faded and brigandage became a struggle of peasants and decommissioned soldiers against an Italian state that sought to force an administrative revolution from above though severe repression that was legalized by emergency legislation in 1862 and 1863.[97] *Brigantaggio* varied from region to region and was frequently a product of small-scale civil wars between different interest groups within the continental *mezzogiorno*, against the background of profound rural discontent.[98]

Rural communities in Ireland and southern Italy came under comparable pressures in the late nineteenth century, when commercialization and mechanization of agriculture diminished the need for traditional seasonal labor, a crucial part of the peasant economy. To be sure, brigandage differed from Irish agrarian violence in some aspects. The outbreak in southern Italy was more widespread and deadly, and the means used to suppress it were more brutal and bloody than any provided by Irish coercion acts. Brigand gangs typically sought sanctuary in mountainous terrain uncommon on the Irish landscape, and Irish agitators, as Lee has observed, "retreated to no mountain lair," but conspired "in the centre of the community."[99] Yet when brigandage is considered as a form of protest against agrarian conditions, clear similarities with Ireland spring to mind. Enrico Dal Lago has argued that brigandage represented "the collective rebellion of the agrarian laborers against their landlords," with the aim to "achieve the status of a landed peasantry."[100] Land occupations, arson attacks on landed estates, and slaughter of livestock were acts perpetrated by both brigands and Irish agrarian agitators. Both groups engaged in ritualized acts of violence that, in certain circumstances, were tolerated within their rural communities. Irish agrarian agitators, who were typically drawn from laborers, farmers' sons, farmers, and herdsmen, held comparable occupational backgrounds to brigands.[101] Occupational information was found for 444 of the brigands included in Table 8. The largest group were *contadini*, or small farmers, followed by seasonal laborers and then herdsmen. Otherwise, deserters from the army, carpenters, millers, priests, charcoal dealers, shopkeepers, and landowners represented a small portion of those tried for brigandage at military courts.

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[96] *Times*, 6 Feb. 1863.

[97] John A. Davis, "Le Guerre del Brigantaggio," in Mario Isnenghi and Eva Cecchinato, eds., *Fare l'Italia: Unità e Disunità nel Risorgimento* (Turin, 2008), 738–52; Daniela Adorni, "Il Brigantaggio," in Luciano Violante, ed., *Storia d'Italia. Annali, 12: La Criminalità* (Turin, 1997), 283–319, 288; Molfese, *Storia del Brigantaggio*, 385; Tommaso Pedio, *Brigantaggio Meridionale, 1806–1863* (Cavallino di Lecce, 1987); Alfonso Scirocco, *Il Mezzogiorno nella Crisi dell'Unificazione, 1860–1861* (Naples, 1981).

[98] Lupo, *L'Unificazione Italiana*, 99–129; John Dickie, *Darkest Italy: The Nation and Stereotypes of the Mezzogiorno* (New York, 1999), 25–52.

[99] Joe Lee, "The Ribbonmen," in T. D. Williams, ed., *Secret Societies in Ireland* (Dublin, 1973), 26–35, 32.

[100] Enrico Dal Lago, "'States of Rebellion': Civil War, Rural Unrest, and the Agrarian Question in the American South and the Italian Mezzogiorno, 1861–1865," *Comparative Studies in Society and History* 67 (2005): 403–32, 405.

Perhaps more interestingly for our case, Hobsbawm emphasized the predominance of young men in the unrest. In *Bandits* he found that the majority of brigands in the Basilicata region of Italy were "young men," which he defined as men under twenty-five, following a similar pattern for banditry in regions he surveyed in Hungary, Manchuria, and Columbia.[102] The military courts established by the 1863 "Pica Law" allow us to return to this theme, since they gathered an extensive body of documentation on brigandage. Some courts recorded only suspects' names, but others gathered precise and ample bureaucratic information such as place of birth, occupation, age, marital status, and parents' names. The records of five military courts in mountainous and low-lying regions in the south of the peninsula, excluding Basilicata, provide ages for 801 persons tried for brigandage—including murder, kidnapping, rape, and property destruction—and "complicity in brigandage." Known as *manutengoli*, people tried for "complicity" were often arrested on a pretext, for simply holding family ties to suspects or in reprisal for brigands' actions. At the same time, many also actively supported the brigands and it is important to take them into account because it gives us a profile of those directly and indirectly involved in violence, better facilitating comparison with collective action in Ireland.[103]

