The Famine Plot Revisited

Author(s): Mark G. McGowan

Source: *Genocide Studies International*, Spring 2017, Vol. 11, No. 1, Starvation and Genocide (Spring 2017), pp. 87-104

Published by: University of Toronto Press

Stable URL: https://www.jstor.org/stable/10.2307/26986061

The Famine Plot Revisited: A Reassessment of the Great Irish Famine as Genocide

Mark G. McGowan
University of Toronto

There has been considerable debate among historians and public commentators about whether or not the Great Irish Famine (1845–1851) could be considered as genocide. Recently, controversial journalist Tim Pat Coogan has argued that England's treatment of Ireland in this period can be considered genocide. Historical evidence suggests otherwise. There was considerable blame for the perpetration of Ireland misery beyond the ill conceived and poorly executed policies of successive British governments. At the root of the famine tragedy was an outmoded and poorly functioning landholding system and over-dependence of an impoverished rural underclass on the potato staple. Anglo-Irish landlords, merchants, businessmen of all denominations, large landholding farmers, nationalist politicians, clergy, ineffective implementation of poor relief by local gentry, and unscrupulous port officials and ship's captains must also bear some responsibility in contributing to this calamity in modern Irish history.

Key words: Ireland, famine, potato, landlord, free trade, immigration

With the publication of Tim Pat Coogan's *The Famine Plot* in 2012, a new controversy erupted among Irish scholars and an interested Irish public over the question of whether or not the Irish Famine (1845–1851) met the criterion described in the modern definition of genocide. Coogan could not have been more clear in his assessment that "John Mitchel's stark analysis that God sent the blight but the English created the Famine rings true … Whig policy was directed at getting the peasants off the land and if it took mass death to achieve that directive, so be it."[1] In his concluding remarks he is even more pointed: "Certainly in the years 1846–1851 responsible Whig decision makers were complicit in genocide and did direct public incitement, as the columns of *The Times* sadly confirm only too well, toward furthering that end."[2] Coogan's remarks immediately elicited a response from Professor Liam Kennedy, one of Ireland's leading experts on nineteenth-century Ireland and professor emeritus at Queen's University Belfast. Kennedy and Coogan engaged the genocide argument on BBC radio, and later in a special debate organized at the National Famine Commemoration in Newry in 2015, and most recently in a new publication by Kennedy, *Unhappy the Land: The Most Oppressed People Ever, the Irish?*[3] Kennedy's counterargument cuts to the quick and exposes the divide that has long existed between professional historians and their populist counterparts on the notion that the English committed an act of genocide against the Irish during the Great Famine:

> Contrary to what might be surmised, modern Irish society is not particularly receptive to the doctrine of genocide. The fact that virtually all historians of Ireland have reached a verdict that eschews that position, be they Irish-born scholars from Britain, North America or Australasia, has weakened the traditional populist account.[4]

Mark G. McGowan, "*The Famine Plot* Revisited: A Reassessment of the Great Irish Famine as Genocide," *Genocide Studies International* 11, 1 (Spring 2017): 87–104.
doi: 10.3138/gsi.11.1.04

While Kennedy may be correct in the assessment of his colleagues in the academy, the persistence and perhaps the prevalence of the "populist accounts" in forging the popularly constructed memory of the Famine cannot be underestimated, as the brisk sales of Coogan's tome suggests.

The recounting of the history of the Famine is a complicated, nuanced, and, for some, emotional exercise. Recently, in *The Great Famine: Ireland's Agony* (2011), historian Ciaran O'Murchadha is less categorical in his assessment of the *Gorta Mor* as genocide:

> if genocide is taken to signify the deliberate, systematic annihilation of an entire ethnic or religious group by mass murder, there is no nineteenth-century equivalent that applies anywhere. However, if it is defined as a deliberate systematic use of an environmental catastrophe to destroy a people under the pretext of engineering social reform, then there is certainly a case to be answered.[5]

This paper argues that it is inappropriate to affix the label of genocide on English action/inaction during the period of the Great Hunger in Ireland. While English politicians at Westminster and their minions in Dublin Castle in Ireland initiated policies that caused undue and prolonged suffering, largely due to their slavish adherence to laissez-faire capitalism, their commissions and omissions during the famine cannot be aligned neatly with the United Nations definition of genocide developed a century later. Nevertheless, when one examines the various strata of Irish and British society of the time, one discovers that there was plenty of blame to share among those persons, on both sides of the Irish Sea, who were able to assist the starving and diseased in Ireland but failed to do so. Merchants, both Catholic and Protestant, priests and ministers, Irish nationalists and pundits, landlords, land agents, and farmers with larger and more productive farms, all collectively share culpability for the persistence of Irish suffering from 1845 to 1851. In the end, the ideology of political economy and self-interest doomed the Irish peasant classes, who either suffered and died in their homeland or sought new life abroad.

If there was a chief culprit in creating the greatest calamity to befall the Irish people in modern history, it was the generations-old landholding system and the economic structures that corresponded to it that set the stage for what happened during the potato crop failures of 1845 to 1850 and accounts for the frustrated attempts at alleviating mass starvation. From the time of the British plantations in Ireland in the sixteenth century and throughout historical developments of land tenure imposed by the British Crown, Ireland had emerged with a landed class that held property and the majority of the population that rented and farmed as tenants. Complicating matters was the fact that the landlords were primarily Protestant (as strengthened by the Penal Laws imposed in the late sixteenth century), English-speaking, and often absent from their demesnes. Their tenants were primarily, but not exclusively, native Irish, Roman Catholic, and officially (until 1829) effectively barred from public office and the liberal professions.[6] In the wake of the end of the Napoleonic wars, agricultural prices declined although agricultural exports grew, yet those at the bottom of the agricultural pyramid failed to advance in their economic status. Moreover, the cottage linen trade in northern counties of Ireland went into steep decline as larger urban industrial textile mills replaced them.[7] Faced with these new convulsions in the economy, many Irish, both Protestant and

Catholic, regarded emigration to Britain, the United States, and British North America as their only recourse.

For those farmers who remained, rural life faced new population pressures as their families grew, along with the commensurate pressure to feed them. The potato became a wonder food rich in vitamins and carbohydrates; the average Irish male consumed around twelve pounds per day, prepared in various ways.[8] It has been recorded by contemporaries that the Irish peasant was considered to be one of the most robust and healthiest in Europe.[9] A ready food supply facilitated population growth, but as tenant families grew, so did the familial obligation to provide older sons with their own land to farm. Tenancies shrunk as a result of these subdivisions, but the "lumper" variety of potato was an ideal crop, yielding large harvests from "lazy beds" planted on even the tiniest patches of land.[10] By 1840, Irish tenants, particularly in the west of Ireland, were trapped in a potato monoculture, and the fields of many small tenant farmers, cotters, and labourers were not diversified horticulturally.

