

## FORUM ON CULTURE AND EXPLANATION IN HISTORICAL INQUIRY

2.

RECONSTRUCTING CULTURE IN HISTORICAL EXPLANATION:  
NARRATIVES AS CULTURAL STRUCTURE AND PRACTICE

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## ABSTRACT

The problem of how to access and deploy the explanatory power of culture in historical accounts has long remained vexing. A recent approach, combining and transcending the “culture as structure”/ “culture as practice” divide among social historians, puts explanatory focus on the recursivity of meaning, agency, and structure in historical transformation. This article argues that meaning construction is at the nexus of culture, social structure, and social action, and must be the explicit target of investigation into the cultural dimension of historical explanation. Through an empirical analysis of political alliance during the Irish Land War, 1879–1882, I demonstrate that historians can uncover meaning construction by analyzing the symbolic structures and practices of narrative discourse.

## I. INTRODUCTION

While it is now widely accepted that culture—symbolic systems of embodied meaning by which people understand their experience of the world, and in turn act upon it—is as constitutive of social structure, social order, and social change as material and institutional forces, and causally significant in historical events, transformations, and processes, the problem of how to access and deploy the explanatory power of culture in historical accounts remains vexing. For some time, social historians and sociologists were divided over whether culture and its causal capacity should be analyzed as structure or as practice.<sup>1</sup> Recently a more fruitful approach that combines and transcends the “culture as structure”/ “culture as practice” conundrum puts explanatory focus on the recursivity of meaning, agency, and structure—or more specifically, the mutual transformation of social structure, social action, and cultural systems—in historical transformation. Exemplars of this approach include Ansell’s analysis of how an organizing symbol, the strike, that emerged through discursive interaction between competing unions contributed to the realignment of the French working class in the late nineteenth century; Mabel Berezin’s investigation into the creation of Italian Fascist identity through public spectacle in piazzas, the symbolic core of Italian community; and William Sewell, Jr.’s exposition of how the symbolic interpretation of an event—“the taking of the Bastille”—led to the creation of a new symbolic concept—“revolution,” and a new meaning of political sovereignty.<sup>2</sup>

1. For a discussion of these different conceptualizations of culture, see William Sewell, Jr., “The Concept(s) of Culture,” in *Beyond the Cultural Turn*, ed. Victoria Bonnell and Lynn Hunt (Berkeley, 1999), 35-61.

2. Christopher K. Ansell, “Symbolic Networks: The Realignment of the French Working Class, 1887–1894,” *American Journal of Sociology* 103 (1997), 359-390; Mabel Berezin, *The Making of the Fascist Self* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1997); William Sewell, Jr., “Historical Events as Structural Transformations: Inventing the Revolution at the Bastille,” *Theory and Society* 26 (1996), 245-280.

All these works recognize, if only implicitly, that the foundation underlying the reciprocity of social action, social structuring, and the reproduction and transformation of cultural systems, is meaning construction, the process of using cultural models to make sense of experience. Whether mundane or extraordinary, experience is the encountering of specific structural conditions (both material and non-material) and events (ranging from the behavior of other actors, to the fall of the stock market, to a change in political regime). How individuals and collectives respond, and the specific action they take, depends on how they interpret events using symbolic systems of understanding, or cultural models, which themselves are subjected to interpretation when they are used. Meaning construction is thus at the nexus of culture, social structure, and social action, and must be the explicit target of investigation into the cultural dimension of historical explanation. In this article, I review a theoretical framework developed for studying meaning construction, which asserts that meaning structure and meaning construction together form the basis for cultural explanation in historical processes.<sup>3</sup> Then through empirical analysis, I demonstrate more fully how historians can uncover the reciprocal processes of social action, cultural transformation, and social change by analyzing the symbolic structures and practices of discourse and narrative.

In my sociological research, the problem of political alliance in social movements has been a central concern, and I've researched it empirically through the study of the Irish Land movement and War, 1879–1882. The Irish Land War began in late 1878 as a tenant farmer protest movement against high rents, evictions, and landlord intransigence in the face of an agrarian crisis precipitated by the European-wide agricultural depression of the late 1870s and Ireland's consecutive crop failures in 1877 and 1878. Seizing the opportunity for mass mobilization and renewal of Irish political energy, the nationalist movement immediately harnessed itself to the agrarian agitation. United under the organization of the Irish National Land League (INLL), a movement of farmers, political activists, nationalist politicians, rural townspeople, and Catholic clergy began in the spring of 1879 the Land War campaign against landlordism and British domination. The immediate result of this phase of the land movement was the Land Act of 1881, which drastically changed the structure of Irish land tenure, and led soon afterward to the dismantling of landlordism in Ireland.<sup>4</sup> It also contributed mightily to the end of British rule in Ireland.<sup>5</sup>

As important as the success of the land movement is to Irish history, what has fascinated me is how unlikely this success was, given the diversity and contention

3. Anne Kane, "Theorizing Meaning Construction in Social Movements: Symbolic Structures and Interpretation during the Irish Land War, 1879–1882," *Sociological Theory* 15 (1997), 249–276; Kane, "Narratives of Nationalism: Constructing Irish National Identity during the Land War, 1878–1882," *National Identities* (forthcoming, 2000).

4. By establishing commissions to determine fair rents and by allowing tenants the right to sell their interest in a holding (based on improvements they might have made), the Act essentially created a form of co-possession between landlord and tenant, whereas before the landlord maintained absolute property rights.

5. For a discussion of the social and political outcomes of the Land War, see Paul Bew, *Land and the National Question in Ireland* (Dublin, 1978); Philip Bull, *Land, Politics, and Nationalism* (Dublin, 1996).

among its constituent members. How was it that diverse social groups—tenant farmers, nationalists, clergy, and townspeople—with conflicting agendas built enough solidarity for a successful social movement against the joint power structure of landlordism and British rule? With the exception of the Catholic Emancipation movement of the 1820s, no previous campaign for Irish independence, tenant rights, or Catholic freedom had been productive, owing largely to the inability of nationalists, tenant farmers, and the Church to formulate shared understandings of these issues. In fact, the three groups had historically thwarted the goals of one another, and hence themselves, in protecting their own self-perceived interests. The diverse cultural orientations of these groups, due in part to their differential experience of British rule, led to near intractable political divisions among them. Furthermore, these groups fragmented internally, along “class” lines (small, middle, and large farmers) political lines (constitutional federalists [“Home Rulers”] and radical separatists), and doctrinal differences (ultramontane and Irish patriotic [within the Gallican tradition]). Conflict within the groups produced as big an obstacle to political alliance and movement mobilization as conflict between the groups. What then made the land movement that erupted in 1879 different? How do we account for the successful alliance and mobilization of the tenants, nationalists, and Catholic Church during the Land War?

