“And When I Arrived at Manhood…I Chewed My Father’s Thumb”: Working-Class Masculinity and the Folksongs of Larry Gorman

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Abstract:
Larry Gorman was born on Prince Edward Island in 1846, and by the time he was eighteen years old began traveling for employment to either New Brunswick or northern New England. These travels continued throughout his lifetime and with them he brought a tradition of making songs. Gorman used his songs to critique and challenge the men around him and ultimately, this paper argues, to challenge the authority of his bosses, demonstrating that wage earners could assert power in the work place. While the late folklorist Edward D. Ives has already worked to document Gorman's life and songs, he did not interpret them through a gendered lens. Drawing on the oral histories collected by Ives, this paper's new perspective highlights working-class masculinity and shows that wage laborers in the last half of the nineteenth century did not have to remain silent about poor treatment from their bosses. While other historians have examined working-class masculinity, many of their studies only consider letters, diaries, and newspaper articles. While there is nothing wrong with these sources they leave out subjects who have not left such detailed historical paper trails. Some historians have examined connections between song and masculinity, but the canon of Larry Gorman has been omitted. This paper adds Gorman's songs to the historical discussion of masculinity to help create a more complete understanding of working-class masculinity during the second half of the nineteenth century.
Key words: Larry Gorman, working-class masculinity, history nineteenth century

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Ve erkekliğe ulaştığımda... Babamın başparmağını çiğnedim: Larry Gorman'ın halk şarkıları ve işçi sınıfı erkekliği

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Özet:

Larry Gorman 1846'da Prens Edward Adasında doğdu ve 18 yaşından itibaren gerek New Brunswick gerekse Kuzey New England'a çalışmak için gidip gelmeye başladı. Bu yolculuklar hayatı boyunca devam etti ve yolculuklarla beraber şarkı yazma geleneğini de beraberinde getirdi. Gorman şarkılarını etrafındaki erkekleri eleştirmek, meydan okumak ve en nihayetinde, bu çalışmanın da ele aldığı gibi, patronlarının otoritesini sarsmak, işçilerin de gücü olduğunu göstermek için yazdı. Güncel halkbilimcilerden Edward D. Ives, Gorman'ın hayatı ve şarkıları hakkında bir belgesel hazırlarken, Gorman'ın hayatını toplumsal cinsiyet perspektifinden yorumlamadı. Bu çalışmanın yeni perspektifi, Ives tarafından toplanan sözlü tarihlerden yararlanarak işçi sınıfı erkekliğini vurgulamakta ve 19. Yüzyılın son yarısında işçilerin patronlarından gördükleri muameleye sessiz kalmadıklarını göstermektedir. Diğer tarihçilerin çoğu işçi sınıfı erkekliğini incelemiş olsa da, bir çok çalışma yalnızca mektuplar, günlükler ve gazeteleri içermektedir. Her ne kadar bu kaynaklarla ilgili hiç bir yanlışlık olmasa da, bu çalışmalar ardında ayrıntılı tarihsel bir iz bırakmamış olan işçileri birer özne olarak çalışmaların dışında bırakmıştır. Bazı tarihçiler şarkı ve erkeklik arasındaki ilişkiyi incelemişler ancak Larry Gorman'ın kanonunu çalışmalarına dahil etmemişlerdir. Bu çalışma, 19. Yüzyılın ikinci yarısındaki işçi sınıfı erkekliğini daha bütüncül bir şekilde anlamaya yardımcı olabilmek adına, Gorman'ın şarkılarını erkekliğin tarihsel tartışma zeminine taşımaktadır.

Anahtar kelimeler: Larry Gorman, işçi sınıfı erkekliği, tarih, 19. yüzyıl

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Spurgeon Allaby (1957) of Passekeag, New Brunswick, recited several folksongs for thefolklorist Edward "Sandy" Ives. Among these folksongs was the satirical, "The Gull Decoy," which was composed by the woods poet, Larry Gorman on Prince Edward Island some time during the last half of the nineteenth century. The song tells a story of a man named Patrick O'Reilly for whom Gorman had worked on a fishing boat. Gorman satirizes the way that O'Reilly raised his children and challenges the subject's respectability. In a humorous tone, the song lists some of O'Reilly's inappropriate actions such as exhuming a dead child to spite his brother, and setting "the dog on an orphan boy." This commentary highlights several negative male behaviors, a familiar theme throughout Gorman's canon.

