Unnatural Offenses of English Import: The Political Association of Englishness and Same-Sex Desire in Nineteenth-Century Irish Nationalist Media

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In December 1919 Michael Fogarty, the Catholic bishop of Killaloe, in a letter to the editor, decried the fact that the "hirelings of British tyranny" were characterizing the people of County Clare as "a race of moral degenerates." His indignation is apparent: "One would think . . . that we were here ankle-deep in the filthy compound of burglary and murder, sodomy, bigamy and infidelity, child murder, divorce, and sexual promiscuity that covers the standing pool of Saxon life." Fogarty thought that the judge exemplified the long history of English elites wrongfully characterizing Irishmen as violent children unfit for self-governance.[1] To conclude his defense of his countrymen, Fogarty closed his letter with a sarcastic sign-off, asserting exactly what he thought was wrong with the people of County Clare: "It is that they have the manliness to stand up against tyranny, and to flourish the Flag of Irish Independence in the face of [Dublin] Castle hacks."[2]

The fierce imagery Fogarty evoked, painting the English not only in their barbarian ancestry but also through five counts of sexual criminality and immorality, was not unique. Tying English rule to sexual immorality

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[1] "Clare and Kerry," *Irish Examiner*, December 15, 1919. Fogarty was appointed to the bishopric of Killaloe in 1904, and he served in that position until his death in 1955. The Roman Catholic bishop of Killaloe oversees the diocese of Killaloe, which consists of all of County Clare, the northern part of County Tipperary, and the western part of County Offaly.

[2] "Bishop and Judge: Judicial Harangue on Clare," *Irish Independent*, December 18, 1919.

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was a powerful Irish nationalist tactic.[3] Parliamentary debates and media discussions about who should rule Ireland revolved around the moral character of the governed and governing. As historian Maryann Valiulis notes, "Central to the Irish claim for independence was their difference from England. England was described as pagan, Anglo-Saxon, urban and materialistic while independent Ireland was Celtic, Irish-speaking, rural and Roman Catholic. Above all, [Ireland] . . . was virtuous."[4] When Fogarty described the most heinous crimes possible, he grouped murder together with sexual promiscuity, prostitution, divorce, bigamy, and homosexuality—and pointedly affirmed that these were all English behaviors. I argue that the link between sexual immorality, particularly same-sex desire, and Englishness was a well-established concept by 1919, one cultivated by Irish nationalist presses throughout the nineteenth century to undermine British moral authority to rule Ireland. Newspapers like the *Cork Examiner* and the *Freeman's Journal* played a critical role in Irish nationalism because they emphasized the association between sexual immorality and Englishness through selective coverage of sodomy court cases and queer scandal and through a vigorous rejection of Irish culpability in such crimes.

This is not to suggest that newspaper editors conspired to create the association between Englishness and homosexuality. It is just as likely that this was a popular assumption in Ireland, just as the English assumed homosexuality to be a French affectation. On the one hand, there were so few sodomy cases in Ireland's own courts that it was reasonable for Irish papers to cover British sex crimes instead. On the other, the tone that Irish nationalist papers used when reporting on Irish sodomy cases in the nineteenth century is peculiar. While editors would print as much detail as censorship and good taste allowed when it came to English men on trial for same-sex sex crimes, those same papers made sweeping declarations that Irishmen could not possibly be guilty of an "unnatural crime" because such things did not happen in pure and good Ireland. Irish nationalist newspaper editors also exploited queer scandals involving important English men to draw attention to the sexual immorality seemingly rampant among the English ruling elite. In one case, that of the Dublin Castle scandal in 1884, when British government administrators in Ireland were accused and found guilty of having sex with other men, newspaper editors were even responsible for exposing the scandal.

Attacking English elites to build political capital was most common at the end of the nineteenth century, but it was a tactic cultivated from very

[3] The Irish nationalist use of sex scandal and immorality to undermine British rule has been explored by several scholars, particularly H. G. Cocks, *Nameless Offences: Homosexual Desire in the 19th Century* (London: I. B. Tauris, 2003); and Aleardo Zanghellini, *The Sexual Constitution of Political Authority: The "Trials" of Same-Sex Desire* (New York: Routledge, 2015).

[4] Maryann Gialanella Valiulis, *Gender and Power in Irish History* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2008), 100.

early on in the Irish nationalist movement.[5] Britain annexed Ireland by the Act of Union in 1801, forming the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. For the next 120 years, defiance, suppression, and occasional concession characterized Anglo-Irish relations. Irish politicians and radical rebels alike challenged English rule through mass meetings, armed resistance, and constitutional processes. By the 1880s Irish politicians seeking political change rallied support through a robust national and regional newspaper culture. The *Freeman's Journal* (1763–1924) and the *Irish Examiner* (1841–present) were prominent in the nineteenth century, with wide national circulation and continuous publication for the majority of the century. Though not the most radical of nationalist newspapers, they do paint a more complete picture of how quietly the longer-running and more moderate nationalist papers cultivated the particular association between homosexuality and Englishness through selective coverage. As historian H. G. Cocks notes about nineteenth-century UK journalists more broadly, "The content of newspaper reports clearly reflects editorial decisions about what was both significant and decent."[6] Though generally neither the *Freeman's Journal* nor the *Cork Examiner* identified authors of articles in the nineteenth century, the stories they ran and the tone of the papers can be attributed to the papers' owner-editors, who would have assigned reporting duties to journalists, written much of the paper themselves, and approved editions before final publication.

The *Freeman's Journal* was Ireland's first nationalist newspaper and the leading newspaper in the nineteenth century. Its owner-editors included several Protestants who supported repeal of the Act of Union, such as Philip Whitfield Harvey (editor, 1802–26), Henry Grattan (editor, 1826–31), and the Gray family (editor, 1841–92). One Catholic, Patrick Lavelle, a "valuable but over-zealous advocate of Repeal," owned the paper from 1831 until his death in 1837.[7] After Sir John Gray took over the paper in 1841, the *Journal* maintained a constitutional-nationalist point of view for just over five decades, supporting the Home Rule movement, which sought to reinstate an Irish parliament to legislate domestic matters within the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland. The *Cork Examiner* was a provincial daily broadsheet and is still in print. It was founded in 1841 by Mr. John Francis Maguire (editor, 1841–72) to support Daniel O'Connell, a Catholic lawyer and politician who led the successful Catholic emancipation movement in the 1820s and an unsuccessful repeal movement in the 1840s. The *Examiner* maintained a Catholic-nationalist tone throughout the nineteenth century. Though the *Journal* had a greater popularity and

[5] See Margot Gayle Backus, *Scandal Work: James Joyce, the New Journalism, and the Home Rule Newspaper Wars* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2013), 27–58.

[6] Cocks, *Nameless Offences*, 21.

[7] Felix M. Larkin, "'A Great Daily Organ': The *Freeman's Journal*, 1763–1924," *History Ireland* 14, no. 3 (May–June 2006): 44–49, 44.

wider circulation, the two echoed one another in their presentation of English sodomy cases. They were not, however, the most radical nationalist newspapers of their time.

United Ireland, run by Member of Parliament (MP) William O'Brien and with writers like MP Tim Healy, was by far the boldest in terms of political maneuverings. In the 1880s Healy was the primary force behind the most shocking of *United Ireland*'s revelations, and it was *United Ireland* that broke the story about Dublin Castle men having sex with other men.[8] Dublin Castle was the seat of British power in Ireland, where the men who administered Ireland on behalf of the queen and Parliament of the United Kingdom conducted their day-to-day governance. As Cocks notes, the Home Rulers used *United Ireland* to constantly needle the British in an effort to undermine their rule, reporting on scandals, raising money for agitators, and organizing like-minded Irish men and women.[9]

Cocks, along with other scholars such as H. Montgomery Hyde, Jeffrey Weeks, Alan Sinfield, Matt Cook, Morris Kaplan, and others, has produced important work on British homoeroticism and same-sex sex in the nineteenth century.[10] I seek to contribute to these "legal and cultural histories that have explored those moments when the 'nameless crime' was identified and described."[11] While it is not uncommon to rely on Victorian newspapers to reveal the "secrets" and discursive frameworks of knowledge about homosexuality, I will place more emphasis than the existing scholarship on the specific features of the Irish context. Through decades of disproportionate reporting, the "nameless crime" was distinct from that in Britain: in Ireland, same-sex sex was an unnatural offense of English import.