Younger men were involved in brigandage in the 1860s, but it is clear from Table 8 that there was no juvenile dynamic. Just 11 percent of those tried were under twenty-one, despite the fact that many young men of conscription age joined brigand gangs to evade service in the Italian army.[104] In contrast to Hobsbawm's study, in the regions analyzed here only 25.5 percent were under twenty-five and 57 percent were over thirty. This older profile, in contrast to the Garibaldini, was noted in the court records that provided descriptive accounts of the brigands' physical appearance: "The brigand is tall, reddish

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[101] William Vaughan, *Landlords and Tenants in Mid-Victorian Ireland* (Oxford, 1994), 194.

[102] Hobsbawm, *Bandits*, 34–39.

[103] Loretta de Felice, "Introduzione," *Fonti per la Storia del Brigantaggio Postunitario Conservate nell'Archivio Centrale dello Stato* (Rome, 1998), xiii; John A. Davis, *Conflict and Control: Law and Order in Nineteenth-Century Italy* (Basingstoke, 1988), 180–82, 223.

[104] Alessandro Bianco di Saint Jorioz, *Il Brigantaggio alla Frontiera Pontificia dal 1860 al 1863: Studio Istorico-politico-statistico-morale-militare* (Bologna, 1864), 63.

TABLE 8.
Persons Arrested for Brigandage and Complicity in Brigandage, 1863–1865

16–20	*21–24*	*25–29*	*30–34*	*35–39*	*40–49*	*50–59*	*60+*
90	117	139	124	79	120	80	52
11%	14.5%	17.5%	15.5%	10%	15%	10%	6.5%

Total: 801. Compiled from the recrords of the "Tibunali Militari Straordinari" for Avellino, Campobasso, Cosenza, Caserta, and Bari, 1863–1865, *Fonti per la storia del Brigantaggio*, 6–163, 261–300.

hair, aged between 30 and 35." Other brigands are described as "around 30" and even "around 50."[105] Women were members of the gangs and make up about 7 percent of the group surveyed in Table 8. Many held familial connections to brigands, typically as wives or mothers. Where occupational information was given, some were described as *contadine* or peasants, with midwives, servants, and seamstresses also featuring. Almost half of these women were over forty years old, and two-thirds were over thirty.

Similar to Irish agrarian violence, there was a cross-generational dimension to brigandage, revealing that it involved different groups within rural communities beyond those seeking to avoid conscription or the stereotypical marginalized young male. Political as well as social factors drew different cohorts into the unrest. Placing rural violence in this comparative context demonstrates that the role of younger men was not exceptional or disproportionate in collective action in either case. The comparable generational dimensions point to the importance of politicization and desires for peasant land ownership in mobilizing broad sections of rural communities.

Yet, a striking contrast is found between descriptions of the perpetrators of rural violence in both countries. In Italy, references to brigands as criminal, barbaric, and "beyond the pale of civilised society" were common, but the designation of youth does not appear to have held the same connotations as in the Irish case.[106] The national daily newspaper *La Nazione*, for example, fully supported the use of martial law to "disinfect" the south and was generally hostile toward the brigands, but it did not refer to their youth. Similarly, contemporary writings on brigandage that are frequently referred to in scholarly studies, by Alessandro Bianco di Saint Jorioz and Giuseppe Bourelly, and the Massari Commission's report itself, do not dwell on the age of the brigands.[107] Youth assumed very positive connotations during the Risorgimento, when younger generations were exalted as the foundation of the new nation. Indeed, during the brigandage wars youth was portrayed as the key strength of the newly established National Guard (*Guardia nazionale mobile*), hence the same quality was not attributed to brigands. Curiously, some reports on Italy in British newspapers did refer to age, the *Times* describing "numbers of idle youths (picciotti)," who preferred brigandage to settled life.[108]

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[105] Quoted in "Il Brigante nei Documenti d'Archivio," in de Felice, ed., *Fonti per la Storia del Brigantaggio*, 446.

[106] Dickie, *Darkest Italy*, 39.