Larry Gorman used "The Gull Decoy" and various other folksongs to comment on the behavior of the men around him; he lampoons several masculine behaviors and characteristics. Often times Gorman used song making to retaliate against men who he felt had wronged him and in several cases, "The Gull Decoy" being one of them, his songs were used against his employers. Gorman lived in a time when working-class men were increasingly dependent on others for wages as economic self-sufficiency was becoming more difficult to achieve; such self-sufficiency had previously been looked upon as a pillar of manhood (Glenn, 2006). Such dependency limited the authority working-class men had in the workplace (Stiles, 1998) but through song Gorman maintained and exerted some degree of power.

Numerous scholars have studied masculinity and identity formation, but many of their studies focus primarily on traditional written sources such as newspapers, letters, and journals. While there is nothing wrong with using these sources they only represent the experiences of those who have left a well documented record. This study does not use such sources and instead focuses on oral histories and folksong in which a new voice of masculinity is heard highlighting complexities of gender and identity formation.

Beginning in the 1980s historians began studying manhood and masculinity to understand the ways men formed gendered identities and how these identities were performed. The study of the formation of these constructs has been used to better understand historical events and experiences. Very few historians, however, have used folksong to understand masculinity and those who have omit Larry Gorman from their focus.

Steven Maynard's "Rough Work and Rugged Men: The Social Construction of Masculinity in Working-Class History," (1989) raises important questions for scholars studying masculinity and its connection to labor and the working-class. Maynard examines the ways capitalism was connected with gender and argues that "as industrial capitalism unfolded [at the turn into the twentieth century] it not only altered class relations, but also shifted gender relations precipitating a crisis in masculinity" (p. 160). Furthermore, Maynard suggests that a rise in "powerful tools" shifted manhood yet again by the twentieth century; working class claims of manhood based on skill were challenged. Definitions of manhood were in flux during this period and other historians have also noted these changes over time.

E. Anthony Rotundo (1993) also studied changes in the masculine identity in his work, *American Manhood: Transformations in Masculinity From the Revolution to the Modern Era*, and it is considered one of the pioneering studies of masculinity in American history. Rotundo's work examines masculine identity throughout the nineteenth century and argues that American manhood passed through three phases (p. 2). The first of these phases was based on performance in the community which emerged in colonial New England, the second, connected to the rising market economy, appeared in the last years of the eighteenth century, and the third based on passion, strength, and self-expression rose at the end of the 1800s. It is clear that manhood is not a historical constant but evolves over time.While his study is well done it should be noted that it is limited, focusing only on the urban middle-class of New England and relies heavily on personal diaries and correspondence from educated men. He, therefore, only considers historical subjects who have left a

well-defined paper trail. A more complete picture of manhood is created when scholars consider working-class subjects and alternative sources such as oral history and folksong. These sources can give a voice to historical agents not heard before and expand the field by considering working-class subjects.

Deborah Stiles (1998) is one historian who has worked to understand working-class masculinity. In her study, "Martin Butler, Masculinity, and the North American Sole Leather Tanning Industry: 1871-1889," Stiles focuses on the northeast borderland and worksto understand how working-class manhood was negotiated in this region Stiles relies heavily on Martin Butler's journal and newspaper printings. Through Butler's writing Stiles finds that rural working-class masculinity could be found "in the contingencies *and* determinants of the North American sole leather tanning industry, and…located within the discourses Butler constructed about his and other men's experiences" (p. 92). Stiles concludes that the identity of men working in the northeast sole leather tanning industry was not entirely subject to the forces of industrial capitalism and that working-class individuals crafted their own identity (p.111). The real value in this study is the conclusion that these men exerted some amount of control over their identities. Historians should, therefore, discount the control men like Larry Gorman had in crafting identity although subject to the will of his employers.

Historians of masculinity have yet to recognize the discourse of masculinity within Larry Gorman's songs, but some scholars have recognized similar discourses in other song traditions. Stephen Nicholas Sanfilippo's (2010) doctoral dissertation, "Whalemen's Song: Lyrics and Masculinity in the Sag Harbor Whalefishery, 1840-1850," examines the ways Long Island whalemen of British ancestry, crafted and communicated a masculine identity. Sanfilippo addresses three concepts of masculinity in his study: "the Victorian bourgeois man," whose identity was based on economic success and social status, "the evangelical Christian man," whose identity focused on "fulfilling his Christian obligations as a family provider," and "the secular libertine," whose focus was on "immediate pleasure" (p. iii). To understand how

whalemen defined and performed masculine ideals Sanfilippo relies heavily on the songs Lewis Jones recorded while aboard whaling expeditions.

