

These Graves and Ruinous Houses/So Pertinacious Has Been the Misery

Maddison J. Rhoa

Spruce Creek, Pennsylvania

Bachelor of Arts in History
The Pennsylvania State University, 2016

Bachelor of Arts in English
The Pennsylvania State University, 2016

A Thesis presented to the Graduate Faculty of
The College of William & Mary
in Candidacy for the Degree of Master of Arts

The Lyon G. Tyler Department of History


College of William & Mary
August, 2018

© Copyright by Maddison J. Rhoa 2018

APPROVAL PAGE

This Thesis is submitted in partial fulfillment of
the requirements for the degree of

Master of Arts



Maddison Jane Rhoa

Approved by the Committee May 7, 2018

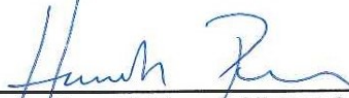


Committee Chair

Associate Professor Hiroshi Kitamura, History
College of William & Mary



Associate Professor Andrew Fisher, History
College of William & Mary



Associate Professor Hannah Rosen, History & American Studies
College of William & Mary

ABSTRACT

“‘These Graves and Ruinous Houses’: The Role of Domestic Items and Spaces in Revolutionary Ireland” focuses on the events of the 1916 Easter Uprising, when a small number of Irish rebels staged a four-day-long rebellion in Dublin in order to proclaim Ireland’s independence from Britain. Primarily analyzing the writings of Margaret Skinnider in conjunction with twentieth-century items catalogued in the National Museum of Ireland, this paper explores the ways in which domestic items and spaces were perceived and subsequently used as tools of rebellion in a particular historical arena. In it, I argue that through the use of domestic items and places for political purposes (and vice versa), both male and female revolutionaries and citizens witnessed a blending of societal roles. Spaces traditionally associated with masculinity and femininity experienced cohesion, often forcing individual actors to work across gendered lines towards a common political goal. This study likewise explores the theme of need in a politically and militarily turbulent time: both the need for transforming items and spaces to suit political purposes when other resources are scarce, and the appearance of small pockets of social change resulting from the need for political union against a common enemy.

“‘So Pertinacious Has Been the Misery’: Othering the Irish in *The Illustrated London News*, 1845-1849” evaluates the visual and textual rhetoric employed by a popular British news publication called *The Illustrated London News* during the mid-nineteenth century. One of the major events the paper covered was the Great Famine, which decimated Britain’s neighboring Ireland during the mid-nineteenth century, from about 1845 to 1849. As Ireland operated under the jurisdiction of the British government at the time, the events of the Potato Famine as both a spectacle and a shame were presented as being of interest to consumers of the British press. As such, the publication capitalized on the repeated theme of “Irish misery,” representing the Irish as miserable in their destitution, physical and mental illness, and their rampant Catholicism. Through use of such visual and textual rhetoric, the publication was able to influence, manipulate, and ultimately control the famine discourse. Furthermore, I contend that *The Illustrated London News*’ iconography of pity – and the pitiful – reinforces the othering of the miserable Irish as a way to jettison the culpability of the British government for the events and repercussions of the Great Famine.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Acknowledgements	ii
Dedication	iii
Intellectual Biography	1
“These Graves and Ruinous Houses”: The Role of Domestic Items and Spaces in Revolutionary Ireland	6
“So Pertinacious Has Been the Misery”: Othering the Irish in <i>The Illustrated London News</i> , 1845-1849	41

ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The author wishes to express her appreciation to Professors Fisher, Rosen, Levitan, Kitamura, and Horning, under whose guidance this research and writing were conducted, for their patience, guidance and criticism throughout the duration of the historical investigation. Maddison is also indebted to Ryan Langton for his careful reading and criticism of the manuscript, as well as Megan Whirley, Amy Trostle, and Ian Halter for their thoughtful feedback throughout the review process. Finally, Maddison wishes to thank her parents for their constant support and encouragement.

This M.A. is dedicated to Casey Walsh, 1993-2017.

INTELLECTUAL BIOGRAPHY

The two research papers I have produced over the past year reflect my continuing interest in modern Irish history. In them, I explore concepts of discourse, meaning, and rhetoric in different historical arenas and time periods with a particular focus on meaning production in times of crisis. While one paper focuses on the way that historical actors and ideas transcended fixed boundaries during a time of political upheaval, the other focuses on the construction of these boundaries during a time of natural disaster.

My first paper, entitled “‘These Graves and Ruinous Houses’: The Role of Domestic Items and Spaces in Revolutionary Ireland,” explores the way in which domestic items and spaces were perceived and subsequently used as tools of rebellion in the 1916 Easter Uprising in Dublin, Ireland. I argue that through the use of domestic items and places for political purposes (and vice versa), spaces traditionally associated with masculinity and femininity experienced cohesion, often forcing individual actors to work across gendered lines towards a common political goal. As such, my paper explores the theme of need in a politically and militarily turbulent time: both the need for transforming items and spaces, as well as their use, when other

resources are scarce, and the appearance of small pockets of social change resulting from the need for political union against a common enemy.

My main primary source for this project was the diary of Margaret Skinnider, a Scottish-born Irish revolutionary who directly participated in the events of 1916. While Skinnider's observations are crucial to understanding the context of rebel preparation and mobilization from a female perspective, I endeavor to also integrate some of James Connolly's writings into this study in the future. Connolly, one of the leaders of the 1916 Uprising and one of the most prolific political minds behind the Irish Nationalist movement, is mentioned in Skinnider's diary as having interacted with her specifically, often in both a domestic and political setting. In integrating both of these historical actors' narratives, I endeavor to represent the political and domestic spheres – as well as the masculine and the feminine – on a more equal basis. The addition of a male perspective, I believe, will work to reinforce my claim that the feminine and masculine actors of 1916 transcended traditional, societally-prescribed roles in order to achieve a common political goal.

My second paper, entitled “‘So Pertinacious Has Been the Misery’: Othering the Irish in *The Illustrated London News*, 1845-1849,” evaluates a popular British news publication during the Irish Potato Famine, specifically focusing on the publication's simultaneous sympathetic and antipathetic

portrayal of the Irish people as fundamentally different from their English neighbors. I argue that, by depicting the Irish as the undeserving poor and capitalizing on the concept of “Irish misery,” those working for *The Illustrated London News* disseminated information intended to both reinforce the concept of “Englishness” while also eradicating blame from the British government and society for the pervasive Famine atrocities in their neighboring land.

For this project, I used multiple articles and illustrations from *The Illustrated London News* as a way to analyze the textual and visual representations of the Irish during the Famine. It was clear that, during the 1840s, the publication capitalized on the repeated theme of “Irish misery,” representing the Irish as miserable in their destitution, physical and mental illness, and their rampant Catholic predilections. Even so, this paper focuses on the portrayal of the Irish by a British publication without integrating the Irish response. In the future, I endeavor to expand this project to engage more with the Irish living in Britain during the Famine era in order to analyze how *The Illustrated London News* affected these individuals and their families, taking into consideration how they may have been perceived in London society. Likewise, integrating Irish responses to these publications and their prejudiced depictions – if available – will also work to broaden the

scope of this project and illustrate the effects of the publication's "othering" of the Irish people.

While both of my papers focus on a similar geography, they also critically evaluate the concept of perception in nineteenth and twentieth century Ireland. My first paper acknowledges the ways in which the meaning of everyday, domestic items and spaces shifted and transformed based on political and militant needs. In this instance, the Irish rebels frequently altered the meanings of items like clothing, kitchen tools, household furniture, and so forth in a time of political need, which subsequently led to a restructuring of gendered spaces and power dynamics. My second paper similarly evaluates how societal and cultural perceptions and representations – in this case, of the emaciated Irish – were often manipulated under the guise of sympathy to ultimately eradicate blame from a potentially responsible power. In analyzing nineteenth-century representations of the Irish, the perceptions of the writers, editors, illustrators, and compilers of *The Illustrated London News* also suggest an implicit prejudice harbored towards the Irish people. Because the press controlled the dissemination of information, they also influenced the Famine discourse, potentially altering the construction of meaning on both a local and national level.

Another key theme that marries my two research topics is that of the "everyday." While it is crucial to understand the larger patterns and

significant moments of history, I firmly believe that it is the responsibility of historians to also engage with the lives of those who, while perhaps unable to boast the status of high class or military might, still influenced the trajectory of world history based on their interactions with everyday items, publications, rhetoric, and perceptions. In the Irish and British instances, these everyday interactions formulated a discourse that, while circulating throughout different power structures at a local level, also prompted reverberations that eventually led to large-scale, structural changes in British and Irish government, societal organization, and national identity.

While both of my research papers explore separate moments of Irish history, they required me to expand my geographical scope and time period, develop my understanding and application of new theories, and draw connections across different historical contexts. It is my hope that, in the future, I am able to continue pushing myself beyond the boundaries of my academic comfort zone to enrich my work with different historical understandings.

“These Graves and Ruinous Houses”:

The Role of Domestic Items and Spaces in Revolutionary Ireland

Revolution engenders and necessitates creativity. When a people are denied their fundamental rights under the legislation of an oppressive regime, a need arises: the oppressed must assert their right to independence and self-governance despite their limited access to traditional tools of rebellion (such as armaments, funds, land, public spaces, and so forth). In the context of early twentieth-century Ireland, when the rise of Irish nationalism signaled the birth of the Irish Independence Movement, this creativity manifested as an interlacing of the feminine and masculine, as well as the domestic and the political. The home and the items held within it were imperative to the Irish nationalist cause and continued struggle for independence from Britain, especially during the pivotal 1916 Easter Uprising. This study seeks to understand how the significance of domestic items and spaces was contingent upon their existence and use within an atmosphere of political upheaval. It argues that these items and spaces were fundamental facets of both the political rhetoric and rebellious action of the Irish Independence Movement.

The political environment in Ireland leading up to 1916 was characterized by considerable strife and unrest. According to historian

Caitriona Clear, Irish social life was constantly in flux, both at home and in public, beginning in the 1850s and leading up to the subsequent years of revolution in the early twentieth century.¹ While the British recruited Irishmen to fight for the crown in the First World War (though not without significant Irish resistance), Ireland also faced internal challenges associated with labor uprisings, efforts to combat rural and urban poverty, women's suffrage movements, and cultural revival projects, all of which exemplified the rise of Irish nationalism arriving on the heels of (or, perhaps, hand-in-hand with) nineteenth-century modernization.² Margaret Skinnider, a Scottish-born Irish revolutionary whose personal writings will guide this study, attested to the tumultuous nature of the political backdrop of the time, stating that "these disturbances... were part of a campaign by which Nationalists hoped to keep Irishmen out of the war and ready for their own fight when the time came."³ And the time did come, in the form of what is today referred to as the 1916 Easter Uprising – a pivotal event in Irish history that rebel leader James Connolly thought was motivated by "the diversion afforded by the war [which] was an ideal opportunity for Ireland to strike out for her independence."⁴

¹ Caitriona Clear, *Social Change and Everyday Life in Ireland, 1850-1922* (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007), 159.

² Oonagh Walsh, *Ireland's Independence, 1880-1923* (London: Routledge Press, 2002), 30-35.

³ Margaret Skinnider, *Doing My Bit for Ireland* (New York: The Century Co., 1917), 24.

⁴ D.G. Boyce, *Revolution in Ireland, 1879-1923* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd., 1988), 204-205.

To study 1916 in Ireland is to discuss one of the most important moments in the history of the Irish Independence Movement. According to historian Oonagh Walsh, “the 1916 Rising represents a crucial turning point in modern Irish history, and as a result has attracted a great deal of scholarly attention.”⁵ Scholars have approached 1916 using a plethora of different historical lenses, but many, such as Charles Townshend and Fearghal McGarry, have focused on the events, actors, and ideologies of the Irish Independence Movement, often in conjunction with the years following 1916 until Ireland became a free state in 1922. Others, such as Keith Jeffrey, approach 1916 as one of many in a long succession of Irish rebellions, but one that happened in concurrence with the First World War. However, few scholars have engaged with the more intimate aspects of 1916, such as the tools used on the ground by the Irish rebels in order to achieve their political, ideological, and militant goals. As such, there is a need to consider the physical tools and spaces of rebellion in the context of 1916 in order to better understand the scope of creativity and ingenuity used by Irish revolutionaries.

While Irish revolutionaries and the events of 1916 have been the subjects of continuous historical study, especially in the recent wake of the centennial commemoration of Easter Week 1916, analysis of the objects of revolution has been surprisingly sparse. Many scholars, such as Lucy

⁵ Walsh, 42.

McDiarmid, Margaret MacCurtain, Mary O'Dowd, and Maria Luddy have explored the role of gender in the 1916 Uprising – and some have inherently associated domesticity with womanhood in this instance – but few have married the concepts of gender, domestic items and spaces, and revolutionary contexts into a cohesive scholarly project. One exception to this general pattern is James MacPherson's article in Volume 36 of *Éire-Ireland*, entitled "Ireland Begins in the Home': Women, Irish National Identity, and the Domestic Sphere in the Irish Homestead, 1896–1912."

MacPherson's article explores the notion of the domestic sphere in Ireland leading up to the dawn of the Independence Movement with a particular focus on women, but it does not directly address 1916 or concepts of gender intersections within the context of revolution. However, scholarship may be moving in that direction, as suggested by the recent publication of Lucy McDiarmid's 2015 book, *At Home in the Revolution: What Women Said and Did in 1916*. However, the relative newness of this work suggests that analysis of domestic spaces and items within a revolutionary context is a fairly unexplored topic within the field of modern Irish history, and if it is explored at all, it is solely associated with femininity. It is this scholarly gap that I endeavor to help fill.