Legally, this was literally true, as the laws governing same-sex sex in Ireland were English. The Buggery Act of 1533, which made anal sex a capital offense, was exported from England to Ireland in the 1610s under James Charles Stuart, king of England, Ireland, and Scotland.[12] The 1861 Offences Against the Person Act reduced the maximum sentence for sodomy from death to up to life imprisonment. MP Henry Labouchere tacked on a last-minute addition to the 1885 Criminal Law Amendment Act to introduce

[8] Frank Callanan, *T. M. Healy* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 88–92.

[9] Cocks, *Nameless Offences*, 140.

[10] The most influential contributions to this scholarship include Cocks; H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Love That Dared Not Speak Its Name: A Candid History of Homosexuality in Britain* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1970); Morris B. Kaplan, *Sodom on the Thames: Sex, Love, and Scandal in Wilde Times* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2005); Alan Sinfield, *The Wilde Century: Effeminacy, Oscar Wilde, and the Queer Moment* (New York: Columbia University Press, 1994); Charles Upchurch, *Before Wilde: Sex between Men in Britain's Age of Reform* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2009); and Jeffrey Weeks, *Coming Out: Homosexual Politics in Britain from the Nineteenth Century to the Present* (London: Quartet Books, 1977).

[11] Cocks, *Nameless Offences*, 4.

[12] Brian Lacey, *Terrible Queer Creatures: Homosexuality in Irish History* (Dublin: Wordwell Books, 2008), 59–75.

the legal concept of "gross indecency," broadly conceived and intentionally undefined, with a maximum sentence of two years' imprisonment with hard labor. In addition to both the 1861 and 1885 laws, nineteenth-century UK constabularies also utilized a range of public indecency and assault laws to police same-sex-desiring men. As Susannah Bowyer notes, before English law was imported, early Irish Brehon law was quite lax regarding same-sex sex.[13] Irish nationalists' use of antihomosexual sentiment to undermine English rule, which brought antihomosexual laws to Ireland, is all the more salient.

Even in the very rich scholarship on sensational cases involving famous Irishmen like Oscar Wilde, historians have remained relatively focused on the British context.[14] While Ireland was part of the Union, and Dublin and Belfast were arguably culturally British, Ireland was at best a junior state in a coerced (and militarily enforced) union, and, as many scholars of Ireland contend, it can be more accurately described as a colony.[15] Given this fact, nineteenth- and twentieth-century Anglo-Irish relations need to be examined through the lens of a colonizer/colonized relationship. Following the example of Michael de Nie's examination of the racialized images of Irish men and women in British newspapers, I argue that even though it took place within a broader UK print-culture discourse on the subject, the politicization of same-sex sex in Irish nationalist papers is most illustrative of an Irish anticolonialist effort to draw a line between Irishness and Englishness.[16]

Nineteenth-century Ireland had a rich print culture.[17] Although literacy rates were fairly low before and during the Great Famine (approximately 1845–52), at just 20 to 30 percent in most counties, priests and teachers

[13] Susannah Bowyer, "Queer Patriots: Sexuality and the Character of National Identity in Ireland," *Cultural Studies* 24, no. 6 (2010): 801–20.

[14] A notable exception is the work of Eibhear Walshe, both his *Sex, Nation, and Dissent in Irish Writing* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1997) and, more specifically, his excellent *Oscar's Shadow: Wilde, Homosexuality and Modern Ireland* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2011), both of which examine same-sex desire and scandals like that of Wilde through an Irish studies lens. Still, Walshe does not focus on Irish nationalist print culture, as I do here.

[15] For example, see Stephen Howe, *Ireland and Empire: Colonial Legacies in Irish History and Culture* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2000); Christine Kinealy, *The Great Irish Famine: Impact, Ideology, and Rebellion* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2002); and Lawrence John McCaffrey, *Ireland, from Colony to Nation-State* (Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall, 1979).

[16] British papers also politicized and demonized both sex and Irishness and drew their own lines between "Englishness" or "Britishness" and "Irishness." This was at least in part to justify their continued rule of Ireland. See, for example, Michael de Nie, *The Eternal Paddy: Irish Identity and the British Press, 1798–1882* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004).

[17] Andrew Murphy, *Ireland, Reading and Cultural Nationalism, 1790–1930: Bringing the Nation to Book* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2018), 17–48; and John Strachan and Claire Nally, *Advertising, Literature, and Print Culture in Ireland, 1891–1922* (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2012), 19–36, 61–87.

would read aloud from papers like the *Freeman's Journal* to keep parishioners and students abreast of the latest news, particularly as it pertained to nationalist causes.[18] Though universal education took hold much faster in industrialized England than in agricultural and impoverished Ireland, the British Education Act radically expanded access to primary and secondary education.[19] By 1881 75 percent of the population could read; by 1901 the number had risen to 86 percent.[20] By the time Charles Stewart Parnell founded the Land League, which boycotted abusive landlords and agitated on behalf of tenants' rights in rural Ireland, and became the leader of the major Home Rule party, the Irish Parliamentary Party (IPP), in 1882, newsprint was the best way to connect with constituents and communicate important information and issues. Parnell found the nationalist leanings of dailies like the *Examiner* and the *Freeman's Journal* insufficient, so together with William O'Brien he founded *United Ireland*.[21] When run by politicians, newspapers like *United Ireland* provided a direct line of communication from the political party to the people. For the nationalists, journalism provided a platform from which to celebrate successes, bolster Irish national confidence, and undermine British moral authority to rule.

Irish nationalists had to employ a range of tactics in pursuit of their Home Rule goals.[22] Constitutionally, they had minimal power. In 1882 the Liberal government held onto a decent majority, 352 seats when 336 was a majority. It was difficult in those circumstances for Parnell to exert much political sway, even though the IPP held 63 seats. So Parnell relied on the subversive activities of the Land League, which pushed for reforms in the early 1880s through agrarian agitation, including boycotting, harassing landlords, and providing aid to evicted tenant farmers. In addition to political machinations and agrarian terrorism, however, the Irish nationalists utilized sensational journalism to challenge English moral authority. One of the most powerful examples of this tactic is the Dublin Castle scandal, which began when, in August 1883, Tim Healy started

[18] Brian Jenkins, *Irish Nationalism and the British State: From Repeal to Revolutionary Nationalism* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2014), 126; and Murphy, *Ireland*, 49–78.

[19] Walter H. G. Armytage, "The 1870 Education Act," *British Journal of Educational Studies* 18, no. 2 (1970): 121–33.

[20] Andrew Murphy, "Reading Ireland: Nationalism and Cultural Identity," *Irish Review*, no. 25 (Winter 1999): 16–26.

[21] Callanan, *T. M. Healy,* 62.

[22] For more on the Irish Home Rule movement, see Alvin Jackson, *Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800–2000* (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003); and Alan O'Day, *Irish Home Rule, 1867–1921* (New York: Manchester United Press, 1998). For Charles Stewart Parnell's role in the Home Rule movement, see Robert Kee, *The Laurel and the Ivy: The Story of Charles Stewart Parnell and Irish Nationalism* (London: Hamish Hamilton, 1993). For another examination of print culture and the Home Rule movement, see Michael de Nie, "Pigs, Paddies, Prams and Petticoats: Irish Home Rule and the British Comic Press, 1886–93," *History Ireland* 13, no. 1 (2005): 42–47.

running stories suggesting that certain Dublin Castle officials were having sex with other men.[23]

Healy had a habit of making salacious allusions to the (sexual) immorality of Englishmen, including other members of Parliament. In the middle of a parliamentary session, Healy accused MP George Bolton of living with his wife before they were married.[24] While true, it was the sort of thing one simply did not say in public. Bolton launched a libel suit against Healy and won. The purpose of nineteenth-century libel suits was to protect individual honor, and in the first half of the nineteenth century it was common for all these cases to be decided in favor of the claimant. The 1843 Libel Act changed this trend by making it possible to decide in favor of defendants when they could prove "the truth of such matters charged . . . and further to allege that it was for the public benefit that said matters charged should be published."[25] In effect, if the truth at the heart of a libel claim was something that was deemed a matter of public concern, like murder or sodomy, then the judge could find in favor of the defendant. In those cases, particularly sodomy cases, if there was sufficient evidence, the judge could also charge the complainant with "said matters." In August 1883, when Healy started anonymously printing stories in *United Ireland* about the sexual proclivities of James Ellis French, captain of the Dublin Royal Irish Constabulary (RIC), and then similar stories in May 1884 about Gustavus Cornwall, the secretary of the General Post Office of Ireland, he lured both men into libel trials.[26]

