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"The Irish Servants of Barbados 1657-1661: Illuminations on Subjecthood, Religion, Nationality, and Labor"/ "Moral Dynamite: Support and Opposition for Nationalist Political Violence and Nationalist Activity among Irish-Americans in the 1880s"

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"The Irish Servants of Barbados 1657-1661: Illuminations on Subjecthood, Religion, Nationality, and Labor"/ "Moral Dynamite: Support and Opposition for Nationalist Political Violence and Nationalist Activity among Irish-Americans in the 1880s"

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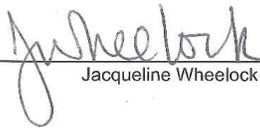
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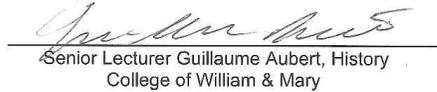
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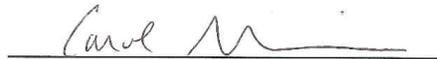


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ABSTRACT

The first paper, "The Irish Servants of Barbados, 1657-1661: Illuminations on Subjecthood, Religion, Nationality, and Labor" explores the Irish as subjects within the English Empire and their access to the immunities, rights, and tolerance of other subjects of non-Irish nationality. This paper attempts to demonstrate not only the various ways in which the Irish were conceived as subjects in the early modern English Atlantic but also the ways in which this subjecthood was articulated and deployed in often fluid and haphazard ways. This paper uses colonial Barbados in the late 1650s and early 1660s as a case-study and relies on laws that were passed during this time that relate to labor and to the Irish as well as colonial correspondence between the colony of Barbados and the metropole to illuminate the ways in which ideas and definitions about subjecthood differed and how attitudes in one arena informed attitudes in the other. The second paper, "Moral Dynamite: Support and Opposition for Nationalist Political Violence and Nationalist Activity among Irish-Americans in the 1880s" uses the activities of the Fenian dynamiters as a focus for an exploration of the attitudes regarding nationalist political activity and nationalist violence in the wider Irish-American community in the 1880s. This paper relies on newspaper coverage from a wide variety of secular, religious, middle- and working-class sections of Irish-America to uncover the ways in which the dynamiters were discussed and the ways in which nationalist activity and violence was discussed.

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The Irish Servants of Barbados 1657-1661: Illuminations on Subjecthood, Religion, Nationality, and Labor

Introduction:

In December 1667, William Lord Willoughby, the Governor of Barbados wrote to the Privy Council regarding the need for servant labor in the colony. Willoughby stated: "...There yet remained that I acquainte your Lordships, with the greate want of Servants in the Island, with the late War hath that occasion'd...If your Lordships shall open a trade in Scotland, for transportation of the people of that Nation hither, and prevent any accesse of Irish in the future, it will accommodate all the ends propounded, and abundantly gratify his Majestys good subjects heere..."¹ Although this correspondence from Willoughby is just outside the time frame that will be considered here, the sentiments expressed within it are useful for demonstrating how the Irish in Barbados were viewed by their fellow subjects in the Empire. As the request demonstrates, the Irish were subjects within the English Empire, but were conceived of as subjects very different from other groups, as the comparison with the Scottish that Willoughby makes conveys. Willoughby also states that the prevention of "any accesse of Irish" subjects would be pleasing for "his Majestys good subjects here," further invoking a feeling that while the Irish were seen as subjects within the English Empire, they fit into the Empire as subjects without necessarily the same access to immunities, rights, and tolerance as other subjects.

This essay will attempt to demonstrate the various ways in which the Irish were conceived as subjects in the early modern English Atlantic and what this tells us about the fluid and haphazard ways in which the notion of subjecthood was articulated and deployed

¹ Willoughby to Privy Council, Dec. 16, 1667. *Calendar of State Papers, Colonial America and West Indies: Volume 5, 1661-1668*. <http://www.british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/colonial/america-west-indies/vol5/pp520-534>

and how it often intersected with notions of labor, religion, and nationhood. This essay will use colonial Barbados in the late 1650s and early 1660s as a case-study and will look at both the laws that were passed in this time period that relate to labor and to the Irish and the colonial correspondence between the colony of Barbados and the metropole to illuminate the ways in which ideas and definitions about subjecthood differed and how attitudes in one arena informed attitudes in another. The period of the late 1650s and early 1660s is the period under consideration because of the sheer amount of formative and decisive events taking place in Ireland, England, and in the Caribbean at this time. This was truly an important juncture in the evolution of ideas of Englishness, Irishness, what the Empire should look like, and what subjecthood should look like. This was also truly a trans-Atlantic process that did not occur in a vacuum. Between the experience of colonizing Ireland, an experience which included the establishment of plantations and the constant defeat of "rebellious" groups, and the turbulent series of events that defined the Interregnum and Restoration period, ideas about subjecthood - what it meant to be a subject, who could hold the access to certain immunities and rights that being a subject included - were formed as were ideas about Englishness, national identity. It will be argued here that the attitudes held about the Irish were also very much informed by these events and experiences, as well as the developments occurring in neighboring Caribbean islands as the presence of powers from the Continent and their colonizing missions mobilized ideology and attitudes.

The attempt of this paper will be to show that there were a series of questionings about what subjecthood looked like in the late seventeenth century in the English Atlantic. The experience of the Irish in Barbados in the late 1650s and early 1660s demonstrates that the process of defining subjecthood was not a clear or straightforward process and that there were constantly changing definitions, informed by events in neighboring Caribbean colonies,

developments in England, and instructions from the metropole. Both subjecthood and Irishness, therefore, were never stable notions, but were framed and reframed at various moments in this period, demonstrating the lumpiness and the turbidity of colonial subjecthood and ideas of nationhood. Through law, colonial authorities attempted to streamline this process and give authority and legitimacy to their ideas regarding subjecthood, but these attempts were interrupted and disturbed by actions from the metropole, demonstrating how subjecthood and national identity were constantly subjected to trans-Atlantic wranglings.

The Irish in colonial Barbados in the last half of the seventeenth century is a relatively understudied topic that has not been subjected to close investigation by many historians. The bulk of the literature refers to the Irish in passing, as subjects of cruelty, oppression, and exploitation, in a wider history of the Caribbean or the English Empire. The close investigative work of the Irish in Barbados at this time is primarily the work of historians Hilary McD Beckles and Jenny Shaw. Beckles has done groundbreaking research on white indentured servants, including the Irish, and the relationship between race and labor in the early modern Caribbean, casting the Irish and other white indentured servants as the precursors to African slaves in Barbados and in other islands.² Shaw, in her work, has fought against the popular narrative of the Irish as only victims of brutality and unfairness by attempting to highlight the agency of the Irish at this historic juncture through their actions of resistance, emulation, and attempts at negotiation.³ Neither of these historians, however, have focused much on what the experience of the Irish in colonial Barbados can tell us about

² Hilary McD Beckles. *White Servitude and Black Slavery in Barbados, 1627-1715* (Knoxville: The University of Tennessee Press, 1989), 1-218.

³ Jenny Shaw, *Everyday Life in the English Caribbean: Irish, Africans, and the Construction of Difference* (Athens: University of Georgia Press, 2013), 1-185.

the nature of subjecthood at this time. This essay will attempt to address this issue with a discussion of how the situation of the Irish in colonial Barbados and competing discourses about the Irish as subjects sheds light on the instability of subjecthood, how subjecthood could be mobilized in different circumstances and how at various points it intersected with other notions, such as religious affiliation, servitude, and labor status. This topic is an important one because it ties into and possibly complicates the important and heavily studied issues of identity, how nations and nationalities are constructed, as well as ideological origins for empire.

In terms of structure, this essay will begin with a brief discussion on the circumstances which led to the Irish arriving in Barbados in a position of servitude and the English colonization of Ireland, with a focus on how the English experience in Ireland informed their attitudes towards the Irish. This essay will then move onto exploring a series of laws passed in Barbados from 1655-1661, and the colonial correspondence which accompanied them. On August 1, 1660, just two months after the Restoration of Charles II onto the British throne, the Minutes of the Council of Barbados described the reading of the new King's proclamations into the colony: "The King's Act of free and general pardon, indemnity, and oblivion," the minutes state, is "to be published throughout the island...Acts relating to the disarming of the Irish [are] to be repealed."⁴ The acts mentioned here refer to both an act passed during the administration of Governor Daniel Searle, referred to in *Acts Passed in the Island of Barbados* as "An Act to refrain the wandering of Servants; and to suppress the indolences of Scotch and Irish Servants"⁵ passed by the Assembly in November

⁴ Minutes of the Council of Barbados. Aug 1, 1660. *Calendar of State Papers Colonial Series, America and West Indies: Volume I 1574-1660*. <http://british-history.ac.uk/cal-state-papers/colonial/america-west-indies/vol11/pp486-489>

⁵ Barbados. *Acts Passed in the Island of Barbados from 1643 to 1762 inclusive*. London, 1764. *The Making of the Modern World*. pg. 467

1655, and a "four-point program of control" initiated by Governor Searle in September 1656 to limit the activity of Irish settlers and laborers on the island of Barbados.⁶ In response to the instruction from London to repeal the legislation disarming specifically and explicitly Irish in Barbados, the colonial assembly instead passed "An Act for the good governing of Servants, and ordaining the Rights between Masters and Servants" in 1661, which again targeted the Irish but in much less direct terms. These laws and their accompanying correspondence will be the laws and documents under consideration here and will be considered in chronological order and considered in the context of developments occurring on the continent, in the British Isles, and in the Caribbean. In the vocabulary and in the language utilized in colonial correspondence before and after the repeal of these discriminatory acts, and in the acts themselves, we can see many illuminations into the ideas of subjecthood in the early modern English Atlantic, the ways in which these ideas were articulated differently in the colony than in the metropole, and how the Irish fit in as "subjects" in this dynamic.

The origins of the Irish in Barbados and the experience of the English in Ireland:

English colonists first settled Barbados in 1627.⁷ While reliable immigration figures are lacking on the number of Irish in Barbados before the mid-1650s, by the mid-1650s, thousands of Irish men, women, and children had arrived in Barbados.⁸ Some of these Irish, contrary to the popular narrative of all the Irish in Barbados as "Cromwellian slaves," came

⁶ Hilary McD Beckles, "A Riotous and Unruly Lot," 517.

⁷ Richard Dunn, *Sugar and Slaves: The Rise of the Planter Class in the English West Indies, 1624-1713* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1972), 4.