The strength in Sanfilippo's study is in his methodological approach which seeks to understand the cultural and social implications of Jones's songs. This merger of cultural and social history serves his study well as it seeks to make connections across multiple sources and strengthens the overall arguments. Placing cultural sources (i.e. folksong) in a social context is a promising methodology that should be considered by gender historians to derive new meanings from their sources.By understanding the cultural and social meanings of folksong, historians can include new voices into the discussion of masculinity.

Edward "Sandy" Ives (1964) published his study of Larry Gorman and the songs he wrote throughout his life. Ives traveled across Maine and the Maritime Provinces of Canada tracing Gorman's life and documenting his songs. Ives places Gorman in two central positions: the first as "the woods poet," and the second as part of a satirical "song tradition" (p. 2). As a woods poet Gorman shared his songs with his male coworkers in lumber camps but many of his songs were meant to attack those who wronged him. Ives believed no one ever took satirical song writing as far or as seriously as Gorman had; he was always making songs about the people and events around him (p. 187). It should be noted that Ives does not provide an in depth analysis of Gorman's songs except when attempting to determine how likely it is that a song may or may not have been written by the woods poet, or, when the song contains autobiographical information. Just a brief glance at some of the songs presented in his book, however, shows the prospects for deeper analysis. While a gendered analysis is lacking, Ives's work is still central to understanding Larry Gorman's life and songs. It places Gorman's life in perspective and provides important background information; a reexamination of Gorman's songs, therefore, must build on the work of Ives. Providing analysis through a gendered lens, as this study does, yields new insights into the importance of folksong and to notions of manhood and masculinity at the turn into the twentieth century.

Larry Gorman was born on Prince Edward Island around Trout River in 1846. His father, Thomas Gorman, an Irishman from County Kilkenny, had come to North America by 1825 and settled on one hundred acres on the north side of Trout River. To support himself and family Thomas Gorman worked in a shipyard and maintained a farm. He married Ann Donahue before 1834, also from Ireland. The couple had thirteen children in all while ten of them survived to become adults; Larry Gorman was the couple's second son (Ives, 1993: 9-11).

In 1874 Gorman's father passed away but his mother maintained a small store before opening another in Tyne Valley in 1880. Within the decade she closed shop and moved to her oldest son's farm in Glengarry, Prince Edward Island (Ives, 1993: 9-11). It is not known for certain when Larry Gorman began traveling between the island and the mainland, either New Brunswick or some part of the northeastern United States, for work but he most likely started by the time he was eighteen in 1864 (Ives, 1993: 54). It is believed that Gorman had a falling out with his brother James leaving him without a formal home on the Island. Because of this, by the time he was in his late thirties, he left Prince Edward Island permanently (Ives, 1993: 49-50).

Gorman spent a number of years working and traveling throughout New Brunswick before moving to Maine by the 1880s. In 1889 Gorman purchased a home in Ellsworth, Maine and in 1891, Gorman in his mid-forties, had married Mary Mahoney. Mahoney died five years later and Gorman was without a wife again (Ives, 1993: 80). After a year had passed Gorman was remarried to forty year old Julia Lynch. By the start of the 1900s the couple had sold the property in Ellsworth and moved to Brewer where Gorman lived for the remainder of his life (Ives, 1993: 110, 137).Throughout his life and travels Gorman brought with him a song making tradition and created a sizeable collection of songs.

Gorman and his songs present an interesting case study in masculinity for two reasons. For one, Gorman was married much later in life and never had any children; therefore, Gorman was unable to assert

his masculinity through fatherhood.[1] Secondly, many historians have examined masculinity through physical strength and occupational skills but Gorman was lacking in both areas.[2] William Bell (1956) of Brewer, Maine recalled that when in Brewer Gorman worked in a "wood and coal yard." One of Gorman's occupational duties was to carry coal up a set of stairs and Gorman almost quit because he could not handle this task. Bell also recalled that Gorman also worked in the wood yard of Eastern Fine Paper in Brewer but "wasn't quite man enough for the work" (Bell, 1956). Without these abilities Gorman needed a different way to assert his manhood and he did so through his songs.

The period in which Gorman lived and worked was also one of transition. Working-class men, by the close of the nineteenth century, found it difficult to reach economic independency and were increasingly dependent upon other men for wages.[3] This transition of dependency is highlighted in one of Gorman's songs, "The Old Pod Auger Days" (n. d.). This song was printed and meant for sale during his time in Brewer. The broadsheet takes a more serious tone than many of his other songs, and the reason for this shift could be that this publication was meant to be sold; perhaps the author believed a more serious song would sell to a wider audience.