Being accused of something like same-sex desire without legally challenging the accuser was as good as an admission of guilt. French and Cornwall thus had no choice but to respond with a libel suit—an eventuality for which *United Ireland* editor William O'Brien prepared. Given the radical tendencies of his authors, O'Brien already had considerable experience with libel trials. For the French and Cornwall suits, he hired a private investigator to gather witnesses who would give testimony confirming that French and Cornwall had in fact committed the acts described and more. In preparation for the two trials, April 1884 for French and June 1884 for Cornwall, O'Brien provided his lawyers with the names of twenty-two witnesses, many of whom claimed to have had sex with Cornwall or French or both.[27] That the testimonies revealed a robust sex ring in the Dublin Royal Irish Constabulary barracks and Cornwall's use of the General Post

[23] See, for example, *United Ireland*, October 13 and 20, 1883.

[24] "Class III: Law and Justice," *Historic Hansard*, Commons Debates, August 13, 1883, vol. 283, c.348, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1883/aug/13/class-iii-law-and-justice#column_348.

[25] William Blake Odgers, *A Digest of the Law of Libel and Slander* (Boston: Little, Brown, 1881), 674–76.

[26] Callanan, *T. M. Healy*, 90–92.

[27] *R v. Gustavus Cornwall*, August 1884, box 15, Crown & Peace Files, 3-045-14, City and County of Dublin, National Archives of Ireland.

Office to meet and pick up sexual partners was simply too much for the judge to ignore. He deemed the whole affair a danger to society, and he indicted both men and many of their accomplices on charges of sodomy and conspiracy to commit sodomy. He was so disturbed by the testimonies that he had the transcripts destroyed.[28] French was ultimately found guilty, and Cornwall was acquitted due to insufficient evidence and a split jury. Both of their lives were ruined. Cornwall was forced to retire early, without a pension—despite forty-five years of service—and retreat from public life.[29] French was remanded to a two-year prison sentence in Richmond Jail.[30]

The coverage of the trial and the magnitude of its impact on nationalist sympathizers was extensive, and Healy and O'Brien relished every minute of the scandal. They published long, scintillating excerpts from the trial proceedings, really pushing the envelope of what constituted acceptable reporting. While the *Freeman's Journal* published considerable portions of the examinations of witnesses, none dared to describe Cornwall's kisses, affectionate notes to lovers, or rendezvous with the other young men on trial.[31] Even the *Examiner* was tame compared to the coverage in *United Ireland*, and it devoted two full columns of the third page of the August 23 edition to an article about Malcolm Johnston, a twenty-five-year-old employee of the Prince of Wales Hotel whom Cornwall allegedly introduced to one of the other defendants on trial for a sexual liaison. In addition to coverage of the trials, Edmund Gray, editor of the *Freeman's Journal* in 1884, collected money for the O'Brien Indemnity Fund. One Baghaderen man wrote a letter to the editor, and Gray published it, to congratulate O'Brien for his "courage and ability to undertake the hideous, but heroic work of exposing . . . the abominations" taking place in Dublin Castle. Reverend J. Halpin wrote to the paper on behalf of his "poor but national parish," which had collected ten pounds for the "enormous cost incurred by [O'Brien] in striving to rid Ireland of such beasts as Cornwall and Co."[32] More than any previous libel trial in which *United Ireland* had been involved, readers seemed to consider the exposure of homosexual practices in Dublin Castle to be proof of English administrators' malfeasance.

Cocks points to the Dublin Castle scandal of 1884 as a flashpoint of Irish nationalist homophobia.[33] Others, like Margot Gayle Backus, argue

[28] There is, however, a copy of some of the Cornwall testimonies at the National Archives of Ireland. See the previous footnote.

[29] "Regarding the compulsory resignation of G Cornwall and his Pension," July–November 1885, file 45, box 120, Royal Mail Archive, British Postal Museum and Archive.

[30] James H. Murphy, "'Disgusted by the Details': *Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* and the Dublin Castle Scandals of 1884," in *Back to the Future of Irish Studies*, ed. Maureen O'Connor (Bern: Peter Lang, 2010), 185.

[31] Murphy, 181.

[32] "The O'Brien Fund," *Freeman's Journal*, August 29, 1884.

[33] Cocks, *Nameless Offences*, 140–44. For other examinations of the Dublin Castle scandal, see Kaplan, *Sodom on the Thames*; Murphy, "'Disgusted,'" 178–85; Michael Lapointe,

that Healy was himself not particularly antihomosexual and that he instead merely recognized a political opportunity when it presented itself.[34] Healy's use of newsprint and the tamer but nevertheless clear echo of those stories in the *Freeman's Journal* and *Examiner* was meant to expose the corrupting influence of the Dublin Castle administrators, who were the agents of English rule in Ireland.[35] As James Murphy notes, by exposing the "putative miscarriages of law and misconduct among officials at Dublin Castle, [the] heart of the British administration," the nationalists won a moral victory in 1884.[36] Significantly, though not necessarily exclusively because of the Dublin Castle scandal, as the IPP and nationalist newspapers waged rhetorical and land wars against British imperialism in 1884, when an election was called in 1885, the Irish Parliamentary Party gained twenty-three seats, and Gladstone's Liberals lost thirty-three and then needed the IPP to preserve the government. Yet this scandal represents more than a clever politician using scandal as a subversive tool. The Dublin Castle scandal was the culmination of a century of assertions in print culture that immorality existed in Ireland only because of the presence of the corrupting English. This was central to Irish nationalist mythology: that the English were morally corrupt and corrupting. Irish purity could only be preserved through autonomous rule.

Media outlets on both sides of the Irish Sea made liberal use of stories about crimes and court proceedings to challenge the moral credibility of those in power.[37] The British papers latched on to every incident of Irish superstition, violence, and seeming irrationality as fodder for their continued paternalism. When Irishman Michael Cleary murdered his wife in 1895, newspapers from London to Sheffield reported on the "revolting cruelty" of "surviving Celtic superstition."[38] These "spots of mediaevalism," the *Birmingham Daily Post* editorialized, "do not appear only in national characters; very often they are to be observed in those of individual men."[39] Cleary brutally murdered his wife, Bridget, while members of her family watched. All present, including her husband, claimed that she wasn't Bridget at all

"Between Irishmen: Queering Irish Literary and Cultural Nationalisms" (PhD diss., University of British Columbia, 2007); Eibhear Walshe, "The First Gay Irishman? Ireland and the Wilde Trials," *Éire-Ireland* 40, no. 3/4 (Fall/Winter 2005): 38–57; and Jonathan Coleman, "Rent: Same-Sex Prostitution in Modern Britain, 1885–1957" (PhD diss., University of Kentucky, 2014), 71–89.

[34] Backus, *Scandal Work*, 42–44.

[35] Zanghellini, *The Sexual Constitution*, 135–37.

[36] Murphy, "'Disgusted,'" 178.

[37] Political cartoons similarly served both sides, caricaturing the Irishman as a simian barbarian (animals, after all, are undeniably unfit for self-governance) and calling out the treachery, both real and imagined, of the British in Ireland. See de Nie, *The Eternal Paddy*, 5–13.

[38] "Revolting Cruelty in Ireland," *Birmingham Daily Post*, March 27, 1895.