Most cultural analyses of political alliance look at movement ideology and identity as the site for transcendence of conflicting, and construction of new, cultural models. I agree that the Irish tenant farmers, nationalists, and clergy were able to forge an alliance largely because they constructed a new ideology, one that encompassed yet transcended the diverse and conflicting symbolic systems brought to the land movement by these and other groups. However, unlike most other analyses mine begins from a more fundamental assumption: as meaning construction allows people to come to shared understandings (the basis of identity, ideology, frames of collective action, and specific discourse), and as shared understandings are crucial to alliances, solidarity, and mobilization, being able to explain and analyze meaning construction is fundamental to understanding political alliance and mobilization, as well as a host of other movement processes. In this article I will argue that cultural explanation of historical processes and transformations, such as social movements and their outcomes, must uncover the construction and transformation of meaning, and that in this historians must begin with the investigation of the structures of culture.

Explaining political alliance in social movements provides an excellent case study to address the issue of cultural explanation in historical processes. First, social movements dramatically exhibit necessary components of recursivity: social structures (political regimes, economic systems, and social institutions), cultural systems (ideologies, identities, religions), and social action (activities of movement participants such as demonstrations, eviction resistance, and boycotting, the and response of dominant power through arrests, violence, and concessions) mutually influence one another. In order to act in unison and effectively, diverse participants in a social movement must forge new understandings which both employ and often transform their cultural models and structural conditions.

The most effective way to uncover meaning in cultural models, to chart the transformation of meaning and symbols in conjunction with action, conditions, and events, and to witness the emergence of new cultural models is to study the “active” component of culture structures, namely narrative. Narratives are stories that embody symbolic meaning and codes of understanding; through “story-telling” meaning is publicly shared, contested, and reconstructed. Thus, through analysis of narratives the historian can access the causal power of culture, both as structure and as practice.

I present my argument in two main sections: one lays a theoretical foundation, the other provides an empirical analysis of meaning transformation and political alliance. The theoretical discussion focuses on the structure of meaning and the dual role of narrative, in concert with social action, structural conditions, and contingent events, in both the maintenance and transformation of meaning. Because it is impossible here to analyze and discuss all the transformations of meaning which helped build political alliance in the movement throughout the Land War, in the empirical section I confine myself to examining the transformation of a major and contentious symbolic principle of land movement ideology, “constitutional.” Specifically, I analyze the narratives of the Irish Land Movement which represented and articulated conflicting groups and their discourses regarding the proper path—radical militancy (“Retribution”) or moderate constitutionalism (“Conciliation”)—to achieving the movement’s goals. I show that through the collision of narrative meaning and understanding, in conjunction with collective action and contingent events (especially the repressive response of the government), the diverse groups reconstructed their shared understanding of “constitutional,” and created a new narrative of Irish political action.

## II. MEANING, METAPHOR, AND NARRATIVE

I understand meaning to be an *emergent* product of a construction process involving the analytically separable variables of cultural structures of meaning, people’s vital interests (from spiritual well-being to material power), social structural conditions, and contingent events. Therefore, to understand how meaning is constructed we must find the conditions and mechanisms which bring together these variables, and which facilitate and allow change. However, meaning construction must be analyzed in the first and last instance in reference to the internal, or the semiotic, structure of symbolic systems. I do not claim a causal priority of symbolic systems over human agency, contingent events, or other structural conditions. However, people do refer first to cultural models as they try to make sense of situations, and shape their strategies for action. My assertion, then, is that the locus of meaning, and therefore the condition for meaning construction, is symbolic structures.

More specifically, I assert that culture’s autonomy rests on the *metaphoric* nature of symbols and the patterned relationship of symbols within a structure, and that this characteristic of symbols is a fundamental key to understanding how

meaning is constructed and why it can change. As metaphors, symbols strongly but ambiguously signify social relationships, conditions, and experiences through associations of similarity and difference among separate entities. Symbols connote multiple meanings and evoke various emotions associated with particular meanings. Because they are polysemous, symbols are transformable. The particular power and specific use of symbols is dependent both on their relationship to other symbols in a symbolic structure, and on how people interpret them. Because meaning is embodied in the specific arrangement of symbols in cultural models, and cultural models are the first point of reference when people interpret experience, these structures should be the initial theoretical and analytic focus in studying meaning construction.

This is not to diminish the importance of interpretation and action in the construction of meaning. In fact, as it turns out there is “tangible” overlap between cultural structure and cultural practice. Indeed, two elements of cultural models, narrative and discourse, are also modes of symbolic action.

Combining various perspectives, we can define discourse structurally as organized sets of symbolic meaning and codes<sup>6</sup> representing a pattern of opposition and distinction,<sup>7</sup> and as “symbolic practice through which people create and reproduce their cultural codes for making sense of the world.”<sup>8</sup> Steinberg points out that discourse as practice “quintessentially involves dialogue situated in particular social contexts.”<sup>9</sup> Structurally then, discourse intertwines particular symbolic codes with social relationships and conditions, thereby articulating meaning and understanding of specific issues and problems. Put into practice, a discourse asserts a particular argument in dialogue with others.

During the Land War, an evolving Discourse of Retribution organized various symbolic codes into a cultural model of militant claims for social and national independence. The radical Discourse of Retribution emerged in opposition to the longstanding and moderate Discourse of Conciliation, embraced by groups both within and outside the movement. Narratives structured, organized, and articulated the beliefs embedded in each discourse.

I understand narratives, including myths, to be stories that embody symbolic codes. Thus, narratives are configurations of meaning, through which an individual and/or community comes to understand itself. Narratives also afford a vehicle of communication and interaction between social actors. Both the symbolic structural and practical aspects of narrative are achieved through emplotment. As Somers and Gibson put it, “Above all, narratives are *constellations of relationships* . . . embedded in *time and space*, constituted by *causal emplotment*.”<sup>10</sup>

6. Jeffrey Alexander and Philip Smith, “The Discourse of American Civil Society: A New Proposal for Cultural Studies,” *Theory and Society* 22 (1993), 157.