"The Old Pod Auger Days" bemoans the passing of an older time. During that time Gorman claims that, "You'd find all men more honest then, / Athletic, brave, and strong, / Their faces heavily bearded, / And their hair they wore it long." The song's composer believed that men in his time were lacking compared to the men of the past. The men discussed throughout Gorman's canon do, in fact, appear to be lacking many of these traits. While he does present men who are strong in some of his songs, they are surely not honest or are lacking in other positive attributes. Gorman adds in the song that in these days, "the father trained the son, / He taught him to be useful, / How to use an axe and gun, / To clear the land and till it well, / A livelihood to raise." It is interesting that Gorman laments the passing of these events because, as we know, he never had any children or maintained a farm of his own. The man spent his life dependent on others for wages. Countless

working-class men at this time were becoming increasingly dependent on wages from others for economic stability and these lines very much reflect this shift.[4]

The time in which Gorman lived and composed songs required new characteristics and behaviors of manhood; teaching sons to work the land to support themselves no longer defined the proper man. "The Old Pod Auger Days" is critical of the men that surrounded Gorman during his time and the song maker critically outlines several types of men throughout his canon. Covered in his songs are men defined by material possessions, men defined by physical strength, and men who are dishonest. Furthermore, many of the critiques in Gorman's songs were directed towards his bosses, allowing him to challenge the power of those above him and to exert his own authority in the workplace, therefore, allowing him to act out his own masculine identity.[5]

The first type of working-class manhood that appears in Gorman's songs is defined by material possessions. This description of man appears in two songs, "Bachelor's Hall" and "Michael O'Brian." In both songs the men are seeking a bride and believe that their belongings make them good men and attractive.

In "Bachelor's Hall," the song maker criticizes an anonymous man's motivation for seeking a wife and the method he chose to do so. This man's courtship was different, it was out of the ordinary, and that is what drew Gorman to crafting a song about it in a satirical style. The man in the song is seeking a wife because he desires someone to keep his house for little money. The song is not in Gorman's voice but that of the suitor, and states, "Folks boast of a life without any wife / They tell you it would be much cheaper / And they'll persuade great riches they made / By hiring a frugal housekeeper." But these people were wrong as he found a housekeeper to be more expensive than a wife. (McClellan, 1957: 5-6).Gorman portrays the man as seeking a wife for the wrong reasons and offered this song as a criticism of his motives. To Gorman, then, taking a wife involved more consideration than the cost of a housekeeper.

In the start of the song the man calls out to local women and asks them to take pity on him because "a bachelor's hall is no place at all" for a man to call home (McClellan, 1957: 5-6). Once this man is sure that he has the attention of the women he begins to extensively list all of his possessions to appear attractive. In one version of the song the list spans nine stanzas and boasts of fine mirrors, cups, and furniture. In the middle of the list, however, are also items used to clean and maintain a home. The singer includes "a box of white sand I keep always on hand / All packed away safe for the winter / I've a broom and a mop for to wipe every slop" but quickly switches back to his better possessions especially his "new chamber set" which he claims to be "the best yet" on the list (McClellan, 1957: 7). Clearly this man is simply not looking for a companion but someone to clean his home and who is attracted to his property. The song ends, as it began, with a call to all ladies to take pity, but the character now believes the list of possessions has entitled him to *his* choice of the women: "So now ladies all, come each when I call / Come Peggy, come Betsy, come Nancy / When I see you all, both short, fat and tall / I will surely see the one that I fancy" (McClellan, 1957: 9).

Gorman used this song to critique the way this man went about finding a wife. The man seeking a bride repeatedly calls to "Young ladies all both short, fat, and tall," as if any woman at all would do (McClellan, 1957: 5). Because this song is crafted in a satirical tradition Gorman did not believe that the purpose of finding a wife was to find an inexpensive housekeeper and that a man was not attractive because of his possessions. The topic and style of these verses reappear in his song, "Michael O'Brian."

"Michael O'Brian," is not in the voice of the composer but that of the title character and in the song O'Brian calls out to girls both short and tall. Once he has their attention he then begins to list all of his fine possessions. Included in this list are a "horse and wagon, two bobsleighs, / A harrow and a plow, / A fattening pig and two runabouts / With five calves and a cow." The focus of the list, however, makes a quick shift to the items needed to maintain a household. O'Brian adds, "I got a stove, a pot, pans, a strainer can / A bucket and a broom"(Doucette, 1957: 1-2).