[39] "Superstition in Tipperary," *Sheffield Evening Telegraph*, March 29, 1895; "Celtic Superstition," *York Herald*, March 29, 1895; and "The 'Witch' Burning in Ireland," *London Globe*, March 29, 1895.

but a fairy changeling and that when they threw urine on her, forced her to drink bitter tea, and put her feverish body in the fire they were trying to save the real Bridget. When discussing her funeral, the *Globe* reminded readers that "the Irish peasantry . . . believe . . . that the real Bridget Cleary will come back, riding on a white horse sent by the fairies, and that if they can succeed in cutting the reins of the horse they will secure her."[40] Something as violent and superstitious as the burning of Bridget Cleary was the bread and butter of British characterizations of the Irish.[41]

In moralizing discussions of Irish (un)fitness for self-rule, the British frequently cited alleged Irish violence and criminality. Particularly in moments of heightened Anglo-Irish tensions, MPs argued about penal code reforms, the expansion and renewal of a law to regulate the possession and importation of guns and ammunition into Ireland, and the need for more (or fewer) police to deal with the Celtic population.[42] These debates were published in large sections in the *Times* and other British broadsheets in order to emphasize Irish backwardness. Editors of nationalist newspapers like the *Journal* and the *Examiner* felt obliged to respond and to defend Irish national character from the attacks made by English newspapers and members of Parliament.

Conveniently for Irish nationalist papers, the actual published statistical reports on crime regularly favored Ireland. In some cases, Irish newspaper editors capitalized on the comparative numbers of crimes in England and Ireland without contextualizing the very low numbers in a proportional data set to show population versus number of crimes. There were more people in England, and so the number of crimes committed was naturally higher. At times, then, Irish editors presented a skewed interpretation of the data to cast the Irish in a more moral light. But for the most part the annual criminal and judicial statistics reports created for Parliament and sold to the public revealed shocking statistical differences between England and Ireland. While offenses dealt with summarily such as drunkenness were generally high in Ireland throughout the nineteenth century, England usually had a higher rate of indictable offenses.[43] In 1841 the *Examiner* highlighted the contrast: "Now, while the criminal calendars of England are actually blackened with every enormity that fiends could conceive . . . while murders, assassinations, poisonings, stabbings, robberies, burglaries, revolting

[40] "The 'Witch' Burning."

[41] For more on the murder of Bridget Cleary, see Angela Bourke, *The Burning of Bridget Cleary: A True Story* (Viking: New York, 2000).

[42] "Arms (Ireland) Bill," *Historic Hansard*, Commons Debates, August 13, 1843, vol. 69, cc. 996–1063, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1843/may/29/arms-ireland-bill. Parliament discussed arms bills for Ireland from May to August 1843; again in August 1846, December 1847, and July 1848; throughout May 1886; and in August 1886.

[43] In the usage of the day, dealing with an offense "summarily" usually meant that a constable meted out a fine or short incarceration directly, without trial.

Table 1. Crimes in London and Ireland, 1847

	London alone	All Ireland
Murders, attempted murder (by knife, poison, shooting)	91	51
Unnatural offenses, assaults with intent to commit unnatural offenses	36	0
Bigamy	27	11
Suicides	207	0
Embezzlement	238	89
Conspiracies to defraud	387	128
Offenses against currency	619	241
Indecent exposure	57	10
Smuggling	302	0
Robberies by prostitutes	2,399	353

Note: Table created by Reverend P. O'Rourke using statistics from an 1848 government crime report published in the *Sheffield Argus* and the *Freeman's Journal*, February 23, 1859. Re-created by the author.

suicides, disgusting indecencies, and horrid, unnatural offences—all make the readers of the English journals suffer at the frightful picture which they present the morals of that people—oh! Thank God! Ireland is almost free from crime—certainly, from crimes of that vile and loathsome nature."[44] In short, the *Examiner* described the most heinous crimes by nineteenth-century standards as English afflictions: the "standing pool of Saxon life."

It was frequently true that in any given year there were very few of the most violent or sexual crimes in Ireland. As demonstrated by table 1, based on information provided to the *Freeman's Journal* by Reverend Patrick O'Rourke, in 1848 the number of the most barbaric of crimes in London far exceeded those same crimes in all of Ireland. "No sincere publican man," O'Rourke wrote in his accompanying *Journal* editorial, "can brand poor Ireland (with all her miseries) with being more deeply imbued with crime than England." Most articles in the *Freeman's Journal* and *Examiner* pointedly identified the English as the perpetrators of "unnatural offences." Letters to the editor, like that of Reverend O'Rourke, suggest that the association of Englishness with moral corruption was as much a popular assumption as a carefully cultivated nationalist tactic.

Responding to an annual government crime statistics report, one Irish entrepreneur wrote a letter to the editor in 1868 claiming that "in proportion to population, England has forty percent more crime than Ireland."[45]

[44] *Irish Examiner*, October 25, 1841.
[45] "Crime in Ireland," *Irish Examiner*, August 18, 1868.

In 1871, when English MPs asserted that there was a need to inflict harsher punishments on the Irish, the *Freeman's Journal* responded: "From this Parliamentary paper there stare us in the face the following damning facts as to 'moral England.' . . . The English outstep the Irish in unnatural offences by 85 per cent."[46] In raw conviction numbers, that "outstepping" appeared to be true. Between 1868 and 1878 there were only 26 arrests for sodomy in all of Ireland, and only 2 resulted in convictions.[47] In that same period, there were 395 reported arrests for sodomy in England and Wales. In just 1877 the British courts convicted 29 men of sodomy.[48] That said, in 1871 census data show Ireland with a population of just over 4 million and England with a population of 21.3 million. Numbers could be used—and misused—effectively by either side of the debate.

In addition to addressing the perceived sexual immorality of England, nationalist papers challenged the alleged prevalence of Irish violence and criminality. Combatting the English sentiments about the Irish was a near-constant struggle for Irish parliamentarians and journalists alike. Turning the mirror toward the English was an important part of that battle. The constant pushback against British parliamentarians' negative characterizations of the Irish was an important part of the nationalist papers' function and had been for centuries, as evidenced by Jonathan Swift's satirical challenges to English characterizations of the Irish. Significantly, the English belief that the Irish were inherently violent had real consequences.[49] In April 1864 Irish MP James Whiteside questioned why there were 150 extra police in Lisburn, where "the inhabitants considered that a great insult . . . to this pre-eminently loyal and peaceful town." MP and founder of the modern British police force Robert Peel responded that "1,000 persons, men, women, and children, marched through the town of Lisburn with drums, fifes, shouting, and even the firing of pistols . . . [which] created some excitement," and so the magistrate called in a police force of 107 to prevent a "riot," which seemed, to the magistrate, imminent with such excitable inhabitants.[50] Violence, particularly police violence, against the Irish was so common in the course of the nineteenth century that it became the norm. British MPs considered any gathering of Irish men or boys in the streets—whether their intent was to riot or celebrate—a threat to domestic security.

[46] *Freeman's Journal*, November 21, 1871.

[47] Ireland Criminal and Judicial Statistics 1877, in *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers* (Dublin: Alexander Thom, 1878), digitized by ProQuest Information and Learning Company.

[48] England and Wales Criminal and Judicial Statistics 1877, in *House of Commons Parliamentary Papers.* England and Wales were reported together as a rule, while Scotland and Ireland each got its own statistical report.

[49] De Nie, *The Eternal Paddy*, 17–27, 144–226.

[50] "Ireland—Additional Police at Lisburn—Question," *Historic Hansard*, Commons Debates, April 14, 1864, vol. 174, cc. 969–71, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1864/apr/14/ireland-additional-police-at-lisburn.

There were, of course, isolated instances of actual radical activity in Ireland. Outbursts of agrarian violence, failed uprisings to overthrow the Union, and assassinations of British officials were not regular or constant, but they were frequent enough to imprint a perception of Irish violence in the English mind. Groups like the White Boys of the 1820s, the 48ers, the Fenians of 1867, and even some of the Land Leaguers of the 1880s were violent in pursuit of their causes and goals.[51] But these radicals did not represent the majority of Irish men and women. [52] Though scholars of Ireland are split over whether nineteenth-century Ireland was categorically more violent than elsewhere in Europe, even a slightly higher margin of violent crimes—1.97 homicides per 100,000 people—is still a reminder that most Irish citizens, 99,998 per 100,000, were not involved in violent crimes.[53] When Irish newspaper editors and leaders responded to parliamentarian manipulation of data and persistent categorization of all Irishmen as savage, their efforts were more than petty quibbling. They were fighting an uphill battle that was, for some, a matter of life and death.