Pythophthora infestens, a fungus that attacked potato stalks and then gradually turned the subterranean tubers into a stinking, putrid mess, struck the Great Lakes and St. Lawrence Valley of North America in the early 1840s.[11] In most regions, both Canadian and American, farmers were able to adapt to the loss of the potato because the agricultural economy of the region was diversified. In Eastern Nova Scotia, however, poor land and frontier type settlements had produced a farmer reliance on the potato akin to Ireland. When disaster struck that colony in 1845 and 1846, the local government sent immediate financial aid and new seed to develop and diversify the local farm economy.[12] Ironically, *pythophthora infestans* was likely carried to Ireland by merchant ships from the Americas and was born on the winds and rain from continental Europe, where potato blight had been reported in the Low Countries. In the autumn of 1845, what on one day appeared to be beds of healthy potato plants soon turned black, and as much as one-third of the late autumn crop of potatoes was destroyed, although the losses varied from county to county, with heaviest losses in the east of Ireland.[13] There was no sense of panic among farmers themselves: first, the entire crop had not failed; second, the blight was not universal; and finally, within living memory, crops had failed before in 1817 and 1821, on both of which occasions Irish tenant farmers muddled through and anticipated a return of the potato harvest the following year.[14]

While there had been concern for the quantity and quality of seed potatoes for the crop intended for 1846, most Irish farmers thought that the worst dangers had passed. In the autumn of 1845, the administration of Prime Minister Sir Robert Peel had made arrangements to import American maize, to be sold at a penny per pound, in order to relieve any distress to those farmers who had lost the previous year's crops. The sale of the maize, however, did not begin until March 1846,[15] due to the inability of American grain to be shipped expeditiously and perhaps a lack of urgency, given the limited scope of the blight the previous autumn. Peel's government also dramatically altered British trade policy in June that year when it abolished the Corn Laws, which had protected UK farmers by restricting the importation of cheap foodstuffs. Inherently a free trader, Peel had seen the potential Irish food crisis as sufficient reason to facilitate a more liberal trade in agricultural products.[16] The potato crop in the summer and autumn of that year appeared to flourish, but just in advance of the harvest the blight returned, destroying much of the potato crops in all 32 counties. The new crisis had to be faced

by a new administration. Peel's repeal of the Corn Laws had alienated protectionist members of his own party and his government eventually fell (although on a "Coercion Bill"). Subsequently, Lord John Russell and his Whig (Liberal) Party assumed the government, bringing with them a zealous adherence to laissez-faire capitalism and a reluctance to engage the State in actions that might inhibit the natural economic forces at play in the marketplace. Charles Edward Trevelyan, the Secretary of the Treasury, held on tightly to the dictums of laissez-faire, fearing that the redirection of Irish food exports would disrupt the Irish economy irreparably and that government handouts to the Irish poor would create an unnatural dependence on government assistance, which would also hamper values of hard work, productivity, and thrift.[17]

The results of this laissez-faire policy were an unmitigated disaster. The Poor Law Unions, which had been hastily established in 1838 and were completely unsuited to the Irish social structure, were completely overwhelmed by the destitute.[18] In addition, many of those local gentry who were obliged to support them through the Poor Law rate found that their finances were stretched thinly. Tenants who defaulted on rent sent a chain reaction through the local economy, ultimately inhibiting some landlords from being able to meet their own obligations.[19] The government-sponsored soup kitchens and the private relief offered by churches and the Quakers provided needed immediate relief, but no long-term strategy to solve the food crisis in Ireland. The government also put in place local public works projects, designed to put money in pauper hands to buy food and not to disrupt local markets. While the economic theory behind putting cash in the hands of the poor to help reignite the economy might appear to be a sound approach in the eyes of notable economic theorists today,[20] it was short sighted to think that starving and ill people could successfully carry out the heavy labour required to build stone walls or roads to nowhere. The harsh winter of 1846–1847, one of the worst in Irish memory, just hastened the death and destitution of the Irish people. In recognition that they did not work and were subject to local corruption, Trevelyan began to scale back and ultimately cancelled the public works initiatives, and, in an effort to thwart undue dependence on the state by its citizens, ended the subsidized soup kitchens.[21] Ironically, the soup program had been modestly successful in feeding thousands who might have otherwise perished in Black '47. The crisis continued that year even though there was a modest harvest of potatoes by year's end. This ray of hope was dashed by two successive years of crop failure in 1848 and 1849. By the early 1850s, 1 million Irish people had died and 1.5 million Irish had emigrated, out of an 1841 population of 8.1 million.[22]

In the 160 years after this disaster, writers, historians, politicians, and casual observers have been deeply divided on issues of culpability for the extent of the death and destruction and more pointed attitudes regarding at whose feet the blame for the famine should lie. Shortly after the famine, John Mitchel wrote that "the Almighty had brought the blight, but the English created the famine."[23] His recounting of how ships laden with Ireland's agricultural bounty set sail for foreign markets while Ireland starved condemned the policies of the British government and to this day has brought charges of genocide against Russell, Trevelyan, and the Whigs who supported their laissez-faire policies. Such ideas about the famine resonated strongly in diasporic areas like the United States and some parts of British North America, to which hundreds of thousands fled during the famine, often experiencing harrowing passage across the Atlantic on ships unsuited for mass human transport. Irish nationalists in the United

States, whose experience was likened to a state of "exile" from their homeland,[24] were pronounced in their use of the famine as a justification for the use of physical force to rid Ireland of British rule once and for all.[25]

Ironically, the historical record in Ireland did not focus on the famine period with any seriousness until the 1940s, when then-President Eamon DeValera commissioned several noted scholars, principally from University College Dublin, to produce an official history of the Great Famine. Published in 1956, nearly a decade after its anticipated date of publication, Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams' edition, entitled, *The Great Irish Famine*, assigns no blame for the famine, exorcises some of the famine myths of previous writers, and offers some pithy insights into the politics of the relief efforts, but in the end demonstrates the weakness of having been written without much sense of social historical method.[26] Six years later, however, Cecil Woodham-Smith's *The Great Hunger* (1962) became the standard text on the famine, as she filled its pages with heroes and villains and tapped into some of the worst and most emotionally gripping episodes of the famine.[27] American Irish nationalists and others lapped up Smith's work, particularly her critique of Trevelyan, and the text became the touchstone for a nationalist perspective on the famine. In recent years a new generation of scholars, including Cormac O'Grada, Mary Day, and Joel Mokyr, have challenged Smith's work and Mitchel's rhetorical flourishes, providing revisions that have enflamed Irish nationalists on both sides of the Atlantic.[28] The research and writing of historians such as Peter Gray, Christine Kinealy, and James Donnelly in the 1990s, as the famine approached its 150th anniversary, provided a balance between revisionist corrections of economic and political circumstances, and an acknowledgment that the famine was real and marked a period of untold human suffering in Ireland, including areas of the north of Ireland.

The debates regarding issues of culpability during the famine came to the fore in a more popular fashion in the 1990s, when local communities in Ireland and in the diaspora began to build public monuments and commemorative sites to remember the famine and its victims. The monuments themselves often said more about those who crafted and built them, than they did about the dead and suffering souls they were memorializing in stone, bronze, or glass. The Mitchelite mantras served as inspiration for portrayals of the horror faced by the Irish people 150 years before.[29] In the United States memorials bore the imprint of the "American Dream" motif wherein the famine serves as a case of a people being liberated by America and pulling themselves up by their own "boot straps," and emerging in the end as successful builders of America. In this period the states of New York and New Jersey crafted new school curricula, with varying degrees of emphasis on the famine as genocide (mostly in New Jersey). Recently, historian Liam Kennedy agreed with Peter Gray's reference to this process as a means of Irish Americans creating a form of "collective ethnic solidarity" with the famine as a touchstone event for Irish American identity.[30] These American and Irish populist interpretations, embedded in school curricula and set in stone for all to see, also begged the question as to whether the famine should be referred to more accurately as the "Great Hunger," implying blame for Great Britain for this Irish disaster.