⁸ Matthew C. Reilly, "The Irish in Barbados: Labor, Landscape, and Legacy," in *Caribbean Irish Connections: Interdisciplinary Perspective* ed. Alison Donnell et al (Kingston: The University of the West Indies Press, 2015), 113.

willingly as indentured servants in the years prior to the late 1640s.⁹ Many immigrants, however, did come unwillingly. Throughout Ireland, vagrants and criminals were commonly sent to exile in Barbados, as were political prisoners and Irish caught in military campaigns.¹⁰ The considerable bulk of these came with the Cromwellian invasion of Ireland in 1649 in an effort to put an end to an Irish uprising which had begun in 1641. Upon Cromwell's invasion, "several thousand" Irish rebels and Royalist sympathizers were "Barbadosed" for their roles in the rebellion, their Royalist sympathies, their religious beliefs, and even their low socioeconomic status.¹¹ 1641, in addition to providing the context in which the Irish were sent, in enormous numbers at least, to Barbados, also provides a context into understanding some of the negative attitudes held towards the Irish at the time. In October of 1641, Gaelic Irish landowners in the northeast of the island rose up against Protestant colonists, in the heavily planted province of Ulster.¹² Following these Ulster massacres, which led to the death of between 4,000-12,000 (estimates vary widely), the Irish Catholic upper classes formed the Catholic Confederation in the summer of 1642 which became the de facto government of Ireland, although constantly engaged in war in a conflict that was religious, ethnic, and also political with the added element of Parliamentarians and Royalists fighting for who would govern Ireland.¹³ The Irish Confederate Wars, as these are known, were only put to an end in 1653, following Cromwell's invasion in 1649 to end them and eliminate the threat of Irish rebels and Royalist supporters.¹⁴ The uprising and the long series of wars which it engendered left a bitter legacy of Irish treachery and rebellion in the

⁹ Ibid.

¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹ Shaw, *Everyday Life*, 17.

¹² Nicholas Canny, *Kingdom and Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World 1560-1800* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins Press, 1988), 113.

¹³ Ibid.

¹⁴ Ibid.

minds of both English settlers and English administrators, renewing the notion of the Irish as uncivilized and barbaric. The memories of 1641 were fresh in the minds of many English administrators in the Caribbean, who feared both potential uprisings among the Irish population and the brutal violence that would have to put down such an uprising.¹⁵ Paired with this, Shaw mentions that the "threat of war with Catholic Spain was ever present," and English officials worried that Irish servants would take advantage of imperial distractions to rise up in areas of English control, thus providing further reason for the English elite to have feelings of anxiety of mistrust.¹⁶

1657 Prohibitions on Irish Behavior:

The 1657 Prohibitions on Irish behavior, Governor Searle's "four-point program of control" were passed in an atmosphere of deteriorating servant-master relations.¹⁷ Although legislation designed to halt servant migration had been passed in the 1640s, most notably in the form of the failed 1644 "Act for the prohibition of landing of Irish persons," which specifically targeted the Irish by calling for the complete prohibition of Irish immigration into Barbados, the 1650s marked a serious turning point in the deterioration of servant-master relations.¹⁸ This deterioration has largely been attributed to the development of the sugar plantation monoculture that began to exclude ex-servants from participating effectively in the land market.¹⁹ As the value of arable land in Barbados "more than trebled in between 1645 and 1655 and most wage owners found the purchase of even small parts of marginal land beyond their reach," the ambition of servants to own their own land, an ambition held

¹⁵ Ibid.

¹⁶ Shaw, *Everyday Life*, 18.

¹⁷ Hilary McD Beckles, *A History of Barbados* (Cambridge: Cambridge UP, 2006), 37.

¹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹ Ibid., 39.

dear to most, increasingly appeared out of reach.²⁰

While this explanation goes some way towards accounting for the attitude the planter elite had towards servants at the time and towards explaining why the governing elite might have adopted a "four-point program of control," there must be an added element of "Irishness" here, for the 1657 Prohibitions specifically targeted the behavior of Irish and not just servants, and the rebellious and subversive servant activity on record involves Irish servants, not just servants. This worsening in relations between servants and masters can be seen in the "servant revolts" described in the minutes of the Barbados Council. In the Minutes of the Barbados Council, in 1655, for example, Governor Searle described "several Irish servants and negroes out in rebellion in the Thicketts and thereabout...making a mockery of the law."²¹ The council, in response, ordered Lt. Col. John Higginbottom of the St. Phillip parish militia to raise Col. Henry Hawley's regiment and "follow the said servants and runaway negroes...secure or destroy them."²² In July 1656, Governor Searle again ordered Higginbottom to look into a case of a "riotous and unruly lot" of Irish servants on the estate of Robert Margott in the St. Philip parish.²³ Beckles finds that the investigation "led to several arrests and the imprisonment of five Irishmen who had declared themselves opposed to the 'furtherance of the English nation.'"²⁴ And in September 1657, the council "heard the petition of Edward Hollingsheade, who stated that 'his Irish servants, Reage Donnohu and Walter Welch, have rebelliously and mutinously behaved themselves towards him, their said master, and their mistress, whereby they have been in fear of their lives by the

²⁰ Ibid.

²¹ Beckles, A "Riotous and Unruly," pg. 515

²² Ibid.

²³ Ibid.

²⁴ Ibid.

said servants."²⁵

It is clear that, by the end of September 1657, both Governor Searle and the colonial elite of Barbados were convinced that the treachery and rebelliousness of Irish servants, and not just servants in general, needed to be addressed. To do this, Governor Searle issued a public proclamation and passed a "four-point program of control," the 1657 Prohibitions on Irish behavior. The text of the preamble to his public proclamation and the Prohibitions are revealing for what they disclose about how subjecthood was conceived in the English colonial environment of the latter half of the seventeenth century. In the public proclamation Governor Searle delivered, the preamble states:

It hath been taken notice that several of the Irish nation, freemen, and women, who have no certain place of residence, and as vagabonds refusing to labor, or put themselves into any service, but contriving in a dissolute, leud, and slothful kind of life, put themselves to evil practices, as pilfering, thefts, robberies, and other felonious acts for their subsistency, are endeavoring by their example and persuasion to draw servants unto them of the said nation to the same idle, wicked course;

A few of the word choices and phrases here are particularly illuminating. To begin with, Searle refers to the Irish as being of the "Irish nation," rather than as part of the English empire. Likewise, Searle mentions that they are "endeavoring" to "draw" in servants of that "said nation." The use of the word "nation" in an imperial context such as this opens up a whole host of questions regarding the extent to which there could be "nations" in an empire or what it meant to belong to a distinct "nation." The use of the word "nation" has been found in other rhetoric regarding English colonies in the Atlantic, such as in the case of the Jews in English Surinam following the loss of the colony to the Netherlands in 1667.²⁶ An

²⁵ Ibid.

²⁶ Jacob Selwood, "Left Behind: Subjecthood, Nationality, and the Status of Jews after the Loss of English Surinam," *Journal of British Studies* 54:3 (2015), 579.

English delegation of commissioners was sent to Surinam in 1675 charged with "the removal of the king's subjects," remnants of the English colony before its loss to the Dutch just eight years earlier who claimed a group of settlers, Jewish settlers, that the Dutch did not consider to be under the Crown's purview.²⁷ This delegation stated that it sought to remove "His Majesty's subjects in Surinam as well the Hebrew nation as English."²⁸ In his study of this event, Jacob Selwood highlights the tendency for the English to invoke multiple nationalities when discussing subjecthood, a tendency the Dutch did not have.²⁹ At this time of composite monarchy, Selwood states, "the undifferentiated language of subjecthood present" that "evoked multiple nationalities...bolstered, rather than challenged, subject status, for in Surinam, as in the British Isles, members of different nations could be subjects of the same king."³⁰ The Dutch, by contrast, Selwood claims, "would conflate subjecthood with nationality, arguing that only members of the English nation could be evacuated as subjects of an English monarch."³¹ The willingness to include and claim the Jewish settlers as "members of a Hebrew nation" but "English born" and as subjects with full rights and privileges as any English person, seems to have been hastened by imperial competition and rivalry, as the Jewish subjects in Surinam were seen as vital for the survival of Surinam as a colony because they were experienced planters.³² This also demonstrates the ways in which labor intersected with these attitudes towards subjecthood. The Irish, as servants and not experienced planters that would be productive to the furtherance of Empire, were not seen as a valuable "nation" as the Jewish were considered by English officials. The willingness to

²⁷ Ibid., 578

²⁸ Ibid.

²⁹ Ibid.

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Ibid.

claim and welcome the Jewish community, moreover, demonstrates how these notions of subjecthood were inconsistent and unstable - English officials were more than willing to embrace the Jewish community as subjects in Surinam (a failing colony) at this very specific time for their experience as planters, but these are circumstances that would not exist in all colonies at all times. In another geographic location, without the circumstances of imperial rivalry with external powers and without the survival of the colony at stake, the Jewish community would perhaps not have received these terms of subjecthood at all from imperial officials, demonstrating that this process was not at all straightforward or consistent.

It is telling, as well, that Searle only mentions the Irish in this context as a group who are "vagabonds refusing to labor" or as people leading a "dissolute, leud, and slothful kind of life" and resorting to "evil practices" such as "pilfering, thefts, robberies." Here, as well, labor and productivity seem tied with ideas of subjecthood, and the previous experience of the English in Ireland is shown. The use of "vagabond" here seems reminiscent of English commentaries on Irish practices of transhumance used in the early years of English conquest as justification for the English plantation and colonization of Ireland. Edmund Spenser, for example, remarked on the ways that the Irish lived for "the most part of the yeare in boolies, pasturing upon the mountaine, and waste wilde places," and "grow thereby the more barbarous, and live more licentiously than they could in townes."³³ As Jenny Shaw argues, English observers in Ireland, such as Spenser, often "misinterpreted Irish practices of transhumance" as "nomadism" and felt that the supposed Irish propensity for "land mismanagement and unwillingness to live in more urban spaces" confirmed that the Irish were uncivil and "unsuitable stewards of their country and its resources."³⁴ Searle's comment

³³ Edmund Spenser, *A View of the Present State of Ireland* (E. Partridge: Scholartis Press, 1934) pg. 55

³⁴ Shaw, *Everyday Life*, pg. 27

that they rely on "pilfering, thefts, robberies, and other felonious acts for their subsistency" seems connected to stereotypical characterization of the Irish being unable to manage resources and land, as do the stereotypical characterizations Searle makes of the Irish being "lewd" and "slothful."

Additionally, Searle claims that these Irish are persuading others of their "said nation" to follow their example and also embark on an "idle, wicked course" which gives interesting illuminations into how Searle and other of the colonial governing elite may have seen the Irish as forming a subversive group in society, almost certainly informed by the recent end to the Irish uprising of 1641 and the English experience in having to put down rebellions throughout its process of colonization.