In order to do so, this study must be driven by certain guiding questions, such as: what domestic items were used in the context of the Irish

Rebellion, and how did they represent the sentiment of the revolutionary cause? Who used these domestic items and for what purposes? What, if any, rhetoric surrounded these items? How did the use of domestic items and spaces for political ends work to deconstruct gendered spheres of influence? In what ways does the meaning of an item change based on its political and historical context? And how does the domestic realm (households, farms, privately owned properties) become politicized, or transform into spaces suitable to house tools of insurgency? Using several forms of primary source material (including memoirs, personal writings, postcards, contemporary photographs, images of items from museums, as well as secondary scholarship) in order to answer these questions, this paper considers the ways in which the realms of the domestic and the political – as well as the feminine and the masculine – intersected within a revolutionary context. The primary objective of this paper is to examine and analyze the ways in which the Irish, a people severely limited under the significant and invasive burdens of British influence, employed domestic items as tools of rebellion, and furthermore, used the domestic sphere to house and conceal political items in an effort to both control and deflect the threat to Irish culture and identity in 1916.

It is within this context of revolution, which often overlaps with ideologies associated with nationalism, romanticism, modernization, and

cultural revival that domestic items and spaces – and, furthermore, the cultural connotations associated with the domestic sphere – intersect with political agendas. As D.G. Boyce makes clear, “Ireland is a country where a nation’s design for living cannot easily be separated from its political beliefs and practices.”⁶ So, too, can the reciprocal be true. It is this intersection of the domestic and the political that will guide this study of Irish history and material culture.

Producing any study of material culture – in this case, domestic items and spaces in the context of revolution – is particularly important in urging the discussion of the Irish Independence Movement forward, especially in the wake of the recent centennial commemoration of 1916. While it is crucial to study historical events, actors, ideologies, and settings in order to understand the greater patterns of political movements, it is also necessary to evaluate the physical resources used to achieve political goals. Without considering the tools of rebellion (whether associated with the domestic sphere or otherwise) within the greater historiographical discourse, historians and scholars limit their scope of understanding. However, this can be avoided if material culture theory is considered in the discussion of revolutionary history. Karen Harvey, a historian, author, and professor of cultural history at The University of Sheffield, defines “material culture” as “not simply objects

⁶ Boyce, 116.

that people make, use and throw away; it is an integral part of – and indeed shapes – human experience.”⁷ Based on Harvey’s definition, one must effectively consider the nature of objects and how they both reflect and affect the social, cultural, and political attitudes of those who use them. In the Irish context, these domestic items and spaces were tethered to those who used them because their definition depended on human actors, and, reciprocally, human actors were affected by the use of the objects themselves. Like Harvey, Ian Woodward contends that “because objects are material things that humans interact with in an environment, they are part and parcel of all types of human activity. We can say that objects are part of any social performance, whereby people go about actively constructing and communicating meanings.”⁸ The performative capacity of domestic items, then, cannot be separated from the human actors who ultimately assign them meaning, which is contingent upon the object’s use, interpretation, and reinterpretation within a particular setting. Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello further reinforce the variability of material culture, stating that “none of these are stable objects: they take meaning in space and time, they change as human thoughts about them change, and it is in the human-object

⁷ Karen Harvey, *History and Material Culture: A Student’s Guide to Approaching Alternative Sources* (London: Routledge Press, 2009), 3.

⁸ Ian Woodward, *Understanding Material Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 2007), 152.

relationship that history is written.”⁹ Thus, in order to apply material culture theory to twentieth-century Ireland, it is necessary to evaluate the meaning historical actors assigned to the use of objects as well as how the objects provided meaning to the historical actors themselves. While historians can analyze the objects, or photographic proof of the objects, the meanings associated with them, of course, are not equally tangible. In many instances, the meanings of items are constructed within the minds of those who use them, much like how historian and political scientist, Benedict Anderson, argues that nationalism and ideas of nationhood are “imagined” and “created.”¹⁰ Just as Irish nationhood was a construction based, first and foremost, within the minds of the Irish people, so too were the meanings they assigned to their tools of rebellion.

The *Handbook of Material Culture* offers a few definitions of what constitutes a domestic space, and furthermore, what sort of objects are found within such a space. Robert St. George defines “domestic interiors” as “social spaces that shape human interaction according to the furnishings a given room contains”¹¹ and as “the beginnings and irregular expansions and contradictions of consumer culture.”¹² Keeping St. George’s definition in

⁹ Anne Gerritsen and Giorgio Riello, *Writing Material Culture History* (London: Bloomsbury Academic Publications, 2015), 7.

¹⁰ Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities* (London and New York: Verso Press, 2006), 6.

¹¹ Christopher Tilley, Robert St. George, et al, *Handbook of Material Culture* (London: Sage Publications, 2006), 221.

¹² Tilley, St. George, et al, 226.

mind, it is important to note that the domestic items and spaces of twentieth-century Ireland varied in appearance, use, and connotation. Ranging from common household items (such as furniture, clothing, and housewares) to more specialized domestic items (such as rosaries, smelling salts, and vehicles), the meaning of these items shifted and transformed based on the context in which they were employed. Based within the bounds of St. George's definition, and also within the context of this study, I define "domestic items" as anything commonly found or stored within a "domestic space" – a household, a farm, or a privately owned property or piece of land. This definition of domestic items includes objects such as clothing, books (and other reading and writing materials, such as pamphlets, letters, newspapers, dispatches/notes, personal diaries, etc.), cleaning implements, linens, agricultural tools, sporting equipment, furniture, vehicles, etc. In other words, these objects are items whose definitions, when not used in the context of a political movement, remain as they were first and most commonly intended. For instance, a couch is fundamentally a piece of furniture that one sits upon (its intended purpose) in times of relative political stability, but a couch can also be both thought of and used as a barricade (its transformed purpose) in a time of political upheaval. Similarly, I intend to contrast these domestic items with items more traditionally associated with revolution and warfare, such as arms, uniforms, ammunition, protective gear,

explosives, and other forms of weaponry. In many historical accounts, especially in those that inform this study, both domestic items and political items are used in conjunction with one another, thus blurring the lines between the domestic and political spheres.

This study is likewise interested in how the perception of domestic spaces also changed based on their use in the context of rebellion, often becoming sanctuaries for revolutionary activity. In the early twentieth century, and reflective of the cultural romanticism that characterized the nationalist movement, Irish homes were considered to have a “multi-functional domestic interior, with as strong an aesthetic sense as was compatible with practicality.”¹³ Because of their ties to Irish insurgency, domestic items and spaces became a method of characterizing historical moments of revolution, often providing a humble but intimate context through which scholars analyze how individuals perceived, shaped, and executed their political goals using only what they had available to them at the time.

It is also within the intersection of domestic and political spaces that another intersection occurred; an intersection of gender. In both the Irish instance and within the global context, both the domestic and the public spheres were undoubtedly gendered in the early twentieth century (hence the establishment of the women’s volunteer group, Cumann na mBan, in

¹³ Clear, 143.

response to men's exclusion of women from their own armed volunteer forces),¹⁴ though to what extent is debatable. The domestic sphere and homestead were not always strictly associated with women, nor was the political sphere always a realm consistently dominated solely by men. Instead, both genders moved with relative fluidity between these spaces, often finding themselves and their agendas drawing upon both simultaneously. However, while revolutionary men and women constantly challenged the notion of gendered spheres, it is important to recognize that this fluidity did not translate to absolute gender equality between the sexes. Angela Woollacott acknowledges the existence of gender inequality in the context of revolutionary Ireland in her 2006 book, *Gender and Empire*, stating that "women's subordination in the Irish Free State was presaged by masculinist insistence on their subordination during the nationalist struggle."¹⁵ While Woollacott identifies an important aspect of gender relations in nationalist Ireland, it is also crucial to identify spaces in which women eagerly accepted opportunities for their own political and social advancement. One must only look to historical actors such as Countess Contance Markievicz, Maud Gonne, Helena Molony, and the principal voice of this particular study, Margaret Skinnider, to understand that women –

¹⁴ Sarah Benton, "Women Disarmed: The Militarization of Politics in Ireland 1913-23," *Feminist Review*, no. 50, (1995): 148.

¹⁵ Angela Woollacott, *Gender and Empire* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006), 114.

despite facing significant inequalities and challenges – were able to assert themselves, their skills and knowledge, and their own political purposes during the Irish Revolution. As such, Margaret Skinnider’s personal writings will be included and analyzed extensively in this paper due, not only to Skinnider’s direct and enthusiastic participation in the events of Easter Week, but to her wealth of contemporaneous writings about 1916 in the form of a memoir published – for the good of Ireland and women’s involvement in the 1916 Uprising – at her own personal risk.¹⁶ Skinnider was originally from Glasgow, Scotland, but was born to Irish parents and had visited Ireland – principally County Monaghan – many times as a child.¹⁷ Having witnessed the poverty of the Irish countryside under English administration during her many visits, Skinnider claims that her resentment grew the more she learned about Ireland’s history and tumultuous relationship with England.¹⁸ But it was her love of Ireland that drove her willingness to become involved in the Irish Rebellion; a sentiment that becomes clear in the first few pages of her memoir when she admits that “Scotland is my home, but Ireland my country.”¹⁹

The choice to examine Skinnider’s writings is also tied, not only to her firsthand discussion of rebellious activity that involved domestic items and

¹⁶ Skinnider, vii.

¹⁷ Skinnider, 3.

¹⁸ Skinnider, 4-5.

¹⁹ Skinnider, 3.

spaces, but to her gender. With the general trends of twentieth century gender inequality in mind, it is imperative that historians and scholars comprehend the contemporary significance of certain historical actions – such as when Thomas McDonagh, one of the primary leaders of the 1916 Rebellion, gifted Margaret Skinnider a revolver for Christmas,²⁰ or when, in Skinnider’s own words, “the test I had been put to was, it seemed, not merely a test of my ability to draw maps and figure distances. From that day I was taken into the confidence of the leaders of the movement for making Ireland a republic.”²¹ Not only do these actions and attestations exemplify instances in which women were treated with respect by the male leaders of the revolution, but they show a direct breakdown of the more common gendered notions of the time – a time during which women owning, carrying, and firing guns would have been regarded as radical.²² Both women and men had to work together – in the same spaces, wearing the same clothes, taking the same orders, firing the same guns – in order to promote their nationalist agenda in the face of significant odds. It is no coincidence that the first line of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic begins with such inclusive language as “Irishmen and Irishwomen,” and that furthermore, within the body of the document, the word “women” (in reference to Irishwomen) is used three

²⁰ Skinnider, 92.

²¹ Skinnider, 42.

²² Margaret Ward, *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism* (London: Pluto Press, 1995), 1-2.

times alongside use of the term “Irish men,” and the all-inclusive “Irish people” is used twice to refer to the united efforts of individuals of both sexes.²³ It is this reality that forces the breakdown of the “gendered sphere” as it is commonly understood and replaces it with a more fluid yet cohesive environment, within which the masculine and the feminine constantly transcended the bounds associated with one particular sex over the other.

One of the most influential manifestations of the fluidity between these two spheres in revolutionary Ireland was the use of domestic items (items associated with the home, farm, and any land owned by a particular person, group, or family) as tools of rebellion. Both men and women used such items for the same political purpose, thus blurring the boundaries between the respective spheres of influence. Likewise, the ways in which the home itself became a haven for political items more traditionally associated with rebellion (such as arms, uniforms, etc.) speaks to the ways in which traditional gendered spheres of influence were reconstructed to suit the needs of the Irish rebels in politically tumultuous times. In this way, and despite numerous other inequalities that existed between men and women in the early twentieth century, the use of domestic items and spaces as tools of rebellion worked as an equalizer between the sexes, even if the historical actors themselves were not consciously aware of this effect.

²³ James S. Donnelly, “Proclamation of the Irish Republic” in *Encyclopedia of Irish History and Culture*, (Farmington Hills, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004), 935-936.

The home itself became a politicized space in the years leading up to 1916. One of its greatest advantages to the political cause was that it was generally considered a private space, which, by nature, excluded that which was not explicitly wanted or welcomed. One particular home that operated at the intersection of domestic and political was that of Countess Constance Markievicz, one of the most prominent female Irish revolutionaries who resided in Dublin in a house on Leinster Road. Often mentioned by Margaret Skinnider in her writings, the house on Leinster Road was a virtual headquarters for Irish nationalists, housing guns, bombs, provisions, costumes used for disguises, uniforms, and, of course, the revolutionaries themselves.²⁴ It was in this space that James Connolly shared the news with Markievicz and Skinnider that the American ship, the *Aud*, was to bring thousands of armaments to Dublin for use by the Irish rebels, and that it was planning to arrive shortly before Easter week.²⁵ After the *Aud*'s untimely end and the subsequent loss of expected armaments (save for a few salvaged from the wreckage), the domestic space became much more important as a safe haven for the guns and ammunition the rebels did possess.²⁶ Thus, it

²⁴ Skinnider, 10, 59-60.

²⁵ Skinnider, 59.

²⁶ Skinnider, 91.



“Countess Markievicz's Mauser automatic pistol. With detachable carbine stock which acts as a holster or case. Calibre .30. 5" rifled barrel. Rear-sight 50 - 1,000 metres.” Image and caption courtesy The National Museum of Ireland.

was within the walls, alcoves, and fireplaces of the house on Leinster Road that Countess

Markievicz stockpiled and concealed

armaments,

including rifles,

bombs, and pistols,

much like her own



“Browning Fabrique Nationale automatic pistol. Calibre .25', number 474251.” Image and caption courtesy The National Museum of Ireland.

Browning Fabrique Nationale automatic pistol

and Mauser automatic pistol – both of which are

currently held by the National Museum of Ireland.²⁷ In this way, the home

became both a domestic and a politicized sphere as a space where tools of

rebellion were concealed, both women and men gathered and worked

together, and where covert action could take place.

However, the house on Leinster Road was not the only domestic space that played a part in the weeks leading up to the Easter Rising.