In light of these interpretive shifts, it is important to reexamine the facts around the issues of what was done during the famine to alleviate the distress and whether blame can be legitimately cast on Britain for not having done enough. In the first instance, and often the only one, the British government is blamed for doing nothing or working in half measures. Such criticism is not entirely accurate and should be

nuanced. It is inaccurate to say the government did nothing—their expenditure on Ireland during the famine was £9.5 million, or the equivalent of £712 million in today's currency (roughly $1.5 billion CAD).[31] Clearly, the real question ought to be, did the government spend the money effectively and as generously as it might have, had the famine actually taken place on the island of Great Britain. Historian Peter Gray has speculated that, at the end of the day, had the famine ravaged England and destroyed its agricultural economy there would have been far greater financial intervention from Westminster.[32] Long-standing prejudice against the Irish, both in cultural and religious terms, and "Irish fatigue" among politicians and British voters who despaired at ongoing troubles in Ireland, may account for a less than robust response to the Irish food crisis. There is no doubt that the Peel government effected significant relief projects to alleviate what was thought to be a passing trouble in Ireland. Although Peel might be chastised for political opportunism in enacting free trade in agricultural products by means of the abolition of the Corn Laws,[33] the fact remains that allowing for the importation of cheaper foodstuffs should have been a key measure in alleviating Irish hunger.

As for Lord John Russell and the Whig Party that replaced Peel after his dramatic defeat, largely at the hands of anti-free traders within his own party, there is sufficient evidence to judge them most harshly. Trevelyan and his allies were unwilling to deviate from a very strict application of allowing the free market to respond to natural economic forces. They placed too much faith in the ability of the economy to right itself, and too little faith in the Irish people, whom they thought would become too dependent on the government and perhaps in perpetuity. Their response to the famine was dictated by doctrinaire capitalist theory and a repugnance to Irish Catholic culture, although it has been clearly established by Gerald McAtasney and Christine Kinealy that Protestant Irish, even in the northern counties, also suffered from the devastation of their potato crops and the hunger and disease that came thereafter.[34] Therefore, one ought not to lean too hard on the theory that British relief policy in Ireland was too steeped in anti-Catholicism, when Belfast, Lurgan, Armagh, and large sections of northern Down were stricken by the blight and subsequent food crisis as well.

In fairness, it cannot be said that the Whigs did nothing. Their policies were ill-conceived, doctrinaire, and ultimately ineffective. The broadening of the Poor Law to include outdoor relief and the imposition of the principle that "Irish property would pay for Irish poverty" were ill-conceived and eventually abject failures. What Westminster perceived was a fattened landholding class in Ireland not pulling their weight, whereas in reality many landlords and their agents struggled to cover their own debts when rent revenues from impoverished tenant farmers were drying up.[35] It has already been noted that public works programs, while theoretically a reasonable approach to inject capital into a failing economy if introduced early, also failed. Introduced too late, and without forethought or much planning, subject to local corruption, and relying on starved and ill labourers, the scheme failed. Even when successful programs such as the soup kitchens were enacted, the government, ill-advisedly having declared "the worst to be over," terminated them.[36] There was always the lingering fear that they would breed overdependence on the state and a culture of laziness in Ireland. Much blame can be laid at the feet of the Russell administration for initiatives that were poorly conceived and executed and a half-heartedness in action as the crisis dragged on. Yet, culpability for prolonging Ireland's woes ought not to be placed on their shoulders alone.

  doi:10.3138/gsi.11.1.04

There is compelling evidence to suggest that many landlords shared the blame in adding to the misery of their tenants during the famine period. The inability of tenants to pay rents became a convenient excuse for mass evictions from some estates, thereby providing the opportunity for landlords to consolidate the small tenancies and to create pasturage for the more lucrative agricultural practice of animal husbandry. Landlords claimed that they were impoverished by defaulting tenants (a practice that had gone on for decades) or having inherited lands from those who left their properties deeply in debt. The famine crisis provided an opportunity for many landowners to rid themselves of tenants who were perpetually in arrears and to finally initiate a land reform that would dismantle the small farms that had multiplied on their estates over the past half century and open the land for new economic opportunities.[37] Some landlords were notorious in their attitudes toward the peasantry and their opportunism. George Bingham, Lord Lucan of Castlebar, County Mayo, Ballinrobe, evicted 2,000 tenants (he was in arrears in paying his poor rate) and his tenants where cast out onto the roads, landless, unemployed, and without hope.[38] Nearby, in the Doolough Valley, in 1849 hundreds of tenants trekked the 20 kilometers from Louisbourgh in the north of the valley to Delphi in the south, where they were rebuffed by the landlord's agents when they begged for food. A gale and snowstorm blew off the north Atlantic as they trudged back to their homes.[39] Most of them died, and to this day the valley is nearly devoid of human habitation. In another act of callousness, in 1847 William Gregory, a Minister of Parliament and landlord in Galway, proposed his famous "Gregory Clause," which amended the Poor Law to allow for outdoor relief but only for those tenants holding a quarter acre of land or less; tenants with holdings greater than a quarter of an acre would have to abandon their lands to be eligible for relief.[40] While on the surface the policy appeared to be a generous extension of relief at the workhouses within poor law unions, it was in reality a means whereby landlords could rid themselves of their responsibilities to their disadvantaged tenants and reclaim their tenancies.

Other landlords were seemingly contradictory in their approaches to their tenants. Elizabeth Smith, wife of a prominent landlord at Baltiboys (also Baltyboys), County Wicklow, wrote: "We determined to rid of the little tenants and to increase the large farms—and we did it—not at once—just watched for opportunities and managed this delicate business without annoying anyone—even causing a murmur [sic] .... Envy, malice, evil-speaking, hatred, lying and all uncharitableness ... how I wish we had not one tenant in Baltyboys." If one based judgment of this landlord simply on her diaries, one would miss the disconnection between her words and her actions. Smith was known to travel from cabin to cabin and got to know her tenants personally. She was sympathetic to those who worked hard and highly critical of those she deemed indolent. When she was faced with a crisis on her husband's estate in the early years of the famine, she was noted for her generosity to most tenants in supplying them with food and shelter. Based on her experiences of rural poverty on her estate and neighbouring ones, she publicly criticized the policies of the Russell government.[41]

Despite the general negative images of landlords, the historical record is never neat and issues rarely appear to be as black and white as they are at first glance. There are cases in which landlords actually rose to the fore in the time of crisis and assisted their tenants in extraordinary ways. Steven DeVere, a nephew of Lord Mountjoy and a landlord in Limerick County, traveled with his assisted tenants to Quebec and then complained formally to the British government about conditions on board the emigrants'

ships, thereafter immortalized as "coffin ships"; DeVere's testimony in front of a Parliamentary Board of Inquiry became a catalyst in the revision of the Navigation Acts to ensure better food and health care for passengers on transatlantic voyages.[42] Lady Catherine, the Marchioness of Sligo, whose son George was a landlord in Mayo, took personal interest in the relief of suffering within her family's estate, becoming one of the most noted philanthropists during the famine.[43] At the end of the crisis she was personally responsible for the erection near her estate of the first known monument to those who lost their lives during the calamity. Also of note was John Hamilton, who at the age of 21 in 1821 inherited 20,000 acres in south Donegal near Donegal town. He was loved by his tenants and for good reason; he nearly bankrupted his estate to aid tenants in need both before and during the famine.[44] In Wicklow, Lord Fitzwilliam, knowing that there was little for his tenants left in Ireland, paid for the transport of hundreds of Irish to begin new lives in New Brunswick, British North America. Although many of the migrants struggled, and faced discrimination from the communities that they entered, the migration plan offered hope to those that had virtually lost any sense of a future in Wicklow.[45]