In 1882 a member of the RIC killed a boy named Patrick Melody in Ballina, County Mayo, who was celebrating Parnell's release from prison with Parnell's friends. The RIC opened fire on the group of teens, and Melody died of gunshot wounds. The RIC's violence against teens, however, was ignored in favor of a flood of coverage about the May 6, 1882, assassination of the newly appointed Lord Lieutenant of Ireland, Frederick Cavendish, in Phoenix Park, Dublin. Rather than addressing the RIC's murder of a child in Ballina, the Irish papers used their ink to denounce the violence of the Invincibles, a radical, secret, oath-bound, fraternal organization seeking Irish independence from Britain through violence. Under colonial rule, police brutality had barely received any press attention, since Irish journalists, including the *Freeman's Journal* and *Examiner*, were preoccupied by the constant struggle to defend against the association of Irishness and violence. There are over 130 articles between the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Examiner* dealing with the immediate effects of the Phoenix Park murders and the trials of the Invincibles between 1882 and 1883. The only *Journal* or *Examiner* reference to the Ballina murder appeared in the report on the inquest, where the RIC governing board looked into the death of the Ballina boy, in which the teens were referred to as a "mob" and when the cause of death was confirmed (gunshot wound), the inquiry was adjourned with no consequences for the guilty constable.[54]

[51] See, for example, Michael Higgins, "Whiteboys and Ribbonmen: What's in a Name?," in *Crime, Violence, and the Irish in the Nineteenth Century*, ed. Kyle Hughes and Donald M. MacRaild (Liverpool: Liverpool University Press, 2017), 21–37; and Teresa O'Donnell, "'Skin the Goat's Curse' on James Carey: Narrating the Story of the Phoenix Park Murders through Contemporary Broadside Ballads," in Hughes and MacRaild, 243–63.

[52] Kyle Hughes and Donald M. MacRaild, introduction to Hughes and MacRaild, 1–18.

[53] Hughes and MacRaild, 3.

[54] *Irish Examiner*, July 26, 1882. See various "Arms (Ireland) Bill" discussions in *Historic Hansard*, Commons Debates, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/bills/arms-ireland-bill.

MPs argued throughout the nineteenth century, particularly in the 1840s, 1860s, and 1880s, about the need for more police, harsher laws, and greater surveillance of the Irish.[55] Irish newspaper editors and letter-to-the-editor writers battled away over misconceptions about the prevalence of Irish criminality. English perceptions of Irish violence were hardened through the frightening moments of radicalized violence. It was difficult for politicians and journalists to completely reject that stigma because the nineteenth century was marred by waves of agrarian, sectarian, electoral, and political violence led in large part by fringe groups. Relying on the theory that in a political war of moral attrition, a better defense was a good offense, individuals like Tim Healy, Michael O'Brien, and Charles Stewart Parnell were determined to expose the moral failings of the British government in order to make a stronger case for Irish self-governance. This was most forceful in the 1884 Dublin Castle scandal. But that scandal was built on a longer tradition of nationalist papers' selective sodomy coverage, as demonstrated in table 2, which shows the percentage of English versus Irish sodomy cases reported on by the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Examiner*. The Irish nationalist presses cultivated the seeming undeniability of the English origins of homosexuality.

To satisfy censorship laws and Victorian codes of respectability, reporters covering court cases used coded language, with terms like "unnatural crimes," "abominable acts," and even "immoral passions," to talk about sex crimes. The term "sodomy" appeared only very rarely.[56] Cocks has shown how this usage turned same-sex sex into a "nameless offence," a process that actually forced a public discourse on the meaning of these code words.[57] While censorship laws and unwritten codes of journalist respectability prevented explicit coverage of same-sex sex crimes in the papers, Irish and British newspapers found other ways to discuss sexual immorality. Throughout the nineteenth century, Irish newspapers, at their most vague, referred to such crimes as "felonies," and only context would clue readers into the nature of the crime. More frequently, Irish journalists used the term "unnatural offence," particularly when they were covering cases of English defendants being tried in British courts.

Of the 104 *Freeman's Journal* articles about sodomy, over two-thirds were about English sodomy cases. Only one-third were about Irish cases, and most of these simply note the crime in a court calendar, which alerted readers of the crimes on the assizes docket and served as a last call for the accused, who needed to be in court to stand trial. There are fewer articles

[55] "Crime and Outrage (Ireland)," *Historic Hansard*, Commons Debates, November 29, 1847, vol. 95, cc. 270–366, https://api.parliament.uk/historic-hansard/commons/1847/nov/29/crime-and-outrage-ireland.

[56] Charles Upchurch, "Full-Text Databases and Historical Research: Cautionary Results from a Ten-Year Study," *Journal of Social History* 46, no. 1 (2012): 89–105.

[57] Cocks, *Nameless Offences*, 7.

Table 2. Keyword search of the Irish Newspaper Archive Online

	Freeman's Journal (1800–1900)			*Cork Examiner* (1841–1900)		
Search terms	Total same-sex sex crime reports	Percent English	Percent Irish	Total same-sex sex crime reports	Percent English	Percent Irish
Abominable crime	9	67	33	4	100	0
Unnatural offense	48	75	19	27	63	26
Unnatural crime	47	60	38	23	87	13

Note: To create this table I searched the two papers for the keywords associated with sodomy cases. I did not search for "indecent assault," one of the terms that Charles Upchurch notes as being the most fruitful, because I did not have access to court records to determine whether the indecent assaults were committed against male or female victims. Instead, I searched for the terms "unnatural offence," "unnatural crime," and "abominable crime," common nineteenth-century code words for same-sex sex crimes. "Sodomy" turned up only nine times for the *Freeman's Journal* and five for the *Examiner* for the entirety of the nineteenth century, so "sodomy" was not included in this data pool.

overall to look at in the *Examiner* because the paper only opened in 1841, but, strikingly, of the fifty-four articles about sodomy cases, 87 percent were about English offenders. In both papers it is clear that nationalist journalists had a tendency to associate same-sex sex with Englishness.

When a nationalist paper did cover the court proceedings of an Irishman on trial for sodomy in detail, there was always a caveat. Nationalist journalists utilized such cases to challenge what they saw as the biased British judicial system. The reports on English crimes of the same nature frequently included case details, named names, provided the hometowns of the offenders, and gave information about the circumstances of the case, even when those on trial were not otherwise well-known public figures. For example, the only sodomy coverage for 1839 in the *Journal* appeared under the headline "Crime in England." This was the case of "Francis John Nichols, a clerk, aged nineteen, who was tried and acquitted on Friday on the capital charge of committing an unnatural offence with a boy named Purdy, at a public bath, [and who] was again indicted for a similar offence with another boy named Frederick Hall."[58] Francis Nichols, barely more than a boy himself, was not a person of political consequence. Only local London papers like the working-class rags *The Charter* and *The Operative*

[58] "Crime in England," *Freeman's Journal*, April 19, 1839.

divulged details comparable to those in the *Journal*.[59] Providing information about his previous case, the names of his sexual partners, and the location of the offense was excessive, even for a slow news day. This was much more detail than any of the Irish nationalist newspapers would have printed had the case only involved an unknown Irishmen.

In the rare cases when Irish papers covered Irish sodomy trials in more detail, the resulting articles are quite stunning in their certainty that an Irishman would never be party to same-sex sex, but if he was, surely he was the first of all Irishmen to do so. In September 1809 James Munroe, a tidewaiter at the Dublin Custom House, "a wretched creature . . . charged with an unnatural offence," was described by the *Freeman's Journal* as "the only Irishman, we believe, who was ever brought to trial for such an abominable and disgusting propensity." The verdict, guilty of attempting to commit sodomy, "was received with a sort of satisfaction," which the journalist thought "creditable to the manliness and feeling" of the court-room attendees. In delivering the sentence, the chief magistrate of Dublin, who presided over the case, noted that he "regretted that it was not in his power to visit the atrocity of the offence with commensurate punishment." Had Munroe been found guilty of committing sodomy rather than just the attempt to commit sodomy, he would have been hanged. Instead, he received a year in prison and a public whipping.[60]

Despite the *Journal*'s implication, James Munroe was neither the first nor the last Irishman convicted of sodomy.[61] But the nationalist papers provided only bare-bones coverage of Irish sodomy trials beyond the criminal calendar announcements. When a case served a particular political purpose, however, the coverage was quite robust and extensive. In 1828, when Catholic emancipation agitator and lawyer Daniel O'Connell was elected to a seat in Parliament—one he couldn't take, thanks to restrictions on Catholics in the UK—*Freeman's Journal* editor Henry Grattan took offense to a case in London where two Irishmen, Martin Mellett and James Farthing, were found guilty of sodomy. The *Journal* gave a lengthy report on the case—almost a full column on the second page of the paper, plus an additional four-inch report on page 4 the next day—arguing that the case exemplified

[59] *The Operative* and *The Charter*, as well as the *Evening Mail*, provided lengthy reports on the case, which was typical for the "unnamed crimes," all on April 21, 1839, following the criminal trial. They all included the circumstances of the crime—which involved Nichols's seduction of several fourteen- and fifteen-year-old boys while serving as their swim instructor—and the *Evening Mail* even included quotes from a letter Nichols wrote to his accusers while in prison.