7. Margaret Somers, “The Privatization of Citizenship: How to Unthink a Knowledge Culture,” in *Beyond the Cultural Turn*, ed. Bonnell and Hunt, 129.

8. Marc Steinberg, *Fighting Words: Working-Class Formation, Collective Action, and Discourse in Early Nineteenth-Century England* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1999), 14.

9. *Ibid.*

Through emplotment, narratives explain experience, evoke emotion, engage participation, and normatively evaluate courses of action, all crucial functions of interpretation.

Narratives are logically structured by plot (the story line) and emplotment is the configuration of particular events and actors into the story line—temporally, sequentially, and contextually. Thus, a narrative explicitly connects and constructs networks of relationships into meaningful wholes, not only among the events and actors but also social structures and institutions. For example, one of the primary narratives of the Irish people is “The Conquest,” the story of a centuries-long process of invasions, wars, and land confiscations by the British in order to subjugate the Irish. The logic, or the “theme” of the narrative,<sup>11</sup> is British domination, and the narrative, in its various renditions, connects people, events, and institutions across years, decades, and even centuries.

Through their configurative capacity, narratives explain to people who they are, why they are experiencing a particular social condition, and what the relationships of social solidarity and opposition in which they are situated are. In other words, narratives provide the basis for an individual or group to make sense of the world as it is experienced. This explanatory capacity is crucial to interpretation and understanding: “we, as individuals and collectives, come to be who we are by being located and locating ourselves . . . in social narratives.”<sup>12</sup>

This locating of self in a narrative, and thus identifying with others who share the same narrative account of their experience and sentiments, results from engagement with a particular narrative. Engagement takes two forms. First, because narratives are symbolic structures, and therefore ambiguous and polysemous, a narrative’s specific meaning derives from the listener’s interpretation of it. Second, narrative conclusions are often vague: as told, the story is still unfolding, and the ultimate outcome relies on the listener’s action. For example, how tenant farmers imaginatively locate themselves, and their potential action, in the narrative of “The Conquest” is crucial to real outcomes. If farmers act, both in their imaginations and in reality, in defiance of British domination they may regain the land of Ireland from the landlords; if they cannot envision rebellion, they will continue their deferential stance and never be landowners. Thus narrative engagement guides action: “People act . . . or not in part according to how they understand their place in any number of given narratives.”<sup>13</sup>

Beyond the cognitive dimension, narratives also evoke strong collective emotions, such as pride, shame, rage, and loyalty, because they are organized and anchored by sacred symbols. The most sacred symbol in land movement narra-

10. Margaret Somers and Gloria Gibson, “Reclaiming the Epistemological Other: Narrative and the Social Constitution of Identity” in *Social Theory and the Politics of Identity*, ed. Craig Calhoun (London, 1994), 59 (italics in original).

11. For a discussion of the types and components of narrative, including theme, see Margaret Somers, “The Narrative Constitution of Identity: A Relational and Network Approach,” *Theory and Society* 23 (1994), 605-649.

12. *Ibid.*, 606.

13. *Ibid.*, 618.

tives, whether agrarian or nationalist, radical or moderate, was the land. Indeed, in important symbolic ways Ireland and the land are synonymous. As we analyze the major narratives shared during the Land War, for example “The Conquest,” “The Confiscation,” and “the Famine,” we will see land as the sacred and central symbol organizing the meaning in each. The emotions that narratives evoke become extended to strong feelings of affinity with others who share the same memory, reverence, and emotion for the sacred being or object.<sup>14</sup>

As the *dominant* symbol standing at the relational center in various webs of meaning and competing discourses, the sacred symbol of the land was “multivocal”—different groups and people understood its meaning in different and sometimes opposing ways.<sup>15</sup> Yet as Ansell points out, dominant or sacred symbols have the powerful capacity to join together conflicting discourses. In his otherwise excellent study, Ansell omits a crucial middle step between the emergence of an organizing, or dominant, symbol and the transcendence of conflicting discourses; that step is narrative. In the empirical analysis that follows, we will see how the sacred symbol “land” became connected with the constitutional principle in emergent movement narratives, and how the reconstruction of what “constitutional” meant combined the competing discourses of Retribution and Conciliation.

### III. THE NARRATIVE APPROACH TO MEANING CONSTRUCTION DURING THE LAND WAR

In my analysis below, I draw out and on narratives through which the struggle over land movement ideology, identity, goal setting, and strategy was fought.<sup>16</sup> These narratives were of three types. First, representatives of all the land movement groups employed traditional or public narratives in their discourse<sup>17</sup>: narratives about British domination and confiscation of the land, the Famine, land consolidation and tenant dispossession, and the heroic strength of the Irish. Second, many events that occurred during the Land War were immediately narrativized and integrated into one of the contending discourses. For example, the 1880 general election proved to be a major contingent event in the Land War. Not only were Gladstone and the Liberals returned to power, but middle-size tenant farm-

14. For discussions and examples of sacred symbols and collective identity and action, see Bruce Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society* (Oxford, 1989) and Simonetta Falasca-Zamponi, “Of Storytellers and Master Narratives: Modernity, Memory, and History in Fascist Italy,” *Social Science History* 22 (1998), 415-444.

15. See Victor Turner, *The Forest of Symbols: Aspects of Ndembu Ritual* (Ithaca, N.Y., 1967) for the seminal discussion of dominant symbols, and Ansell, “Symbolic Networks,” for an elaboration on Turner’s conceptualization.

16. My reconstruction of the process by which Land Movement participants transformed meaning during the Irish Land War is based on textual analysis of discussions, debates, and speeches at the hundreds of land meetings which occurred from 1878–1882, as well as other arenas of movement action such as local Land League branch meetings, eviction protests and demonstrations, and court hearings. The general atmosphere, “goings-on,” and most importantly the speeches, debates, and discussions at these sites of movement activity were well reported, verbatim in the case of discourse, by two types of reporters—newspaper and police.

17. For a discussion of types of narratives, especially “public,” see Somers, “The Narrative Constitution of Identity.”

ers helped unseat the majority of “ascendency” (landlords) Irish M.P.s from Parliament, and install pro-Land League and nationalist M.P.s in their stead. The election was considered a victory for the Land League, and the powerful role tenant farmers played in it was immediately narrativized and incorporated into the moderate and conciliatory discourse of larger farmers and Home Rulers.