Searle continues in the preamble:

of and information having been given that divers of them have late uttered threatening words and menacing language to several of the inhabitants of this place, and demeaned themselves in a very preemptory and insolent way of carriage and behavior; and some of them have endeavored to secure themselves with arms, and others are now forth in rebellion and refuse to come in, by which it appears that they could be in a condition of power, or had opportunity, they would soon put some wicked and malicious design into execution.

This second part of the preamble is revealing as well for it describes the Irish as having been known in colonial Barbadian society for their "threatening words and menacing language" and for an attitude that is "preemptory and insolent." Searle speaks of previous and current attempts for the Irish to "secure themselves with arms" or engage in "rebellion." With this language it is clear that these instances of indolence or outright resistance are not instances of servant-master tension or crises of labor, but instead stem from the Irish themselves as being a part of a different nation. If these were only conditions of labor tensions, Searle might have mentioned the fact that there are servants and laborers who

belong to other groups than the Irish, or other "nations," but instead Searle's explicit mention of only the Irish makes it clear that there is something else going on in these rebellions to make the Irish complicit. Additionally, Searle states that if the Irish were in a "condition of power, or had opportunity, they would put some wicked and malicious design into execution." With this statement, it is clear that Searle and other members of the Barbados governing elite are convinced that the Irish are interested in a different "design" for the colony of Barbados than the English are, and are not interested in furthering the English plans for empire, but actually, are interested in undermining them. Unlike the Jewish community of Surinam, willing to aid in the survival and success of the colony, the Irish here, again almost certainly derived from the past experiences of Irish colonization, are portrayed as a domestic enemy, an enemy within.

Jenny Shaw argues that "arguments made by English elites in the 1650s that privileged Protestant Christianity as the arbiter of freedom were later displaced by reasoning that had a more racially motivated analysis at heart."³⁵ By this, Shaw means that the negative traits and characteristics held were result from race, they were inherent, and not able to be changed or reformed. Shaw points out that this shift took place in stages and that there was "no strict progression from one position to the other."³⁶ Shaw states that before this racially motivated analysis took hold, English lawmakers felt that cultural difference could be overcome and "Irish Catholics might adopt the practices of Protestants."³⁷ As elites "realized the dangers that such ideologies [of being able to reform the Irish and lift them to a more equal status of civility] posed" and as the colonial elite needed to "maintain their hierarchy of labor" with an "underclass who could be subjected to various degrees of bondage," Jenny

³⁵ Shaw, *Everyday Life*, 27.

³⁶ Ibid.

³⁷ Ibid.

Shaw argues that this shift occurred. A turning point for this supposed change in the belief of the Irish as able to be reformed or civilized also appears to be 1641. As Nicholas Canny argues, in Ireland in 1641, the "settlers were taken by surprise by natives who, they [the settlers] had convinced themselves, were becoming more neighborly, and...the colonists were shocked at how much the natives had learned from them both in political sophistication and military skills."³⁸ With 1641, Canny sees the English settlers as shelving the "question of reforming the natives, who, it was now believed, had no choice but to become absorbed into the settler community or to wither away to insignificance."³⁹ The text in Daniel Searle's public proclamation seems to reflect this shift well - the characterizations of the Irish seem to apply to all Irish and seem to be a result of them belonging to this "nation," and there is no mention here of Irish practices or traits being malleable or able to change following English imitation.

Following Searle's public proclamation, the government adopted a "four-point program of control." First, Irish servants "found off their plantation without a 'pass,' 'ticket,' or 'testimonial' signed by their master or mistress were to be arrested and conveyed by any English person to the nearest constable, who was empowered to whip and return them to their plantation."⁴⁰ Second, Irish freemen or women "found about the island who could not give a good count of themselves were to be arrested by constables and, 'if they be of no fixed abode,' put 'to labor for one whole year on some plantation."⁴¹ Third, it became illegal to for anyone "'to sell any kind of arms or ammunition whatsoever to any of the said nation."⁴² And fourth, any Irish person "found in possession of arms or ammunition, 'either on their

³⁸ Canny, *Kingdom and Colony*, 29.

³⁹ Ibid.

⁴⁰ Beckles, "A 'Riotous and Unruly,'" 518.

⁴¹ Ibid.

⁴² Ibid.

persons or in their houses, shall be whipped and jailed at the Governor's pleasure."⁴³

1661 "An Act for the good governing of Servants, and ordaining the Rights Between Masters":

We can also see, at this time, the Irish intertwined in a tension between the political system that had existed during the Protectorate and the one that was emerging with the Restoration. As Hilary McD Beckles has written in a *A History of Barbados*, the Barbadian planter elite was determined to enjoy "a maximum degree of self-government within the imperial structure."⁴⁴ According to Beckles, this self-government and non-interference was something that the planter elite had achieved at the beginning of the 1640s but that was beginning to be threatened following the news of the execution of Charles I in January 1649.⁴⁵ The Cavalier-Roundhead conflict, for many, threatened the neutralist stance of the colony as royalist sympathizers expressed "their opposition to parliamentary authority and advocated that colonists should reject the trade restrictions principles of Cromwell and practice free trade as formerly" they had done.⁴⁶ As a major factor in the prospering of the colony had been in its free-trade policy, mainly with Dutch merchants, many in the planter elite were opposed to seeing this interfered with by parliamentary decree.⁴⁷ In May 1650, the General Assembly of the colony voted for the governorship of Francis Lord Willoughby, "a move which confirmed that Cavaliers had succeeded in breaking Roundhead political power," and quickly started deporting many Roundheads and confiscating Roundhead

⁴³ Ibid.

⁴⁴ Beckles, *A History of Barbados*, 31.

⁴⁵ Beckles, *A History of Barbados*, 32.

⁴⁶ Ibid.

⁴⁷ Ibid., 31.

property.⁴⁸

In response, Parliament dispatched a military fleet to "subordinate the colony" in light of these distressing developments, and lacking the military power to conquer the royalist militia of the colony, blockaded the colony until the pressures of commercial isolation led to planter elite to accept the terms of the Parliamentary fleet.⁴⁹ Beckles highlights the fact that Barbadians agreed to terms "favorable to themselves" by consenting to recognize the rule of Parliament but in return for "continued self-government, free trade, and a restoration of confiscated properties" under the leadership of Governor Daniel Searle.⁵⁰ The Barbadian planter elite, however, saw another hit to their self-government with the Restoration government of Charles II. The aforementioned instructions from London to repeal the acts disarming the Irish in Barbados appear to be just the beginning of an era of increased interference from London in the affairs of the colony. The atmosphere of the beginning years of Charles II's reign was marked by increasing mercantile provisions, trade laws aiming at bringing the Barbados economy under fuller control of the metropole (such as requiring planters to send their sugar and other cargoes to England in English ships and purchase enslaved labor only from English traders) and "attempts to curtail many of the political rights which Barbadians won during the Commonwealth."⁵¹

In 1661, the same year the colonial assembly passed "An Act for the good governing of Servants, and ordaining the Rights between Masters and Servants," Charles II also "took it upon himself to fill the two vacant offices of Secretary and Provost-Marshal in Barbados," an action that was seen as "a direct infringement" of the rights and privileges of Barbadians,

⁴⁸ Ibid., 32.

⁴⁹ Ibid.

⁵⁰ Ibid.

⁵¹ Beckles, *A History of Barbados*, 33.

as offices had always been filled by the islanders themselves, leading the Council and Assembly to protest.⁵² Vincent Harlow, writing a history of Barbados in 1926, articulated this shift in political systems well: "In political organization, the tendency had been to delegate to the colonies a large measure of local independence within the Commonwealth. By a series of concessions, Barbados has been gradually released from imperial control in her internal affairs. With Cromwell, replaced by Charles II, such status would have been regarded by the planters as ideal. But the Restoration entailed the reestablishment of proprietary government, and increasing control of the island which hampered its development as a distinct community."⁵³

These tensions may be helpful in understanding at least some of the motivations behind the passing in September 1661 of the "Act for the good governing of Servants, and ordaining the Rights between Masters and Servants" soon after the instructions were received from the metropole in August 1660 to repeal the acts specifically disarming the Irish in Barbados. In part, the passing of this act so soon after the instructions sent from London appears to be an act of resistance among the elite in Barbados. It also, in part, appears to highlight that to many of the governing elite in Barbados, the potential for treachery and subversion among the Irish, was still a considerable threat that needed to be addressed. It is clear, however, by the very passage of the act that the Barbados colonial elite felt that they had been unsuccessful in halting the instances of servant insubordination among the Irish and the tense labor relations that existed in the colony.

While no explicit mention of the Irish is made in this legislation, the fact that it is addressing those "turbulent and dangerous spirits" the Irish were thought to possess seems

⁵² Vincent T. Harlow, *A History of Barbados* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1926), 33.

⁵³ *Ibid.*

clear and apparent within the act itself.⁵⁴ This act, covering most aspects of servant life, was especially explicit on the topic of resistance, stating, for example, that any servant who shall "lay violent hands upon his or her mistress, or overseer, or any person put over them in authority to govern them, and being thereof convicted before any of His Majesty's Justice of the Peace shall serve one whole year after his or her time."⁵⁵ While there are no exact numbers for the amount of Irish servants at this time as compared to the amount of servants in general, which would be helpful in providing a gauge for which the term "servant" could be synonymous with "Irish," it is clear that the presence of Irish servants in the general composition of the servant population was considerable (Beckles describes the amount of Irish servants in Barbados in the 1650s as "large").⁵⁶ The population was considerable enough that the Barbadian government made many attempts and requests to the metropole (such as the correspondence Willoughby sent in December 1667 demonstrates) to remedy the amounts of Irish servants being sent in comparison to other non-Irish white servants and it would be an accurate assumption to presume that in making restrictions and prescriptions for servant behavior, the colonial assembly was, by extension, also making restrictions and prescriptions on Irish behavior.⁵⁷

The idea that this act was passed in replacement of the 1657 prohibitions which the Barbados assembly was forced to repeal following instructions from London is further supported by the fact that some of the provisions that served to limit Irish behavior are repeated in very similar language, only different in absence of any explicit mention of the

⁵⁴ Barbados. "An Act for the good governing of Servants, and ordaining the Rights Between Masters," in *Acts, passed in the island of Barbados from 1643, to 1762, inclusive*, Richard Hall (ed.), 44.

⁵⁵ *Ibid.*

⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

⁵⁷ Beckles, "A 'Riotous and Unruly,'" 519.