There were also landlords who provided more complicating challenges to the stereotype of the evil landlord. John Plunkett Joly of Clonast, Kings County, appeared almost completely oblivious to the famine taking place all around him. His diaries dating from the period make little or no mention of the human suffering in his midst. Joly, who wrote about his many travels through Ireland and sketched what he saw along the way, demonstrated a preoccupation with music, peasant dances and customs, and his many hobbies. Joly appeared to live somewhere in a mental world of his own creation.[46]

The case of Major Denis Mahon of Strokestown, County Roscommon, provides a controversial case study that could be read in a variety of ways depending on the reader's perspective on and interpretation of the role of landlords during the famine. In 1845, after having managed the 10,000 acre estate for seven years and fighting a legal battle to retain title to the land, Denis McMahon took ownership of Strokestown on the eve of the famine. His deceased uncle, the mentally unstable Maurice Mahon, the first Baron Hartland, had died in 1835, but not before he nearly bankrupted the property with capital works (including tunnels for the workers on the property so that they might not sully his view of the countryside), a situation compounded by years of uncollected rents.[47] In 1847, at the urging of his cousin and land agent, Ross Mahon, Major Denis Mahon chartered four ships out of Liverpool, purchased the leases, and assisted 1,490 tenants (274 households) off his property with the hope they would start a new life in Canada.[48] This action could be interpreted, and has been, in several ways. First, it has been judged as a means of taking hold of small holdings and combining them into large pastures for the purposes of the more lucrative livestock trade. Given the fact that it was believed, later in 1847, that over half of his tenants died on route to Canada or in quarantine at Grosse Ile (current research has established that 30 per cent died on route either at sea or in quarantine),[49] Mahon's actions were deemed by many who remained behind as callous and cruel. In November 1847, he became the first landlord to be assassinated during the famine. It is also arguable, however, that Mahon had thought emigration for tenants held out better possibilities than starving at home. The complexity of the Mahon case demonstrates the dangers of tarring all landlords with the same brush, but it does not mitigate the fact that many of Mahon's colleagues bore considerable responsibility for the suffering of their tenants.

John Mitchel's critique of the British government, one that has been picked up by Britain's opponents thereafter, was that, while Ireland starved, Irish agricultural products were being exported to the rest of the world. Surely, it is argued, that had these foodstuffs been retained in Ireland, the Great Hunger could have been averted. The historical record is clear that food was exported from Ireland during the famine—grains, livestock, distilled products, etc. It was clear to Trevelyan and those who held principles of free trade and laissez-faire capitalism that any disruption in Irish trade would have had a most serious long term-effect on the Irish economy. The fear of long-term dependence on the government and persistent Irish poverty as a result stood as principal arguments against ceasing agricultural exports, during the time of the potato crop failure. While it has been argued effectively by Mary Daly,[50] among others, that the amount of food exported would never have fed the hungry of Ireland if diverted to domestic use, Mitchel's observation does lead one to probe the complex web of relationships within the food industry and integrated with British free trade policy. In the end, the British Government was not solely to blame for the continuation of food exports. Roman Catholic and Protestant merchants refused to divert their exports of agricultural goods from foreign markets in order to feed the local population. Merchants also used the market forces argument to keep food prices high,[51] and appeared to be equally as convinced that the market forces ought not to be disrupted. Self-interest governed the behaviour of the mercantile community, who desired neither to disrupt the flow of trade nor their own profits and livelihood to unduly assist the starving masses around them. While a reduction of exports in the first year of the crisis may have mitigated some of the worst effects of hunger and disease in 1845–46, the British laissez-faire policies appeared to have had considerable support among the merchants of Ireland.

The merchants and exporters, however, form only one part of a chain of trade that links foreign markets with domestic producers. Each link along this chain bore some of the responsibility for having not engaged the food crisis with a greater sense of urgency and a level of compassion for neighbours. Within the land holding system there were tenant farmers, with large holdings, who diversified farming on their land and did not depend solely on the potato for sustenance. It was these mid-level farmers who had subdivided some of their large tenancies, subletting them to cottiers and tiny tenancies. In a time of crisis, these middle farmers demonstrated little willingness to divert their surpluses to relieve the distress around them. It should also be pointed out that this division between the small and middle-sized tenancies did not correspond to a sectarian divide. Middle-sized holdings were in the possession of both Roman Catholic and Protestant farmers, neither of which appeared willing to make sacrifices for their sub-tenants and both of which continued to export food stuffs to foreign markets.[52] Moreover, during the crisis, larger farmers refused to pay cash wages to their agricultural labourers, who were then forced to return their meager rented plots, and then leave the land, perhaps to face starvation as an army of the rural landless.[53] One of the great tragedies within famine Ireland was the fact that many of the individuals closest to the scenes of starvation and who may very well have helped to make some difference locally failed to do so. One does not have to look all the way to Westminster to discover that there were more than just economic theorists, capitalists, Malthusians, and merchants who thought that in the greater scheme of things profits outweigh persons.

When one examines the situation on the ground in Ireland, one might be surprised as to who might have been in a position to assist the distressed and hungry, but did less than expected. Churches, whose Christian teachings underscored the necessity to serve the poor, weak, marginalized, and the proverbial "widow and orphan," were called upon ceaselessly to assist those in need: some rose to the challenge while others did not. The Roman Catholic Church, which represented a majority of Irish persons in the provinces of Connacht, Leinster, and Munster, and a large minority in Ulster, did provide assistance during the famine, through food/soup kitchens, outdoor relief, the distribution of relief money from abroad, and the provision of charitable aid in a variety of ways. In Limerick, Bishop John Ryan established soup kitchens and a "Soup Society" to alleviate hunger in the city, which elicited great praise from *The Limerick Reporter,* which claimed that such works were evidence that "he who gives to the poor, lends to God."[54] In Dublin, Archbishop Daniel Murray became a central source of charitable donations made by persons, institutions, and churches around the world. From Dublin Murray would respond to requests for assistance from across Ireland, therein creating a network of Church-based relief that fanned out to all counties, but particularly those worst afflicted in the west of Ireland. His priests in the archdiocese became a major source of information on the spread of disease and the depletion of the food supply.[55] Likewise, Laurence Renehan, president of Maynooth College, kept in contact with a network of priests and alumni, from whom he gleaned first-hand accounts of the famine, and sent aid from the college to Kerry, Longford, and Tipperary.[56] Moreover, priests were recorded as having kept calm in riot-prone areas, working feverishly to relieve suffering and maintain order.[57]

Acts of charity and self-sacrifice offer only part of the story of religious institutions' engagement in the famine. While some politicians, landlords, and philanthropists regarded emigration as an opportunity for starving landless tenants to start anew and perhaps have a better life in America, Archbishop John McHale of Tuam discouraged emigration, as did Bishop Paul Cullen, who with many clergy regarded "exodus" as an attempt both to denude Ireland of its Catholic majority and to play to the advantage of scheming landlords.[58] In fairness, McHale had been an outspoken critic of the government's laissez-faire policies and had also been instrumental in the distribution of aid to the starving masses in Connaught.[59] As had been the case of Denis Mahon, one may read several motives behind assisted immigration and, perhaps, those who resisted emigration schemes might have been more forthcoming in assisting those who were to remain in Ireland, landless, poor, and malnourished. It should be pointed out that, despite the temper of the times, the Roman Catholic Church also continued to engage in capital projects during the famine, thereby limiting the relief they could offer, while still demanding collections for local and papal charities. Mary Daly assesses the Church's collective effort as more reactive than proactive, with the hierarchy unable to speak as one powerful voice for change under the conditions brought by the famine; "instead the majority [hierarchy] busied itself with burying the dead and curbing social unrest."[60]

Much more might be said of organized Protestantism and its engagement with the famine. The legally established Church of Ireland (Anglican) did charitable work locally, but did not discontinue tithing in Ireland, nor did they sacrifice the lavish parochial lifestyle in the ministerial manse.[61] Moreover, rumours spread with varying degrees of evidence that, in some locations in Ireland, Protestants were dolling out soup on the condition that Catholic recipients denounce their faith and become Protestant.