This construction of new narratives indicates that discursive struggle often develops over particular narratives, or more specifically, how certain events are given narrative form. As Ronald Jacobs points out, “the same event can be narrated in a number of different ways and within a number of different public spheres and communities.”<sup>18</sup> Competing groups often refer to the same event but narrativize it differently to promote their own discursive position.<sup>19</sup> For example, radical nationalists and small farmer advocates dismissed the importance to the movement of the 1880 general election and increased political power larger farmers claimed as a result. According to the former, the Land War would not be won in Parliament and the power of tenant farmers and all the Irish lay in militant collective action in Ireland. The crucial theoretical point is that the narrative itself is contested territory.

Finally, political struggle and the collision of narrative meaning and understanding produces new “master” narratives. This is the third type of narrative, which I understand to be a narrative structure that brings together intertwined stories in a particular pattern, and thus presents specific symbolic meaning, and represents and defines a specific collectivity. The empirical focus of this article is demonstrating how in the discursive processes of the land movement, through the sharing and contention over narratives regarding their history, their current situation, important contingent events, and their future, the Irish constructed a new master political narrative based on the reconstruction of the symbolic principle “constitutional.”

#### IV. NARRATIVES, DISCOURSE, AND MEANING CONSTRUCTION IN THE LAND MOVEMENT

As the land movement gained strength in the west of Ireland during 1879, collective action was guided by an emerging ideology based on a Discourse of Retribution that fused radical nationalism and small farmer culture. The Discourse of Retribution embodied two principal meanings: on the one hand, it signified that compensation, redress, and justice must be obtained from landlords and the British; on the other, it suggested retaliation and punishment for the wrongs and consequent sufferings inflicted upon the Irish and Ireland. The discourse of retribution argued that when the land is returned to the farmer, and

18. Ronald Jacobs, “Code, Co-Text, and the Rodney King Beating,” *American Journal of Sociology* 5 (1996), 1241.

19. For a discussion of narrative competition in giving meaning to an event see Lincoln, *Discourse and the Construction of Society*; Alexander and Smith, “The Discourse of American Civil Society”; Marshall Battani, David Hall, and Rosemary Powers, “Culture(s) Structure(s): Making Meaning in the Public Sphere,” *Theory and Society* 22 (1997), 781-812.

political and social independence from Britain is obtained, the Irish will have justice and prosperity. That landlords would lose their property, and Britain would lose an important component of its empire, seemed just punishment and redress for the damage they had together wrought in Ireland.

The Discourse of Retribution opposed the longstanding Discourse of Conciliation from which moderate reformers of the land and political structures operated. Conciliation represented compromise, accommodation, and patience. Those subscribing to it—the larger tenant farmers in the south and east, as well as much of the Catholic clergy and hierarchy—advocated gradual, and constitutional, reform of land tenure laws and British domination through, respectively, the prevailing model of land reform, the “3Fs,”<sup>20</sup> and the Home Rule movement. Importantly, conciliation honored the property rights of landlords and the imperial legitimacy of British rule.

Yet, the policy of compromise and accommodation with the British government, and endeavoring to change laws through the Parliament, had historically yielded little but frustration. For decades, Home Rulers had made no headway in achieving self-government, the Church was denied the Catholic Education Bill it so desperately wanted, and no real land reform had come from the much heralded Land Act of 1870. Radical movement activists believed that only militant activity would achieve change: refusing to pay “rack” rents, mass demonstrations, boycotting anyone sympathetic to landlords, eviction resistance, and in general undermining the status quo. Moderates, abhorring social disorder, maintained that steady constitutional activity would in the end yield social reform. Thus, “constitutional” became the lynchpin of discursive conflict between radicals and moderates. By analyzing key narrative understandings in each discourse, their collision in public events, and the conjunction of contingent events, we will see how the transformation of the meaning of “constitutional” contributed to the changing contours of the land movement.

##### V. THE NARRATIVE STRUCTURE OF THE DISCOURSE OF RETRIBUTION

The “Confiscation” myth was a central narrative of retribution. Small tenant farmers believed God had given the land of Ireland to the Irish, so that all could subsist on it. Family enterprise, ties and allegiances, and religious faith—all arranged in relationship to land—governed the attitudes and social relationships of the small farmers. Narratives recounted at land meetings of small farmers stressed God’s intention that the land of Ireland belongs to those who cultivate it; and that the present land system was accountable for Ireland’s suffering—its poverty, massive emigration (the “exile”), and social strife. At a land meeting of small farmers at Curry in the western county of Sligo, Fr. Peter Canon O’Donohue proclaimed that the purpose of the “wondrous” land movement was

20. The “3Fs” refer to fair rent, fixity of tenure, and free sale of the tenant’s interest in his holding upon quitting it (or being evicted). Under this reform plan, land would be essentially “co-possessed” by landlord and tenant.

“[T]o fix the Irish tenant on that land whereon he was placed by his great Creator, the land that has been given to him and to the fruit of which he has the most just right and aboriginal title. . . . A free peasantry is now the universal cry, because the cruel, heartless, landocracy has been deaf to every cry for justice and mercy and because of not having done their duty to their tenantry or their country.”<sup>21</sup> As this narrative excerpt demonstrates, small farmers, clergy, and radical nationalists believed the land was no longer being used as God intended because it had been unjustly and brutally confiscated by the English centuries ago.

This traditional understanding—the injustice of confiscation—was regularly invoked during the Land War, especially in emotional dramatizations of the past. More important, movement activists began to innovate and connect the symbolism of confiscation to other concepts that together suggested alternative understandings of how justice for tenant farmers would be obtained. For example, early in the movement speakers at numerous meetings responded to charges that the land movement advocated illegal land confiscation. At a demonstration at Tuam, Co. Galway, P. J. Costello claimed that not only had landlords obtained land by confiscation, but continued to confiscate tenant farmers’ property, and indeed the latter’s motivation to be productive, through excessive rents and evictions: “[We] come not as the advocates of violence and crime . . . (but) as the true conservators of order . . . to protest against, and . . . prevent the landlords from confiscating the outlay and industry of the tenant farmers.”<sup>22</sup> At Drumsna, Co. Leitrim, Michael Davitt<sup>23</sup> tied the concept of confiscation to a traditional and communal principle of land holding: “proprietary” belongs to those who are productive and use the land well, not only for themselves but the nation. “Has the land been conferred upon the landlords of Ireland for services rendered to Ireland or to humanity? I say no . . . they own the land of Ireland by virtue of conquest and confiscation.”<sup>24</sup> And in Co. Mayo, at Gurteen, barrister James Killen proclaimed that confiscation of landlord property would be fitting restitution for the historical wrongs suffered by the Irish. “[T]he land of Ireland has been three times confiscated, but always in favor of the aristocracy. [We] want a fourth confiscation, or rather a restitution now in favor of the people.”<sup>25</sup>

In this way, the meaning of confiscation was transformed. A concept which had represented historical wrongs and present injustice and suffering now included a call for compensation, a just component of righteous retribution. This metaphoric “transfer of sense”<sup>26</sup> happened as people reinterpreted the traditional

21. *Sligo Champion*, Co. Sligo, Ireland, 23 January 1880.