Skinnider writes about her own travels to Belfast – to the home of Irish rebel leader James Connolly and his family – and how upon her arrival, she found

Connolly's house converted into a space where the women busied

themselves assembling first aid materials and planning uniforms for the

²⁷ “Countess Markievicz, 1916 / automatic pistol,” Easter Week Collection, *Road to Independence* Exhibition, The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

rebels.²⁸ She also notes that The O’Rahilly (a common name of Michael Joseph O’Rahilly), being the owner of several estates, “had given much property to the cause, and now was risking his life for it.”²⁹ Connolly and O’Rahilly, both men of considerable political standing in the Irish offensive, were able to ascertain the inherent value of the domestic space for obtaining their political goals, and thus donated their own homes and properties to the rebel cause. In this way, the domestic sphere and the public sphere were inherently linked to one another, and, perhaps, home is where the Irish Rebellion truly began.

Homes were likewise used as outposts, both by the Irish rebels and their British counterparts, which reinforces the idea that the domestic sphere can easily become political, and vice versa, based on those who assign meaning to these spaces through patterns of action and inaction. Skinnider mentions how the British would hold out in houses to shoot at the Irish Volunteers, thus converting domestic spaces into political battlegrounds.³⁰ The Irish, too, held out in houses, usually converting standard domestic attributes to suit their own wartime imperatives. Skinnider tells of how the rebels “cut holes through and directly under the sloping roof. Here we could shoot in perfect safety while remaining unseen.”³¹ As a result, the home was

²⁸ Skinnider, 77-78.

²⁹ Skinnider, 130.

³⁰ Skinnider, 125-126.

³¹ Skinnider, 134.

not only a space for planning and preparing for rebellion, but it also existed as a protective barrier against enemy fire. The “safety” and “privacy” usually associated with the home, it is important to realize, did not disappear when domestic spaces were used as military outposts, but were simply refocused. Instead of protecting a family or resident from threats outside of the home, the home now protected the Irish rebels from discovery and attack.

While the home did offer protection both in times of war and peace, it was far from a neutral space. Even Irishpeople who were not actively part of the 1916 Uprising found themselves, and their homes, facing challenges associated with political instability. Skinnider tells the story of an Irish mother, daughter, and cousin who offered hospitality to a few British soldiers during the events of 1916, and subsequently found themselves targets of violence whilst within the confines of their own home.³² She notes that “these three women had been at their window, looking with curiosity into the street, when the very soldier they had just fed turned suddenly and shot them.”³³ In this instance, it is clear that the domestic space had become politicized from the moment that the three Irish women welcomed the British soldiers over their threshold, and once more when the soldier subsequently interpreted the home as a fair space to fire upon. The blurring of these spaces – the domestic and the political – suggest that such separate spheres

³² Skinnider, 172-173.

³³ Skinnider, 172-173.

may not appear to be so separate during times of war, especially when allegiances are constantly in question.

The home was a space in which political movements were borne, thus becoming an environment of shared domesticity and revolutionary action. As such, this also made the home a target for opposing forces who, judging the space to be politicized and not purely domestic, frequently invaded houses in response to the rebel action in Dublin during Easter Week. Margaret Skinnider attests to such reports, telling the story of “fourteen men who had nothing to do with the rising, [and how they] were killed in their homes by British soldiers who buried them in their cellars, while others looted the houses.”³⁴ Not only were private houses deemed spaces that should be penetrated (whether their occupants were guilty or not), but the soldiers then set their sights upon the items – usually domestic – held within the homes. Skinnider continues her narrative, noting that “the house in Leinster Road was pillaged, and the soldiers had the effrontery to sell the books, fine furniture, and paintings on the street in front of the dwelling.”³⁵ Thus, the value of domestic items extended beyond their use by the Irish rebels, and were also considered to be of value, at least monetarily, to looters and British soldiers alike. Nonetheless, the desecrated state of these domestic spaces confirms their great contribution to the Irish nationalist cause; their ruin

³⁴ Skinnider, 177.

³⁵ Skinnider, 177.

attests to their value in both a domestic and political sense. Had they not been locations central to the Easter Uprising, then they would have easily been passed over by British soldiers looking to answer to rebel action.

It wasn't only the home itself that was of use to the Irish rebels; the items found within the home were also utilized for political purposes. The Irish revolutionaries (who, for the most part, came from middle-class, educated backgrounds) were no strangers to the domestic items they employed; these were common items whose changing meaning and use reflected the political demands placed upon their historical actors, and, by extension, the objects themselves.³⁶ Some of the most common items associated with the home are its furnishings and larger housewares. A house itself stands naked without furniture, décor, and tools to fill its spaces, all silently denoting the human need for both rest and activity on a diurnal basis. These objects were also crucial for the daily demands of rebellion, and, as such, their meaning shifted from simply items that filled a home to items that could serve another, more politically-driven purpose altogether. Postcards,



“Irish Rebellion May 1916. Guarding one of the Dublin Streets. This is [part of] a collection of postcards... from the Daily Sketch series that was published after the Rising by Easons.” Image and caption courtesy the Letters of 1916 Project.

³⁶ Boyce, 113.

printed with photographs showing the streets of Dublin after the 1916



“The table on which the leaders had their last meal (breakfast) on Easter Monday 1916 before marching out of Liberty Hall. The proofs for the Proclamation were also set out on this table. An oak trestle table top, with one trestle.” Image and caption courtesy The National Museum of Ireland.

Uprising, depict barricades made of couches and tables, taken haphazardly from the domestic sphere and splayed out in the streets for protection against enemy fire.³⁷ Likewise, the literary and political components of the Irish

Independence Movement, which are often considered to exist in union with one another, were also commonly associated with domestic items. In Dublin’s Liberty Hall, a large, brown dining table was not only used to feed the Irish rebels, but was a surface used to perform proofing of the Proclamation of the Irish Republic, which would be read on the steps of the General Post Office by rebel leader



“Typewriter, Underwood; the first typewriter with Irish characters used by the Gaelic League. Purchased about 1905 by the Gaelic League, and probably the first Gaelic Typewriter to be made.” Image and caption courtesy The National Museum of Ireland.

Pádraig Pearse on Easter Monday of 1916.³⁸ Similarly, the National Museum of Ireland holds a typewriter manufactured with Irish Gaelic letter

³⁷ “Collection of 1916 Rebellion Postcards,” Letters of 1916: A Year in the Life Project, National University of Ireland, Maynooth.

³⁸ “Liberty Hall, 1916 Rising / table,” Easter Week Collection, *Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising Exhibition.*, The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

keys, which was purchased in 1905 and used through 1922.³⁹ Undoubtedly this typewriter played a major role in producing Irish language materials in an effort to promote Irish nationalism before, during, and after 1916.

However, one of the most well-known and undoubtedly one of the most haunting pieces of furniture used during 1916 was a simple chair, which many associate with the eventual execution of rebel leader James Connolly.⁴⁰ While Margaret Skinnider was in the hospital as a result of a gunshot wound she received during the events of Easter Week, she recalled that “at length Norah Connolly and her sister came to see me. They told me of their father’s last hours; how, because of his wound that already had brought him close to death, he had to be strapped into a chair to face the firing-squad.”⁴¹ As can be ascertained from Connolly’s case, domestic items used in the context of the Irish Rebellion still loom large in the memory of 1916 – so much so, in fact, that it would be difficult to imagine the events of the Easter Uprising – let alone the legacies of the Irish rebels – without them.

³⁹ “Gaelic League / Anglo-Irish Truce,” Easter Week Collection, *Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising Exhibition*, The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

⁴⁰ James Connolly, *James Connolly: Selected Writings*, (London: Pluto Press, 1988), 7.

⁴¹ Skinnider, 164.

While pieces of furniture and larger domestic items played a part in the fight for Irish independence - a number of smaller, more specialized housewares were also used for political ends. The kitchen in particular, and the goods held within it, were ultimately utilized to produce non-traditional weapons for the rebel cause. Margaret Skinnider herself carried around a bit of ground black pepper, as would be found on a dining table, as a weapon



“Home-made bomb, of the type used in the 1916 period. Bourneville chocolate tin (marked on bottom) filled with iron shrapnel fragments, which would also have contained a black gunpowder.”
Image and caption courtesy The National Museum of Ireland.

while she walked and rode through the



“A ladle used in bullet making, Enniscorthy, 1916. Distorted metal cup, or container attached to metal rod, used to pour molten metal or lead into moulds to manufacture ammunition.”
Image and caption courtesy The National Museum of Ireland.

streets of Dublin.⁴² If ambushed by police, Skinnider planned to throw the pepper in

their faces, temporarily discombobulating them so as to make her quick escape.⁴³ Other kitchen items were used as methods of attack, including a chocolate tin that was converted into a homemade bomb for use by the Irish rebels.⁴⁴ In Enniscorthy, Co. Wexford, just south of Dublin, a kitchen ladle was found that had been used for holding and pouring molten lead to make

⁴² Skinnider, 51.

⁴³ Skinnider, 51.

⁴⁴ “1916 Rising / tin can bomb,” Easter Week Collection, *Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising Exhibition.*, The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

homemade bullets for the 1916 Rising.⁴⁵ In this way, items found within the kitchen, and usually intended for consumptive use, transformed into weapons and tools of warfare that had the capacity to seriously injure and destroy.

Domestic ephemera were also used by the Irish Volunteers during drilling sessions, and later, during the events of Easter Week. Because of a significant lack of arms, Volunteers, in preparation for mobilization orders, would use whatever objects they had on hand that resembled a gun during their training. According to historian Oonagh Walsh, “members drilled enthusiastically with hurleys in place of rifles”⁴⁶ and many



“A book of Dublin Corporation reports which Councillor William P. Partridge carried under his arm when he was sent by James Connolly on an important mission to Tralee a week previous to Easter Sunday 1916.” Image and caption courtesy The National Museum of Ireland.

more drilled with dummy rifles assembled of wooden cut outs and paint, fashioned to mimic the appearance of an actual rifle.⁴⁷ During the Rising itself, rebels also used standard yard sticks as devices for breaking windows through which they would then fire their arms.⁴⁸ Books, too, were utilized in creative ways to conceal both armaments and ammunition. The National

⁴⁵ “Enniscorthy, 1916 / cup,” Easter Week Collection, *Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising Exhibition.*, The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

⁴⁶ Walsh, 39.

⁴⁷ “Irish Volunteers, 1916 / dummy rifle,” Easter Week Collection, *Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising Exhibition.*, The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

⁴⁸ “Four Courts, 1916 / yard stick,” Easter Week Collection, *Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising Exhibition.*, The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

Museum of Ireland houses William Partridge's book of corporation reports, which he "carried under his arm when he was sent by James Connolly on an important mission to Tralee a week previous to Easter Sunday 1916."⁴⁹

Inside an easily-concealed cutout section within the book's interior, Partridge hid his Irish Citizen Army membership card, as well as "layers of bullets and some secret documents."⁵⁰ In this way, when domestic items were not being



"William Partridge's rosary beads and case on which he used to recite the Rosary to his comrades in the College of Surgeons during Easter Week 1916. Set of small brown wooden beads, some carved, with a brass crucifix, silvered crucifix (Lourdes engraved on the back), and two medals (St Gerard and St. Christopher). In a red lacquered container." Image and caption courtesy The National Museum of Ireland.

used as weapons themselves, they aided in the manufacture and concealment of weapons and ammunition in preparation for the events of Easter Week 1916.

Not only were domestic ephemera used in conjunction with weapons, however.

Sometimes, these items were used to bolster the mental, physical, emotional, and spiritual wellness of the Irish rebels during difficult times. For instance, rosaries were a crucial, if more rhetorical, component of rebellion.

Several rosaries belonging to Joseph Plunkett, William Partridge, Winifred Carney, and Sean Heusten were associated with the 1916 Uprising, used for

⁴⁹ "William Partridge, 1916 Rising / book," Easter Week Collection, *Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising Exhibition.*, The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

⁵⁰ "William Partridge, 1916 Rising / book," Easter Week Collection, *Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising Exhibition.*, The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

both personal and public prayer, as well as a tool to boost rebel morale.⁵¹

Smelling salts were likewise used by members of the women's volunteer force, Cumann na mBan, for first aid purposes. The National Museum of Ireland houses a bottle of smelling salts formerly belonging to Eilis O'Connell,

which she carried on her person when she was

stationed on Church Street during the events of 1916.⁵²

Often housed in humble glass bottles, trinket boxes, or bags, these religious and medical items – which might be found on a bedside table or within a medicine cabinet – were used to promote wellness among the Irish rebels in times of difficulty.

One must only read a few pages of Margaret Skinnider's work to realize that clothing played an incredibly important part in the events of, and those leading up to, the Easter Uprising of 1916, as well.

Clothing had many varied connotations. Depending on

what type or article of clothing it was, an individual's dress could be used as a signifier, a disguise, a symbol of nationalism, a method of concealment, or



“Bottle of smelling salts used by Eilis O'Connell (Mrs), as a member of Cumann na mBan in 1916. Green bottle, large spherical stopper (wedged in neck), still containing liquid.” Image and caption courtesy The National Museum of Ireland.

⁵¹ “William Partridge, 1916 / box,” “Sean Heuston, 1916 / rosary beads,” “Winifred Carney / rosary beads,” “Joseph Plunkett, 1916 / souvenir,” Easter Week Collection, *Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising Exhibition.*, The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

⁵² “Eilis O'Connell, 1916 / bottle,” Easter Week Collection, *Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising Exhibition.*, The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

any combination of those simultaneously. Skinnider herself experienced the transformative nature of clothing, making note that, in one instance of her travel from Glasgow to Dublin, “in my hat I was carrying to Ireland detonators for bombs, and the wires were wrapped around me under my coat.”⁵³ In this instance, Skinnider’s outerwear transformed from simple articles meant to keep her warm and instead took on a new meaning – one of concealment. Other Irish nationalists experienced the transformative nature of clothing, as well. Skinnider discusses the costumes held within the confines of Countess Markievicz’s house on Leinster Road, noting that “these theatrical costumes were sometimes used for plays put on at the Abbey Theater, near by. They served, too, as disguises for suffragettes or labor leaders wanted by the police.”⁵⁴ Clothing also was used as a way to blur the lines between the feminine and the masculine during the Irish Rebellion. Margaret Skinnider recalls in her memoir that “when I told [Countess Markievicz] I could pass as a boy... she tried me out by putting me into a boy’s suit, a Fianna uniform.”⁵⁵ In this way, clothing transformed Skinnider’s inherent femininity into masculinity when it was more convenient – and safe – for her to be perceived as a male. Skinnider also notes that she could use the way in which clothing offered her the opportunity to fluidly portray gender in order to suit her own

⁵³ Skinnider, 9.