The term "souperism" still persists to denote apostasy that is motivated by the want to better one's conditions.[62] While there has been much made of souperism in popular literature on the famine, it was clear that documented cases are fewer than expected and the Quaker charities in no way engaged in the practice.[63] Nevertheless, the images of such proselytism, particularly from testimony from contemporaries in West Cork, Kerry, and Mayo, suggest that the famine became an opportunity for churches to accelerate their mission programs when they felt the Catholic population was vulnerable. Even Church of Ireland Archbishop of Dublin, Richard Whatley, admitted "attempts were made … in some instances to induce persons to carry on a system of covert proselytism by holding out relief of bodily wants and suffering as a kind of bribe for conversion."[64] This was hardly evidence of Christian charity in a time of great need.

The self-interest of the churches may also be reflected in the general religious attitudes that may have determined some policy and public perception of the Irish during the famine. In the mid-nineteenth century, there was an acknowledged religious bias, particularly among Anglican Evangelicals like Charles Trevelyan, who saw the hand of Providence in the potato blight; perhaps, it was thought, God was meting out divine punishment to Irish Catholics who had slavishly obeyed the dictates of a foreign potentate in Rome and persisted in superstitious and outrageous religious beliefs and practices.[65] While these attitudes, as prejudiced as they are, might have held sway among large numbers in the English propertied classes and in the Whig caucus and civil service, it is hard to link them directly by evidence to government policy. Nevertheless, such Providentialism, when combined with the low opinion of the Irish as a people, provided a fertile social and political context in which ideas of massive relief to Ireland might be dismissed or rendered in mere half measures. One irony of this Providentialism was the fact that those who were starving were not exclusively Catholic. The famine knew no sect. While a long-standing myth in Northern Ireland is that the famine was essentially a southern and Catholic problem, the research of Gerald McAtasney and Christine Kinealy proves otherwise.[66] Protestants suffered in the Belfast area, in Lurgan, and in Counties Antrim, Armagh, and Down. Newry became a principal point of departure in the north for famine victims. Working-class areas of Belfast were overwhelmed by starving refugees from the countryside, in addition to those who starved in the mill towns and linen-producing villages around the Laggan. In 1847, 38,000 migrants, mostly famine refugees, entered the Upper Canadian inland port of Toronto, which then had only about 20,000 citizens. It is estimated that one in five of these migrants were Irish Protestants. Today, St. James Anglican cemetery has the only known memorial in the world dedicated exclusively to Protestant victims of the Irish famine.[67] Thus, the irony of Providentialism becomes clear and certainly challenges notions that the famine can be seen clearly within a sectarian context of Protestant overlords who oppressed and Catholic peasants who suffered, died, or emigrated. Moreover, despite its ironies, Providentialism may have lain at the heart of indifference for some Evangelicals during the famine, but Emmet Larkin's research is also clear that Catholics themselves may have felt that they had earned the displeasure of the deity in some way, and after the famine became newly energized by Archbishop Paul Cullen's devotional revolution.[68]

As might have been the case with the churches, one might have thought that Irish politicians, particularly those objecting to the Union with Great Britain, would have been front and center in the effort to relieve the food crisis. In point of fact, the opposite was

the case. The great movement, led by Daniel O'Connell, for the repeal of the Union of 1801, was bitterly divided by the mid-1840s. While O'Connell had marked notable success in forcing Catholic Emancipation in 1829, and his monster meetings were drawing tens of thousands of Irish to the cause of "repeal," his movement was coming apart at the seams. A growing movement within repeal, known as Young Ireland, grumbled that O'Connell's means of constitutional reform were too cautious and ineffective. When, in 1843, O'Connell was threatened by the law and called off a mass meeting at Clontarf, it was clear to Young Irelanders that repeal now had to mount new and aggressive means to secure Irish autonomy from Great Britain.[69] O'Connell's reform newspaper the *Freeman's Journal* faced stronger rhetorical competition from *The Nation*, the more radical voice of the Young Ireland movement.

In the midst of the row between O'Connellites and Young Irelanders, the famine unfolded. O'Connell, who himself was a landlord, was infirm, old, and a weaker voice in Westminster. He spoke about Irish relief, admitting at first that Ireland had more than enough food to satisfy its needs,[70] but had been a supporter, politically, of the Whig faction in Parliament and became tainted with the policies perpetuated by Russell and Trevelyan. While his pleas for relief in both 1845 to Peel and 1846 to Russell fell on deaf ears, he continued to supply relief in the form of maize and oatmeal to his own tenants in Kerry.[71] In 1847, while traveling to Italy for a rest, O'Connell died. His final years had been a pale imitation of the energy and passion that had earned him the title "The Great Liberator."

As for the Young Irelanders, their approach to the famine was to discourage charitable aid to Ireland, fearing that the Irish people would be demoralized and reduced to pauperism. David Wilson, in his excellent biography of Young Ireland member Thomas D'Arcy McGee, comments that "Young Irelanders were closer than they realized to Charles Trevelyan."[72] In fact, McGee himself thought that the famine might open the opportunity for the most important issue of the day—the independence of Ireland. McGee told potential American donors promising economic relief that such a move was bound to interfere with the free trade that ought to be made open to Ireland as a result of the repeal of the Corn Laws. With almost a Trevelyanesque reasoning, McGee did not want any interference in the correcting of the Irish economy and the subsequent strengthening of Ireland which, in the short term, might bring about Repeal of the Union. According to Wilson, while "American political aid was welcome, American economic assistance would be counterproductive."[73] It is ironic that John Mitchel, whose writings have been so often cited because of their implication that the British created an artificial famine, was rank and file among the Young Ireland leadership which tried to block relief for ideological reasons.

To a certain degree the devastation of the Irish people that came as a result of the crop failure was not entirely something that leaders could remedy easily. There is little doubt that conditions for the Irish people failed to improve because of poor government policy; an ineffective Poor Law system; struggling and, in some cases, self-serving landlords; ideologically driven politicians of all stripes; double-souled churchmen; and less than charitable merchants and larger landholders. There are also reasons for the prolonged suffering in Ireland that were outside the capabilities of civil servants and local officials to remedy. Trustees of the workhouses and local physicians were helpless in their efforts to treat effectively the diseases that emerged, sometimes in pandemic

proportions, as a result of hunger and starvation. Rudimentary epidemiology and microbiological skills of physicians were no match for cholera, typhus, and typhoid, which carried off many of those rendered destitute by hunger. In the case of typhus, for instance, also known as "ship fever," or by its scientific name, *Rickettsia prowazecki*, there was no known cure. Victims essentially infected themselves. Lice carrying the bacteria would bite the victim, defecate into the wound area, and, in the act of scratching, the victim essentially rubbed the bacterial-laden feces into the wound. It took roughly ten days of incubation before the symptoms of typhus began to appear. Thus, doctors often presumed that victims were healthy, because in the initial stages they appeared to be such. Typhus is a hearty bacterium that can live outside of a host for a considerable time. In the crowded workhouses, shelters, and dwellings of Ireland, it spread with impunity and killed tens of thousands. Today this bacterial infection can be fought easily with antibiotics.[74] In the 1840s physicians used milk, wine, poultices, and plasters to ease the fever and skin lesions that often accompanied typhus. In truth, they were powerless to prevent its spread.[75] Archbishop Daniel Murray, in gathering information in October 1847, reckoned that of the 74,065 deaths reported to him from nearly 300 districts across all four Irish Provinces, 51,884 or 70 percent were from disease, and the remaining 30 percent were from outright starvation.[76] While governments could have been more effective in the administration of food and shelter, and been less eager to put so many of the ill in crowded quarters, physicians were still certainly limited in their abilities to fight the bacterial infections that ravaged the weakened bodies of the malnourished.[77]