This song is different from “Bachelor’s Hall” as O'Brian claims to be "on the verge of thirty now / and…tired of a single life / It's time that I should make a vow / That I should have a wife" (Doucette, 1957: 3). This man now feels that it is the time in his life to take a wife, but his search has proved unsuccessful. The true comedy of "Michael O'Brian" comes at the end when the singer claims women will not give him attention because of bad breath. To resolve this problem he "takes a stroll for the good of my soul / and see my neighbor's wife." When his foul breath sends the girls away, he resorts to visiting his neighbor's wife, as he argues, for "the good of his soul." This man believed a physical connection with a woman was important and a factor in his decision to seek a wife (Doucette, 1957: 3).

These songs present men who had defined themselves in terms of their material possessions and believed that these belongings entitled them to their choice of companion. Through satire, however, Gorman makes it clear he did not agree with these opinions. Although these songs do not provide positive definitions for courtship, or what made a man, satire makes it clear that the characters of these songs were acting in an improper manner.

While the men in “Bachelor’s Hall” and “Michael O’Brian” defined themselves in terms of possessions, some other characters in Gorman’s songs defined themselves in terms of their physical abilities. These images of manhood appear in two of Gorman’s songs, “The Champion of Moose Hill” and “Michael Riley” whose main characters are strong fighters, their manhood is directly challenged.

As Irving Frost (1957: 3) remembered it, "The Champion of Moose Hill" is about Emery Mace, who was quite the fighter. According to the song, which was composed in Mace's voice, Mace "licked the Amherst Champion" and "Fred Titus I nearly killed." At the end of this verse, however, Gorman delivers the punch line when in Mace's voice he sings: "But I almost lost the belt by a single welt / From a lady on Moose Hill." Emery Mace was able to fight and defeat other men but proved no match for this woman.

Frost (1957: 4) recalled that the song was made after Mace, who was "Always kickin' up a fuss" when he was drinking, "started…tryin' to kick up a fuss with [a woman's] husband."This woman had decided that she was not going to let Mace get away with this and so "she grabbed a stick of wood and she bated him right over the head with it, and knocked him cold." Frost added that this act surely "did not do his reputation any good." In this case a woman had beaten a strong man, and when she hit him, she directly challenged his manhood. This event, to Frost at the very least, would have soiled Mace's character and by commemorating this event in song Gorman shared the insult with a larger audience.

In "Michael Riley," Gorman presents another image of manhood defined by athleticism. The song is again not composed in Gorman's voice but that of the title character. In the song Riley boasts of defeating his father in a fight:

> And when I arrived at manhood, I did him as proceeds:
> He took me to a raffle where he gave me too much rum-
> We got into a squabble and I chewed my father's thumb;
> And when I proved his champion how mighty proud I felt;
> Ever since that time I've worn the diamond belt (Pendergast, 1957: 9).

As the song continues Riley adds that "The Cape Wolfe pugilists I did beat them all/Like Samson with the Philistines, I slew them great and small" (Pendergast, 1957: 9). Clearly Riley was strong and able to display his masculinity through fighting, but as the song concludes Gorman delivers his true assessment of this man.

Riley is criticized as lacking control in the consumption of alcohol and in his emotions. Not only does this man fight his father when he is drunk at a raffle, he also subjects his wife and children to similar abuses. The final verse adds, "When I go to a tavern [I] like a foaming spout/When they get tired of me [it's] then they throw me out/I leave for home in anger to accomplish my desire /I take my wife and children and throw them on the fire" (O'Halleran, 1957: 3). Riley went too far when under the influence of alcohol, maltreating his father, wife, and children.

While at first it appeared that this song praised Michael Riley's masculine abilities, in actuality it presents a sharp critique of the man.

Several people, like Irving Frost, who recalled Gorman's songs also remembered some of the stories surrounding their creation and consequential effects. These histories provide insight into how Gorman's songs were interpreted by those around him as well as their social implications. There is a good chance that some of the histories that accompany Gorman's songs are not true; they might be exaggerated or plainly false, yet they highlight what these songs meant to those who heard them and provide an essential social context to asses Gorman's songs.

Another popular image that appears in the canon of Larry Gorman is that of the dishonest man. This imagery appears in the songs, “Myles Everett More” and “Donahue’s Spree.” While the precise events in the songs may have not actually occurred the remembrances of these two songs are critical for understanding their relation to Gorman’s own masculine identity and how the song maker’s contemporaries interpreted them.