⁵⁴ Skinnider, 11.

⁵⁵ Skinnider, 20.

needs: “Whenever I was called down to carry a despatch, I took off my uniform, put on my gray dress and hat, and went out... with my message. As soon as I returned, I slipped back into my uniform and joined the firing squad.”⁵⁶ A simple outfit change could prepare Skinnider for her role as a dispatch rider, a scout, or a sharpshooter, depending on the task at hand. Skinnider’s experience with clothing exemplifies shifting boundaries of gender, as well as how the domestic inherently became political as soon as it served a purpose to the rebel cause.

In addition to clothing, accessories were also used to make covert



“A wristlet watch used by Countess Markievicz to time all the despatches sent from the Royal College of Surgeons during Easter Week 1916, by Commandant Michael Mallin and Major Constance Marckievicz.” Image and caption courtesy The National Museum of Ireland.

action easier for the rebel forces.

Countess Markievicz used a standard wristwatch to time

dispatches⁵⁷ and simple sewn

armbands were worn and used to

identify rebels occupying important

⁵⁶ Skinnider, 138.

⁵⁷ “Markievicz, RCSI, 1916 / wrist watch,” Easter Week Collection, *Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising Exhibition.*, The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

holdings, such as the GPO or Trinity College.⁵⁸

Likewise, Liam Mellows used a black veil to disguise himself as a nun in order to flee Dublin before he was captured and imprisoned for his activity in 1916.⁵⁹ Bodily adornments did not only work as signifiers, but as tools to ensure or disguise identity, keep time, and protect against misfire.

Another aspect of the home that is usually overlooked as a domestic item is

transport. While, of course, modes of transport usually serve the purpose of ushering a person out of the domestic sphere and into the public sphere (and assumedly back again), automobiles and bicycles are also distinct signifiers of the home and of private property. After all, owning a mode of transport also necessitates owning or having access to a domestic space in which to store it when not in use. In the context of the Irish Rebellion, however, these vehicles became politicized through their varied uses – by both men and women – in the events of 1916.



“Gossamer veil, black. Worn over his face by Liam Mellows when he escaped Ireland after the 1916 Rising, disguised dressed as a nun, in late 1916, to England, before going from there to America.” Image and caption courtesy The National Museum of Ireland.

⁵⁸ “Georgious Rex Volunteers, 1916 / armband,” Easter Week Collection, *Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising Exhibition.*, The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

⁵⁹ “Liam Mellows, 1917 / disguise,” Easter Week Collection, *Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising Exhibition.*, The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

Automobiles were frequently used, not only as transport to Dublin for the Easter Uprising, but also as barricades for the rebel forces. The National



“The starting handle of The O’Rahilly’s car. The starting handle of The O’Rahilly’s green Ford Touring Car, which he drove to O’Connell Street on Easter Monday. Witnesses last saw the old car being used as a barricade in Princes’ Street outside the General Post Office during the 1916 Rising.”
Image and caption courtesy The National Museum of Ireland.

Museum of Ireland is in possession of “the starting handle of The O’Rahilly’s green Ford Touring Car, which he drove to O’Connell Street on Easter Monday. Witnesses last saw the old car being used as a barricade in Princes’ Street outside the General

Post Office during the 1916 Rising.”⁶⁰ Likewise, Margaret Skinnider notes that “motorcars and drays passing [Saint Stephen’s] Green were commandeered, too, to form a barricade,”⁶¹ and later, that “two British officers were taken prisoners in one of the autos.”⁶² However, it was not only men who used and operated vehicles during the rebellion. Countess Markievicz used a barricaded motorcar as a place to sleep until the British stationed across the street from Saint Stephen’s Green began firing on it at four o’clock in the morning.⁶³ As such, automobiles could also be used as a sort of makeshift domestic space during the events of the 1916 Rising – as a

⁶⁰ “The O’Rahilly, 1916 / starting handle,” Easter Week Collection, *Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising Exhibition.*, The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin.

⁶¹ Skinnider, 105.

⁶² Skinnider, 105-106.

⁶³ Skinnider, 119.

temporary safe haven for domestic activities (in this case, sleeping) in the midst of revolutionary activity.

Bicycles were also used by the Irish rebels during the Easter Uprising and were a common mode of transport around Dublin, even while both the British and the Irish rebels were actively firing in the streets. Margaret Skinnider frequently used her own bicycle to get around Dublin in the years before and during the Easter Rising. She often rode around on her bike to scout troop numbers, map parts of the city, and deliver dispatches, often doing so without discovery.⁶⁴ She attributes this to her gender, stating, “he [a policeman] paid no attention to me; I was only a girl on a bicycle.”⁶⁵ In this instance, Skinnider’s femininity was viewed as harmless, making her activity around Dublin even more covert due to the way women were commonly perceived as non-threatening entities during 1916. However, her travels around the city were not always safe, even if they were relatively secretive in nature. Skinnider describes an instance in which she found herself being fired upon by the British, but it was her bicycle – which she was riding in the midst of street skirmishes – that took the toll of their machine-gun fire.⁶⁶ She describes her experience, stating that “bullets struck the wooden rim of my bicycle wheels, puncturing it; others rattled on the metal rim or among the

⁶⁴ Skinnider, 92-95.

⁶⁵ Skinnider, 95.

⁶⁶ Skinnider, 121.

spokes. I knew one might strike me at any moment, so I rode as fast as I could.⁶⁷ If not for Skinnider's ability to use her domestic mode of transport during the violent events of 1916, she may not have made it back to her outpost safely. In this way, domestic items were crucial to the rebel cause in that their use kept the Irish rebels safe from danger, discovery, and discrimination.

The sampling of domestic items and spaces cited within this study attests to their necessity in the revolutionary events of Easter Week 1916. From clothing to vehicles and from furniture to housewares, domestic items and spaces were used by both men and women, often within a political context. As a result, gendered items and spaces often overlapped, creating an environment in which femininity and masculinity, as well as the domestic and the political, often intersected for the advancement of a common nationalistic goal. The bounds of this study confine it to only a selection of the available source material reflective of the more intimate aspects of the Easter Uprising; many more firsthand accounts, as well as records and photographs of domestic items used for rebellious purposes, exist. The National Museum of Ireland in Dublin houses more than one-thousand records of items associated with 1916 alone, and undoubtedly, more evidence of such items' use can be found in the personal accounts of female

⁶⁷ Skinnider, 121.

revolutionaries such as Maud Gonne, Helena Molony, Constance Markievicz, etc. Likewise, the writings and last statements of the male rebel leaders, such as James Connolly, Pádraig Pearse, Thomas Clarke, etc. may hold evidence of such claims, as well, and should be considered in future studies about domestic items and spaces, gender, and rebellion within the Irish context and beyond. However, more emphasis should be placed upon the physical items used during momentous political moments in history; study of the events themselves, their actors, and their settings can only extend so far. In the instance of this particular study, the Irish Rebellion of 1916 would have been without hope if the rebels had failed to use their creativity to employ domestic objects and spaces in the face of a much more organized, better armed, and militarily powerful threat. While domestic items and spaces are often forgotten or taken for granted within history, their influence and aid to political causes should not be overlooked or underestimated.

Bibliography

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities*. London and New York: Verso Press, 2006.
- Benton, Sarah. "Women Disarmed: The Militarization of Politics in Ireland 1913-23." *Feminist Review*, no. 50 (1995): 148-72.
- Boyce, D.G. *Revolution in Ireland, 1879-1923*. Dublin: Gill and Macmillan Ltd., 1988.
- Clear, Caitriona. *Social Change and Everyday Life in Ireland, 1850-1922*. Manchester: Manchester University Press, 2007.
- Connolly, James. *James Connolly: Selected Writings*. London: Pluto Press, 1988.
- Donnelly, James S. *Encyclopedia of Irish History and Culture*. Farmington Hills, MI: Macmillan Reference USA, 2004.
- Gerritsen, Anne and Giorgio Riello. *Writing Material Culture History*. London: Bloomsbury Academic Publications, 2015.
- Hoppen, K. Theodore. *Ireland Since 1800: Conflict and Conformity*. 2nd Ed. ed. Studies in Modern History. London: Longman, 1999.
- Jeffery, Keith. *Ireland and the Great War*. Cambridge University Press, 2000.
- Letters of 1916: A Year in the Life Project. "Collection of 1916 Rebellion Postcards." National University of Ireland, Maynooth.
- MacCurtain, Margaret, Mary O'Dowd, and Maria Luddy. "An Agenda for Women's History in Ireland, 1500-1900." *Irish Historical Studies* 28, no. 109 (1992): 1-37.
- MacPherson, James. "'Ireland Begins in the Home': Women, Irish National Identity, and the Domestic Sphere in the *Irish Homestead*, 1896-1912." *Éire-Ireland*, Volume 36, Number 3&4, Fall/Winter 2001, pp. 131-152.
- McDiarmid, Lucy. *At Home in the Revolution: What Women Said and Did in*

1916. Dublin: Royal Irish Academy, 2015. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCOhost.

McGarry, Fearghal. *The Rising (New Edition): Ireland: Easter 1916*. Oxford University Press, 2016.

Philpin, C.H.E. *Nationalism and Popular Protest in Ireland*. Past and Present Publications. Cambridge Cambridgeshire: Cambridge University Press, 1987.

Skinnider, Margaret. *Doing My Bit for Ireland*. New York: The Century Co., 1917.

The National Museum of Ireland, Dublin. Historical Collections Online. Easter Week Collection. *Road to Independence and Proclaiming a Republic: The 1916 Rising* Exhibitions.

Tilley, Christopher, Robert St. George, et al, *Handbook of Material Culture*. London: Sage Publications, 2006.

Townshend, Charles. *Easter 1916: The Irish Rebellion*. London and New York: Allen Lane Publishing, 2005.

Walsh, Oonagh. *Ireland's Independence, 1880-1923*. London: Routledge Press, 2002.

Ward, Margaret. *Unmanageable Revolutionaries: Women and Irish Nationalism*. London: Pluto Press, 1995. *eBook Collection (EBSCOhost)*, EBSCOhost.

Woodward, Ian. *Understanding Material Culture*. London: Sage Publications, 2007.

Woollacott, Angela. *Gender and Empire*. New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2006.

“So Pertinacious Has Been the Misery”:

Othering the Irish in *The Illustrated London News*, 1845-1849

Newspaper articles have captivated reading audiences throughout history due to their literary allure, visual content, and catalogue of current events. Often featuring a collection of various facts and fables, news publications play a crucial role in the dissemination of information to vast swathes of interested readers. However, the manner in which ideas are discussed and depicted in news publications affects the way the audience may interpret the content, for better or worse. As such, those who own, operate, and assemble the press exercise a certain level of control over the reading public by deciding what information the audience sees or does not see, thus controlling discourse. This, in turn, shapes the beliefs, values, and norms held within a society, culminating in the formation of a cultural and national consciousness. As much as the information disseminated in news publications shapes identities and cultural markers within a society, they are also utilized as tools in constructing “othered” identity through the use of repeated tropes, caricatures, and rhetoric to typify that which exists beyond the bounds of a limited cultural understanding.⁶⁸

⁶⁸ Use of the term “other,” “othered,” “othering,” etc. will henceforth appear without quotation marks. I discuss othering used in conjunction with concepts of race, class, ethnicity, and religion, below.

The Illustrated London News was the world's first illustrated weekly publication (sometimes referred to as a magazine, journal, and/or a newspaper), started in 1842 by Herbert Ingram.⁶⁹ The publication revolutionized the British press by becoming the first newspaper world-wide to integrate visual imagery in print journalism before the dawn of the photographic era. It featured sketches, drawings, and images of the events the adjoining articles discussed as a way to entice readership – which it did with enormous success.⁷⁰ In 1842, the year of its establishment, *The Illustrated London News* claimed a circulation of 20,000 copies per week, which subsequently increased to 130,000 in 1855 and 300,000 by 1863.⁷¹ Based on these numbers, it is clear the readership of *The Illustrated London News* continued to develop from its founding onward, making it “England’s highest selling newspaper by 1863.”⁷² However, the paper was not cheap – it was mostly affordable to middle and upper class British readers, and, as such, *The Illustrated London News* did not feature some of the more radical and satirical political cartoons that many of its contemporaries, such as *Punch* or *Harper’s Weekly*, boasted.⁷³ Despite its more moderate reputation

⁶⁹ Peter W. Sinnema, “Dynamics of the Pictured Page: Representing the Nation in the ‘Illustrated London News,’ 1842-1852” (PhD dissertation, York University Canada, 1995), iv.

⁷⁰ Jennifer Tucker, “‘Famished for News Pictures’: Mason Jackson, *The Illustrated London News*, and the Pictorial Spirit” in *Getting the Picture: The Visual Culture of the News*, ed. Jason E. Hill and Vanessa R. Schwartz (London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015), 213.

⁷¹ Sinnema, “Dynamics of the Pictured Page,” 21-26.

⁷² Sinnema, “Dynamics of the Pictured Page,” iv.