[107] *La Nazione*, 19 Aug. 1861; *Il Brigantaggio nelle Province Napoletane: Relazione della Commssione d'Inchiesta Parlamentare letta dal Deputato Massari* (Milan, 1863); Bianco di

EXAGGERATIONS OF YOUTH IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY IRELAND

This contrast raises the question of why elites in Ireland exaggerated youth to such an extent when discussing political and social unrest? True, young men are physically more suited to physical conflict and for centuries have generated legitimate concerns about disorder, and historians should not conveniently ignore evolutionary psychology approaches that identify long-term trends in young men's propensities for violence.[109] In order to compare the age cohorts involved in political violence and everyday violence in mid-nineteenth-century Ireland, a profile of prisoners tried for violent assault relating to personal disputes, theft, or drunkenness is compiled in Table 9.

Younger age cohorts were more likely to commit assault, and about three quarters of those surveyed in Table 9 were under thirty. The prevalence of younger men in everyday criminal violence may have encouraged the view that those involved in agrarian radicalism were similarly young, but this explanation is clearly insufficient. The authorities' exaggeration of youth, I argue, is better explained by more general anxieties about crime and class that imbued the political and social establishment in Ireland and Britain, and reveals paternalistic aspects to the relationship between metropole and colony.

Voicing concerns about young men was another way of voicing concerns about class. In Ireland, youth became a confrontational category into which elite social and political misgivings about class were placed. In his analysis of mid-century France, Luzzatto noted how "the working class had been denounced as dangerous because it was composed mostly of young men."[110] Gatrell has argued that in England concerns about youth crime were emblematic of moral panic, a "vehicle for articulating mounting anxieties about issues which really had nothing to do with crime at all: social change and

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Saint Jorioz, *Il Brigantaggio alla Frontiera Pontificia*; Giuseppe Bourelly, *Il Brigantaggio dal 1860 al 1865 nelle Zone Militari di Melfi e Lacedonia* (Venosa, 1987 [1865]).

[108] *Times*, 6 Feb. 1863; and 21 Sept. 1866.

[109] John Carter Wood, "A Change of Perspective: Integrating Evolutionary Psychology into the Historiography of Violence," *British Journal of Criminology* 51 (2011), 479–98; Martin Wiener, *Men of Blood: Violence, Manliness and Criminal Justice in Victorian England* (Cambridge, 2004).

[110] Luzzatto, "Young Rebels and Revolutionaries," 209.

TABLE 9.

Men Tried for Assault in Ireland 1840–1867

16–20	*21–24*	*25–29*	*30–34*	*35–39*	*40–49*	*50–59*	*60+*
123	200	128	72	36	33	17	2
20%	32.5%	21%	12%	6%	5%	3%	0.5%

Total: 611. Source: NAI, Ireland-Australia Transportation Registers (1836–1857).

the stability of the social hierarchy."[111] When agrarian violence flared up in Ireland, references to youth could not easily be separated from questions of rural social hierarchies.

Perceptions of agitators as young was a means of stressing their exclusion from the adult world of politics, not simply on the grounds of age, but also on the basis of social class. At the 1852 and 1870 select committees for agrarian outrage in Ireland, the witnesses—almost without exception from the landowning class, the Anglican and Catholic churches, or local magistrates—made repeated references to the "lower classes," "servant boys" and "young labourers" as the agents of agrarian violence. Their explanations of Ribbonism mixed all the dangers of both youth and class in a social, or criminal, explanation that emphasized immaturity and denied the political aspects of unrest.

From the beginning of the nineteenth century, crime and everyday violence in Britain became associated primarily with working class men and this was reflected in the development of penal, policing, and judicial institutions.[112] In the Victorian era, urban street gangs and public displays of aggression generated serious anxieties about lawlessness and working class youths.[113] The development of penal and educational institutions reflected these anxieties, as well as concerns about the involvement of juveniles in petty crime. In 1847, the first legislation dealing with young offenders was passed in Britain and eleven years later the Reformatory Schools Act was passed in Ireland. The first Irish industrial schools were opened in 1869. By the end of the century juvenile offenders (ages sixteen to twenty-one) were separated from adults in penal reformatories, and Ireland's first borstal opened in 1906.[114]

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[111] V.A.C. Gatrell, "Crime, Authority and the Policeman-State," in E. McLaughlin, J. Muncie, and G. Hughes, eds., *Criminological Perspectives* (London, 1996), 386–88.

[112] Martin Wiener, "The Victorian Criminalization of Men," in P. Spierenburg, ed., *Men and Violence: Gender, Honor and Rituals in Modern Europe and America* (Columbia, 1998), 197–212.