22. *Freeman’s Journal*, Dublin, Ireland, 22 September 1879.

23. Michael Davitt was the son of tenant farmers who had lost their farm in County Mayo (Connaught). He served time in English prison for IRB (Irish Republican Brotherhood, the forebear of the IRA) activity, but continued political organizing while interned. He returned to Ireland after his release in December 1877, and was a key visionary of the land movement. He co-founded the Irish National Land League and, along with MP and Home Rule Leader, Charles Stewart Parnell, was co-leader of the Land War campaign.

24. *Freeman’s Journal*, Dublin, 15 December 1879.

25. *Limerick Reporter*, Limerick, Ireland, 21 November 1879.

26. Paul Ricoeur, *The Conflict of Interpretations* (Evanston, Ill., 1974), 60.

narratives presented at meetings in the context of the current agrarian crisis and the land movement, along with the emotional fervor both generated.

#### VI. NARRATING THE DEMAND FOR "PEASANT PROPRIETARY"

The ideological structure of the early land movement also focused on the rights of Irish farmers. This belief became embodied in the concept and demand for "peasant proprietary." The initial movement demand was for immediate rent reductions and a land bill to afford some tenurial security to the tenant farmers. Through narrative discourse, however, these reform goals soon became symbolic of Irish tenant degradation, emphasizing their beggarly dependence on landlords. These understandings were forcefully represented in the narrative provided by Michael Davitt at a major land meeting in Tuam, Co. Galway:

All Ireland [is] calling on the landlords to give that reduction of rent which in justice, fair play and even humanity they [are] bound to do. [However] the time [has] arrived when Irishmen should ask themselves why privation and misery was ever to be the normal condition of tillers of the Irish soil? Had they forever to be struggling with poverty, and to have famine periodically staring them in the face (cries of "no!") . . . the time at last arrived when men who thought themselves above the reproach of being slaved cowards should take the place of ones that had ruined and impoverished Ireland for centuries.

What was the remedy? . . . a system of peasant proprietary such as that which existed in all continental countries and America should be substituted for the system landlordism which had impoverished Ireland and degraded her people for centuries.<sup>27</sup>

Though Davitt's speech begins by "asking" the landlords for a reduction in rents, it soon becomes a narrative portraying the landlords and the landlord system as responsible for poverty, misery, and famine. The only resolution to the injustice is peasant proprietary, a system already proven just and efficient in the advanced countries of Europe and America. The strong implication of Davitt's scenario for attaining peasant proprietary is that tenant farmers must bravely stand up and fight not only for their own rights to the land, but also to save Ireland.

But it is how the tenant farmers, as listeners, situate themselves in the narrative that is really crucial, and contingent. How do I fit into this story; what does it mean to me; how shall I act on this meaning? Especially important is interpretation of the resolution. Davitt's narrative concludes with the establishment of peasant proprietary, which because it is the opposite of landlordism will not only be just, but afford Ireland and her people prosperity and happiness. Yet the future is uncertain: it will depend on how tenant farmers act. They have been "slaved cowards" in the past; in order to change the system tenant farmers must change themselves through their action. And this action is guided by how they interpret the narrative, and evaluate courses of action.

#### VII. THE DISCOURSE OF CONCILIATION

In contrast, and partially in opposition to the militancy of the west, the larger tenant farmers in the southern and eastern counties maintained a moderate approach

27. *Freeman's Journal*, 22 September 1879.

to land reform and nationalism. At the Louth (in the eastern province of Leinster) Tenant Defense Association meeting in January 1879, a discussion of an eviction exhibits tenant farmer indignation over perceived landlord injustice. Yet the farmers and their supporters recognized the rights of both the government and landlords. Rev. George Taaffee, P. P. Collon, proclaimed: "The farmers of Ireland . . . should cry out against the terrible injustice to which they are exposed, and demand from the government protection for themselves and properties. The farmers are as peaceable and law-abiding subjects as those who have more power to oppress and rob them."<sup>28</sup> At the same meeting, a tenant farmer, O. J. Caraher of Cardistown, spoke about organizing for self-protection and change in the land laws, but also identified himself as a subject of the crown: "In the face of persecution . . . they should band themselves together and never cease in their efforts to have such a change made in the law as will secure for every honest and law abiding subject a right to live on the soil."<sup>29</sup>

Both passages reveal that these tenant farmers understood themselves to be peaceable and law-abiding, not degraded and desperate as their counterparts in the west. They measure themselves as British subjects and by the standards of their rulers. The deferential, non-contentious, conciliatory understanding of structural relations is unmistakable, evidenced by this comment by tenant farmer Michael McCarthy at the Waterford Farmers Club meeting in October 1879: "[We are not here] to wage war against the landlords, but to ask them to help the farmers in their present depressed condition."<sup>30</sup> The understandings portrayed in these narratives also indicate that many farmers in the south and east considered themselves British subjects, citizens who had the same rights and protections as all other British subjects. Yet even at this early stage, cracks in the narrative structure of conciliatory discourse is evident: for example, although they recognize the authority of landlords and the British government as legitimate, they see this joint power structure as oppressive and criminal (it "robs" them).

#### VIII. NARRATIVES OF RESISTANCE: TRANSFORMING THE MEANING OF "CONSTITUTIONAL"

In November 1880, the British government—frustrated with its inability to stem the growing insurgency and social unrest in Ireland—arrested Charles Stewart Parnell (M.P., Head of the Home Rule Party, and President of the INLL) and thirteen other League leaders on charges of sedition. The arrests and the threat of coercion and movement repression, which became reality a few months later, provoked a profound sense of outrage and indignation among the previously cautious and moderate middle class, farmer and non-agrarian, of Ireland. They began to doubt the British government would accord them the right to wage a constitutional struggle for land reform and political independence.