⁷³ Extensive use of the terms “British” and “English” will be used within this essay. As such, I employ the term “British” to describe the press, as its dissemination was not limited to

– at least in a depictive sense – *The Illustrated London News* did not hesitate to address major political issues that were relevant to the Victorian reading public. One of the major events the paper covered was the Great Famine (1845-1849), which decimated Britain’s neighboring Ireland during the mid-nineteenth century.⁷⁴ As Ireland operated under the jurisdiction of the British government at the time (despite the burgeoning rise of Irish nationalism), the events of the Famine as both a spectacle and a shame were presented as being of interest to consumers of the British press.⁷⁵ These portrayals depicted an Ireland rife with misery. From the perspective of those who worked for the British press, the economic fate of Ireland after the failure of the potato crop was exacerbated by rampant Irish poverty, physical illness, mental unfitness, and perverse Catholic religiosity. Awareness and dissemination of these perceptions through the popular press urged British readers to pity the Irish for their circumstances while simultaneously othering them in ways that distanced all Irish from middle-class, Victorian values and

London or those geographies specifically located within England’s borders. Likewise, “British” is used in a political context, usually to describe the comprehensive government structure of Victorian Britain, with London as the representative metropole. “English” denotes a social and cultural identity, most often employed in the context of perceived differences between what is “English” and what is “Irish.” This accounts for the complex histories associated with those who identified as “Scottish” and “Welsh” – who were also part of Britain, but who were not “English.” Tucker, “Famished for News Pictures,” 216.

⁷⁴ Paul Hockings, “Disasters Drawn: The Illustrated London News in the Mid-19th Century,” *Visual Anthropology* 28, no. 1: 23-24.

⁷⁵ Hockings, “Disasters Drawn,” 24. For more information on the rise of Irish nationalism and the emergence of an Irish Nationalist Press in Dublin, see Ann Andrews, *Newspapers and Newsmakers: The Dublin Nationalist Press in the Mid-Nineteenth Century* (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014) and Bruce Nelson, *Irish Nationalists and the Making of the Irish Race* (Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999).

norms. As a result, these perceived differences – an inherent part of what constituted “Irishness” – were presented as pitiful to the British reading public through *The Illustrated London News*.⁷⁶ This transformation in the manifestation of pity worked to ultimately change the discourse surrounding the Great Famine from one of (perhaps, at times, feigned) empathy to one that perpetuated ideas of dissimilarity between England and othered Ireland.

The representations of the Irish in *The Illustrated London News* may have served a greater purpose than simply othering the Irish from the English, however. At a time when burgeoning Irish nationalism offered the future potential for a politically separate Ireland, the British press’ representation of the Irish as miserable simultaneously denied Ireland’s capacity for effective rebellion while also squashing domestic notions that Ireland could ever effectively challenge their representative British government. If, however, the British press did not capitalize on othered representations of the Irish, it might have exposed the British government as an entity that, even in a small way, could be threatened by dissent. Bolstering these representations were notions of English culpability for the effects of the Great Famine. The British press represented the Irish as undeserving of continued aid because they were unchanging in their inherent Irishness, and, as such, fundamentally could not help themselves out of

⁷⁶ Henceforth, the term “Irishness,” like “othering,” will appear without the addition of quotation marks.

poverty, illness, starvation, etc. In representing the Irish as such, the British press manipulated the discourse surrounding intervention into Famine Ireland, rendering British intervention pointless and wasted on a population who, by nature, would remain impoverished and uncivilized. *The Illustrated London News* contributed to the Famine discourse, notions of blame, and ideas of culpability in the way the editors, illustrators, and compilers chose to represent Ireland and the Irish people during the Great Famine.

The major questions guiding this exploration of the British press and its construction of the Irish Famine are as follows: Who produced – and who consumed – journalism about the Irish as portrayed in the *Illustrated London News*? How was the *Illustrated London News* received and regarded as a form of media? How does the visual imagery and text of the *Illustrated London News* both convey and reflect the prejudices the British press held towards Irish people during the Victorian era? How does the concept of “Irish misery” function in the text, and how is it constructed? How frequently did the concept of “Irish misery” appear in *The Illustrated London News*’ articles and illustrations depicting the Great Famine? What Irish stereotypes were capitalized upon, and why? How does the *Illustrated London News*’ portrayal of the Famine-ravaged Irish compare and contrast with other forms of visual imagery being circulated through the press at the same time? And, finally, how do perceptions of othered identities simultaneously counter, complicate,

and reinforce one's own identity?

While much scholarly work exists on the history of the Great Famine, the racialization of the Irish by English onlookers during the Famine decade, and general histories of the Victorian British publications that explicitly referenced the Great Famine, less work has been done exclusively on the way the *Illustrated London News* portrayed the suffering Irish in contrast to English society during the 1840s.⁷⁷ As Michael de Nie observed in 2004, “Despite its central role in Victorian culture and politics, the British popular press remains a largely under-utilized resource in the historiography of Anglo-Irish relations.”⁷⁸ However lacking the scholarship may be, a few scholars have made use of the British popular press – specifically *The Illustrated London News* – in understanding the relationship between England and Ireland during the Famine era. Many of these explorations are the work of Leslie A. Williams, whose book, *Daniel O’Connell, The British Press, and the Irish Famine* and chapter, “Irish Identity and the Illustrated London News, 1846-1851: Famine to Depopulation,” in Susan Shaw Sailer’s *Representing Ireland: Gender, Class, Nationality*, directly comments on the

⁷⁷ Scholarly works that examine the way Irishness was perceived and portrayed in the British press include: Michael de Nie, *The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press, 1798-1882* (Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004); Edward G. Lengel, *The Irish Through British Eyes: Perceptions of Ireland in the Famine Era* (Westport, CT: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002); and Neil McCaw ed., *Writing Irishness in Nineteenth-Century British Culture* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2004).

⁷⁸ Michael de Nie, “Britannia’s Sick Sister: Irish Identity and the British Press, 1798 – 1882,” in *Writing Irishness in Nineteenth-Century British Culture*, ed. Neil McCaw (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2004), 173.

way *The Illustrated London News* depicted Irishness in response to the Great Famine.⁷⁹ Williams contends that “the coverage of the prolonged Irish famine in English newspapers and magazines is the source of a strange narrative that vacillates from intense sympathy to dismissive antipathy.”⁸⁰ Her argument traces these vacillations over time, showing how the English government and people often repeatedly changed their minds about the Irish during the Famine years. In response to and as an extension of Williams’ argument, this study affirms the presence of both sympathy and antipathy in *The Illustrated London News*’ representation of the Irish; however, I argue that these concepts worked simultaneously (often layered within the same article or illustration) instead of in a state of fluctuation over time. Likewise, this study contends that *The Illustrated London News*’ iconography of pity – and the pitiful – reinforces the othering of the miserable Irish as a way to jettison the culpability of the British government for the events and repercussions of the Great Famine.

The Irish Potato Famine, or the Great Famine, looms large in historical memory. If one knows nothing else about Ireland’s past, they might well associate the expansive failure of the potato crop – and consequent images

⁷⁹ Leslie A. Williams, *Daniel O’Connell, The British Press, and the Irish Famine* (Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003) and Susan Shaw Sailer ed., *Representing Ireland: Gender, Class, Nationality* (Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1997).

⁸⁰ Leslie Williams, “Irish Identity and the *Illustrated London News*, 1846-1851: Famine to Depopulation,” in *Representing Ireland: Gender, Class, Nationality*, ed. Susan Shaw Sailer (Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997), 59.

of poor, emaciated Irish people – with one of the most devastating moments in the history of the small country. The enormous tragedy of the Great Famine, of course, did not affect Ireland alone. The horrific biological plague that caused so many individuals to starve, perish, or emigrate may have decimated the Irish people and the Irish landscape, but it also engendered a domino effect of movement, heartache, and misery – the results of which can still be witnessed the world over. For many Irish, Americans, and Australians, especially, the events, results, and reverberations of the Great Famine may feature into their personal family histories, often explaining why individuals and families today live and work where they do.

The Great Famine, which began in 1845, was caused by an environmental disaster: the potato blight, a fungal infestation scientifically known as *Phytophthora infestans*, which quite literally took root in Irish soil and subsequently imposed a mycelial rot upon the most vital food source of the lower-class Irish.⁸¹ Because the starchy potato plant could be grown in poor, acidic, moist, or rocky soil, many poor farmers relied on the potato as an ideal and energy-rich crop that could easily sustain individuals and families who could not afford much else.⁸² In the provinces of Munster and

⁸¹ John Kelly, *The Graves are Walking: The Great Famine and the Saga of the Irish People* (New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2012), 3; Cormac Ó Gráda, *Black '47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy, and Memory* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1999), 13.

⁸² Ó Gráda, *Black '47 and Beyond*, 18-21.

Connacht, located in the southern and western quadrants of the island respectively, the effects of the potato blight took the most significant toll.⁸³ The widespread devastation in this region resulted from the comparatively large reliance on the potato for daily sustenance, as the land quality in the south and west of Ireland is ubiquitously stony and therefore hospitable to the propagation of tubers.⁸⁴ As such, the spread of the fungus, which turned the potato crop soft and black with rot, inevitably caused mass panic from Galway to Dublin and from Donegal to Cork. While many perished of sheer starvation, others became severely ill with diseases such as dysentery, scurvy, typhus, dropsy, marasmus, consumption, cholera, and fever as a combined result of malnourishment, contact with other ill individuals, and desperate attempts to consume the rotten crop.⁸⁵

However, the poor Irish were not the only victims of sickness as a result of the Great Famine. Wealthy landlords, their families, and other members of the upper class in Ireland, too, succumbed to the spread of illness and often came down with bouts of fever through contact with those who were already infected.⁸⁶ While the Great Famine's effects were felt most severely by the Irish poor, relatively few living across the island escaped its tenacious grip completely unscathed. Thus, after 1845, Ireland

⁸³ Ó Gráda, *Black '47 and Beyond*, 108.

⁸⁴ Ó Gráda, *Black '47 and Beyond*, 108.

⁸⁵ Ó Gráda, *Black '47 and Beyond*, 89-93; Hockings, "Disasters Drawn," 24.

⁸⁶ Ó Gráda, *Black '47 and Beyond*, 94.

was in a dire state of emergency, with circumstances only growing worse as the Great Famine claimed more casualties.

Likewise, the dawn of the Great Famine in 1845 wreaked havoc on an already compromised Irish economy. Poverty was a staple of pre-Famine Ireland (especially due to the fairly meager yield of the potato as a monocrop across the island) which only exacerbated the crumbling of the lower-class Irish way of life once the crop began to rot on a mass scale.⁸⁷ The vast socioeconomic divide between the landed elite – who were, for the most part, politically, fiscally, and socially powerful Anglo-Irish landlords – and the impoverished Irish peasant class, was on the brink of collapse by the time the Great Famine had taken a firm hold of the island.⁸⁸ With an estimated ten thousand landlords holding the greatest access to the market, property, and political control (a portion of which were “absentee landlords” who resided and managed their Irish affairs from London) in contrast to the millions of Irish who occupied the lower-strata of Irish society, the fabric of daily life began to unravel.⁸⁹ This culminated in not only the loss of nourishment, but the loss of work, home, income, and personal security. However, differing levels of poverty meant that some of the suffering Irish – namely those “small capitalists” as *The Illustrated London News* referred to

⁸⁷ Ó Gráda, *Black '47 and Beyond*, 20-24.

⁸⁸ Ó Gráda, *Black '47 and Beyond*, 26.

⁸⁹ Oonagh Walsh, *Ireland's Independence, 1880 – 1923* (London: Routledge Press, 2002), 4.

them, who might have been slightly more financially stable – may have had the means to emigrate and escape almost certain illness or death.⁹⁰

News of the Great Famine spread far and wide, but was of principal concern to Ireland's better-off neighbor located across the Irish Sea, England. Newspapers, magazines, and various other publications featured articles about the Irish Famine, characterized as both a natural disaster and a contentious current event.⁹¹ These publications subsequently circulated a plethora of opinions that varied based on what constituted the best approach to aid for Ireland – or if aid for Ireland even fell within the range of England's political and social responsibilities.⁹² Within the span of a few years, publications like *The Illustrated London News* capitalized on the Great Famine as a way to report current events to its growing miasma of middle class readers while also continuing the famine chronicle as a way to establish a steady and profitable readership.⁹³ As such, *The Illustrated London News* reported on the Great Famine almost weekly between 1845 and 1849. Front pages, featured articles, and gossip columns all reported on the state of Ireland, still under the legal and political jurisdiction of the British government despite the steady rise of Irish nationalist sentiments appearing,

⁹⁰ Ó Gráda, *Black '47 and Beyond*, 105; "Evictions of Peasantry in Ireland," *The Illustrated London News*, 16 December 1848, 380.

⁹¹ Hockings, "Disasters Drawn," 23.

⁹² De Nie, *The Eternal Paddy*, 86.

⁹³ Hockings, "Disasters Drawn," 23-24.

especially in Dublin.⁹⁴ It is no coincidence, then, that *The Illustrated London News* found the events of the Great Famine to be a central topic of specifically visual interest to its audience.

The inception of *The Illustrated London News* in 1842 conveniently coincided with the beginning of the Great Famine in 1845, providing the press with plenty of reportage for at least the ensuing four years. During this time, the publication used the repeated concept of “Irish misery” in its visual and textual depictions during the years of the Great Famine to disseminate subtle, but implicitly prejudiced, interpretations of the suffering Irish to its readership. Between 1845 and 1849, as the potato blight spread across Ireland and destroyed the main form of subsistence for many lower-class Irish people, *The Illustrated London News*, while operating under a guise of sympathy, used perceptions of Irish destitution, Irish physical and mental illness, and Irish Catholicism as evidence of Irish misery to other the Irish from the British reading public. In eliciting pity toward the marginalized Irish, *The Illustrated London News* simultaneously implied that Irish cultural difference from British societal norms was pitiful in nature.