[113] Geoffrey Pearson, *Hooligan: A History of Respectable Fears* (London, 1983); Andrew Davies, "Youth Gangs, Masculinity and Violence in Late-Victorian Manchester and Salford," *Journal of Social History* 32 (1998): 349–69.

[114] Reidy, *Ireland's "Moral Hospital,"* 17–30; Nial Osborough, *Borstal, in Ireland: Custodial Provision for the Young Adult Offender, 1906–74* (Dublin, 1975).

The moral panic associated with juvenile delinquency combined with more traditional concerns about younger men and crime, shaping elite views of youths as increasingly problematic and distorting perceptions of Irish agrarian secret societies. Juvenile delinquency, however, was a problem in British cities, not the Irish countryside. It was generally understood to result from the moral decline that accompanied urbanization and industrialization in Victorian England. Carolyn Conley has observed how "cornerboys" were the closest thing to "hooligans" in post-Famine Ireland, but they "were more of a nuisance than threat and rarely committed indictable offences."[115] Yet immigrants from rural Ireland formed a significant part of the working class in England and Roger Swift has emphasized the "host society's widespread belief in the innate criminality of the Irish." The Irish in British cities were over-represented in prosecutions for both adult and juvenile crime, and significantly, the term "hooligan," coined to describe the young members of street gangs, held Irish origins.[116] These stereotypes contributed to the Irish gentry's views of rural secret societies. In Britain, substantial initiatives to tackle juvenile crime were undertaken by the gentry, at their own expense and through exerted political pressure for reform.[117] They advanced the moral qualities of agricultural labor as a remedy for urban delinquents, but in rural Ireland those who arguably worked hardest, the laborers, were blamed for disorder, suggesting their class status and ethnicity factored in how they were viewed by the gentry. Concerns about class overlapped with perceptions of Irish peasants as innately temperamental and prone to violence.

Descriptions of radicals as young functioned as a means of political exclusion that was informed by colonial contexts, as well as social class. In his study of the British Empire in the nineteenth century, Uday Mehta has identified strategies by which certain groups were excluded from the principles of liberalism and democratic politics. These strategies "imply without explicitly stating a sense of limits. These limits are inscribed in the dense minutiae of social and cultural descriptions" and configure "boundaries between the politically included and the politically excluded."[118] The principles of universal liberalism, he argued, were understood to apply only to "mature adults" and had "no application to backward societies." Consent was not required to govern those beyond the limits of liberalism.[119] The repeated and frequently inaccurate descriptions of collective action in Ireland as something instigated and carried out by the young represented a subtle strategy of excluding the participants from liberalism by suggesting that they were immature and emotional, not yet ready to be included in politics. Yet the means to become an adult and access politics was not simply about growing older, but required opportunities to marry, or to acquire property or an education, which were far from accessible to all in the nineteenth century.

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[115] Carolyn Conley, *Melancholy Accidents: The Meaning of Violence in Post-Famine Ireland* (Lanham, Md., 1999), 5.

[116] Roger Swift, "Heroes or Villains? The Irish, Crime, and Disorder in Victorian England," *Albion* 29 (1997): 399–421, 399, 404; Pearson, *Hooligan*, 74, 255–56.

[117] John A. Stack, "The Provision of Reformatory Schools, the Landed Class, and the Myth of the Superiority of Rural Life in Mid-Victorian England," *History of Education* 8 (1979): 33–43.

[118] Mehta, "Liberal Strategies of Exclusion," 67.

[119] Ibid., 75.

The labeling of radicals as "young" was not confined to the writings and speeches of officials and clerics. Declan Kiberd has observed how nineteenth-century Irish writers flirted "dangerously with the stereotype of the childlike Hibernian peasant."[120] He notes how, for example, W. B. Yeats typically demonstrated an awareness of this stereotype and often sought to subvert it, but his poem "Easter 1916" associated the rebels with children, and in doing so suggested they "were not full moral agents … even when they seem to have done wrong, they can be forgiven."[121] The reiteration of the parent-child metaphor evoked a paternalistic relationship between metropole and colony, trivializing rebellion and suggesting that the authorities ultimately held the rebels' welfare in mind.