Irish. In the 1657 prohibitions, for example, the first limitation, as discussed above, stipulated that any Irish servants found away from their plantation of residence without a "pass,' 'ticket,' or 'testimonial' signed by their master or mistress were to be arrested and conveyed by any English person to the nearest constable, who was empowered to whip or return them to their plantation."⁵⁸ The 1661 "Act for the good governing of Servants, and ordaining the Rights between Masters and Servants," in contrast, states that "and whatsoever Servants, or Servants shall, willfully or obstinately absent him, or herself out of his, or her Master, or Mistress's Plantation, or service, either on *Saturdays*, *Sundays*, or any other days or times, not having License, or Ticket in writing, under his Master, Mistress, or Overseer's hand, for the same" shall serve terms to be judged by the Justice of the Peace for their absence.⁵⁹ This element of the 1661 act, which also speaks of the need for a "ticket" for servants found off of their plantation of residence, seems to demonstrate that the Barbadian elite, forced to repeal prohibitions on behavior for the Irish specifically, were attempting to achieve the same aim in the 1661 Act as in the 1657 prohibitions. While they could not specifically mention Irish servants following the August 1661 instructions from the Restoration government to repeal acts disarming the Irish, they could make a prohibition on the behavior of servants in generally that would, by extension, apply to the Irish and go some way towards countering the Irish ability to conspire and be subversive and treacherous. Here, as with the 1657 Prohibitions, we see an attempt to articulate the idea that the Irish should have a different set of rights and privileges as subjects of the English Empire, and that these privileges and rights are not shared by all subjects.

While the law makes no mention explicitly of Irish servants, it does specifically

⁵⁸ Ibid.

⁵⁹ Barbados. "An Act," 45.

mention rights that exist for English servants. For instance, the law states, again with a reference to the idea of a "nation," that "no person whatsoever shall presume to bring into this Island any children of the *English* Nation as Servants under the age of fourteen, unless they can provide a good certificate, or an Indenture, or Writing from the principal person of the parish where the said children has lived, that it is done with their consent, or with the consent, or at the request of the parents of such a child; the age of such Child, or Servant to be judged by inspection."⁶⁰ This act is also illuminating for its explicit description of the illegal (unconsented to) servitude and transportation of people from *England*. The second paragraph of the act begins:

And whereas it hath been an ill custom and usage of divers merchants, and other persons coming to this Island, indirectly and by delusive means and practices, to obtain Men and Women on board of ships in *England*, so cause them to be transported hither, and are here disposed of to serve according to the custom of the Country, having no Indenture, Covenant, or Contract for the fame: It is therefore hereby further enacted and ordained, by the Authority aforesaid, That from and after publication hereof, all persons to indirectly sent or brought over, the Master of them, or persons to whom they are consigned, or who are concerned therein, having no Covenant, Indenture, or Contract, made in writing, or other vertabl agreement, by him, or them to be proved, by the oath of one or more witnesses, or by the Servants confession, that such Servant came with his own consent or knowledge; that all such persons so brought over, have hereby power, and are at liberty to implead the persons who brought them, or to whom they are consigned, according to the Laws of *England*, for their freedom, and to recover their damages and satisfaction for such wrongful and injurious dealing.⁶¹

The text in this section of the act is extremely revealing to our understandings of late seventeenth century categories of difference and hierarchies within subjecthood especially in

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⁶¹ Ibid.

light of the considerable transportations of Irish servants and indentured labor in the Cromwellian period after the 1641 uprising in Ireland. The servants transported from England, and England only, this act specifies, are able to "implead the persons who brought them" and "recover their damages and satisfaction for such wrongful and injurious dealing." The servants transported from England, and England only, were the victims of "wrongful and injurious dealing." The servants from England have the right to recourse and an articulation of the rights and privileges they hold as subjects, while those not from the "English nation" do not.

It seems that this concept of "nation" is again invoked when it serves explicitly to defend the rights of people belonging to the English "nation." The very need to exert this legislation on servitude, as well, with its laws pertaining to resistance against masters seems to have a direct link with the ideas discussed above, articulated by Governor Searle, that the Irish were endeavoring to "secure themselves with arms" and engage in rebellion, and this legislation appears to be a clear attempt to pre-empt that. In addition to appearing like an action of resistance on the part of the colonial elite towards the imperial metropole, the passing of this act might also say something about the endurance of the tradition for self-government among the elite in Barbados. The passing of this act might signify that the influence of almost nine years of self-government and non-interference between 1640 and 1649 and the brief periods of self-government and non-interference under Cromwell were so strong that the tradition was able to withstand, to some extent, the centralizing policies of the Restoration government.

Conclusion:

The experience of the Irish in Barbados in the late seventeenth century is just one

part of a larger story in a broad history of English, and then British, empire building in the Atlantic and elsewhere. In the English exploration, colonization, and settlement along the Atlantic, the English made claims on massive amounts of people and brought in massive influxes of people, such as the Irish after 1641, influxes from both England and areas that had also been subjected to colonial designs, such as Ireland. Although the period considered here is just one particular moment in a larger story, it is part of the broader development of the ideas about English subjecthood and citizenship that would be throughout the English and British Atlantic in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries. As this essay has attempted to demonstrate, the early modern English notions of subjecthood were heavily contested and in flux at this period, subjected to wranglings and debate from colonial authorities, officials in the metropole, and even local authorities. These concepts were never clear and subject to constantly changing definitions. While the attitude towards the Irish as subjects was heavily informed by the experience of English conquest and colonization in Ireland, attitudes were then further informed by events occurring in England, Ireland, on the European continent, and in neighboring Caribbean islands where European presence was felt by elites in Barbados and officials in London. As an imperial power with colonial designs and as a tripartite kingdom consisting itself, the notion of subjecthood had to be deployed and articulated. What subjecthood meant, however, and what it meant for different groups of people was subject to constant tensions and inconsistencies in its framing, as the Irish experience in Barbados demonstrates. Despite efforts to streamline the process by enshrining a particular definition of the Irish as subjects into law by the colonial assembly in Barbados, this definition was wrangled as the Restoration government instructed the assembly to repeal it. This was then followed by a subsequent effort to define the protections and the access to rights available to the Irish in the 1661 "An Act for the good governing of Servants and

ordaining the Rights between Masters and Servants," an act which the assembly, unable to specifically target the Irish following instructions from the Restoration government, targeted them nevertheless by creating an act pertaining to servants, which most of the Irish were, and by making explicit mention of the rights and protections afforded to those of the "English nation." The sequence of events in which the colonial assembly provided a particular definition of subjecthood and how the Irish fit into it in the 1657 Prohibitions on Irish Behavior, the Restoration government required the acts within it to be repealed, and the colonial government subsequently attempted to target the Irish again by a 1661 law pertaining to servants demonstrates the ways in which the conception of the privileges and rights of the Irish were continuously up for debate. These laws and the colonial correspondence, in many ways, appear schizophrenic in aims and ideas, and we can see a struggle over ideas of difference, ideas sometimes carried over from Europe and sometimes specific to life in the Caribbean, and many combining elements of both. The designation of the Irish as subjects, and what this meant, was, therefore, was a turbid process, as was what colonial subjecthood meant more generally. In addition to the other factors coloring the attitudes towards the Irish as subjects for colonial authorities and English officials, the idea of subjecthood also appears to intersect with other factors such as labor, religion, and nationhood. It was, thus, not enough for the Irish to be born in a colony of England and transported to a colony of England. Their status as subjects was up for debate because of factors such as their labor status, what they could bring to the English Empire in terms of productivity and service to the colony, their different religious status, and their previous experience at resisting English colonial designs in their homeland, seen as a capacity for treachery. And as the case of the Jewish community in Surinam demonstrates, the willingness to claim subjects, declare them "English born," and state their rights as the same

as an English person was subject to the context of a particular colony at a particular time. This particular episode in the history of the early modern English Atlantic is not only important in demonstrating how fluid, turbulent, and in flux the notion of subjecthood was at the time, and how inconsistently it was articulated and deployed, but in also demonstrating the importance of periphery and colonial experiences in the history of empires. In addition to Ireland being one of the earliest lands to feel the initial thrust of English expansion and conquest, the Irish experience in Barbados was a formative one in which the formulations and subsequent re-formulations of what subjecthood looked like and what it meant would then be deployed throughout the English Atlantic through into another century. As this episode illustrates, the experiences of the Irish colonial enterprise and the debates and developments in the small island colony of Barbados left formative marks on concepts and definitions that were integral to the England and then the British Empire, the concepts of subjecthood and, through the categorization of difference in the Irish subject population, the concept of Englishness.

"Moral Dynamite:"⁶²Support and Opposition for Nationalist Political Violence and Nationalist Activity among Irish-Americans in the 1880s

On the afternoon of January 24, 1885, three homemade bombs exploded almost simultaneously in the chamber of the House of Commons, the crypt of Westminster Hall, and the armory of the Tower of London. The episode, orchestrated by an Irish-American revolutionary nationalist group known as the Fenian dynamiters, was called "Dynamite Saturday" in the press.⁶³ On July 17, 1974, and on March 30, 1979, the Irish Republican Army (IRA) would do the exact same thing, with a bomb going off at the Tower in July 1974 and a car bomb detonating at the House of Commons parking lot in March of 1979.⁶⁴ While the actions of these late-nineteenth century terrorists seem drastic and unprecedented, the Fenian dynamiters are a vastly understudied group, despite the parallels their activities have with Irish nationalist groups to follow.

Throughout the 1880s, with most of their activity taking place between 1881 and 1885, the Fenian dynamiters embarked on an urban bombing campaign of the British mainland orchestrated from their safe haven in the United States. They conceived of their

⁶² "Moral Dynamite," *Catholic Mirror*, Baltimore, January 20, 1883.

⁶³ Shane Kenna, *War in the Shadows: the Irish-American Fenians who Bombed Victorian Britain* (Kildare: Irish Academic Press, 2014), 2

⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

campaign as a type of asymmetric warfare which targeted economic, symbolic, governmental, and infrastructural sites throughout Great Britain. Although numerous bombs failed to explode and many of their bombing attempts have been written off as failure, the campaign had many startling moments, bringing fear into the hearts of many and capturing news headlines across the Atlantic. The radical actions of this group begs questions of representativeness: How common were the sentiments of these bombers throughout the Irish-American community in the late nineteenth century? Were they widely supported or widely condemned? Do the supporters or non-supporters of these dynamiters tell us anything about the debates occurring in Irish-America regarding Irish nationalism and Irish independence?