Representations of misery and pity were central to *The Illustrated London News*' conception of the Irish, and, as such, contributed to the publication's distinct tone. In contrast to many of its vitriolic contemporaries

⁹⁴ Walsh, *Ireland's Independence*, 4-6.

and successors, *The Illustrated London News* was a more visually moderate, albeit also intrinsically prejudiced, publication. Marketed towards the middle-to-upper class reading public, the paper boasted a slightly higher price along with a more sympathetic view of the suffering Irish across the sea.⁹⁵

However, this sympathy was colored by portrayals of the Irish as inherently different from the British – especially the average reader who constituted *The Illustrated London News*' audience. Rarely did the articles and images within the paper call for the audience to sympathize with the Irish because they were similar to the English; instead, the paper's implicit message suggested that the Irish deserved the reader's pity because of their deplorable Famine conditions. This message quickly transformed into pitying the Irish not only for their calamitous circumstances, but also because their inherent cultural and religious differences from the English *were* pitiful. The repeated concept of "Irish misery" was the vehicle through which these implicitly prejudiced sentiments were conveyed, and the concepts used as evidence of this misery – namely Irish destitution, illness, and Catholicism – further implicated the Irish as the alien other.

According to historian Edward G. Lengel, severely racialized portrayals of the Irish were not popularly employed in English discourse and national consciousness until the post-Famine era (with distinct roots

⁹⁵ Tucker, "Famished for News Pictures," 216.

appearing in the 1840s and 1850s), but racial rhetoric and ideas of inherent cultural difference influenced the way the Irish were perceived before and during the Famine crisis.⁹⁶ As such, this study will not directly engage with the complex, deeply-rooted, and extensive history of race relations between the English and the Irish, but it will employ Matthew Frye Jacobson's theories of Irish racial difference (as discussed in his work, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*) as a way to understand the concept of othering and how it was utilized by those who viewed and depicted the Irish – in this particular study's instance, the nineteenth-century British press.⁹⁷ Likewise, this historical exploration will consider the concept of race to be inherently enmeshed in conceptions of class, religion, socioeconomic status, and ethnicity, all of which work as networks of power and perception. Moving forward, these concepts will fall under the category of othering, a concept which is defined as “the perception of an entity as distinct in relation to other entities; the perception or representation of a person or group of people as fundamentally alien from another, frequently more powerful, group.”⁹⁸ However, this study does not conflate the concept of race with the concept of othering, but will contend that

⁹⁶ Lengel, *The Irish Through British Eyes*, 98. For more information on what constitutes “national consciousness,” see Benedict Anderson, *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism* (New York: Verso Press, 1991).

⁹⁷ Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race* (Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998).

⁹⁸ *Oxford English Dictionary*, s.v. “othering,” accessed 5 March 2018 (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004).

race, as well as categories such as class, gender, and religion emerge as products of othering.

As Jacobson notes, there are several important factors to keep in mind when considering the way that certain groups of people were othered (especially along racial lines) in the past. First, one must understand that “race resides not in nature but in politics and culture. One of the tasks before the historian is to discover which racial categories are useful to whom at a given moment, and why.”⁹⁹ In the context of this study, this idea manifests in the way the writers, editors, and compilers chose to portray Irishness in *The Illustrated London News*, and I endeavor to understand why these particular portrayals were depicted so often and to what purpose. Second, and in conjunction with the previous observation, Jacobson notes that “race is not just a conception; it is also a perception. The problem is not merely how races are comprehended, but how they are seen.”¹⁰⁰ In applying this idea to *The Illustrated London News*, it is clear that the way Irishness was depicted (conception) directly affected the way Irish people and their circumstances, identities, and beliefs may have been viewed by British readers (perception). Third, Jacobson is careful not to “minimize the significance of economics and class in racial formation,” arguing that “racial stereotypes... were economic assessments that had economic consequences (in the form, typically, of

⁹⁹ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 9.

¹⁰⁰ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 9.

dispossession).”¹⁰¹ This economic basis, in the context of British perceptions of the suffering Irish, allowed for othering to occur by clearly delineating Irish economic circumstances (poverty, land loss, poor healthcare, among others) from the more stable British domestic economy within the press. Finally, Jacobson attempts “not to argue that race is freighted the same way from period to period or from case to case.”¹⁰² The way race is perceived and discussed in the present moment differs greatly from how race was constructed and perceived in the past. By examining Famine Era politics, economics, relations, and media, one must carefully attempt to understand how race or othering was being used, by whom, and for what purposes during that specific time.

In order to employ the concept of othering, however, first one must assert that there is something that inherently makes an individual or a group of people alien in some way. Jacobson engages with this idea by using the phrase “natural difference” to describe the way British individuals conceived of the Irish.¹⁰³ This belief in a “natural difference” present in the Irish was the basis for portraying them as the other, or as something essentially different that required pity during the Famine crisis. Michael de Nie’s scholarship conveniently breaks down the psychology behind how Victorians conceived

¹⁰¹ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 20-21.

¹⁰² Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 9.

¹⁰³ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 48-49.

of Irish and English difference by asserting that British publications were used to define the Irish other as well as to reinforce notions of what constituted the English self.¹⁰⁴ According to de Nie, “the qualities that made up Britishness included self-control, reason, love for order and freedom, respect for the law, sobriety, and a firm dislike for enthusiasm or emotionalism.”¹⁰⁵ In stark contrast to qualities of Britishness, Irishness was “superstitious, feckless, improvident, violent, excitable, subservient to priests and demagogues, and given to drink.”¹⁰⁶ Thus, the British press capitalized on these cultural notions – however prejudiced – to delineate English society from the pandemonium of Irish Famine society. As de Nie notes, “ultimately, this stereotyping served to reinforce ideas that somehow a native Irishness was historically at fault for the nation’s problems, and that the introduction of ‘British’ values was an essential component of any solution to Erin’s [Ireland’s] ills.”¹⁰⁷ This assertion reinforces the idea that Irish differences from British cultural values were pitiful – so much so that the only viable approach to healing Famine Ireland was to eradicate these pitiful differences by enforcing the adoption of British values instead. This theme becomes apparent as deeply-embedded in the textual and visual representations of the Irish in *The Illustrated London News* through the portrayal of Irish

¹⁰⁴ De Nie, “Britannia’s Sick Sister,” 173.

¹⁰⁵ De Nie, “Britannia’s Sick Sister,” 174.

¹⁰⁶ De Nie, “Britannia’s Sick Sister,” 174.

¹⁰⁷ De Nie, “Britannia’s Sick Sister,” 173.

poverty, illness, and rampant Catholic religiosity.

A People Too Poor and Sorrow-stricken to Attempt to Elevate Themselves

The Irish suffered from pervasive poverty during the Famine years – a poverty from which they fundamentally could not relieve themselves, at least in the eyes of their British neighbors.¹⁰⁸ Tellingly, an article entitled “The Irish Poor-Law” elucidates the negative sentiment the producers of the British press harbored for their impoverished neighbors – a sentiment which, through publication, they attempted to disseminate to the British reading public. The author states:

If the splendor of our benevolence has not kept pace with the hideousness of her misery, it has not been from any want of inclination on the part of the living race of Englishmen, but from the sheer impossibility of remedying in one year the accumulated evils of ages; and of elevating the character of a people too poor and sorrow-stricken to attempt to elevate themselves.¹⁰⁹

Not only did the British press contend that the Irish were so destitute and miserable that their ills rendered them incompetent, but the publication trumpeted English “benevolence” in the face of a failing Ireland to convince the public that England was not to blame. However, the concept of benevolence – especially employed in this context – is significant.

“Benevolence” may connote a selfless concern for the wellbeing of others,

¹⁰⁸ Lengel, *The Irish Through British Eyes*, 97.

¹⁰⁹ “The Irish Poor-Law,” *The Illustrated London News*, 25 November 1848, 321.

but benevolence is simultaneously undone by the reinforcement of the benefactor's position as superior to those he or she aids. In helping the poor Irish, England simultaneously reinforced its position as the entity of power, health, wealth, and stability.

Thus, *The Illustrated London News* depicted the Irish peasantry as smothered by their misery in both a textual and visual medium. This depictive choice simultaneously elicited pity and capitalized upon the notion of intrinsic "Irish misery" to differentiate the reader and viewer of the publication from the Irish subjects portrayed within its pages. Adding to this trend, concurrent depictions of English agrarian prosperity in *The Illustrated London News* – images which Leslie Williams argues "certainly buoyed the image of English provident management and productivity in a grain-based agricultural economy" – indirectly contrasted with the scenes depicting Irish poverty.¹¹⁰ Even so, this "smug contrast between Irish and English agriculture," as Williams describes it, certainly affected the way that depictions of Irish destitution may have been read by consumers of *The Illustrated London News*. While the English farmer prospered in a similarly agrarian environment, the suffering Irish peasant crumbled under his miserable rural circumstances – a concept which, as Williams similarly notes, indirectly colors the Irish as incapable of properly managing their property,

¹¹⁰ Williams, "Irish Identity and the *Illustrated London News*," 60.

crops, and, perhaps most importantly, themselves.¹¹¹ Thus, the othering of the Irish, especially from the consumers of the British press, was implicit in the way the publication portrayed Irish poverty as a function of their inherent and persistent misery.

The idea that the Irish could not support themselves on any level was reinforced by evictions of impoverished Irish tenants from their homes by their wealthier landlords. When the tenants failed to pay rent, they were forcibly removed from their homes and the structures were then destroyed. The writers working for *The Illustrated London News* did not shy away from explicating their views on the evictions, stating:

The truth is, that these evictions, under the peculiar and most melancholy circumstances of Ireland, are not merely a legal, but a natural process; and, however much we may deplore the misery from which they spring, and which they so dreadfully aggravate, we cannot compel the Irish proprietors to continue in their miserable holdings the wretched swarms of people who pay no rent, and who prevent the improvement of property as long as they remain upon it.¹¹²

Not only do these writers claim that the evictions are so “natural” that they cannot be helped, but they similarly contend that, if Irish individuals were permitted to remain on the land, their misery, wretchedness, and poverty would act as a contagion, rendering the properties themselves

Coinciding with the textual representations of Irish poverty, visual

¹¹¹ Williams, “Irish Identity and the *Illustrated London News*,” 60-61.

¹¹² “Irish Evictions,” *The Illustrated London News*, 20 October 1849, 257.

representations of destitution in *The Illustrated London News* are littered with depictions of distressed individuals, too pitiful to even show their faces to the audience. On the rare occasion when an Irish face is shown in an illustration, the facial features are contorted into animalistic masks of supplicatory desperation, as especially present in an article entitled “Evictions of Peasantry in Ireland.”¹¹³ In discussing the ejection of Irish peasants and the subsequent emigration of the more financially fortunate, the article characterizes Famine-torn Ireland as experiencing a “social revolution, [which], however necessary it may be, is accompanied by an amount of human misery that is absolutely appalling.” This negative sentiment, which contends that Ireland’s suffering was, in essence, a necessary evil, is mirrored in the article’s description of the poor Irish tenants as “wretched cottiers.” These descriptions exist somewhere in between sympathy and antipathy, as the Irish are characterized as wretched and miserable, but that this state is both “necessary” and “appalling” in the eyes of those producing *The Illustrated London News*.

¹¹³ “Evictions of Peasantry in Ireland,” *The Illustrated London News*, 16 December 1848, 380.

Two detailed illustrations accompany these descriptions, showing a

scene

entitled

“The

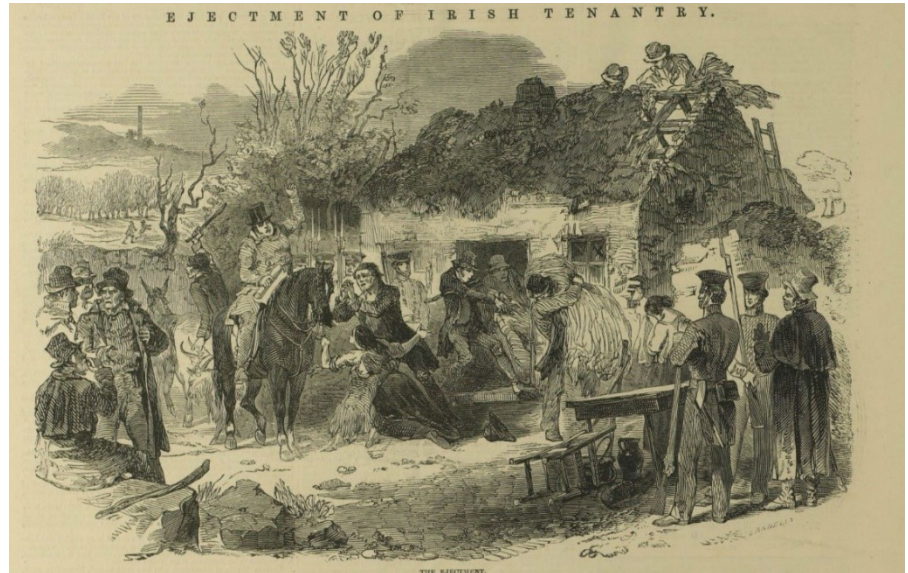
Ejectment”

followed by

another

called “The

Day After



the Ejectment” – both of which are characterized by a distinctive Irish misery.

“The Ejectment” depicts a scene of chaos as a small horde of ragged-looking Irish people, heads turned downward or raised in futile appeal, topple over one another as they are forced out of their homes by their landlords and the accompanying armed guards. There is a marked difference in the way each group of individuals is portrayed in this image – the Irish as poverty-stricken individuals who quite literally wilt into the ground, and the Anglo-Irish landlords as well-fed, well-dressed, and well-assembled in contrast to the crumbling Irish peasantry. Likewise, the transfer and subsequent demolition of property as portrayed in the image only reinforces the pitiful poverty of the Irish. Just as the inhabitants are forced from their home for not being able to pay their rent, another group of individuals – most likely those working for the

landlord – begin to deconstruct the edifice. A few men tear the thatch from the roof of the small cottage while others drive livestock away and move furniture out of the cottage’s interior. This physical destruction of the cottage mirrors the crumbling of the Irish individuals in the foreground of the image, suggesting that all aspects of Irish life are prone to the effects of widespread poverty. The destitution depicted in this particular illustration is so starkly assigned to what is most “Irish” in nature that it is difficult for a viewer not to associate images of misery and loss with that which is inherently Irish.