More explicit use of what Mehta has termed "civilisational infantilism" is evident in the novels of Anthony Trollope, particularly in *The Landleaguers*. Trollope was born in England, but lived for long periods in Ireland, which featured extensively in his writing. In *The Landleaguers* his view of how the government should deal with the agitation is represented by the relationship between a strict parent and his impressionable son. Trollope was deeply critical of Gladstone's policy of conciliation during the Land War and asserted that only a firm, paternalistic approach would end the unrest. In the novel, one landlord refers to his tenants as his "boys," and Irish peasants are described as a "generous, kindly, impulsive and docile" people who are misled by "American teaching."[122] Those who stirred up the violence were "all the same," whether they called themselves "Whiteboys, Terryalts, Ribbonmen, Repeaters, Physical-Forcemen, Fenians, Home-Rulers, Professors of Dynamite, and American-Irish." All were "the boys," immature agitators who were easily led astray.[123]

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There remains a tendency among historians to leave unchallenged and unexplained assumptions about the predisposition of younger men to radicalism and collective action. The "generation gap" and "fathers and sons" paradigms oversimplify processes of radicalization. For Hobsbawm, the category of youth itself held an explanatory power, but it is argued here that the generational dimensions of radicalism must be approached as fluid rather than static, and that doing so will allow us to move toward more nuanced understandings of collective action. The comparative approach facilitates a more careful investigation of perceptions of youth and their relationship to social control.

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[120] Declan Kiberd, *Inventing Ireland: The Literature of the Modern Nation* (London, 1996), 105.
[121] Ibid., 114.
[122] Anthony Trollope, *The Landleaguers*, 3 vols. (New York, 1981), I, 2–3, 63.
[123] Ibid., I, 163, 166; III, 122.

In nineteenth-century Ireland and Italy, periods of profound transformation and historical trauma united particular age cohorts and shaped generational consciousness. The deep upheaval caused by the revolutionary wars in Italy and the Great Famine in Ireland heightened generational solidarity within the nationalist movements that emerged in their aftermaths. In Ireland it appears generational consciousness was sustained among the same age cohort at different times. Both the Fenians and Risorgimento nationalists consciously appealed to youth and projected a rupture with previous generations. The rank-and-file volunteers in both movements were comprised of younger men, for whom fighting in a rebellion not only expressed their political commitments, but was also a means of crossing the threshold to "manhood." One aspect of the appeal of participation in collective action was that it offered an alternative to marriage, education, and property for the achievement of adult-status and political agency.

Descriptions of youth and maturity should not be understood merely as a reflection of age. They were not value-free and served as indicators of individuals' social standing. Elite descriptions of radicals as "young" were frequently inaccurate in terms of age, but they simultaneously evoked a lack of status. Exaggerating radicals' youth was a means of exclusion that de-legitimized political commitments and suggested an irrational aspect to political and agrarian violence. Government officials and the Catholic Church appeared predisposed to employ the designation, even when the people concerned were not particularly young, as a way of downgrading their importance and portraying unrest as a criminal, emotional, or even recreational matter rather than a political one. This tendency has often been reinforced by the historiography. Repeated references to youth revealed paternalistic dimensions to Anglo-Irish relations and implied that radicalism was by its nature immature and would be grown out of under the supervision of government. Instead, the pattern that emerges from existing records undermines the received picture of youthful radicalism and reveals that the involvement of specific age groups in collective action was inconsistent and varied considerably according to historical circumstances.

Abstract: This article examines concepts of youth, maturity, and generations in nineteenth-century Ireland and Italy and perceived connections between young people and political and social unrest. I demonstrate that, rather than being consistent, the involvement of younger generations in radicalism was uneven, and varied significantly with historical contexts. I argue that the authorities frequently exaggerated associations between young people and radicalism as a subtle strategy of exclusion, as a means of downgrading the significance of collective action and portraying it as a criminal, emotional, or even recreational matter rather than a political one, a tendency that has often been reinforced in the historiography. Descriptions of youth and maturity should not be understood as merely reflections of age. They were not value-free, and served as indicators of individuals' social standing and political agency or lack thereof. Yet fighting in a rebellion offered an alternative to marriage, owning property, or education for the achievement of "manhood," or adult status and political agency. The article also investigates how the Great Irish Famine shaped generational consciousness in the second half of the nineteenth century through an analysis of the participants in nationalist and agrarian violence. In all, over four thousand participants in collective action in Ireland and Italy are examined.