The Fenian movement is widely considered to be the greatest and most influential revolutionary tradition in Ireland's history, and, because of this, the movement in Ireland has been written on widely and by a range of scholars. The American faction of the Fenian movement, which embarked on this bombing campaign, has been, by contrast, only studied in detail by two scholars. The works of these two scholars comprise the two monographs which exist on the Fenian dynamiters. Shane Kenna, the first scholar, examines the dramatic events of the dynamiters in detail with an aim to tell the tale of how the British state responded to fighting an "adversary in the shadows," arguing that the emergence of the British Secret Service and many other tunnels of British terrorist defense formed to combat the dynamiters.⁶⁵ Niall Whelehan, the other scholar who has studied the dynamiters, attempts to place the dynamiters into the context of a transnational milieu of radical late-nineteenth century activity. Linking the actions of the dynamiters to revolutionary violent actions, such as the assassination of Tsar Alexander II with homemade bombs and the talk of dynamite

⁶⁵ Ibid., 5.

attacks among Italian anarchists, Whelehan's monograph is an effort to demonstrate that, in many settings, revolutionary organizations such as the Fenian dynamiters abandoned insurrection in favor of "urban guerrilla warfare and assassinations" in the final decades of the nineteenth century.⁶⁶ Despite these two studies on the dynamiters, the role of the Fenian dynamiters in the broader Irish-American community has not been examined to date. Both Kenna and Whelehan make passing comments about the dynamiters being met with opposition in the wider Irish nationalist movement, but the nature of this opposition, the groups from which the opposition came, or what this opposition says about the Irish-American community in the late nineteenth century has not been studied.⁶⁷

To answer the questions of representativeness, a range of Irish-American news publications were examined to gauge how Irish-American presses talked about the role of the Irish-American community in helping achieve Irish independence and the route that Irish independence should take, and to determine how the activities of the dynamiters were depicted. The presses cover a variety of readerships, from working-class to more prosperous, and from Catholic to secular, in the years of dynamite activity from 1881-1886. The overriding questions when each publication was examined were: 1) Does the publication believe that Irish-Americans should play a role in securing independence for Ireland? 2) If the publication believes that there is a role for Irish-America to play in Irish independence, what role does this look like and what route does independence take? and 3) Does the publication speak negatively or positively about the dynamiters' activities following major dynamite attacks?

Where there is a lack of literature on the dynamiters, there is an abundance of

⁶⁶ Niall Whelehan, *The Dynamiters: Irish Nationalism and Political Violence in the Wider World, 1867-1900* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2012), 4

⁶⁷ Kenna, *War in the Shadows*, 4; Whelehan, *The Dynamiters*, 5.

literature on Irish-American nationalism and Irish-American immigrant communities in the nineteenth century. Among this vast literature, there are two general historical narratives which intersect with the press coverage examined in this paper. The first narrative has already been mentioned and has been espoused by Whelehan and Kenna. That narrative states that the Fenian dynamiters were a marginalized and ridiculed group, a small, fringe band on the edges of Irish-American society, with little support from any considerable numbers in Irish America. The second narrative that relates to the questions posed and publications examined is a common description, most clearly articulated by Thomas Brown and Eric Foner, which claims that Irish-American nationalism, was a working-class phenomenon, "a class movement," in the words of Foner, a direct manifestation of the experiences of the unskilled and poorly paid Irish worker.⁶⁸ This view can be seen in Brown's statement that "[i]n England and America, Irish nationalism was largely the cause of the poor - those, according to the *Irish World*, who felt 'heavily the shame of the disgraced condition to which our race is reduced...'"⁶⁹ In this rendering, it is the Irish-American working class that spoke of nationalism and a role to be played by Irish America in securing Irish independence, and not the more middle class, more wealthy, or more devotionally Catholic sections of Irish-America.⁷⁰ Nationalist tracts have been characterized as secular and anti-clerical, and Brown has stated that Irish-American nationalists were unconcerned with the opinions of the Church, claiming that "[t]he American Irish, having acquired the aggressiveness of their new country, were less concerned with the beliefs of the clergy than

⁶⁸ Eric Foner, "Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism in the Gilded Age: The Land League and Irish-America," in *Marxist Perspectives 2* (Summer 1978), 16.

⁶⁹ Thomas Brown, "The Origins and Character of Irish-American Nationalism," *The Review of Politics* 18 (1956): 335.

⁷⁰ *Ibid.*, 347.

the Irish at home."⁷¹

With a close examination of the prominent news publications in Irish-America, however, it appears that neither of these narratives are so neat. In at least three prominent and widely circulated Irish-American presses, the actions of the dynamiters are either defended, supported, or reported about in non-negative, non-pejorative terms. This seems to demonstrate issues with the claim that the dynamiters faced widespread opposition from the wider Irish-American community. In at least three Irish-American publications in which the readership consists of devotionally Catholic and non-working class populations, there is evidence that Irish-American nationalism was indeed not confined to the Irish-American working class. In all publications considered, the presses clearly believed that the Irish-American community had a role to play in helping secure Irish independence. Moreover, in the presses that are Catholic and include non-working class membership, the tactics espoused for achieving Irish independence were continuously shifting, with occasional support even for the tactics of the dynamiters.

While historians, such as Foner and Brown, love to examine the ways in which distinct blocs of groups in the Irish-American community supported, or failed to support, nationalism and violence, the publications studied here demonstrate that support and opposition for the Fenian dynamiters was fluid and crossed religious and socioeconomic boundaries. In all of the publications considered, the complications of making any concrete characterizations about allegiances through religious affiliation or socio-economic grouping are made clear. A close reading of the publications shows that no publication or group can be viewed as specifically violent or non-violent, or as specifically radical or conservative. Despite the tendencies to break the community into blocs with set loyalties, many of the

⁷¹ Brown, pg. 347

publications examined make it clear that the situation is more complicated than this with support in these publications shifting, overlapping, and being modified during the time period considered, and with support and opposition for the dynamiters cutting across the lines of class and religion.

In order to complicate the two narratives outlined above, the structure of the paper will be divided into two main sections. In the first section, the publications the *Irish World*, *The Boston Globe*, and *The Irish American* will be considered. This section will examine the way in which each publication speaks about events occurring in Ireland, the role of the Irish-American community in helping secure independence, and the actions of the dynamiters to conclude that there was considerable support for the dynamiters in the Irish-American community. The second section will examine diocesan presses and more devotionally Catholic presses, with readership that surpassed the working class, to demonstrate the nationalism that occurred across class and religious boundaries in Irish America at this time. With an examination of the *Boston Pilot*, *The A.O.H. Journal*, and the *Catholic Mirror*, the section will aim to demonstrate the problems with speaking of any specific bloc in Irish-American society and their tendencies when it came to nationalism and nationalist violence.

In addition to filling a gap in historical scholarship in regards to the American iteration of the Fenian movement and complicating common narratives regarding Irish-American society, there are additional implications of this study that are significant. While the bombing campaigns are a feature of the Fenian movement that is uniquely American, the ways in which the publications discuss the Land League, Charles Stewart Parnell, the goings-on in Westminster, and other aspects of the Anglo-Irish politics demonstrate the robust trans-Atlantic links of the Irish-American community at this time. The publications themselves, many of them having an entire front page devoted to British and Irish politics,

reveal the transnationality of ideas and sentiments across the Atlantic in the late-nineteenth century. That fascination with the situation in Ireland and the fact that all publications seem to espouse a belief that Irish-Americans had a role to play in achieving Irish independence, demonstrating a considerable amount of nationalism across the Irish-American community, also says something revealing about the immigrant experience in America in the late-nineteenth century and the duality that might have existed regarding national identity. Perhaps the most significant contribution here, however, is tied in with the very aim and argument of the paper, and that is in demonstrating how difficult it is to speak of Irish-America, and even the differentiated subsections that existed within Irish-America, as a monolithic bloc. This study makes it clear that there was no one common aspiration within Irish-America, nor even in distinct subgroups in Irish-America, and that the interactions occurring at this time were constant, with ideas and loyalties consistently shifting and overlapping.

"Let her make war on the scientific plan:"⁷² Fenian dynamiters and support for their activities in Irish-American publications

Because of the nature of Fenian activities, with their frightening bomb detonations capturing national headlines, the Fenians were most regularly discussed in newspapers, inside and outside the Irish-American community. Due to the limits of this short study, Irish-American newspapers will be the measure for the support the actions of Fenians had in the Irish-American community and the reception their activities were greeted with. From studying the way these newspapers characterize the Fenian endeavors, therefore, we can extrapolate the type of support they received in the broader Irish-American community.

⁷² "The Uses of Dynamite," *Irish World*, New York, April 16, 1880.

The *Irish World*, founded by Irish-American journalist Patrick Ford, by the early 1880s had become one of the most prominent Irish-American newspapers.⁷³ Known to be the "voice of the politically-conscious Irish-American working class," various sources estimate the paper to have claimed an astounding circulation at this time of between 80,000-100,000, with Ford distributing a special issue in 1879 that printed over 1,500,000 copies.⁷⁴ Printed in New York City, the *Irish World* quickly became the principal newspaper of Irish America, outselling even John Boyle O'Reilly's Boston *Pilot*, which had previously been known to be the "stronghold" of the Irish-American press and the leading Irish-American publication in the country.⁷⁵ This paper, the most widely read and best-selling newspaper for Irish-Americans, provided routine defenses and support for dynamite activities.

This support can be seen in the fact that the *Irish World* was the publication that helped set up the "skirmishing fund," which was intended to endow the dynamiters with the means to embark on their bombing campaign.⁷⁶ Ford enthusiastically embraced Fenian leader Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa's idea that a band of committed Irish-Americans must devote themselves to a form of asymmetric warfare against Britain to keep the Irish revolutionary momentum going, avoiding "revolutionary paralysis" that might occur in the wake of a failed Fenian uprising in 1867, and that donations were necessary to follow through with this plan. A March 1876 edition of the *Irish World* reveals this support for the "skirmishing fund" and the dynamiters:

We heartily commend the suggestions contained in it to the considerations of all men who love Ireland and who earnestly seek to make her a free nation. Rossa wants to raise a skirmishing fund. He wants to see some action on food. The idea

⁷³ David Thomas Brundage, *Irish Nationalists in America: the Politics of Exile, 1798-1998* (New York: Oxford University Press), 228.

⁷⁴ Brown, "The Origins and Character," 351.

⁷⁵ Ronald Baylor and Timothy Meagher, *The New York Irish* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1997), 280.