Finally, few populist histories of the famine are complete without a chapter on or mention of the coffin ships. References to the horrendous conditions on board ships traveling to and from Ireland, Great Britain, Canada, and the United States are meant to provide further evidence of the means used to exterminate the Irish even after they left Ireland. Indeed there were some horrific examples of conditions, sickness, and death on board ships headed mostly to British North America in 1847. Ports in the USA levied stiff head taxes on any ships landing diseased passengers or paupers. This did not mean that American ports were closed to Irish refugees; it just meant that it was harder to enter the United States. Contrary to popular belief, over 100,000 passengers from Irish and UK ports entered American ports during "Black '47."[78] The motif of the "coffin ship" better suited some of the vessels arriving in British North American ports, particular Quebec and Saint John, in 1847. Some ships captains interpreted the Navigation Acts very loosely and failed to provide adequate food and water for passengers crowded below decks on ships that were intended to carry chattels, timber, and grain, not humans. Ships were hastily refitted for humans upon arrival at Liverpool, Limerick, Cork, Dublin, and other ports. Once cargo had been unloaded, bunk areas were hammered together in the lower decks and intended to be stuffed with emigrants, often four in a wide bunk, in a triplex of bunks. Ships were overcrowded because captains were in collusion with unscrupulous shipping agents who oversold tickets and promises. Crammed below decks on a six to eight week voyage, weak, underfed, and vulnerable to the spread of infectious disease, it is little wonder that a high volume of deaths at sea or in quarantine earned the vessels the infamous moniker of "coffin ship." While it may be moot that landlords and government officials were aware of such conditions, at least before DeVere's testimony, the captains and agents of such vessels surely are culpable for prolonging the agony of the Irish people over this period.

Nevertheless, one must not be hasty in generalizing about all ships, particularly those making the voyage from the United Kingdom to North America after 1847. In fact, during the sailing season of 1847, there were ports of departure that were more responsible than others for the implementation of the provisions of the Navigation Acts. In 1847, the port of Limerick sent 50 ships to British North America, the largest number of any Irish port.[79] The port served some of the most ravaged areas of the famine including devastated poor law unions in County Clare, Limerick, north Kerry, and Tipperary. The captain of the port, Lynch, was evidently scrupulous in the way in which ships were maintained and provisioned. Perhaps his perspicacity was responsible for the fact that ships departing Limerick lost on average only 4 passengers "at sea," whereas Cork lost 27 on average, Liverpool 26, and Dublin 9. Therefore care must be taken regarding sweeping statements about coffin ships.[80]

Similarly, in the aforementioned case of Denis Mahon's assisted migrants from the Strokestown estate, mortality on route to Canada was a matter of chance. First, the 274 families left via Liverpool, with its staggering average rate of deaths at sea totalling 26 passengers per ship. Had Mahon's tickets been booked through Sligo, which was much closer to the estate, the rate of deaths at sea on ships hailing from that port would have been only 14 in 1847. Even in Liverpool, Mahon's tenants faced the odds on which of the four ships would they discover a captain and crew who were abiding, more or less, by the rules laid out in the Navigation Acts. Had a Strokestown migrant been allocated a ticket for the *Virginius* the odds were he/she would be dead before reaching Quebec; the *Virginius* lost almost half of its passenger complement either at sea or in quarantine, making it one of the most infamous of the coffin ships that sailing season. Had the same passengers instead been given a ticket for *Erin's Queen*, it would have meant survival, since there was far less loss of life, due to better conditions and care on board the ship.[81] Thus, one observes two ships, from the same port, with the same collective of passengers from Roscommon, but with entirely different results regarding passenger health, due to the individuals responsible for operating the respective vessels.[82] After 1847 and the tightening up of the Navigation Acts and their more strict enforcement, the coffin ship was more rarity than reality. The *Dunbrody*, sailing from New Ross, County Wexford, lost very few passengers on its many transatlantic voyages, and the Quebec built *Jeanie Johnston* could boast that it lost none.

In the final analysis, Tim Pat Coogan's charges that the British actions during the Irish famine were tantamount to genocide do not stand up to historical scrutiny. Even if one should take the United Nations' definition of genocide, the events of the Irish Famine and the British engagement in it do not pass muster in any of its categories. Moreover, as a historian, this author must confess a great reluctance to apply more contemporary standards of international morality to past events. There were many individuals and institutions in Irish and British society who by their actions, inactions, and misdeeds perpetrated great hardship for the Irish people and perhaps stretched out the crisis unnecessarily over six years. The Russell administration's belief that a free market, unencumbered by regulation or state interference, would remedy the Irish situation was, perhaps, myopic and cruel, even by the standards of the day. The fact that in the midst of this crisis, individuals seized the opportunity to take some economic or social advantage over their destitute neighbours was more a case of opportunism, self-interest, and greed, rather than a planned and systematic attempt to exterminate a people. Had the religious differences, long-standing bigotry and ethnocentrism, and

  doi:10.3138/gsi.11.1.04

Providentialist attitudes of some evangelical Protestants not blurred the vision of administrators, it is possible that more effective measures could have been taken to remedy Ireland's ills more efficiently and expeditiously. After all, similar crises in Scotland and Nova Scotia were contained in far less time, although pre-famine economic circumstances differed in both regions. The Westminster government's failure to make expeditious and effective relief programs work was less a premeditated plan to rid Britain of the "troublesome" Irish than a matter of misguided trust and unrequited faith in the "promises" of laissez-faire capitalism. Amidst the crisis that accompanied such ideological folly, people on the ground—landlords, merchants, and large-holding farmers—all capitalized on the misery of their neighbours. Even those with whom the Irish underclasses had placed their trust—the clergy and nationalist politicians—did not measure up to the task at hand. The churches assisted the poor without deviating from their general development plans, and Irish nationalists placed their own priorities of independence over the immediate needs of the starving masses. The Irish Famine was not genocide. It was an episode in Irish history of the failure of a landholding system, unbending but unrequited faith in political-economic theory, and the prevalence of human self-interest in the face of human want. For all of these things, there was plenty of blame to be shared.

Mark G. McGowan is Professor and Deputy Chair of History at the University of Toronto. He is the author of *The Waning of the Green: Catholics, the Irish and Identity in Toronto* (1999), *Michael Power* (2005), *Death or Canada: The Irish Famine Migration to Toronto, 1847* (2009), and *The Imperial Irish: Canada's Irish Catholics Fight the Great War* (2017).