In "Myles Everett More," the song maker presents a man who is dishonest. The man is portrayed without honor as it tells of his misdeeds. Here, More is not only credited with "mutilate[ing] a bull," but also tells of how he "loafed" and he "lunged" and "on [his] comrades [he] sponged," and "of [his] earning [he] spent every cent." The song adds that this man mistreated those who had treated him well and that he "meddled in folks' affairs" and in the song's conclusion, More admits to stealing a coat (Mace, 1957: 13).Alden Mace recalls that this song was composed after More had disrespected Gorman by calling him a ""bluenose," a term for someone from Nova Scotia (Mace, 1957: 13). The song maker was not going to let this insult pass and so he created a song against the man. Gorman was able to assert his own authority and power though this insulting song.

While Gorman was living in New Brunswick he composed the song "Donahue's Spree," about a man who finds love at a party and brags

to his companion about his dishonest doings. Everett Price recalled that the song was about Israel Brown and was quite insulting to this man. The character boasts, “Now I take a commodity under my jacket, / Steal out through the kitchen and make little racket, / And set it down easy in case I might crack it” (Ives, 1993: 73).Brown was remembered as "a big husky man" and Everett Price (1961: 1) added, "by God Israel Brown would a killed him if he'd a got a hold of him." Price adds that "Gorman had to get out of here, you see, to save his life" and moved to Maine. This reason for Gorman's move across the border may not be accurate, but it highlights how others perceived the song. Gorman's contemporaries understood the insults in the song and believed that Brown would have seriously hurt the composer for them.

Larry Gorman had outlined several masculine abilities and qualities in his songs: he discussed men who defined themselves through their material possessions, through physical strength, and men who were dishonest. While it is clear that Gorman articulated such character traits in his songs, he also used them to speak out against his employers. By vocalizing his opinions of his employers through songs he was able to assert some degree of authority when working-class men felt they had little power if any at all.

The position of working-class men is outlined in Gorman’s song, “The Workman,” (n. d.) which is another one of his printed broadsides, and takes more serious tone. The poem suggests a collective quality as its title is anonymous; "The Workman" could be any working-class man rather than an individual. Additionally, the song refers only to "he" and not a named person. The song calls, "Comrades, sit down and brush off your frown, / 'Til we'll talk of our sad situation." The men Gorman is attempting to reach with this broadside would have identified with the experience outlined in the song. While the song concludes that a working-man is unable to save his wages to provide for the well being of his family, a close reading of the second verse yields the working-man's perceptions of his position at work. The verse goes: "A Workman we know he is ground very low, / He is looked on as something inferior, / He is robbed and abused and badly used, / By those whom they call his

superior" (n. d.). The verse demonstrates that working-class men believed their position in society was low and that they are treated poorly from their bosses. Within the workplace the song claims that working-class men had little if any authority and were subject to their bosses will. For Gorman, however, making folksongs against his bosses allowed him to exercise authority.

For a period of time Gorman worked for Michael McElroy in Miminegash, Prince Edward Island. McElroy was not safe from Gorman's songs and found himself the subject of one with his name of the title. The song cautions those seeking work in the area and Gorman advises, "And if you should fish another year, / Or ever happen to come here, / Of one great bogus, pray keep clear, / He'll rob and starve you all I fear, / His name is McElroy." As the song continues it attacks McElroy's wife for taking pleasure in her husband's "swindling game" before concluding "This McElroy is quite a fop, / A proud, suspicious, naughty pup, / His head is tapering at the top, / Like some wild goose decoy" (Murphy, 1957: 28-29). McElroy's manhood is attacked as he is portrayed as a dishonest swindler, characteristics that Gorman's ideal man would not have possessed.

Mrs. Lawrence Murphy (1957: 31) believed that Gorman "didn't get a very good deal," or Gorman at least "thought he didn't," which inspired him to make up such a song. Rather than remain quiet about the injustices he felt he suffered as a working-class man, Gorman created and shared a song that belittled his boss. It is in this context that this song allowed Gorman to assert some degree of authority. McElroy, however, is not the only employer to have mistreated Gorman and had a song created about himself.

While living on Prince Edward Island Larry Gorman also fished for Patrick O'Reilly. It is uncertain what O'Reilly did to have a song made against him, but the insulting song brought his manhood to the forefront of the attack. "The Gull Decoy," like many of Gorman's other satirical songs, is not in own voice, but that of the title character and O'Reilly is given the nickname "the gull decoy." "The Gull Decoy" mentions how his

wife's parents were "so delighted / She fell in love with the Gull Decoy," and that he was well respected "by every man, woman, girl, or boy" (Allaby, 1957: 5-6). This had changed, however, for several reasons.