⁷⁶ Whelehan, *The Dynamiters*, 19.

is that stagnation will prove the silent destruction of the Irish cause, and that to give strength and vitality to this cause, in fact to keep the very revolutionary organizations now in existence from dying out and striking the nostrils of the people, - it is necessary that the means should be on hand (independent of regular revolutionary funds) which will enable a few intrepid spirits to strike a blow at England, year after year, or oftener as might seem advisable, - heroic men who will carry on an irregular and incessant warfare against the enemy, - whilst the regular military organizations are preparing for heavier and more regular war...⁷⁷

In addition to advocating for support of the fund within the paper, Ford regularly published the names of the subscribers who donated and subscribed to the fund, hoping to spur more people to contribute with the desire to see their name in print.⁷⁸

In defending the actions of the dynamiters, the *Irish World* often employed arguments about Ireland's need to engage with such tactics because of its size and its lack of resources, and often pointed to the bellicose measures other countries utilized in the past. Ford even went so far as to call advocacy of insurrection immoral because the scales are tipped so heavily against Ireland's favor. In an April 1880 edition of the *Irish World*, an espousal of this mindset reads:

Ireland is not able to cope with England in the open. With respect to position, resources, and weapons, the dualists would be altogether unequal. For us therefore to encourage an 'Erin go Bragh' (Ireland Forever) uprising would be criminal...if Ireland means war, let her make war on the scientific plan. Torpedoes, bombs, and Greek fire are now employed by all the great powers. Is Ireland too big a power to despise such little things?⁷⁹

Foner, in his writings on Irish-America in the late-nineteenth century, recounts how observers claimed that the *Irish World* "circulates in every city and town in the Republic," and that when "a Philadelphia labor editor launched a newspaper, he declared his ambition was to create 'the paper of the country second only to the *Irish World*.'"⁸⁰ Support from a

⁷⁷ "Skirmishing Fund," *Irish World*, New York, March 4, 1876.

⁷⁸ Kenna, *War in the Shadows*, 12.

⁷⁹ "The Uses of Dynamite," *Irish World*, New York, April 16, 1880.

⁸⁰ Foner, "Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism," 12.

publication as widely read and respected as the *Irish World* points to the dynamiters not being met with the revulsion and marginalization that one would think their activities would have engendered. While support from one publication does not mean that the group received support from the entire readership of the publication, the widespread circulation of the *Irish World* continued despite its defense of dynamiting activities, and at least complicates the neat image of the dynamiters being on the periphery of the Irish-American community.

In addition to receiving support from the *Irish World*, the dynamiters received occasional defenses from another influential Irish-American news publications of the time, *The Irish American*. Established by Patrick Lunch in 1849, the *Irish American* was, according to Robert Ernst, "without a doubt the most influential Irish newspaper in New York" until it was surpassed in influence by the *Irish World*.⁸¹ This paper had, in the 1840s and 1850s, been known to support the constitutional and democratic Repeal Movement of Daniel O'Connell over the radical actions of the Young Irelanders, which indicates that the paper had a history of advocating nonviolent, peaceful routes towards independence over "physical force" ones.⁸² An examination of the coverage of the dynamiters in *The Irish American* during the period of their activity, however, not only shows the defenses the Fenian dynamiters received from major sources in the Irish-American community, but also just how support for the dynamiters crossed traditional boundaries, with allies of non-violent practices at times supporting the actions more violent groups.

In response to the Fenian detonation of an explosive at Salford Barracks in Manchester on January 14, 1881, *The Irish American* ran an article titled "Crime in England" which read: "So much capital has been recently made by the English papers on the so-called

⁸¹ Robert Ernst, *Immigrant Life in New York City 1825-1865* (Syracuse: Syracuse University Press, 1950), 151.

⁸² T.W. Moody, "Irish-American Nationalism," *Irish Historical Studies* 15 (1967), 440.

'outrages' which, despite the teachings and warnings of the leaders of the Irish Land League have occurred in Ireland, that a review of how matters are carried on in 'moral England' is evidently in order." The article went on to list instances of English injustices to Ireland to counter the claims that the English press has any ability to call the actions of the dynamiters immoral or the bombings inappropriate.⁸³ While the article acknowledges that the dynamiters worked outside of the advice of the Land League, which *The Irish American* regularly advocates as the preferred means of achieving justice for Ireland, its use of quotation marks around words such as "outrages" and its defense against the claims that the dynamiters acted without morals, demonstrates that these publications could often have multiple allegiances and loyalties when it came to the question of Irish independence. It appears that *The Irish American* consistently supported the Land League and the constitutional process of achieving independence but, when the English press attacked the dynamiters, jumped at the opportunity to defend the dynamiters and their activities.

While not an explicitly Irish-American press like the *Irish World* and *The Irish American*, *The Boston Daily Globe* provides additional insight into the reception of the dynamiters because of the ethnic makeup of its editorial staff and because of its tendency to report on dynamiter activities in non-pejorative, neutral language. *The Boston Daily Globe* was founded in 1872 by six Boston businessmen, and by 1886, the paper had the largest circulation of any paper in the country outside New York.⁸⁴ In Boston and outside of Boston, the newspaper had become a stronghold by 1890, and had been known to have an editorial staff dominated by Irish-Americans.⁸⁵ Because of the papers' popularity and because the

⁸³ "Crime in England," *The Irish American*, New York, January 15, 1881.

⁸⁴ William Shannon, *The American Irish: A Political and Social Portrait* (Amherst: University of Massachusetts Press, 1989), 112.

⁸⁵ Paula Kane, *Separatism and Subculture: Boston Catholicism, 1900-1920* (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 1994), 28.

main actors behind the newspaper were Irish-American, the press coverage the dynamiters received in *The Boston Daily Globe* gives an idea of the degree of opposition the dynamiters faced in the wider Irish-American community. While the use of non-judgmental language in multiple instances of reporting indicates that the dynamiters were not met with fierce opposition, the shifting ways in which dynamiters actions are discussed reveals just how fluid these loyalties could be in publications and in groups when it came to the nationalist movement or nationalist violence.

Covering the January 14, 1881 explosion at Salford Barracks in Manchester, the *Globe* writes: "A dispatch from Manchester says an attempt was made by Fenians to blow up an armory barracks at Salford. A meat store adjoining was blown to pieces but the armory, containing many thousands of arms, was uninjured...There is great excitement over the occurrence."⁸⁶ This coverage of a startling and, for many, frightening event is unusual for its matter-of-fact style. Similarly, reporting on the explosion of Liverpool Town Hall on June 10, 1881, the *Globe* sticks again to strict fact-reporting devoid of judgment. The title of the main article covering the event, in contrast to publications such as the *New York Times*, does not call the explosion an "outrage"⁸⁷ or a "bomb to kill the English,"⁸⁸ but simply "An Attempt to Blow Up the Town Hall in Liverpool." In this article, *The Boston Daily Globe* reports: "A daring attempt was made last night to blow up the Liverpool Town Hall by means of dynamite...Two men who had been seen wandering around the hall during the day and who were found in the street after the explosion were arrested."⁸⁹ The use of the word "daring" to describe the attempt, the lack of adverse language, and the neutral reporting that

⁸⁶ "An Alleged Attempt of Fenians to Destroy Arms, *The Boston Daily Globe*, Boston, January 15, 1881.

⁸⁷ "The Agitation in Ireland," *The New York Times*, New York, June 17, 1881.

⁸⁸ "Bombs to Kill the English," *New York Times*, New York, February 25, 1884.

⁸⁹ "An Attempt to Blow Up Liverpool Town Hall," *The Boston Daily Globe*, Boston, June 10, 1881.

does not use terms such as "dupes"⁹⁰ to describe the men implicated (a description characteristic of *The New York Times* when reporting on Fenian activities), is stark when compared to the writings by those who opposed the Fenians, and points to the Fenians not having been met with such opposition among the writers of the *Globe*.

The reporting of the May 6, 1882 Phoenix Park Assassinations, however, stands in stark contrast to the description of the bombings. While the dynamite attack reports contain non-judgmental and non-negative language, *The Boston Daily Globe's* language used to describe the assassination by Fenians of Ireland's New Chief Secretary, Lord Frederick Cavendish, and his Undersecretary, Thomas Henry Burke is full of unfavorable and evocative language. The front page of the May 7, 1882 edition of *The Boston Daily Globe* is covered with articles regarding the incident with titles such as "The Accounting of the Horrible Tragedy, as Given by Eye-Witnesses," "Leading Opinions: It is the Act of a Guiteau," and "A Graphic Description of the Assassinations."⁹¹ Unlike the reports of the dynamite attacks, which contained very little descriptive and no pejorative language, *The Boston Daily Globe* appears to have taken a hard line with violent nationalist activity when it comes to the assassinations, using visual descriptions to evoke emotion and likening the assassin to a Charles J. Guiteau, the man who shot President Garfield and was deemed during his trial to be insane.

The coverage of Fenian activities by *The Boston Globe* demonstrates how difficult it is to characterize groups and publications in terms of their support of radical nationalist activities. While the *Globe* did not speak negatively about some violent Fenian activities, like the Liverpool Town Hall explosion and the Manchester Salford Barracks explosion, it

⁹⁰ "Bombs to Kill the English," *The New York Times*, New York, February 25, 1884.

⁹¹ *The Boston Daily Globe*, Boston, May 7, 1882.

spoke contemptuously of other Fenian activities, such as the Phoenix Park Assassinations. The way in which *Globe* reported the Fenian bombings, however, and the lack of emphatic opposition in the reporting, demonstrates that the Irish-American editorial staff of the *Globe* was, on multiple occasions, reluctant to denounce Fenian activities. Even if the writers of the *Globe* were unable to support the bombings outright, they did not shroud the language of their coverage with the critical and disapproving language found in other publications (*The New York Times* especially) that was an indication of Fenian opposition. This, particularly when the popularity of the *Globe* is taken into account, indicates the difficulty in claiming that the Fenian dynamiters encountered no support and only unequivocal opposition in the Irish-American community.

"It is a war as sacred as any ever undertaken"⁹²: Nationalist sentiment in Catholic presses and publications with "lace curtain" Irish readership

An examination of Irish-American news publications during the period of dynamiter activities shows not only that the dynamiters were received with more support than has generally been thought, but also that the nationalist rhetoric that pervades the papers of the *Irish World* also pervades papers with readership beyond the working class and with more devoutly Catholic readership. The *Irish World* has been consistently used by historians as the Irish nationalist newspaper *par excellence* for its working-class rhetoric and for its secularism and anti-clericalism.⁹³ In this rendering, the only group in Irish-America speaking of help to be provided in the fight for Irish independence is the "exploited and proscribed poor", who had discovered from their time in America that "poverty was not a

⁹² "The Great League," *The A.O.H. Journal*, Richmond, March 1881.