[60] "Recorder's Court," *Freeman's Journal*, September 6 and 9, 1809.

[61] One of the earliest written-about Irishmen convicted of sodomy under the English laws was Florence Fitzpatrick, an earl's servant who had a sexual relationship with his employer in 1631. His employer, Mervyn Touchet, was beheaded after being convicted of sodomy and rape. Fitzpatrick was arraigned and convicted several months later, as the evidence against Touchet also implicated Fitzpatrick. See Lacey, *Terrible Queer Creatures*, 77–85.

the injustices of the English trial-by-jury system, which inherently disadvantaged Irishmen. Allegations of jury packing and the very real early exclusion of Catholics from jury service were serious concerns for the Irish. Editors and letter-to-the-editor writers regularly expressed their frustrations with this practice.[62] As one *Journal* editor put it, for Irish men and women, "trial by jury" in the United Kingdom could be an "infringement on the liberty of the subject."[63] Nationalists, including Protestants, took up these issues because they represented the inequalities created by the Act of Union.

In response to the trial of Mellett and Farthing, nineteen-year-old Irish emigrants who lived in London, Grattan (editor, 1826–31) and his court reporter expressed hearty disbelief and denial. A September 23, 1828, article opened with the reflection that "a session seldom passes at the Old Bailey, or Hick's Hall [courthouses in London] in which there are not several verdicts which lead one to doubt very much whether we do not purchase our supposed security from trial by our peers at the expense of much injustice." Mellett and Farthing were arraigned for having committed an "unnatural crime" together in their lodging house washroom at the beginning of August. In both articles, the paper called into question the evidence brought against them. Under the sodomy laws in the United Kingdom, an outside witness not party to the act was needed to secure a conviction. The primary witness, who was also a lodger in the house, had testified that when she opened the door to the washroom, "which was not fastened in any way whatever," she had "found the prisoners in a situation which left no doubt on her mind that the crime had been perpetrated."[64] The reporter dismissed the initial confession from one of the men and pointed out that the primary witness had tried, according to Mellett and Farthing, to extort money from them over the charge.[65] Another witness, their landlady, said that she had visited the washroom several times during the day and believed that there was no opportunity for the crime to have taken place. She also noted that the other witness was filled with "ill will towards" Mellett and Farthing. "Slender evidence indeed," the reporter wrote, "on which to destroy two poor men." The problem was not merely the evidence, though. The *Journal* asserted that it was simply improbable that Irishmen would have sex with other men: "We should say that the probabilities are . . . these men were innocent. It is the last crime in the world of which Irishmen . . . are likely to

[62] Before Catholic emancipation in 1828, the nineteenth-century laws governing jury service required potential jurors to be landowners. After that, jury packing was still a concern but was also sometimes exaggerated by nationalist presses. Niamh Howlin, "Controlling Jury Composition in Nineteenth-Century Ireland," *Journal of Legal History* 30 (2009): 227–61; and Howlin, "English and Irish Jury Trials: A Growing Divergence 1825–1833," in *The Laws and Other Legalities of Ireland, 1689–1850*, ed. Michael Brown (Farnham: Ashgate, 2011), 117–32.

[63] "St. Bridget's Parish," *Freeman's Journal*, April 28, 1817.

[64] "Trial by Jury," *Freeman's Journal*, September 23, 1828.

[65] "London Sessions—Saturday Sentences," *Freeman's Journal*, September 24, 1828.

be guilty." The jury, which deliberated for an hour after being "cautioned twice by the Judge" to consider the evidence carefully, found Mellett and Farthing guilty.[66] In December of that year, the judge saw fit to commute their death sentences. Farthing and Mellett, just starting their adult lives, were put on a prison transport and sent to a penal colony in New South Wales, Australia, for twenty-one years.[67]

Nationalist editors like Grattan, Patrick Lavelle, the Grays, and John Maguire (*Examiner,* 1841–72) employed such cases to challenge perceived and real injustices for Irishmen created by English rule. They also served as convenient opportunities to construct a binary of what was "Irish" and what was "English," reinforcing the disproportionate sodomy case reporting. Similarly, in 1845 three English railway workers accused Thomas Connell Duffy, a police magistrate for the city of Dublin, of sodomy. Both the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Examiner* took up his defense in print. It is unclear if the charges were taken seriously or if Duffy was formally charged, because he immediately launched a suit against the three accusers for attempting to blackmail him. Several articles about the case in the *Journal* in 1846 took the opportunity to emphasize the Englishness of this "abominable crime." Then-editor John Gray insisted that these "unnatural offences" just did not take place in Ireland. Gray assured readers of the justice of Mr. Duffy's defense against "a conspiracy to charge him with a horrible offence," "an offence unknown in Ireland—save as some incredible rumours of brutality which reach us from the assizes of [England]."[68] Assumptions about Englishmen and Irishmen, implicit in previous coverage of sodomy trials, were explicitly stated here: "It is horrible to think that the exigencies of commerce, in introducing among us new importations of Englishmen, must introduce with them the possibility of so unnatural an offence ever taking place upon our sod."[69] The expression of support for Duffy emphasized the Englishness of same-sex desire, successfully flipping the accusers' accusation back against them. Just as importantly, Duffy's assumed innocence was linked to his Irishness. This allowed Gray (*Journal*) and Maguire (*Examiner*) to discuss the moral superiority of Ireland to England, suggesting that the "unnatural offences" would and could only be imported to Ireland from England. From this perspective, Duffy's courtroom win was really a win for Ireland.[70]

[66] "Trial by Jury," *Freeman's Journal*, September 24, 1828.

[67] Martin Mellett, six records: British Transportation Registers, England and Wales Criminal Registers, Home Office Criminal Entry Books, Capital Convictions at the Old Bailey, Newgate Calendar of Prisoners for Trial, Old Bailey Proceedings, https://www.digitalpanopticon.org/life?id=obpt18280911-234-defend1330.

[68] "Charge against Mr. Duffy," *Freeman's Journal*, June 23, 1845.

[69] "Charge against Mr. Duffy."

[70] Rictor Norton, ed., "Alleged Conspiracy against a Police Magistrate in Dublin, 1845–46," in *Homosexuality in Nineteenth-Century England: A Sourcebook*, June 2, 2017, http://rictornorton.co.uk/eighteen/1845duff.htm.

The assertions that James Munroe's conviction in 1809 marked the "first" Irishman being convicted of sodomy, that sodomy was the very "last crime of which two Irishmen [like Mellett and Farthing] would be guilty," and that English blackmailers were more likely to be guilty of sodomy than an Irishman like Duffy were all threads in a larger tapestry of Irish nationalist reporting that affirmed same-sex desire as English in origin. In 1809 the *Journal* had treated Munroe harshly. He was described as a "wretched creature," and the courtroom attendees' satisfaction at his guilty verdict was described as "manly." That language served to affirm the unnaturalness of the crime and, more specifically, the unnaturalness of such a crime being committed by an Irishman. Same-sex desire was enshrined as anathema to Irishness. This trend continued, of course, in the coverage of the Mellett and Farthing case. Their innocence was presumed. The conviction of the two men in the English trial-by-jury judicial system was interpreted as an injustice that in fact proved Irish purity. In the Duffy case, the papers played on what was, at least by 1846, a common belief: that sodomy, that most "detestable" and "unnatural" sin and crime, was inherently English. The pronouncement that the unnatural crime was introduced to Ireland as an "importation . . . of Englishmen" reflects the nationalist position that only the expulsion of England from Ireland could cleanse the island of unnatural behavior. Like the Munroe, Mellett, and Farthing cases, the representation of Duffy's case as proof that Irishmen did not commit sodomy was intentional. The report assured readers that an Irishman could not be guilty of a crime that was otherwise known only in England. One case was anomalous, one a perversion of justice, and one proof that the English brought homosexuality to Ireland. Significantly, press attention to these three cases all came at times of particularly tense Anglo-Irish relations: in the decade after the Act of Union, Ireland was beset by waves of agrarian violence; 1828 was the height of the Catholic emancipation movement; 1845 was in the middle of O'Connell's repeal movement.[71] Though the editors didn't always explicitly make those connections, coverage of these cases was politically charged. These were not otherwise noteworthy incidents. None of these three cases was given much attention in either British newspapers or the more conservative loyalist Irish papers like the *Belfast News-Letter*, Chute's *Western Herald*, the *Dublin Journal*, or the *Kerry Evening Post*.[72] Only the

[71] Paul Bew, *Ireland: The Politics of Enmity, 1789–2006* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2017), 84–86, 87–124, 125–74.