28. *Dundalk Democrat*, Dundalk, Ireland, 11 January 1879.

29. *Ibid.*

30. *Freeman's Journal*, 14 October 1879.

In defiance of the government and landlords, tenant farmers and their supporters opened thirty-six new branches between the time of the arrests and the end of the year. As the movement grew and strengthened, the cultural models of the radicals and the moderates clashed and converged; the sharing of often emotionally structured narratives contributed to a transformed meaning of “constitutional.”

At a meeting to form a league branch in Ballyclough, Co. Cork, Dr. G. J. Nealon provided a narrative, repeated many times in various forms, about why the leaders had been arrested and how the Irish must respond.

[A] great crisis has arisen . . . the leaders of the Irish people are about to be imprisoned for . . . working to keep the people from famine and starvation. . . . How was the land system to be abolished? Not through the British parliament but by the might, strength and determination of the people. The Irish farmers should then stand together . . . show they are bound together as one man, determined to be free. They must declare . . . in a voice that would shake the empire . . . that they would no longer submit to the cruelty of those landlords.<sup>31</sup>

By using the emotionally charged metaphor of famine and starvation to symbolize the result of “lawful” landlordism, Nealon’s narrative undermines the government’s claim that the arrests are constitutional. It follows that the same government will never repair the land to the Irish; in other words, it is futile to continue on a constitutional path to change, as long as “constitutional” means according to British rules.

For the moderate farmers, the arrests and the imminent coercion law exemplified the tyranny of English rule. As Father John Robinson, curate for Dunsany, declared at a demonstration in county Meath “we . . . look on the Government prosecution of the noble Parnell and his colleagues as a vile and degrading movement to place the iron heel of despotism on the neck of our suffering country.”<sup>32</sup> The metaphors here—“vile and degrading movement” symbolizing the government’s action, and “the neck” symbolizing the land movement leaders—articulate the horror and anger at the arrests and prosecution felt by most of the Irish. Moreover, the metaphors “iron heel” and “despotism” symbolize “constitutional,” further demonizing the conciliatory path to reform.

In early December 1880, land meetings began to be prohibited by proclamation, sometimes by the Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Francis Cowper, sometimes by the local magistrate, if either believed the meeting was called to threaten individuals or that the public peace would be endangered.<sup>33</sup> On January 2, a day before their scheduled but proclaimed meeting, the people in the vicinity of Drogheda held a meeting in defiance of the government. Father Henry M’Kee, the parish priest of Monasterboice, connected a narrative of historical British coercion during the Repeal Movement with the oppression the Irish were presently experiencing.

The Repeal agitation was conducted, as they all know, in a legal and constitutional manner by O’Connell and yet the English Government of the day attempted to quell it in the

31. *Cork Daily Herald*, Cork, Ireland, 8 November 1880.

32. *Dundalk Democrat*, 24 December 1880.

33. T. W. Moody, *Davitt and the Irish Revolution 1846–82* (Oxford, 1982), 443.

blood of thousands of their countrymen at the Clontarf meeting. Something like this episode of 1843 had just been attempted by the English Government today in Drogheda. But the people would defeat their machinations, and by their good sense, prudence, and forbearance would baffle and circumvent their foes.<sup>34</sup>

Father M'Kee's narrative tells how the British actions of the past are the same as those of the present: base, dastardly, violent, and conspiratorial against the Irish. Like the Repeal Movement, as symbolized by the Irish hero Daniel O'Connell, the present land movement is constitutional and legal. The narratives presented at land meetings in the southern and eastern counties in early 1881 increasingly portrayed the British government as the enemy of the Irish, and envisioned the people of Ireland vanquishing her oppressive foe.

On January 24, 1881, Chief Secretary (for Ireland) Forster introduced the "Protection of Person and Property Bill," empowering the government "to suspend the ordinary law in selected districts of Ireland whenever that was deemed necessary."<sup>35</sup> In effect, the Irish executive could arrest and imprison without trial any person reasonably suspected of treasonable practices or agrarian offenses. These coercion measures confronted the larger farmers, clergy, and moderate nationalists of southern and eastern Ireland with the unmistakable reality of a Liberal British government not tolerating a constitutional struggle for social justice in Ireland. At a meeting in New Ross, Co. Wexford, to support the by-election parliamentary candidacy of John Redmond, Father P. M. Furlong provided a narrative decrying the coercion measures imposed on the Irish:

Since the Union we have had 57 Coercion Actions from the English Parliament; the 58th is now being got ready for us. Our British rulers have strangled our national industries. . . . they have left the people to starve and perish in the grasp of a murderous landlordism. When we complain and seek the redress of our grievances they answer us with the coercion of a tyrant.<sup>36</sup>

At this point, Father Furlong's narrative draws on components of traditional narratives, such as the Conquest and Famine, to explain the current event of a new coercion measure. The British government is portrayed as not only tyrannical, but ruinous for Ireland and her people. Having set the historical stage, Furlong continues the story:

The other night Mr. Forster in proposing the . . . Coercion Act in the House . . . pretended to feel great pain in taking that step and yet he supported his proposal by a speech which [was] one of the most lying and infamous speeches delivered *even* in that house.<sup>37</sup> . . . [T]o dispose the English members in favour of [coercion he laid] before them a tabulated statement of supposed outrages in Ireland, which I pronounce as vile and monstrous a concoction as the devil in a brain fever could succeed in inventing. There have been . . . outrages . . . perpetrated, however, not by the people but by the Government . . . in the name of the law upon the homes and liberties of the people.<sup>38</sup>

34. *Freeman's Journal*, 3 January 1881.

35. F. S. L. Lyons, *Charles Stewart Parnell* (London, 1977), 145.

36. *Wexford People*, Ballina, Ireland, 2 February 1881.

37. Italics mine.

38. *Wexford People*, 2 February 1881.

This narrative of Forster's actions clearly depicts him as villainous, on par with the devil: not only are his proposed coercion measures unjust, but he lied about alleged outrages on the part of the Irish and feigned regret at having to take drastic steps. Clearly, in this narrative Forster also symbolizes the British government which now is acting outside the law and any measure of justice, while it is the Irish who continue to act constitutionally.