⁹³ James Paul Rodechko, *Patrick Ford and His Search for America: A case-study of Irish-American Journalism, 1870-1913* (New York: Arno Press, 1976), 2.

necessary condition of existence."⁹⁴ As Brown remarks when accounting for the fervent nationalism among the Irish-American working class: "The squalor of Ireland infuriated Irish-Americans as it never had the peasant Irish. And their own poverty they laid upon the conscience of England."⁹⁵ Along with Irish-American nationalism being characterized as working class, it has also been described as working outside and in opposition to Catholicism. Brown is also a main proponent of this line of thinking, claiming that for Catholic sectors of the Irish-American population, Irish history was "a religious drama, a long martyrdom of a people naturally Christian that was permitted by God to spread His word" and that in the Irish-American "tattered figure," Catholics saw "an arm of the Lord and that in the famine" they were sent forth the "mysterious 'logic of God.'"⁹⁶ Brown uses this categorization of Irish-American Catholic thinking to contrast how Irish-American Catholics and Irish-American nationalists viewed their world, arguing that Irish-American nationalists rejected this "fatalism" and claimed that the Catholic Irish-Americans "thought of Ireland as a pawn that could be sacrificed whenever."⁹⁷ In all of the Irish-American publications examined, however, a belief that Ireland is under unfair and oppressive rule pervades and crosses religious and class boundaries, and the belief that the Irish-American community has a role to play in obtaining independence for Ireland is present throughout.

The Boston *Pilot*, the publication considered to be second in influence in the Irish-America community after *Irish World* in the period considered, is one example of the fact that nationalist sentiment can be seen in groups beyond the Irish-American working class and that nationalism was not only secular in character. The *Pilot*, considered the oldest

⁹⁴ Brown, "The Origins and Character," 334.

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid., 347.

⁹⁷ Ibid.

Catholic newspaper in the country, became the official organ of the Archdiocese of Boston in 1876.⁹⁸ Timothy Meagher describes the *Pilot* as being "the oldest and most respected of immigrant papers...a fully accredited member of Boston's literary community."⁹⁹ Its influence was, therefore, considerable. A July 1871 edition of the *Pilot* reads: "We can do more good by our Americanism than by our Irishism," going on to articulate the belief that American public opinion could be a powerful force in pressuring England to capitulate on Irish demands.¹⁰⁰ Michael Davitt, an Irish republican and the founder of the Irish National Land League, attributed this policy of keeping it constantly in the mind of Irish-Americans that "Ireland had to plead her cause in the market place of ideas" to Boston *Pilot* editor John Boyle O'Reilly and the articles in the *Pilot*.¹⁰¹ Detailed articles with titles such as "Michael Davitt on Irish Prospects" and "The Irish Members at the Opening of Parliament" gloss the front page of the *Pilot* and speak of those involved in Irish nationalist politics in a positive light, demonstrating a desire by the editorship and the readership to be apprised of the developments of the Irish Nationalist Party and to not be detached from the Irish struggle for independence.¹⁰² Instead of the fatalism described in the Catholic position of the situation in Ireland, a front page article on a March 1884 edition of the *Pilot* has a title "An Englishman Tells How Ireland is Governed," with a vivid description of how a Protestant majority rules and oppresses a Catholic minority in a tone of resistance to the situation.¹⁰³

Within the *Pilot*, issues inherent in describing the Irish-American community and

⁹⁸ J.J. Lee and Marion R. Casey, *Making the Irish American: History and Heritage of the Irish in the United States* (New York: New York University Press, 2006), 189.

⁹⁹ Timothy Meagher, *The Columbia Guide to Irish American History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 318.

¹⁰⁰ The *Pilot*, Boston, July 23, 1870.

¹⁰¹ Brown "The Origins and Character," 351.

¹⁰² The *Pilot*, Boston, March 1, 1884.

¹⁰³ The *Pilot*, Boston, March 1, 1884.

their position towards nationalist violence into set categories can also be seen, as the readership of the *Pilot*, its editor, and some of its coverage seem to defy these categories. The *Pilot* at this time was under the editorship of John Boyle O'Reilly, born in Ireland and at the age of twenty-two sentenced to prison for participating in the Fenian uprising of 1867.¹⁰⁴ Because of this incident, O'Reilly was known to be "disposed by character and experience towards moderation" and very aware of "the limitations of revolutionary organizations."¹⁰⁵ The *Pilot* does not contain support for the activities of the dynamiters, but O'Reilly, with his background, was known to act as a support for revolutionaries, and throughout his life remained a confidant of Fenian rebels.¹⁰⁶ The readership of the *Pilot* also demonstrates the problems with fitting the Irish-American community into defined blocs. Foner, in his writings on class divides in Irish-America, states that "[i]f the *Irish World* addressed itself to the Irish-American working class, the Boston *Pilot* may be described, in the words of the Irish nationalist T.M. Healy, as 'the organ of the wealthier and more cultured portion' of Irish-America."¹⁰⁷ Foner later states, however, that the majority of the *Pilot's* readers were workingmen, even though a substantial number of priests and prosperous businessmen were among its readers, which means that multiple groups within Irish-America were consuming the same material regarding Irish nationalist violence and that these ideas were surpassing religious and class lines.¹⁰⁸

As has been mentioned, while known to be a Fenian revolutionary in his youth and known to be a confidant of Fenian revolutionaries throughout his life, O'Reilly did not talk

¹⁰⁴ Brown, "The Origins and Character," 351.

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

¹⁰⁶ Ibid.

¹⁰⁷ Foner, "Class, Ethnicity, and Radicalism," 15.

¹⁰⁸ Ibid.

about Fenian bombing activities in a positive light. Following the December 13, 1884 bombing of London Bridge, the *Pilot* reported: "Another Scare in London: Bogus Attempt to Blow Up London Bridge." Under the article title, the *Pilot* wrote that "A terrible occurrence startled the city this afternoon. It proved to be the result of an attempt to blow up London Bridge. The effort resulted in a failure and the structure was uninjured. Had the outrage been carefully planned and had the perpetrators created more mischief, the result would have been appalling."¹⁰⁹ With words such as "bogus" and "terrible" used to characterize the attempt, and with an almost joyous discussion of how the attempt resulted in failure, it is clear that the *Pilot*, did not support this instance of Irish revolutionary nationalist violence. The article uses the word "outrage," a common term that was used to describe Fenian activities in papers, such as the *New York Times*, that were outrightly disdainful of the bombers, and paints the dynamiters in a negative light by stating that their attempt was not carefully planned. Even if their attempt was carefully planned, the *Pilot* seems to not agree with their action or goals whatsoever, with the claim that, if done right, "the result would have been appalling."¹¹⁰

A lack of support for Fenian activities in the *Pilot* can be again seen in the coverage of the May 6, 1882 Phoenix Park Assassinations in Dublin. The front page of the *Pilot* edition for May 13, 1882 is covered with article titles such as "Appalling Murder in Dublin of Lord Cavendish and Mr. Burke" and "Grief and Horror of the Irish People."¹¹¹ All along this front page is a graphic description of the event with subtitles that read "The Fatal Walk," "The Murder," "Finding the Bodies," and "Examining the Bodies," with brief stories under each subtitle with vivid descriptions clearly intended to incite a negative reaction and

¹⁰⁹ The *Pilot*, Boston, December 20, 1884.

¹¹⁰ Ibid.

¹¹¹ The *Pilot*, Boston, May 13, 1882.

repulsion from the readership.¹¹² This negative coverage of Fenian activities, from an editor who had participated in Fenian activities and was close to Fenian revolutionaries and from a publication with a large working class readership, demonstrates the complicated nature of opinions and allegiances and just how fluid and shifting they were at this time even amongst a single group (in this case, revolutionaries).

Just like the *Boston Pilot*, the regularly published journal for the Ancient Order of Hibernians fraternal organization represents nationalist sentiment present in groups outside the secular Irish-American working class. The American iteration of the Ancient Order of the Hibernians, which emerged out of the organizations such as the Defenders and the Ribbonmen established to protect the interests of agrarians and the poor in Ireland, was founded in New York City in 1836.¹¹³ By the 1880s, the Order was known to stand for the preservation of Irish culture and the "aggressive, almost belligerent, assertion of Irish interests" in the American cities in which it operated.¹¹⁴ While most of its members comprised the coming the sectors of semiskilled and unskilled Irish and Irish-American working-class, the *A.O.H. Journal* advocates both Catholicism and nationalism.¹¹⁵ The very motto of organization, shown under the title heading of each publication, is "Friendship, Unity, and True Christian Charity."¹¹⁶ Throughout the editions of the journal that were published in the early 1880s, there are clear appeals to and discussions of Catholicism. In the January 1881 issue, for example, which discusses the Land League (which the journal calls the "Great League"), an article appeals to Catholic readership and Catholic sentiments in

¹¹² Ibid.

¹¹³ Timothy Meagher, *Inventing Irish America: Generation, Class, and Ethnic Identity in a New England City, 1880 to 1928* (Notre Dame: Univeristy of Notre Dame Press, 2001), 156.

¹¹⁴ Ibid.

¹¹⁵ Ibid.

¹¹⁶ *The A.O.H. Journal*, Richmond, January 1881.

legitimizing the Land League stating that: "...for no one will deny that the cause of the League is not only a good one but a holy one...There has never been an organization that has accomplished as much for Ireland in such a short time as the Land League." The article goes on to say that the "Great League" has "the approval of the clergy and the Church...Father Walsh is at its head here and Right Reverend Dr. Croke's aid at home speaks volumes; then his Holiness Pope Leo XIII approves of its work."¹¹⁷ Discussions of Catholicism also pervade the paper, making it clear that the readership and authorship of the *A.O.H. Journal* does not have the secularism and anti-clericalism that has been attributed to Irish-American nationalism. In a March 1881 edition of the *A.O.H. Journal*, for example, there is a front page article titled "Catholicity is Not a Recent Importation into America" which goes into detail about the roots of Catholicism in America and the influence the Catholic religion has had on the founding of the American nation. "The very name America calls up Catholic times," the article reads, "Columbia - the poetic name given to this republic - brings the mind back to Catholic Columbus."¹¹⁸

The *A.O.H. Journal*, when talking about the situation in Ireland, also does not use the language Brown describes of necessary sacrifice and martyrdom that should not be resisted. In a March 1881 edition, under an article titled "Ireland and Her Oppressors," the AOH lays out:

If ever a maxim was true, that 'resistance to tyranny is sanctioned by God,' it is so in the case before us. It is a war as sacred as any ever undertaken by a nation endeavoring not to obtain merely political rights, but a right to live in their native country without periodical famines, or being blundered by a heartless minority. It is a bloodless war of humanity against cold-blooded avarice and luxury on one side, and an ancient nation driven almost to madness by ages of misrule and injustice on the other.¹¹⁹

¹¹⁷ "The Great League," *The A.O.H. Journal*, January 1881.