The song then moves to discuss how he chose to raise his children. He sings, "I bring my children to my own notions, / The oldest of them I called him Ike, / I always intend to give them tuition, / To drink and swear and to kick and fight" (Allaby, 1957: 5-6). Such methods of child rearing do not fit Gorman's proper notions of fatherhood in which men raised sons to work the land. Furthermore, the Gull Decoy was Michael Riley's father and this song also mentions the same fight as the song made after Riley.[6] After the father was defeated by his son he lost control over his household. As the song continues O'Reilly mentions how he no longer spends Sundays at home; he takes dinner from his son Pat and then leaves for his nephew's, home where he is read the news. Once his control had been challenged and overthrown he could no longer spend his time in his home. After this incident in the song O'Reilly's life spirals downward through his neglecting his Christian duties, exhuming a deceased child to spite his brother, and setting a dog on an orphan boy (Allaby, 1957: 2). The loss of control, coupled with these horrible incidents had changed the perceptions of this once respected man.

Irving Frost (1957: 8) explained that Gorman left Prince Edward Island after he "made up a song about somebody down there and they…was goin' to do away with him, you know? 'Cause he made this fella' mad, whoever he was, and he threatened Larry." This story is connected to his song "The Gull Decoy" and men like Frost felt that such an attack on Patrick O'Reilly would have carried serious repercussions. This story is similar to the one Alden Mace told regarding "Donahue's Spree" and Gorman's departure from New Brunswick. Such traditions demonstrate the amount of power Gorman's songs had, or at least, were perceived to have had.The notion of Gorman fleeing Prince Edward Island, and even New Brunswick, because he could not defend himself would not be considered a positive masculine characteristic. While it is not certain why he left Prince Edward Island, Everett Price recalled that there was more money to be made in the Pine Tree State than in the

Maritimes. If Gorman was seeking economic stability in the States, than surely this move could be considered a masculine action.

William Main Doerflinger (1990: 215) presents another song that was supposedly made against one of Larry Gorman's bosses, Natty Lamb from the lower St. Croix. Doerflinger notes that, "Tomah Stream," like the songs made against McElroy and O'Reilly, "is a classic example of the satirical lumberwoods song aimed at a boss who has treated the songmaker badly…A sly song like this was the worst possible revenge." The song places Natty Lamb within Gorman's theme of dishonest men. The song, in the composers voice, claims Lamb said, "the chance for lumbering was the best I ever did see. / …'The provisions I'll provide for you, and if the very best kind!' / The cook will dish ' er up for you and have yer males on time." The crew, however, was "struck dumb" when they saw the provisions *they* needed to haul to camp and amongst the supplies were "three little loaves of bread as black as the Ace of Spades. / And a quarter of a pound of tea and an old bull's shoulder blade." Things only got worse as they reached the camp where they found "an old dead porcupine, full as large as me. / A piece of an old hemp carpet, 'twas more as thin as gauze, / This was the beddin' that Natty had for to keep out the frost." Lamb had been dishonest with his men and promised good provisions. Apparently, when Gorman found that the provisions were inadequate he made a song against his employer. The song maker was unwilling to remain quiet on the issue and voiced his opinion through verse.

Michael McElroy, Patrick O'Reilly, and Natty Lamb were three of Gorman's bosses who had been victim to his satirical songs but there is at least one more, Roderick McDonald, who was not safe. McDonald managed woods crews and river drivers along the Union River in Maine. He had a reputation for working his men hard, which most likely led Gorman to make a song with his name as the title. McDonald did not appreciate this honor.

In Gorman's song the river driver, who hired out men to help drive logs, is portrayed as dishonest; he keeps wages down by

"preaching up hard times" and when he first meets men he is kind, but once he and his employees are out of town, "his countenance is nothing but a frown." These criticisms do not appear too sharp, but Frost's story of Gorman's Christmas socks sheds light on how much power such a song was perceived to have had and how much their subjects disliked them.

Frost recalled that when Gorman was working along the Union River, his sister had sent the song maker a pair of red socks for Christmas. Shortly after sending the gift she sent her brother a letter asking if had received them. Having realized that he had not, he searched the camp and found them on the feet of Roderick McDonald. When confronted about the theft McDonald argued that the bright red socks were his own and would not hand them over. Once the song maker threatened to make another song about McDonald, however, he promptly sat down, removed the socks, and gave them to their rightful owner. This story highlights how men felt when Larry Gorman made songs about them. What Gorman lacked in social authority and physical abilities he made up in his song making abilities that allowed him to directly challenge other men and his bosses.