[72] Because Mellett and Farthing were tried at the Old Bailey in London, London papers included the men's convictions of a "nauseous" or "unnatural" offense in the papers' court verdict summaries but didn't provide details on the cases. See "Sentences of Death," *Huntingdon, Bedford & Petersborough Gazette*, September 27, 1828; "Old Bailey," *London Evening Standard*, September 22, 1828; "Sentences at the Old Bailey," *Globe*, September 22, 1828; "Smithfield Market," *Public Ledger and Daily Advertiser*, September 17, 1828; and "Old Bailey—Saturday," *Morning Chronicle*, September 28, 1828. Per my search of the British Newspaper Archive, which includes over one hundred English newspapers for

Irish nationalist papers considered them newsworthy, and by representing them so, the editors of the *Journal* and *Examiner* capitalized on popular assumptions about Irish purity and English sexual immorality in order to challenge English moral authority to rule Ireland.

In addition to covering low-profile cases of convicted English same-sex sex offenders like Francis John Nichols, the nationalist papers paid considerable attention to other sex scandals. While this did follow the trend of a general rise in scandal coverage in the era of "new journalism" in the 1880s, led by individuals like W. T. Stead, Irish papers were particularly keen to seize every opportunity to challenge the moral "authority" of important Anglo men.[73] When there were sensational cases involving British officials or gentlemen, the coverage was extensive, with multiple stories running throughout the trials and in their aftermath. In 1869, for example, an Episcopalian bishop was accused of having sex with choir boys at his church in South Africa. The Irish nationalist media was obsessed with the "shocking charge," and their interest was further piqued when the bishop fled the charge and absconded from the Cape.[74] As the *Examiner* reported it, there was a war between *De Tijd*, a Catholic Dutch-language paper, and English-language papers like the *Cape Argus* of South Africa. English journalists presumed the bishop's innocence, while their Dutch counterparts presumed his guilt and called for his head. The *Examiner* published five articles on the story, and the *Journal* printed an additional two. These papers rarely, if ever, covered sex scandal stories outside the British Isles. Perhaps John Maguire and John Gray imagined kinship with the Boers when the Dutch editors, who took "the guilt of the bishop for granted," were "calling for . . . [the Episcopalian] expulsion from the republic as immoral pests." The Boers wanted the English out of South Africa as much as the Irish wanted Home Rule.[75]

At the end of the nineteenth century, British sex scandals made headline news throughout England and Ireland. For Irish nationalists, the Dublin Castle scandal of 1884 epitomized the unfitness of the English to rule Ireland. Scandals that took place entirely on English soil were just as interesting to Irish readers. The *Examiner* called the 1871 arrest of Ernest Boulton and Frederick William Park, "men in women's attire," an "extraordinary case."[76]

1800–1850, neither the Munroe nor the Duffy case was covered in any English papers. Munroe's, Duffy's, and Mellett's cases are not covered in the *Belfast News-Letter*, *Chute's Western Herald*, the *Dublin Journal*, or the *Kerry Evening Post*.

[73] For examinations of the significance of Victorian scandal coverage in UK newspapers, see William Cohen, *Sex Scandal: The Private Parts of Victorian Fiction* (Durham, NC: Duke University Press, 1996); Backus, *James Joyce*; and Aled Jones, *Powers of the Press: Newspapers, Power, and the Public in the Nineteenth Century* (Aldershot: Scolar Press, 1996).

[74] "The Shocking Charge against a Bishop at the Cape," *Irish Examiner*, September 10, 1869.

[75] "The Shocking Charge."

[76] "Arrest of Men in Women's Attire Extraordinary Case," *Irish Examiner,* May 2, 1870.

Boulton was a twenty-two-year-old English man, son of a stockbroker, who struggled to hold down a job. Park was a twenty-three-year-old law student. As friends, the two formed a drag show theatrical double, traveling around London and giving performances as "Stella and Fanny."[77] The *Examiner* summarized the events of the trial in colorful language, describing the scene when the prisoners were escorted to the courthouse: "Dressed as women [they] were arm-in-arm with police officers, and presented a most ludicrous aspect."[78] While newspapers were bound by Victorian censorship laws and could not provide the lurid details of sex crimes, they could describe how Boulton was "dressed in a fashionably low-neck evening dress of white and crimson silk, trimmed with white lace. His arms and neck were bare, and he had a light lace shawl over his shoulders, a pearl bracelet on one arm, and a gold one on the other." The spectacle of the English men in women's clothing made for daring journalism.[79]

Of course, English papers also covered all of these higher-profile scandals, some with the same air of disdain and mockery that the *Examiner* and *Journal* affected.[80] As Charles Upchurch has noted, the English papers found the Boulton and Park spectacle hilarious until investigators found evidence that their deviance was more than just fashionable and that they had also committed acts of gross indecency. When the tides turned, the entire case dried up; the evidence of same-sex sex was disposed of by the investigators, the men were acquitted, and the press coverage ceased. Upchurch argues that the threat of sexual deviance presented too big a challenge to elite English manhood.[81]

While the Irish painted all of the English with the broad strokes of sexual immorality, the English public had their own concerns about the spread of same-sex desire. When the police discovered a brothel for homosexuals on Cleveland Street in the West End of London, an English journalist named Ernest Parke wondered why the prostitutes got off with such light sentences. He published a story in September implicating several English aristocrats as clients of the West End brothel, claiming that they had been allowed to leave the country rather than face charges of gross indecency.[82]

[77] "The Boulton and Park Case," *Bradford Observer*, May 10, 1871.

[78] "Arrest of Men."

[79] For complete accounts of the Boulton and Park trial, see Percy Fitzgerald, *Chronicles of Bow Street Police-Office* (Montclair, NJ: Patterson Smith, 1972); Hyde, *The Love*; Jeffrey Weeks, *Sex, Politics, and Society: The Regulation of Sexuality Since 1800* (London: Longman, 1989); and Charles Upchurch, "Forgetting the Unthinkable: Cross-Dressers and British Society in the Case of the *Queen vs. Boulton* and Others," *Gender & History* 12, no. 1 (2000): 127–57.

[80] For more on the British coverage of sodomy trials in the nineteenth century, see Cocks, *Nameless Offences*, 1–48; Kaplan, *Sodom on the Thames*, 166–223, 224–51; and Upchurch, *Before Wilde*, 129–56.

[81] Upchurch, "Forgetting," 127–57.