In county Carlow, at a meeting in Borris to protest coercion, Father Ryan, the Catholic curate for the town of St. Mullens, articulated the growing unity of the Irish in the face of attacks by the Liberal British government:

I wish to express . . . strong dissent from that expression of the Chief Secretary . . . so insulting to the Irish people—that the leaders of the local branches of the Land League in Ireland [are] ruffians and that they [are] miscreants. . . . Mr. Forster and Mr. Gladstone insulted everything that is true, that is moral and that is law abiding in Ireland . . . he insulted the priesthood and people of Ireland. . . . The people of Ireland and the priesthood are the Land League of Ireland, and on the part of the priests of the county of Carlow, every one of whom occupies a position in the executive of fifteen branches . . . [I hurl] back into the teeth of Mr. Forster his insult.<sup>39</sup>

This narrative directed from a cleric not only to high government officials but to the Irish people as well articulates the symbolic basis of Irish unity: the Land League represents Ireland and everything good in the Irish, and the priests and the people are the Land League. Besides reinforcing their ties to the laity by making these symbolic connections, the Catholic clergy increasingly turned attempts to discredit the League and its leaders into affronts to the Church. While Church doctrine demands submission, obedience, and loyalty to legitimate authority, this narrative implies that the unjust and dictatorial nature of the British government negated its claim to legitimacy.

At a well-attended branch meeting of the Cork Land League, three prominent members expressed their dismay and indignation at the Government's action, and then furthered the portrayal of it as unconstitutional.<sup>40</sup> First, the branch secretary, Mr. O'Connor, proposed that the branch members pledge that in the event of their committee being arrested, to elect others in their place, and "to do so as long as the government might continue to practice their tyrannical and coercive policy." Mr. Heffernan, a substantial tenant farmer, in supporting the resolution, declared: "[I] entered into this movement because [I] believed it to be just and right, and [I am] quite prepared to take the consequences. England could not now muzzle the country. They might patch up and bolster up a system of landlordism, but the people of Ireland would never be driven back to the old tricks."<sup>41</sup> Mr. Tracey, a town commissioner, displayed the mixture of disbelief and indignation at the

39. *Freeman's Journal*, Dublin, 31 January 1880.

40. The following three excerpts are taken from the *Freeman's Journal*, Dublin, 10 January 1881.

41. Heffernan was arrested under the coercion act twice: first on May 12, 1881, charged with inciting to riot and assault (released August 26), and October 15, 1881, charged with preventing payment of rent. State Paper Office, *Protection of Person and Property (Ireland) Act, 1881, List of Persons Arrested*.

actions of the government, demonstrating the transformation from one system of belief (conciliation) to another (retribution).

[I do not] believe Mr. Gladstone, Mr. Forster, or Mr. Bright contemplated coercive measures for this country. [T]he acts of the league, not only in the city, but in the county of Cork, were legal and constitutional and they like to protect all and everyone. If the British Government denied to the people their just rights, it was the bounded duty of the people to rise en masse, and to demand their rights and privileges from the Government. [I am] no revolutionist . . . no communist; but . . . the man who tilled the soil was entitled, as in every country in Europe to the benefits of his labour.

Again, in narrating recent events Tracey portrays the actions of the movement participants as not only legal and constitutional, but just. He admonishes the Irish to rise up against British tyranny; yet, the phrase “demand their rights and privileges from the Government” indicates that though militancy was in order, the movement must remain constitutional even if the government was no longer. Importantly, Tracey’s narrative makes clear that the foundational reason for rebellion is the land.

This transformed understanding of “constitutional” was echoed on March 13 by the newly elected M.P. for New Ross, and future leader of the Irish Parliamentary Party, John Redmond:

The British constitution as far as Ireland [is] concerned [is] a dead letter, representative government for Ireland [is] a mockery, and today England might be proud of the fact that she had created in this country a despotism such as [is] not to be found in any civilised country in the world. Let not the government drive them, as [I believe] they deliberately intend, into acts of bloodshed and violence (no, no). Let them keep their footing on the ground of constitutional action (cheers). Let them ostracize any man who gave help to the enemies of the country by outrage (cheers). Second, let them not be intimidated (cheers). [We] have a sad but proud history. Oppression had not daunted their fathers—let it not drive them from the support of the great cause they supported . . . the holiest cause. Let them meet English oppression by passive resistance—they can not coerce or imprison a nation.<sup>42</sup>

#### IX. THE EMERGENCE OF THE CONSTITUTIONAL NARRATIVE AROUND THE DOMINANT SYMBOL “LAND”

Redmond’s speech indicates the emergence of a new master narrative of Irish political action, based on the dominant symbol of the land and a reconfiguration of the meaning of “constitutional.” This master narrative combined, fused, and ultimately transcended the oppositional discourses of Retribution and Conciliation.

As the many narrative excerpts above suggest, the Land is sacred to the Irish not only because it is the giver of life, and is the basis of social relations, but it is symbolic of Ireland itself. At the outset of the Land War, small farmers, radical agrarian reformers and nationalists, and some clergy believed that neither the landlords nor Britain had a legitimate right to the land or to Ireland because they

42. *Freeman’s Journal*, Dublin, 13 March 1881.

had fraudulently obtained it through conquest and confiscation. Worse, instead of improving the land and Ireland, and thus providing for all the people, the British and the landlords continued the confiscation by stealing the fruits of the land and farmer labor, and impoverishing Ireland. This denial of Irish rights, to the land and to the country, formed the justificatory basis for the righteous rebellion against landlordism and British domination. A simple reform of the land laws would only perpetuate injustice and misery; the landlord system had to be abolished and farmer ownership of land established.

Moderates, though subscribing to the historical narrative of the Conquest and Confiscation, felt themselves bound by the legitimate authority of the British and the property rights of the landlords. Early narratives presented by moderates clearly demonstrate this belief, and the sentiment of deference both to British rule and Irish landlords. Both the land and political system needed reform, but change must be constitutional, not insurgent. As long as Britain and the landlords maintained their legitimacy, moderates in Ireland held to a Discourse of Conciliation.

With the intransigence of the landlords (continuing to evict and refusing to lower rents) in the face of continued agrarian crisis, and then the repressive measures of the government in the face of a growing social movement, the legitimacy of both declined. The narratives of movement participants who had formerly embraced conciliation reveal the realization that first, their rights as British subjects were being denied, and second, that the government itself was acting arbitrarily and tyrannically, not constitutionally. These narratives began to conclude that British rule was not legitimate, and that the Irish were justified in revolting against both the government and the landlords. In the narratives, the landlords increasingly represented the British, or at least a “garrison” of British rule. Thus, the narratives began to deny landlords’ rights to the land.