Notes

1. Tim Pat Coogan, *The Famine Plot: England's Role in Ireland's Greatest Tragedy* (New York: Palgrave MacMillan, 2012), 229–30.
2. Ibid., 231.
3. Liam Kennedy, *Unhappy the Land: The Most Oppressed People Ever, the Irish?* (Kildare: Merrion Press, 2016).
4. Ibid., 119.
5. Ciarán Ó Murchadha, *The Great Famine: Ireland's Agony* (London: Continuum International Publishing Group, 2011), 197–8.
6. Peter Gray, *The Irish Famine* (New York: Harry N. Abrams, 1995), 19–20 and 22–3; John Kelly, *The Graves are Walking: The History of the Great Irish Famine* (New York: Holt and Company, 2012), 19–22; Christine Kinealy, *This Great Calamity: The Irish Famine 1845–1852* (Dublin: Gill & MacMillan, 1994), 5–6.
7. Joel Mokyr, *Why Ireland Starved: A Quantitative and Analytical History of the Irish Economy, 1800–1850* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983), 278–94.
8. Cormac O'Grada, *Black '47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy, and Memory* (Princeton: Princeton UP, 1999), 17–8; Kinealy, *This Great Calamity*, 32.
9. Christine Kinealy, *A Death-Dealing Famine: The Great Hunger in Ireland* (London & Chicago: Pluto Press, 1997), 38.
10. James S. Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine* (Sparkford, UK: Sutton Publishing Ltd., 2001), 8–10.
11. *Globe*, 19 August 1845.
12. Mark G. McGowan, "A Tale of Two Famines: Famine Memory in Nova Scotia, Canada," in *Irish Hunger and Migration: Myth, Memory and Memorialization*, ed. Patrick Fitzgerald, Christine Kinealy, and Gerard Moran (West Haven, CT: Quinnipiac UP, 2015), 57–68. Also Robert Morgan, *Early Cape Breton: From Founding to Famine, 1784–1851* (Sydney, NS: Breton Books, 2000), 136–52.
13. Donnelly, 47; Gray, *The Irish Famine*, 35.
14. Kinealy, *A Death-Dealing Famine,* 41–8.

15. E. Margaret Crawford, "Food and Famine," in *The Great Irish Famine*, ed. Cathal Póithiér (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995), 62–3.
16. Peter Gray, *Famine, Land and Politics: British Government and Irish Society, 1843*–1850 (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1999), 94–101; Thomas P. O'Neill, "The Organization of Relief, 1845–52," in *The Great Famine: Studies in Irish History, 1845–52*, ed. R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams (Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1956), 212–22.
17. Peter Gray, "Ideology and the Famine," in *The Great Irish Famine*, ed. Cathal Póithiér (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995), 89–90 and 102–3; Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 69–70; Kinealy, *Death-Dealing Famine*, 60.
18. Kinealy, *This Great Calamity*, 205–210; Michael D'Arcy Ryan, "Commissioners, Guardians, and Paupers: Life and Death in the Limerick Poor Law Union, 1838–1850," (PhD diss., Concordia University, 2005), 2–12 and 195–9. Ryan's detailed study focuses on the Limerick Union, which was the third largest in Ireland.
19. Ryan, 153–4 and 171–9.
20. Armatya Sen, *Development as Freedom* (New York: Anchor Books, 1999), 168–170.
21. Kinealy, *This Great Calamity*, 93–94 and 102–106; Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 81–92.
22. O'Grada, *Black '47*, 85; Kinealy, *A Death-Dealing Famine*, 151; Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 169–171.
23. John Mitchel, *The Last Conquest of Ireland (perhaps)* (London: R&T Washbourne, nd.[originally 1861]), 219.
24. Kerby Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (New York: Oxford, 1985).
25. David Brundage, *Irish Nationalists in America: The Politics of Exile, 1798–1998* (New York: Oxford UP, 2016), 83–7; Malcolm Campbell, *Ireland's New Worlds: Immigrants, Politics, and Society in the United States and Australia, 1815–1922* (Madison: U of Wisconsin P, 2008), 105–7.
26. R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams, eds., *The Great Famine: Studies in Irish History, 1845–52* (Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1956).
27. Cecil Woodham-Smith, *The Great Hunger: Ireland 1845–1849* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1962).
28. Cormac O'Grada, *The Great Irish Famine* (New York: Macmillan, 1989); Joel Mokyr, *Why Ireland Starved: A Quantitative and Analytical History of the Irish Economy 1800–1850* (London: George Allen & Unwin, 1983); Mary Daly, *The Famine in Ireland* (Dundalgan: Dublin Historical Society, 1986).
29. Peter Gray, "Memory and the Great Irish Famine," in *The Memory of Catastrophe*, ed. Peter Gray and Kendrick Oliver (Manchester: Manchester UP, 2004): 46–64; Emily Mark-Fitzgerald, *Commemorating the Irish Famine: Memory and the Monument* (Liverpool: Liverpool UP, 2013); Mark G. McGowan, "Contemporary Links Between Canadian and Irish Famine Commemoration," in *Global Legacies of the Great Irish Famine: Transnational and Interdisciplinary Perspectives*, ed. Marguerite Corporaal et al. (Bern: Peter Lang, 2014), 267–84; Mark G. McGowan, *Creating Canadian Historical Memory: The Case of the Irish Famine Migration of 1847* (Ottawa: Canadian Historical Association, 2006).
30. Kennedy, *Unhappy the Land*, 105–8 and 122–4.
31. Ibid., 118; Gray, estimates that £8.1 million was spent on famine relief with about £1.1 returned from government loans, *The Irish Famine*, 94–5; O'Grada estimates about £10 million, *Black '47 and Beyond*, 83; Donnelly estimates the cost was about £7 million, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 118–9. There is no unanimity on a final number for the government expenditure; nevertheless, the expenditure was considerable considering the times and the state of the British Treasury.
32. Gray, *The Irish Famine*, 94–5.
33. Gray, *Famine, Land and Politics*, 108–25: Kinealy, *Death-Dealing Famine*, 53–65.
34. Christine Kinealy, "'This Great Agony of the Empire': The Great Famine in Ulster," in *Irish Hunger and Migration: Myth, Memory and Memorialization*, ed. Patrick Fitzgerald, Christine Kinealy, and Gerard Moran, 43–55; and Gerard MacAtasney, *This Dreadful Visitation. The Famine in Lurgan and Portadown* (Belfast: Beyond the Pale, 1997).
35. O'Grada, *Black '47*, 26–7; Kinealy, *This Great Calamity*, 190–1; Ryan, "Commissioners, Guardians, Paupers," 153–66.
36. Kinealy, *Death-Dealing Famine*, 98–103.
37. Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 132–68.
38. Ibid., 158.