The coinciding image, entitled “The Day After the Ejectment,” mimics “The Ejectment” in its visual rhetoric. In the illustration, an Irish woman holds her baby while tucked inside an earthen hovel, around which various pieces of domestic litter (a broken wheel, an unhinged cupboard door, a pitcher, and so forth) are strewn. Above these objects, a man leans



against a tree with his shoulders drooped, head bowed, and his face covered by his arm. His elder child, barefoot and lying on the ground, points to a

structure situated in the distance, which, though the image itself does not provide a definitive answer, could possibly be their former home or the residence of their former landlord. It is clear, through this portrayal, that Irish misery functions as shame, destitution, confusion, and lost hope, rendering the Irish man, woman, and child both pitiable by the English viewer, but also pitiful in contrast to the more economically secure English farmer or Anglo-Irish landlord. Likewise, the scenes elicit pity by representing the Irish as desperately poor and miserable, but they simultaneously other the Irish by depicting them as so pitiful that they are reduced to begging – an action that, according to Michael de Nie’s list of proper English traits, may have been read as “what the Irish do” instead of a more general function of the impoverished human condition.

Likewise, de Nie’s list of that which constituted Englishness appears within the text of another article, entitled “The Irish Perplexity,” in the form of British fears about the Irish Famine. The unnamed writer rhetorically asks: “What then remains? Can nothing be done for Ireland? Are the nominally rich to be reduced to the actual level of the paupers around them?”¹¹⁴ These lines clearly denote the threat the Great Famine posed to English and Anglo-Irish society; the fear stems from not only the possibility of sinking into poverty, but sinking into a poverty akin to Irishness. Thus, representations of

¹¹⁴ “The Irish Perplexity,” *The Illustrated London News*, 31 March 1849, 201.

Irish destitution as portrayed in *The Illustrated London News* not only worked to other the Irish, but also to highlight the perceived threat poverty posed to British or Anglo-Irish property holders who aligned themselves with “Englishness.”

Filth, Darkness, and Discomfort Become a Part of His Nature

Perhaps unsurprisingly, ubiquitous poverty and personal insecurity led to other forms of misery, such as illness. Physical and mental illness, concepts used as evidence of Irish misery, are woven into almost every depiction of the Irish in *The Illustrated London News* during the Famine years. Often layered with illustrations of destitution, the Irish tendency to exist in varying states of sickness is representative of larger perceptions about England’s relationship with Ireland as a whole. Michael de Nie’s work explores the more metaphorical relationship between Britain, the “physician,” and Ireland, the “sick sister,” during the Famine era.¹¹⁵ While de Nie’s analysis tracks larger patterns of nationalistic characterization and identity between countries, the core of his argument – that Famine Ireland herself was viewed by the British as inherently unwell – translates to how Ireland’s inhabitants were also portrayed and perceived as disease-ridden, both mentally and physically, in the British press. Most importantly, though, de

¹¹⁵ De Nie, “Britannia’s Sick Sister,” 173.

Nie's analysis contends that "these [British] efforts to assist Ireland... were paralleled and fundamentally influenced by deep-seated views that ultimately Erin's illness was a product of her Irishness."¹¹⁶ This mutual relationship between being "Irish" and being "ill" is apparent in several articles of *The Illustrated London News*. Mostly used as a device to elicit sympathy from the British reading public, these representations of illness transcend the dichotomy of "health versus sickness" and incorporate elements of Irish identity, as if to conflate the illness with the Irish persona. While physical illness and disease were certainly products of the more material aspects of starvation, the portrayal of mental illness becomes intimately related to the Irish character as portrayed in *The Illustrated London News*, and therefore, an implicit prejudice – working under the guise of sympathy – becomes apparent.

The physical illness present in many of the articles is not gruesome enough to deter the reader, but still portrays a marked uncleanness of Irish physicality and character. The language used in the writings suggests that the poor, starved Irish lived in both literal and metaphorical breeding grounds for sickness, perversion, addiction, and animal-like behavior. One author, commenting on the poor physical conditions of both the Irish individual and the Irish domestic space, states: "Yet, so dear a thing is home, that even to

¹¹⁶ De Nie, "Britannia's Sick Sister," 175.

such a human stye as this the peasant is devotedly attached; and so obstinate a thing is habit, that filth, darkness, and discomfort become a part of his nature.”¹¹⁷ In this example, unclean conditions could not be divorced from Irishness – even the nature of the Irish suggested the presence of ill-health. Another article contends that, on an average day in an Irish village, “a few pigs prowled about the streets, apparently on the best of terms with the passengers,” and that “the Irish peasant lives in a wigwam, and shares it with a pig.”¹¹⁸ These statements, which evoke language representative of savagery, clearly liken the poor Irish peasant to a farm animal. In this case, the Irishman should be pitied because he lives among the pigs – and furthermore, in a hut-like structure, not even in close comparison to the typical Victorian British house. Complicating this portrayal is another writer’s contention that, “As regards mere physical well-being, the condition of the Esquimaux or Kaffirs is preferable to theirs [The Irish]. The weak Irish peasant may starve, but the strong Kaffir contrives to live.”¹¹⁹ Even groups of people who the British continually othered due to their race, culture, and geographical distance from British society were deemed physically better than the Irish, denigrating the Irish peasant to an incredibly low status. This sentiment reflects the portrayal of the Irish in the former article, which

¹¹⁷ “A Day in an Irish Town,” *The Illustrated London News*, 28 July 1849, 49.

¹¹⁸ “A Day in an Irish Town,” *The Illustrated London News*, 28 July 1849, 49.

¹¹⁹ “The Irish Perplexity,” *The Illustrated London News*, 31 March 1849, 201.

highlights the dirtiness and barbarism of a people who choose to cohabit with barnyard animals. Both sentiments would also have been perceived by readers of *The Illustrated London News* as a far cry from societal rules of British decorum and decency. As such, these portrayal may have elicited a mixture of pity and disgust from the English reader, who then might form conclusions that the Irish people – by their very physical nature – were different from and lesser than their more civilized English neighbors.

This Irish uncleanliness is only reinforced by one author's choice to describe, in detail, the Irish "garb, [which was] almost the same in every instance."¹²⁰ He employs adjectives to this end, using words such as "antique," "slouching," "battered," "patched," and "unfastened" – words very much denoting the Irish inability (or lack of desire and means) to attend to physical appearance and well-being. Most tellingly, the author juxtaposes the Irishman, who freely allows "half of the swarthy and dirty leg to be visible" with the "decent shopkeeper... in the ordinary dress of an English tradesman."¹²¹ Like the juxtaposition of the destitute, begging Irish peasant with the more prosperous English farmer in "The Ejectment," *The Illustrated London News* again employs contrast to show their reading public how uncivilized the average Irish individual was in comparison to their more decorous English counterparts. In this instance specifically, the Irishman's

¹²⁰ "A Day in an Irish Town," *The Illustrated London News*, 28 July 1849, 49.

¹²¹ "A Day in an Irish Town," *The Illustrated London News*, 28 July 1849, 49.

dress denotes not only his poverty, but his complete lack of physical fitness and cleanliness in comparison to the more presentable shopkeeper. Interestingly, the article does not clarify if the shopkeeper is actually an Englishman or an Irishman, but instead depicts him as aligning himself, in either instance, with English values through his appearance and profession. In this way, the rhetoric driving the article is tinged with prejudice; it illustrates how the Irish might better themselves through the adoption of English values while simultaneously characterizing the Irishman as having no means, motivation, or physical ability to ascend to the status or appearance of an English gentleman or merchant. As such, this particular brand of othering concocts a narrative of Irishness through a deteriorating physicality that is both barbaric and incapable of betterment.

Physical illness was not the only type of illness portrayed by *The Illustrated London News*. While not understood as the twenty-first-century conceptualization of what constitutes a medically-defined “mental illness,” evidence of depression, moroseness, apathy, laziness, and alcoholism are present within both the visual and textual representations of the famished Irish people. Writers for the publication continually commented on Irish mental weakness, conveying rhetoric such as: “[The Irishman] speaks a barbarous language, and is in arrear with the intelligence of the world,” as well as judgments that “the masses of the [Irish] people cannot be called

civilized by any stretch of flattery or good nature.”¹²² Writers, editors, and compilers working for *The Illustrated London News* frequently portrayed the Irish as lacking in both soundness of mind and general character, suggesting to the reading public that Irish mental weakness also contributed to their perpetual state of misery.

One illustration, entitled “Irish Courtship” plays upon stereotypes of the Irish as mentally distanced from what was deemed “proper” in British eyes. The image depicts a young Irish couple: the man stands, brow furrowed and creased in concern, as he leans over the woman, seated in a dejected heap on the ground with her chin



propped in the palms of her hands. Her mouth is covered by her fingers and her eyes are cast downward and to the side, appearing to hold little emotion as they stare emptily into the distance. The accompanying text is a snippet of an imagined dialogue between the illustrated characters, rife with phrases such as “your coldness will wither the heart-flow’rs I tenderly cherish for you” and “the hopes that I lived on are lost in despair” – language denoting that

¹²² “The Irish Perplexity,” *The Illustrated London News*, 31 March 1849, 201.

even Irish courtship and romance is ostensibly tinged with an inescapable melancholy.¹²³ Similarly, the final lines of the selection complicate the portrayal of the two characters, Kathleen and Dermot, as beginning a faithful relationship, which, the article notes, is an “achievement rare” in Famine Ireland. But this achievement, however rare, is colored by dysfunction. The final stanza of the selection can be read as ironic, as it presents Dermot and Kathleen as “happy” in their mutual misery. Paired with the accompanying illustration of the miserable couple, the end of Kathleen and Dermot’s tale reinforces the English notion that, while Irish people may be inherently miserable, misery is likewise characteristic of their interactions. This misery is so ingrained in Irishness that it becomes a diurnal part of Irish life, impossible to separate from those events and circumstances which would generally be viewed as celebratory or cheerful. Thus, the portrayal of mental, and furthermore, social, dysfunction in Irish society effectively renders the Irish and their unnatural mental states alien to the British reading public.

To Blame His Religion, for the Evils Which Afflict Him

It may initially seem strange to associate Irish Catholicism with themes of poverty and sickness, but, as Jacobson argues, “concerning the ‘Papist,’

¹²³ “The Royal Academy Exhibition,” *The Illustrated London News*, 16 May 1846, 319.

too, religion was sometimes seen as a function of race.”¹²⁴ In the case of *The Illustrated London News*, Ireland’s predominantly Catholic predilections were fundamentally tied to the Irish racial or othered identity in the eyes of their Protestant English observers. As one writer for the publication stated,

So much has been said and written about Ireland – so many and so conflicting have been the statements put forth, that the people of this country begin to loathe the very name of Irish misery... They sometimes believe the Irish peasant to be unteachable. They always know him to be wretched. At one time they blame his Celtic blood, and at another they are inclined to blame his religion, for the evils which afflict him...¹²⁵

Much like destitution and illness, then, Catholicism carried with it a stigma of difference as something distinctly Irish in nature – something that differentiated them from their predominantly English Protestant neighbors. But it was not only the English who interpreted Irish Catholicism as a deficiency of character. Even as the Great Famine forced Irish men, women, and children to emigrate in order to escape the ravages of disease, poverty, and starvation, “the gravest objection to Irish immigrants [in America] was their incapacity, as Catholics, to participate in a democracy.”¹²⁶ Even politically, Catholicism inhibited Irish individuals from becoming full-fledged members of society due to concerns that their allegiance to the pope would supersede their loyalties to their new countries and governments. As such,

¹²⁴ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 70.

¹²⁵ “Irish Agitation and Irish Misery,” *The Illustrated London News*, 27 May 1848, 335.

¹²⁶ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 70.

Irish Catholicism can be understood not only as a system of religious beliefs and practices, but something that continually characterized the Irish – both at home and abroad – as civically impotent individuals, fundamentally incapable of separating themselves from their inherent religious tendencies.

Likewise, Catholicism was perceived as something beyond simply “faith,” and was instead viewed as a limb attached to the Irish cultural body. Jacobson contends that, as Irish people remained within Ireland while others ventured outside of its margins during the Famine Era, “the persistence of Irish Catholicism was inseparable from the issue of Celtic racial identity.”¹²⁷ Thus, it is crucial to understand that Catholicism may not have been understood, especially by the English, as a belief system someone chooses to adopt, but instead as a racial and cultural system into which the Irish were born. Evidence of this contention is present within *The Illustrated London News* – especially in an illustration entitled “Irish Mendicants.”¹²⁸ The image features a sketch showcasing the way that the British press presented Catholicism as inherently linked with “Irishness.”

The depiction shows three Irish people: an older man, seated on a rock with downcast eyes; a downtrodden child seated barefoot on the ground near the man; and a woman, also barefoot and dressed in rags, her face

¹²⁷ Jacobson, *Whiteness of a Different Color*, 70.

¹²⁸ “Exhibition of the Society of Painters in Water-Colours, Pall Mall East,” *The Illustrated London News*, 3 May 1845, 281.

creased with worry
and sorrow,
standing next to
the man with her
hand resting upon
his shoulder. The
faces of the three
individuals are



contorted in expressions intended to clearly show mental anguish, while their dress (or lack thereof) represents their great need and suffering. However, the most fascinating part of the image is not the people themselves, but what affects the way in which the three individuals are read. Upon first glance, the reader's eyes may be drawn to the foreground of the image instead of the central focus due to the most noticeable object that meets their gaze: a crucifix, planted firmly against a rock in the foreground of the picture. This artistic choice immediately colors the reader's perception of the people represented above it. The crucifix, a symbol of Catholicism and by extension "Irishness," as previously discussed, promotes stereotypes associated with Catholic religiosity. By extension, then, the reader might assume that the obvious marker of Catholicism framing the central figures of the sketch contributes to their poverty, physical degeneration, and mental suffering. In

other words, the inclusion of the crucifix attributes the subjects' other failings, at least in part, to their religious beliefs.