¹¹⁸ "Catholicity is Not a Recent Importation into America," *The A.O.H. Journal*, Richmond, January 1881.

¹¹⁹ "Ireland and Her Oppressors," *The A.O.H. Journal*, Richmond, March 1881.

In this, and in the *A.O.H. Journal's* advocating of Land League membership and action, it is apparent that the sentiments of martyrdom paired with inaction that have been described as existing among the Irish-American devoutly Catholic population are not so clear cut. Instead of using religion and religious language to call for inaction and necessary sacrifice, the *A.O.H. Journal* actually uses Catholicism to legitimate nationalism and action for Irish independence, calling action with the Land League, as was earlier described, a "holy" cause sanctioned even by the Pope.¹²⁰

The manner in which the *A.O.H. Journal* speaks about the Land League makes it clear that this is the preferred way in which the AOH thinks independence should be achieved. As mentioned, the League is referred to on multiple occasions as the "Great League." In a January 1881 edition of the journal, it was said: "We advise those who do not belong to a branch of the Land League to join once at once, and if there be none established in your city or village, communicate immediately with Reverend Lawrence Walsh."¹²¹ The next month, the *A.O.H. Journal* reported on the Land League Convention held in Buffalo. When describing the Convention, the journal reported: "Never was a more determined, patriotic, and intelligent body of men assembled in such a good cause. Thirteen States were represented, and the delegates were men of the highest character and moral worth. Full of love for Ireland."¹²²

While the *A.O.H. Journal* clearly contains, throughout the period examined, support for the Land League and support for Charles Stewart Parnell, an Irish nationalist politician active in the Irish Parliamentary Party and the Home Rule League, careful examinations of

¹²⁰ "The Great League, *The A.O.H. Journal*, Richmond, January 1881.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² "The Land Leaguers in Convention," *The A.O.H. Journal*, Richmond, February 1881.

the *A.O.H. Journal* reveal the conflicting allegiances and support that has been seen many times in the publications examined here. Parnell was a politician famous for his denunciation of violent extra-Parliamentary action and the *A.O.H. Journal* is filled with praise for him, going so far as to say in a January 1881 edition that Parnell "...has brought the people to a point of liberty that was never before reached...In this supreme hour it is the most sacred duty of the Irish people at home and abroad to implicitly obey him. He is their chosen leader."¹²³ Despite emphatic advocacy of Parnell with his opposition to violent extra-Parliamentary action, the *A.O.H. Journal* appears to not oppose the action of the dynamiters. In an August 1881 edition of the journal, the publication writes:

Dynamite is power and it seems to have stricken terror into the British heart. It is said that everything is fair in war, and no one will deny that England was been waging a fierce war on Ireland for centuries. Extermination, annihilation, has been her policy, and now that she is threatened with retaliation, she cries out, with uplifted hands, against those who would partially avenge the wrongs which, for centuries, she has heaped upon Ireland. Let the government do its duty and there will be no fear from dynamite; but should it persist in upholding land-lord tyranny, it must bear the consequences. The dynamite of an aroused public opinion will soon sweep her from power, and every day increases the strength of the people, and they will finally triumph.¹²⁴

While supporting Parnell and the constitutional process of achieving Irish independence, it is clear that the *A.O.H. Journal* also, at this time at least, defended the use of dynamite as an appropriate and unmoral means of resisting English rule. Another support for rebellion and violent extra-Parliamentary action can be seen in a May 1881 article reporting the death of a "Forty-Eight Man." The term "Forty-Eight Man" refers to the man, P.G. Coughlan, and his participation in the Young Irelander Rebellion of 1848, a failed Irish nationalist uprising in which many of the junior members went on to found the Irish Republican Brotherhood

¹²³ "How England Stole Ireland," *The A.O.H. Journal*, Richmond, January 1881.

¹²⁴ "To Our Readers - Dynamite," *The A.O.H. Journal*, Richmond, August 1881.

(associated and, at many times, synonymous in name with the Fenian Brotherhood). The report states:

It is with the deepest regret we chronicle the death of P.G. Coughlan, who died at his residence in this city on the 27th of April, 1881....He was, we believe, the Secretary of the 'Young Ireland party,' nearly all of whose members suffered severely from British tyranny...Captain Coughlan is a great loss to Ireland; he was ever ready to advocate her cause...¹²⁵

This description of a man who participated in violent extra-Parliamentary activities in a group which preceded the dynamiters, and this defense of the use of dynamite shows just how fluid support or opposition for the dynamiters was at this time, and that it often crossed the boundaries of class and religion. While the *A.O.H. Journal* shows support for constitutional nationalism and the democratic means of achieving Irish independence, it also appears to demonstrate respect for and defense of violent and more radical means of nationalism, not at all a part of the democratic process.

Just as Patrick Ford's *Irish World* provided consistent support for the activities of the dynamiters, the *Catholic Mirror* is a publication which appears to have provided consistent opposition. Throughout the period considered, the *Catholic Mirror*, the official paper for the Archdiocese of Baltimore, seems to have advocated the constitutional and democratic means for achieving independence with support of Parnell and the Land League and opposition to the violent "physical force nationalism" being practiced by the dynamiters. This position can be seen in a January 1883 article entitled "Violence No Help." In this article, speaking about the practitioners of violent nationalism, it is stated that:

Fair-minded men who have the interest of Ireland at heart will have little sympathy with these, the victims of a misguided judgment. Their acts of violence will benefit the condition of the suffering people nothing, but on the contrary will go far to undo the work of reform effected by Mr. Parnell and his colleagues. The freedom of Ireland is not to be achieved either by riotous mobs or cowardly assassinations - deeds which have a tendency to bring the principals into contempt and the

¹²⁵ "Another Forty-Eight Man Gone," *The A.O.H. Journal*, Richmond, May 1881.

innocent into disrepute. Let Ireland trust her affairs implicitly to her chosen leaders, who will accomplish more by legitimate agitation than will a thousand ill-advised armed assassins.¹²⁶

A similar attitude towards nationalist violence can be seen in the *Mirror's* reporting of a lecture given by Michael Davitt, Irish republican politician and founder of the Land League. The article is titled "Moral Dynamite" with a subtitle "Michael Davitt's New Means of Salvation for Ireland." Reporting on the lecture Michael Davitt gave in London, the *Mirror* reports that "In the lecture, Mr. Davitt said that moral dynamite was the best means to be employed in working out Ireland's position. 'By moral dynamite,' explained the lecturer, 'I mean the power of ideas.' That is to say, Mr. Davitt, who once was an advocate of the physical force doctrine, now sees its foolishness..."¹²⁷ Despite its opposition to physical force nationalism, the *Catholic Mirror* is another example of a Catholic Irish-American publication that is concerned with the affairs of Irish independence and which sees a role to be played by Irish-Americans in helping secure independence for Ireland, once more showing that Irish nationalist sentiment and revolutionary activity pervaded all sections of Irish-American society and not just defined sections of Irish-American society.

Conclusion:

Dáithí Ó Conaill, an Irish republican who was a lifetime member of the IRA and served on the IRA Army council, told the *Irish Times* in 1974: "...the consequences of war are not going to be kept solely in Ireland: they are going to be felt on the mainland of Britain. Responsibility rests squarely and clearly with the British government."¹²⁸ This statement,

¹²⁶ "Violence No Help," *The Catholic Mirror*, Baltimore, January 27, 1883.

¹²⁷ "Moral Dynamite," *The Catholic Mirror*, January 20, 1883.

¹²⁸ Richard English, *Armed Struggle: The History of the IRA* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2005), 169.

imbued with the philosophy that Irish nationalist attacks should be felt in England in order to exert more pressure on London to concede to Irish nationalist demands, could just as easily have been attributed to an Irish-American Fenian dynamiter in 1881 as it was to this senior IRA member in 1974.

The Fenian dynamiters have been a group that has received very little study, but, as the statement from Ó Conaill demonstrates, their ideas clearly had resonance. The fact that the dynamite campaign, with all of the excessive violence inherent in an urban bombing enterprise, was a feature only of the American iteration of the Fenian movement is curious in itself. What makes this story all the more interesting, however, is not that the ideas of the bombers had resonance in Ireland, but that they had this impact in the wider Irish-American community. In serious and wide-selling Irish-American publications for the time, publications such as the *Irish World*, *The Irish American*, and *The Boston Daily Globe*, the actions of the dynamiters were spoken about in either routine encouragement, occasional defense, or tacit support. Moreover, the dynamiters received this support or encouragement even as groups or publications in Irish-America advocated other means of achieving Irish independence. This reveals that, rather than there being mutually exclusive camps that Irish nationalists belonged to (a non-violent means camp and a violent means camp), the proponents of Irish nationalist activity in Irish-American communities could have fluid, shifting, and overlapping ideas of the best means of achieving Irish independence.

Irish-American nationalism has been characterized as being a working-class phenomenon, a product of a combination of "loneliness, poverty, and prejudice," as Irish-American workers felt disenfranchised, oppressed, and felt that they had not attained the means to become respected in the majority society.¹²⁹ Irish-American nationalism has also

¹²⁹ Brown, "The Origins and Character," 333.

been depicted as working in opposition to devout Catholicism. The fact that Irish-American nationalism was seen in all publications with varied types of readership, however, demonstrates that Irish-American nationalism and a preoccupation with the immigrant homeland was not confined to the lowest rungs of American immigrant society. On the front pages of every publication examined, it was clear that Irish-Americans wanted to be consistently kept abreast of the developments occurring in their home country. More importantly, in every publication considered, the publications spoke explicitly of Irish-Americans having a role to play in the struggle for an independent Ireland. This nationalism and the belief that Irish-Americans needed to act for the nation, just like the support or opposition to the dynamiters, cut across the boundaries of class and religion. For the Irish fighting for a united and independent in the 1970s, the influence of dynamiter ideas and a strong belief in nationalist activity is unsurprising. For the Irish-American community in the 1880s, however, the preoccupation with an independent Ireland and the belief for action among the Irish-American community, especially among the sections that would be considered more "assimilated" or detached from the struggle across the Atlantic, is more surprising, and says something quite profound about the immigrant experience and the transnationality of sentiments in late-nineteenth century America.

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