39. Ivor Hamrock, ed., *The Famine in Mayo: A Portrait from Contemporary Sources, 1845–1850* (Castlebar: Mayo County Council, 1998, third printing, 2010), 76–9.
40. O'Grada, *Black '47*, 70; and James S. Donnelly, "Irish Property Must Pay for Irish Poverty," in *Fearful Realities: New Perspectives on the Famine*, ed. Chris Morash and Richard Hayes (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1996), 60.
41. Cited in Matthew Stout, "The Geography and Implications of Post-Famine Population Decline in Baltyboys, County Wicklow," in *Fearful Realities: New Perspectives on the Famine*, ed. Chris Morash and Richard Hayes (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1996), 31. For her compassion see Delaney, *The Great Irish Famine*, 141–2 and 145–9.
42. Donald Mackay, *Flight from Famine: The Coming of the Irish to Canada* (Toronto: McClelland and Stewart, 1990), 266–7; Mark G. McGowan, "Famine, Facts, and Fabrications: An Examination of the Diaries from the Irish Famine Migration to Canada," *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies* 33,2 (2007): 53; Jason King, "Famine Diaries: Narratives About Emigration From Ireland to Lower Canada and Quebec, 1832–1853" (MA Thesis, Simon Fraser University, 1996). Enda Delaney, *The Great Irish Famine: A History in Fours Lives* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2012), 219.
43. Christine Kinealy, *The Kindness of Strangers: Charity and the Great Hunger in Ireland* (London: Bloomsbury, 2013), 160–1.
44. Dermot James, *John Hamilton of Donegal, 1800-1884: This Recklessly Generous Landlord* (Dublin: Woodfield Press, 1998): Delaney, *The Great Irish Famine*, 169.
45. Jim Rees, *Surplus People: From Wicklow to Canada* (Cork: The Collins Press, 2000).
46. Ciaran Rielly, *John Plunket Joly and the Great Famine in King's County* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, Maynooth Studies in Local History, No. 103, 2012).
47. Ciaran Reilly, *Strokestown and the Great Irish Famine* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2014), 14–23.
48. Peter Duffy, *The Killing of Major Denis Mahon: A Mystery of Old Ireland* (New York: Harper Collins, 2007), 11–122; Reilly, *Strokestown*, 65–77; Stephen J. Campbell, *The Great Irish Famine: Words and Images from the Famine Museum Strokestown Park, County Roscommon* (Strokestown: Famine Museum, 1995), 41.
49. Mark G. McGowan, "Migration, Mobility, and Murder: The Story of the 1490 Assisted Immigrants From the Mahon Estate, Strokestown, County Roscommon, 1847," forthcoming in special issue of *Breac*, ed. Jason King and Marguerite Corporal (2017); Marianna O'Gallagher and Rose Masson Dompierre, *Eyewitness: Grosse Ile, 1847* (Ste-Foy, Quebec: Livres Carraig Books, 1995), 349 and 352–3; André Charbonneau and Doris Drolet-Dubé, eds., *A Register of Deceased Persons at Sea and on Grosse Ile in 1847* (Ottawa, Canadian Heritage, Parks Canada, 1997).
50. Mary Daly, "The Great Famine and Irish Society," in *Ireland: The Haunted Ark*, ed. Cecil J. Houston and Joseph Leydon (Toronto: Celtic Arts, 1996), 4.
51. Kinealy, *Death-Dealing*, 82–3; O'Grada, *Black '47*, 135; Alexander Somerville, *Letters from Ireland During the Famine of 1847* (Dublin, 1994), 34.
52. Daly, "The Great Famine and Irish Society," 6.
53. Donnelly, *The Great Irish Potato Famine*, 59.
54. *Limerick Reporter*, 19 January 1847.
55. Archives of the Archdiocese of Dublin (hereafter ADD), Daniel Murray Papers, Vol. 35, folders 2–6, and 10–3 famine correspondence; folder 12, remittances from abroad, 1845–1850.
56. St. Patrick's College Maynooth, Russell Library Special Collections, Laurence Renehan Papers. Note some sample letters from Father T. Kirby, Longford, 13 November 1851; Father M. Slattery, Thurles, 13 June 1847; Father C. Egan, Killarney, 22 April 1846.
57. *Limerick Reporter*, 19 January 1847.
58. Donal A. Kerr, *A Nation of Beggars? Priests, People, and Politics in Famine Ireland, 1846–1852* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1994), 296–8; Kennedy, *Unhappy the Land*, 115.
59. Delaney, *The Great Irish Famine*, 136–8 and 181–2.
60. Daly, "The Great Famine and Irish Society," 17.
61. Kennedy, *Unhappy the Land*, 115–6.
62. Patrick Hickey, *Famine in West Cork: The Mizen Peninsula Land and People 1800–1852* (Dublin: Mercier, 2002), 231–64; Irene Whelan, "The Stigma of Souperism," in *The Great Irish Famine*, ed. Cathal Póirtéir (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995), 135–54.
63. Gray, *The Irish Famine*, 86.
64. Hickey, 262.

65. Gray, *Famine Land and Politics*, 99 and 102–4; Peter Gray, "Ideology and the Famine," in *The Great Irish Famine*, ed. Cathal Póirtéir (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1995), 91–3.
66. Gerard MacAtasney, "*This Dreadful Visitation": The Famine in Lurgan/Portadown* (Belfast: Pale Publications, 1997).
67. Mark G. McGowan, *Death or Canada: The Irish Famine Migration to Toronto, 1847* (Toronto: Novalis, 2009), 91–2.
68. Emmet Larkin, "The Devotional Revolution In Ireland, 1850–1875," *American Historical Review* 77 (1972): 625–52.
69. Patrick M Geoghegan, *Liberator: The Life and Death of Daniel O'Connell 1830-1847* (Dublin: Gill & Macmillan, 2010), 162–5; Kinealy, *Death-Dealing*, 28–9.
70. Daly, "The Great Famine and Irish Society," 4.
71. Geoghegan, 220–1 and 228–9.
72. David A. Wilson, *Thomas D'Arcy McGee: Passion, Reason, and Politics, 1825–1857* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 2008), 1:120.
73. Ibid.
74. William P. MacArthur, "Medical History of the Famine," in *The Great Famine: Studies in Irish History, 1845–52*, ed. R. Dudley Edwards and T. Desmond Williams (Dublin: Browne & Nolan, 1956), 265–70 and 302–6.
75. McGowan, *Death or Canada*, 35.
76. ADD, Murray Papers, Vol. 33, File 6, Letter 13, "List of Deaths," 21 October 1847.
77. MacArthur, "Medical History," 314–5.
78. Donald Harmon Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario: A Study in Rural History* (Montreal & Kingston: McGill-Queen's UP, 1984), 32.
79. McGowan, *Death or Canada*, 28.
80. Ibid.
81. Cormac O'Grada takes Stephen Campbell's figures for the Mahon "assisted" at face value, although he does not claim that the Strokestown ships were typical. O'Grada, *Black '47*, 106–7. Campbell, *The Great Irish Famine*, 40–1. Joel Mokyr's figure of 5% mortality on average per ship should also be put to the test. Mokyr, *Why Ireland Starved*, 267–8.
82. Calculations based on data provided by Charbonneau, A Register of Deceased Persons at Sea and At Grosse Ile; Strokestown Park Archives, Data Set of Departing Tenants, 274 families, 1847. Table 1 indicates how the one cohort of migrants from Strokestown had their fates established according to what name of ship was stamped on their ticket. The *Virginius* and the *Naomi* could both easily be classified as coffin ships as might be the *John Munn*, which had the fewest passengers from the estate. The *Erin's Queen* witnessed only 100 of Denis Mahon's tenants board her and only 14 of them died. Despite the fact that it appeared that all of the *Viriginius* passengers were from the Mahon Estate, further investigation reveals there were many passengers who were on board from outside of Strokestown. What historian Robert James Scally refers to as "spillage and evasion," passengers often used their ticket money to do something else, or resold their passage to someone else and remained in Liverpool. Robert Scally, *The End of Hidden Ireland: Rebellion, Famine and Emigration* (New York: Oxford UP, 1995), 221.

Table 1. Fates of Migrants from Strokestown by Ship

	Assisted	Deaths	Per Cent	Total Passengers
Virginius	476.0	221	46.4%	476
Erin's Queen	100.0	14	14.0%	493
John Munn	55.0	26	47.3%	452
Naomi	350.5	126	35.9%	421
Total:	981.5	338	34.4%	1842