Narratives of retribution and conciliation began to fuse in the understanding that because the Irish were acting both in terms of justice (their rights to the land and the country) and in a constitutional manner, the land movement was completely righteous. And the more the British government tried to repress it, the more it acted unconstitutionally. In fact, the British government was now portrayed and understood by all movement participants as despotic. And the more the legitimacy of the British government and the landlords waned because of their own repressive actions, the more the Irish had a right, indeed an obligation, to act militantly. As Redmond admonishes, the Irish had to meet English oppression with passive (yet militant) resistance. In sum, the new master narrative was founded on the understanding that Irish rights to their land and country, which had been stolen and plundered by the tyrannical British and their henchmen, the landlords, sanctioned them constitutionally to take back the land and the country. Yet, they could not act like the British and the landlords. Thus, their cause had to be fought nonviolently, through the Parliament as well as through militant collective action, and gradually if need be. The conclusion to the narrative was victory, and a restoration of land to the farmers and rule of Ireland to the Irish.

## X. COMMENTS ON THE IRISH LAND CASE

At the outset of the Irish Land War, diverse and contentious social groups came together armed with common opposition to landlords and British domination, but situated in differential structural positions and operating according to varied cultural models. Movement participants also held different goals and strategies, as represented by the oppositional discourses of Retribution and Conciliation. Yet, by the summer of 1881 the movement had forced the British government to introduce a land bill which led to agrarian restructuring, and eventually the end of landlordism and British domination. If we accept that the British government, despite strong attempts to repress the movement, gave in to the movement's demand for major land reform because of the latter's strength, we must still explain how it was that the diverse and conflicting groups in the movement overcame their differences to mount a unified campaign. We must also explain why the Land League and the people it represented accepted an outcome which many had previously sworn themselves against. Because of their material differences and conflicting interests, instrumental compromise or negotiation between the groups seems at best an insufficient explanation. Instead, the preceding analysis has tried to show that through the expression of both cultural and material interests in sites of public discourse, movement participants began to form new understandings and meanings—about the land, proprietary rights, and British rule. Acting on those meanings, for example resisting evictions, and then interpreting the British repressive response to those actions, stimulated further interpretation and meaning reconstruction. In sum, I argue the demand and acceptance for a “conciliatory” land bill can be greatly explained by the transformation of meaning and symbolic understanding and structure which occurred during the Land War, especially the construction of a new master narrative of political action based on a reconfiguration of the constitutional principle.

Though participant groups joined the land movement with conflicting conceptualizations of British authority, the coercion measures the latter instituted provoked shock, a sense of betrayal, anger, and indignation among them all. Tenant farmers, clergy, and movement leaders expressed and shared these emotions through narratives laden with metaphors symbolizing the British Government and its actions, and the Irish and their possible reactions. These narratives portrayed land movement participants acting lawfully and constitutionally; the British government and landlords violated the “constitution” by not upholding the rights of the Irish. Thus, “constitutional” became the badge of the land movement, not the British government. The concept of “constitutional,” now in a militant configuration, regained a sacred status and developed into the accepted route to justice, because it had been symbolically disconnected from the British government.

This transformation of meaning contributed mightily to transforming the two conflicting discourses within the movement, Retribution and Conciliation, into something new and empowering. With the reconstruction of what “constitutional” meant, radical movement participants could accept it. This acceptance resulted in an

ironic consequence—it rehabilitated the meaning of “conciliation.” And it was by conciliation that the Land War was temporarily settled with the Land Act of 1881.

XI. CONCLUDING REMARKS:  
THE NARRATIVE APPROACH TO HISTORICAL EXPLANATION

In this article, I have argued and attempted to demonstrate empirically that culture is causal in historical processes and transformation because symbolic systems are transformable, and transformed meaning can lead to new forms of social action, contingent and unforeseen outcomes, and the restructuring of diverse social structures. Meaning transformation results from the process of interpretation (of conditions and cultural models) in which individuals and collectives engage, a process which is highly indicative of voluntary agency. And social action is the result of this interpretation.

Historical studies can be enriched by a narrative approach to the construction of meanings. By studying the “diverse stories that various social actors tell within emergent situations to which they are mutually oriented . . . in different ways,”<sup>43</sup> social historians should be better able to explain the rupture of relatively strong structures of meaning in the face of concrete, contingent, and dynamic events, and the ensuing emergence of new culture structures. Return, for example, to Sewell’s analysis of the taking of the Bastille and the creation of a new symbolic concept, “revolution,” and a new meaning of political sovereignty. Though he does not discuss narrative as a symbolic structure and practice, Sewell shows that through the various and spontaneous accounts given by National Assembly “orators, journalists, and the crowd itself” the taking of the Bastille “revealed itself in the days that followed as a concrete, unmediated, and sublime instance of the people expressing its sovereign will.”<sup>44</sup> Clearly, this “revelation” and new articulation of meaning occurred through narrative construction, sharing, and convergence. Sewell aimed at theorizing events in historical processes and cultural transformation; an integration of an explicit narrative analysis into the study would have more strongly demonstrated how cultural structures are changed in and through contingent events.

Both as pillars of symbolic structures and as vehicles for symbolic articulation and transformation, narratives are the consolidating component in a theoretical model of meaning construction and historical processes. They also provide the method by which to investigate the recursive relationship of action, structure, and culture. As this article demonstrates with the case of the Irish land movement, the site where symbolic models—of the different tenant farmers, other participant movement groups, and the movement as a whole—converge and collide is public discourse. And the articulation of symbolic understandings and beliefs which underlie discourse was achieved primarily through narrative. Methodologically,

43. John R. Hall, “Public Narratives and the Apocalyptic Sect: From Jonestown to Mount Carmel,” in *Armageddon in Mount Carmel*, ed. Stuart Wright (Chicago, 1995), 206.

44. Sewell, “Historical Events as Structural Transformations,” 852.

just as narratives allow people to understand themselves and each other, narrative enables the analyst to identify and reconstruct the symbolic systems of groups, and to see the conflict between different symbolic models. Finally, the narrative approach allows us to follow changing symbolic projects—such as identity or ideology—over time and in conjunction with other changing symbolic systems, and “non-symbolic” structures such as political regimes and contingent events.

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