Not all of Gorman's songs about the men around him or his bosses were negative; Gorman's song, "It's a Wonder" (Ives, 1993: 130-31), praises one of his employers, Frederick Wellington Ayer of Eastern Manufacturing in Brewer. Not much of the song has survived but one verse praises Ayer for putting men to work: "A stranger comes along, he's soon put to work, / Be he Russian, Rumanian, Polander, or Turk; / There's no discrimination between Gentile or Jew, / It's really phenomenal what one man can do." Ayers's company put numerous men to work, and as Gorman's song makes it seem, treated them all fairly. While this was later in his life it appears that Gorman had finally found an employer who had not wronged or abused him.

Masculinity involves acting in a particular manner that both males and females can recognize as masculine. Through folksong Gorman created and displayed his own manhood; his songs not only

enabled him to comment on the behaviors of other men but to retaliate against his bosses who he had felt wronged him. Through this method, the song maker exerted some degree of authority in the workplace at a time when similar men endured poor treatment from their bosses to earn a wage. Gorman was unable to demonstrate authority through physical actions and so he used songs to display authority. The act of making songs about the behavior of other men, people who wronged him, and his bosses, allowed Larry Gorman to perform his own gender identity.

It is worth returning to Gorman's two broadsides, "The Old Pod Auger Days" and "The Workman." At the core of these two songs is the song maker's understanding of what the definition of manhood once was and where working-class men stood in his time. As already mentioned "The Old Pod Auger Days" claims that men had been "honest…athletic, brave, and strong" and these were qualities Gorman's modern man was lacking. Additionally, the song also highlights the transitional period away from a masculine goal of economic independence. Without this independence at the end of the nineteenth and into the twentieth century "The Workman" demonstrates that men were often mistreated and abused by their bosses. Larry Gorman could silently endure this treatment or speak out against his bosses; through folksong he chose the latter. By examining the masculine discourse and authority exerted in the folksongs of Larry Gorman, historians can work to better understand the complexities of working-class manhood at the turn into the twentieth century and include new voices into their discussions.

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[1] See Arthur Brittan, *Masculinity and Power,* 97-98 for a discussion of masculinity and its relation to fatherhood.

[2] For discussions of physical abilities see: Elliott J. Gorn, "Gouge and Bite, Pull Hair and Scratch": The social Significance of Fighting in the Southern Backcountry," *The American Historical Review,* vol. 90, No. 1 (February 1985). 18-43, Michael Kaplan, "New York City Tavern Violence and the Creation of a Working-Class Male Identity," *Journal of the Early Republic*, vol. 15, no. 4 (Winter, 1995), 591-617. For discussions on masculinity and occupational skills see: Stiles, "Martin Butler," Adam Tomczik, "'He-Men Could Talk to He-Men in He-Men Language': Lumberjack Work Culture in Maine and Minnesota, 1840-1940," *Historian*, vol. 70 no. 4, (Dec. 2008) 697-715.

[3] For a discussion of this transition see Ava Baron, "An 'Other' Side of Gender Antagonism at work: Men, Boys, and the Remasculization of Printers' Work, 1830-1920," in *Work Engendered: Toward a New History of American Labor,* ed. Ava Baron (Cornell University Press, Ithaca, 1991) 47-69;

[4] Margaret Conrad notes a shift in the economy "from wood, wind, and sail to iron, coal and rail" at the last half of the nineteenth century, which drove numerous peoples from the Maritime Provinces. This shift increasingly led to

wage dependency. See “Chroniclesof the Exodus: Myths and Realities of Maritime Canadians in the United States, 1870-1930." Eds. Stephen J. Hornsby Victor A. Konrad, and James J. Herlan. *The Northeastern Borderlands: Four Centuries of Interaction*. Fredericton, New Brunswick: Acadiensis Press, 1989. 97-119.

[5] Authority as masculinity can best be understood in terms of competitiveness. Arthur Brittan notes that "Those who control and own the means of production are in a much better position to impose their competitive power than those who only have their labour and power to sell." Brittan, *Masculinity and Power* (Basil Blackwell; Oxford, 1989), 93.

[6] They are related, however, the last names are different. This could be caused because of the oral tradition of passing songs on or because Gorman changed it to make it rhyme in his songs.