Also worth noting is that there is little description of the image aside from its attribution. However, drawing upon the title of the image clearly depicts its meaning. The use of the word "mendicant" is an interesting and perhaps telling choice. A mendicant is a person who willingly takes a vow of poverty, not a person who involuntarily becomes impoverished due to circumstances beyond their control. Likewise, the word "mendicant" is often associated with specifically Catholic orders of religious men and women, such as friars or nuns. Thus, even word choices used for titles, as well as in-text descriptions, tell of an implicit prejudice as portrayed within the work of British writers and illustrators. In this instance, the title of the article offers a certain biased viewpoint veiled behind a portrayal of poverty: the impoverished state may have been something the Irish deserved or accepted instead of a fate dealt to them.

A similar image likewise brands the Irish as individuals controlled beyond reason by their Catholic religiosity. Entitled "New Years Night in an Irish Cabin," the illustration depicts a group of barefoot Irish people socializing in a dark room made of earthen floors and crumbling walls.¹²⁹ Above them, hanging on one of the more intact walls, is a crucifix, whose

¹²⁹ "New Year's Night," *The Illustrated London News*, 30 December 1848, 424.

presence suggests that even in times of leisure, Catholicism pervasively lords over the Irish way of life. This representation works to other the Irish from the English through its portrayal of poverty and uncivilized dancing, but also by labeling the Irish as inseparable from their Catholic values. As such, the image suggests that because the Irish cling to their Catholic beliefs, practices, and customs, they live in filth, baseness, and partake in barbarous forms of entertainment and socialization.

Both portrayals feature a crucifix as an emblem of Catholicism to

remind

readers of

The

Illustrated

London News

that the Irish

– in both their

work and

their leisure –



were fundamentally married to their religion. These depictions suggest that the Irish should not only be pitied because they are impoverished papists not enlightened enough to practice English Protestantism, but also that the Irish subjects are pitiful because of their conscious choice to practice Catholicism.

It is this choice to subscribe to Catholicism that *The Illustrated London News* conflated with the Irish choice to adopt a life of misery. In this way, the publication suggested that blame for the Famine and the misery that followed rested, in part, with the Irish tendency to accept and practice a backward, un-English religion.

The Question of Irish Misery Thrusts Itself Before the British Public in Every Possible Way

The Illustrated London News did not shy away from reporting on the Famine and continually depicting the Irish as miserable; in fact, its coverage of these events and themes made them a part of everyday life for the consumer of the British press. As one writer for *The Illustrated London News* observed in 1848, "The question of Irish misery thrusts itself before the British public in every possible way. There is no escaping from it."¹³⁰ Despite repeated patterns of negative representation used to other the Irish, not all English readers fully agreed with or subscribed to the ways that *The Illustrated London News* portrayed the starving Irish people and their circumstances. While it is important to track the larger representational trends of how the famished Irish were portrayed by the press, it is also crucial to note that there were opportunities for dissenting opinions within the

¹³⁰ "The Irish People and the Irish Landlords," *The Illustrated London News*, 16 December 1848, 369.

publication. One piece of evidence, an 1849 submission by a reader of *The Illustrated London News* entitled “The Irish Poor Laws: To the Editor of The Illustrated London News,” exemplifies how readers might have partially accepted the messages of Irish misery disseminated by the publication while simultaneously disagreeing with some of the implications that this misery erupted out of Irishness and not as a result of the British government’s neglect.¹³¹ The author of the letter, identified only as T.H.I, contended that “the public is much indebted to you for the graphic descriptions you have lately given... of Ireland and the destitute condition of her people,” proving that he was a regular reader of *The Illustrated London News* and has followed the reportage on Famine Ireland.¹³² Later, he noted that “it is plain that the Irish would have been taught self-reliance at an earlier period – would have been compelled to take more care of themselves, and would not have been so numerous in relation to the land and the food, had there been no Poor-law passed in 1838.”¹³³ In this passage, the author simultaneously communicated perceptions of the Irish as incapable people – individuals who allowed themselves to decay, rampantly reproduce, and starve because they did not know any better – while noting that much of the blame for this

¹³¹ “The Irish Poor Laws: To the Editor of The Illustrated London News,” *The Illustrated London News*, 11 August 1849, 91.

¹³² “The Irish Poor Laws: To the Editor of The Illustrated London News,” *The Illustrated London News*, 11 August 1849, 91.

¹³³ “The Irish Poor Laws: To the Editor of The Illustrated London News,” *The Illustrated London News*, 11 August 1849, 91.

Irishness resided in the British government's response to Irish affairs. Based on this reader's response, the evidence suggests that while readers of *The Illustrated London News* may not have accepted every article and illustration published by the press as fact, much of their opinions – even dissenting ones – were colored by the portrayal of the Irish as miserable and incapable people, fundamentally different from their English neighbors. Despite T.H.I.'s disagreements, his language mirrors that used by *The Illustrated London News*, showing that although the exact origins of Irish misery were debated, the miserable and pitiful nature of the Irish people was never in doubt. T.H.I.'s response is not fully sympathetic or antipathetic, but exists in the middle of these two concepts as one who pities the Irish for their circumstances but also views their incompetence as pitiful in nature.

It was not until later in the nineteenth century that *The Illustrated London News* featured cited works of prominent Irish artists and illustrators on a more regular basis, even though on rare occasion the publication featured an Irish newspaper excerpt or Irish illustration during the Famine era. An article by historian Niamh O'Sullivan, entitled "Through Irish Eyes: The Work of Aloysius O'Kelly in the *Illustrated London News*" seeks to understand the differences between *The Illustrated London News*' earlier representations of the Great Famine in the 1840s as illustrated by mainly English artists and the later 1880s representations of Irish current events by

Irish illustrators working in England.¹³⁴ O'Sullivan's analysis focuses specifically on the work of Aloysius O'Kelly, whose 1880s illustrations painted a markedly different picture of Ireland as compared to earlier representations of Famine Ireland in the 1840s.¹³⁵ In O'Kelly's works, the Irish individuals portrayed are often banded together in crowds with their full faces bared towards the audience – a far cry from the Irish portrayed as shamefully covering their faces in earlier representations of the Irish in *The Illustrated London News*.¹³⁶ Likewise, some of O'Kelly's other depictions show the Irish as armed individuals (albeit with branches, rocks, and other natural matter – rarely guns), facing their English tormenters with their heads held noticeably higher than the Irish depicted during the Famine years, who were barely capable, at least in visual depictions, of facing their own landlords.¹³⁷ While this change in representation denotes progress on the part of the publication, especially as Ireland's own political agenda began to take shape, it also reinforces the notion that the British press, including *The Illustrated London News*, was rife with prejudiced representations during the Famine era, intended to elicit pity that transformed into eventual disgust for the Irish other.

¹³⁴ Niamh O'Sullivan, "Through Irish Eyes: The Work of Aloysius O'Kelly in the 'Illustrated London News,'" *History Ireland* 3, no. 3 (1995): 10-16.

¹³⁵ O'Sullivan, "Through Irish Eyes," 10.

¹³⁶ O'Sullivan, "Through Irish Eyes," 11.

¹³⁷ O'Sullivan, "Through Irish Eyes," 11-13.

Conclusion: *Nothing Like the Misery of the Irish People Exists Under the Sun*

The rhetoric employed by *The Illustrated London News* during the Great Famine oscillated between “sympathy and antipathy” for the Irish people and their dire circumstances, according to Leslie Williams. However, many of the illustrations and articles featured in the publication between the years of 1845 and 1849 operated in an in-between space, often at the intersection of sympathy and antipathy, instead of vacillating between the two. At this crux, the information disseminated to the English reading public simultaneously worked to elicit pity for the suffering and famished Irish population while also othering them from the general tenets of proper British cultural practices. Through the repeated trope of “Irish misery,” *The Illustrated London News* depicted multiple manifestations of pity, often in the same article or illustration, rendering the Irish as alien figures fundamentally incapable of functioning within their crumbling Famine society. In this way, the publication’s portrayal of misery was pervasive and purposeful: one article even asserted that “nothing like the misery of the Irish people exists under the sun” – a biased sentiment frequently littering the pages of *The Illustrated London News*.¹³⁸ The reverberations of this implicit prejudice are multitudinous in both nature and function. While other mid- to late nineteenth-century British publications more overtly (and more offensively)

¹³⁸ “Irish Evictions,” *The Illustrated London News*, 20 October 1849, 257.

caricatured the Irish for both political and comedic purposes, *The Illustrated London News* attempted to portray the Irish Famine in a more visually moderate light. However, this did not mean that their published material did not carry with it significant efforts to represent the Irish as animalistic, dirty, physically and mentally ill, destitute beyond measure, and religiously deranged. On the contrary, *The Illustrated London News*, marketed for a wide range of middle to upper class British citizens, boasted a far reach as the world's first illustrated weekly. Thus, its massive reach (and its portrayals and prejudices) attempted to play a part in shaping English cultural consciousness as different from that of the Irish. By doing so, this distanced the English from the conception of Irishness, which was used to attribute Ireland's famine and sickness to the perceived inherent characteristics – and the uninformed choices – of the Irish people. Thus, this othering of the Irish simultaneously reinforced notions of Englishness, and more specifically an Englishness that was not to blame for the cataclysmal events of the Great Famine in neighboring Ireland.

It is important to analyze the publications of the past in order to understand how central certain perceptions and ingrained prejudices were in the formation of societal and cultural understandings of the self and the other – on both large and small scales. Exploring the ways *The Illustrated London News*' characterized the Irish as the undeserving poor during years of

Famine crisis illuminates how prejudice is formed, disseminated, and continues to thrive in twenty-first-century society. At the very heart of this rhetoric is the concept of othering – rarely employed accidentally – as a means to an end. Whether the end goal of othering is to eradicate blame from oneself or to reinforce cultural distance and incompatibility, the dissemination of negative rhetoric can be used as a way to control discourse and subsequently affect consciousness on both an individual and societal scale.

Bibliography

- Anderson, Benedict. *Imagined Communities: Reflections on the Origin and Spread of Nationalism*. New York: Verso Press, 1991.
- Andrews, Ann. *Newspapers and Newsmakers: The Dublin Nationalist Press in the Mid-Nineteenth Century*. Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2014.
- Curtis, Lewis Perry, Jr. *Apes and Angels: The Irishman in Victorian Caricature*. Washington, DC: Smithsonian Institution Press, 1997.
- De Nie, Michael. *The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press, 1798-1882*. Madison, WI: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004.
- DePue, Tricia. "‘Speaking to the Eye’: Exhibitionary Representation and the ‘Illustrated London News.’" University of Victoria (Canada), 2005.
- De Vries, Leonard. *History as Hot News, 1865-1897: The Late Nineteenth Century World as Seen Through the Eyes of The Illustrated London News and The Graphic*. New York: St. Martin’s Press, 1973.
- Gray, Peter. *Famine, Land, and Politics: British Government and Irish Society, 1843-1850*. Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1999.
- Hill, Jason E. and Vanessa R. Schwartz. *Getting the Picture: The Visual Culture of the News*. London: Bloomsbury Academic Press, 2015.
- Hockings, Paul. "Disasters Drawn: The Illustrated London News in the Mid-19th Century." *Visual Anthropology* 28, no. 1 (2015): 21-50.
- Illustrated London News Historical Archive, 1842-2003.
- Jacobson, Matthew Frye. *Whiteness of a Different Color: European Immigrants and the Alchemy of Race*. Cambridge, MA: Harvard University Press, 1998.
- Kelly, John. *The Graves are Walking: The Great Famine and the Saga of the Irish People*. New York: Henry Holt and Company, 2012.
- Lebow, Richard Ned. *White Britain and Black Ireland: The Anglo-Irish Colonial Relationship*. Philadelphia, PA: Institute for the Study of Human Issues, 1976.
- Lengel, Edward G. *The Irish Through British Eyes: Perceptions of Ireland in the*

- Famine Era*. Westport, Conn: Greenwood Publishing Group, 2002.
- McCaw, Neil, ed. *Writing Irishness in Nineteenth-Century British Culture*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing, 2004.
- McMahon, Cian T. *The Global Dimensions of Irish Identity: Race, Nation, and the Popular Press, 1840-1880*. Chapel Hill, NC: University of North Carolina Press, 2015.
- Nelson, Bruce. *Irish Nationalists and the Making of the Irish Race*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 2012.
- Ó Gráda, Cormac. *Black '47 and Beyond: The Great Irish Famine in History, Economy, and Memory*. Princeton, NJ: Princeton University Press, 1999.
- O'Sullivan, Niamh. "Through Irish Eyes: The Work of Aloysius O'Kelly in the 'Illustrated London News.'" *History Ireland* 3, no. 3 (1995): 10-16.
- Oxford English Dictionary, s.v. "othering." Accessed 5 March 2018. Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2004.
- Sailer, Susan Shaw, ed. *Representing Ireland: Gender, Class, Nationality*. Gainesville, FL: University Press of Florida, 1997.
- Sinnema, Peter W. "Dynamics of the Pictured Page: Representing the Nation in the 'Illustrated London News,' 1842-1852." York University (Canada), 1995.
- Tucker, Jennifer. "'Famished for News Pictures': Mason Jackson, The *Illustrated London News*, and the Pictorial Spirit" in *Getting the Picture: The Visual Culture of the News*, ed. Jason E. Hill and Vanessa R. Schwartz. London: Bloomsbury Academic, 2015.
- Walsh, Oonagh. *Ireland's Independence, 1880 – 1923*. London: Routledge Press, 2002.
- Williams, Leslie A. *Daniel O'Connell, The British Press, and the Irish Famine*. Burlington, VT: Ashgate Publishing Company, 2003.
- Williams, Leslie. "Irish Identity and the *Illustrated London News*, 1846-1851: Famine to Depopulation," in *Representing Ireland: Gender, Class, Nationality*, ed. Susan Shaw Sailer. Gainesville: University Press of Florida, 1997.