[82] For more on the Cleveland Street scandal, see Katie Hindmarch Watson, "Male Prostitution and the London GPO: Telegraph Boy 'Immorality' from Nationalization to the Cleveland

One of the implicated aristocrats, Lord Euston, was in England when the story hit the stands, and he quickly filed a libel suit against the paper. Confirming the suspicions of those who associated the English nobility with homosexuality and corruption, Lord Euston ultimately won the case, and the *North London Press* had to pay damages. The West End scandal of 1889 echoed the concerns of the Boulton and Park case twenty years earlier. Many believed that there was a link between the decadence of the aristocracy and sex between men, and the activities at the Cleveland Street club highlighted those sexual excesses.[83]

Given the implication that English aristocrats were involved, the Irish press picked up the story.[84] The *Examiner* published twelve stories about the case and followed the 1889 libel trial to its conclusion in 1890. When in December 1889 Lord Euston was able to clear his name, the *Examiner* lost interest. They went from publishing long stories describing testimonies about visits to the house of ill repute to a simple announcement that "the trial of Ernest Parke, charged with libelling Lord Euston, is fixed for this morning before Justice Hawkins."[85] The *Freeman's Journal* published only two substantive articles on the case, both in January 1890, which included discussions of Lord Euston's visits to the brothel. By 1889 the editorial governance of the paper was in flux. Edmund Dwyer Gray, the second Gray to own the paper, died in 1888, and the paper was converted into a public company in 1887; it was generally supportive of the Home Rule movement but without clear political allegiance.[86] In the absence of a strong nationalist voice in the *Journal*, the *United Ireland* and the *Examiner* did most of the heavy lifting in challenging English moral authority through subversive journalism.

What came next, however, was not the scandal the nationalists wanted. In 1895 Oscar Wilde launched a libel suit against John Douglas, the ninth Marquess of Queensbury. Queensbury had been demanding for months that Wilde stop cavorting with Queensbury's son, Alfred Douglas, Wilde's not-so-secret lover.[87] Wilde had avoided confrontations with Queensbury—an

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Street Scandal," *Journal of British Studies* 51, no. 3 (2012): 594–617; H. Montgomery Hyde, *The Cleveland Street Scandal* (London: W. H. Allen, 1976); and Graham Robb, *Strangers: Homosexual Love in the Nineteenth Century* (New York: Norton, 2004).

[83] Craig Kaczorowski, "Cleveland Street Scandal," in *GLBTQ Encyclopedia* (2015), http://www.glbtqarchive.com/ssh/cleveland_street_scandal_S.pdf.

[84] The London Met routinely rounded up prostitutes and temporarily shut down brothels. So before the aristocrats were part of the story, the Irish presses would not have paid much attention to it.

[85] "The West End Scandal," *Irish Examiner*, November 27, 1889; and "The London Scandals," *Irish Examiner*, January 15, 1890.

[86] Larkin, "'A Great Daily Organ,'" 45.

[87] Although it is tangential to the goals of this article, it is notable that until the obsession with the Oscar Wilde trial, the British press rarely reported on Irish sodomy trials. See Kaplan, *Sodom on the Thames*; and Upchurch, *Before Wilde*. Douglas, who was sixteen years Wilde's junior, was one of the aesthete's protégés. In the Aesthetic Movement, men like

accomplished boxer—until Queensbury left a calling card at Wilde's club, the Albemarle, accusing him of being a "somdomite [*sic*]." Like Cornwall and French in 1884, Wilde had to respond, and he sued Queensbury for libel. In the course of the libel trial, Wilde was called to the stand to account for some erotic poetry he and Douglas had exchanged. While not confirming his sexual relationship with the young man, Wilde defended the "love that dare not speak its name" and in doing so damned himself. While Gustavus Cornwall had managed to slip out of the jaws of antihomosexual prosecution a decade earlier on technicalities and the cushion of his government position, Wilde had nothing but his fame to protect him. His own testimony was enough to draw the full might of the British criminal justice system onto his head. The larger-than-life Irish playwright, who had made his career mocking the English aristocracy, was put on trial for his same-sex desire.

Wilde was arguably the most famous Irishman of his time. It would have been impossible for the Irish press, even its nationalist sector, to ignore the story that filled the front pages of every competing newspaper. English newspapers seized on Wilde as yet another example of how aristocratic decadence bred homosexuality, and they attacked him mercilessly.[88] The fact that there were thirty articles in the *Journal* and forty-two in the *Examiner* between March 4, 1895, and January 2, 1896, dealing with the Wilde trials is not surprising. Éibhear Walshe has argued that the Irish press, even the *Times*, treated Oscar Wilde gently, a drastic counterpoint to the virulent homophobia deployed by the nationalist press during the 1884 Dublin Castle scandal or unrelated events such as the theft of the crown jewels in 1907. In contrast, the *Irish Times* spent little ink on the Wilde trial, with only seven articles run between April and May 1895.[89] While Walshe acknowledges that the press used the Dublin Castle scandal as a nationalist opportunity, he does not see the coverage of the Wilde trials as part of Irish nationalist mythology.[90] But this was actually very consistent behavior for Irish nationalist journalists. The expansive coverage, which spent most of its time hedging, denying, and justifying the evidence of Irishmen engaged in same-sex sex, followed a pattern that had been established in the *Examiner*

Wilde worshipped the youthful male body. For a discussion of the Aesthetic Movement, see Talia Schaffer, "Fashioning Aestheticism by Aestheticizing Fashion: Wilde, Beerbohm, and the Male Aesthetes' Sartorial Codes," *Victorian Literature and Culture* 28, no. 1 (2000): 39–54; and Kerry Powell and Peter Raby, *Oscar Wilde in Context* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2013), 73–185.

[88] See Sinfield, *The Wilde Century*, 84–108.

[89] "Mr Oscar Wilde and Lord Queensbury," *Irish Times*, March 11, 1895; "The Charge against Lord Queensbury: Mr Oscar Wilde in the Witness Box," *Irish Times*, April 4, 1895; *Irish Times*, April 9, 1895; "The Charge against Wilde," *Irish Times*, April 8, 1895; "Result of the Wild Case," *Irish Times*, May 2, 1895; "Oscar Wilde," *Irish Times*, May 6, 1895; *Irish Times*, September 25, 1895.

[90] Walshe, *Oscar's Shadow*, 1–16.

and the *Journal* presses for almost one hundred years before Wilde ended up on the stand.

Only four of the seventy-two articles in the *Examiner* and *Journal* reference "indecency" or "unnatural" passions, and all four are buried deep within the papers: pages 6, 11, 12, and 13 of the various issues. One of the articles in the *Examiner* focused on one of Wilde's associates, the wealthy thirty-three-year-old Englishman and ex-soldier Alfred Taylor, deliberating on the likelihood of Taylor's guilt. Only briefly in that same article is Wilde discussed, highlighting the judge's presumption of Wilde's innocence and alluding to the key arguments used in his defense. In briefing the jury on that day, the judge "called particular attention to Wilde's answers given in cross-examination, in which he denied that his letters to Lord Alfred Douglas breathed an unnatural passion." The *Examiner* chose to draw readers' attention to the judge's skepticism about Wilde's guilt, and the paper's coverage only presented the evidence that would exonerate him.[91]

The articles covering the Wilde trial in the *Journal* took a slightly different tack. On May 1, 1895, a report included excerpts from Wilde's testimony. He denied the allegations of indecency, stating firmly that "there is no truth whatever in any one of those allegations." The reporter even went so far as to quote from Wilde's justification of his relationship with Douglas. "The love spoken of was the love of David for Jonathan . . . a deep, spiritual affection, as pure as it was perfect."[92] By pairing Wilde's denial of sex with the most Christian elements of Wilde's speech, perhaps the *Journal* reporter was trying to convince readers of Wilde's moral fortitude. It is certainly notable that the *Journal* did not publish sections of the witnesses' testimonies against Wilde. This was treatment with kid gloves, compared to the lambasting Wilde got in the English press, where he was depicted as yet another corrupt aristocrat engaged in same-sex sex.

The lack of coverage of the Wilde trial in *United Ireland* is telling. While the Anglo-centric *Irish Times* at least followed the case, *United Ireland* almost entirely ignored it. From February to May 1895 the paper reported on daily happenings of interest to nationalist readers, but there was scarcely a mention of Oscar Wilde and his trials during this period.[93] Finally, on June 1 *United Ireland* reported on the final sentence and about how Wilde and his associate had been transported to and processed at Newgate Prison in London. William O'Brien, still editor of *United Ireland* in 1895, neglected to even name the crime of which Wilde was convicted, despite the excruciating detail his court reporter provided of the prisoners' processing: "[The prisoners] had to give details of [their] identity and religion, and submit to medical examination, after which they passed through the hands of the prison bath-room attendants and exchanged their own clothes for

[91] "The Case of Oscar Wilde," *Irish Examiner*, May 2, 1895.
[92] "The Oscar Wilde Case," *Freeman's Journal*, May 1, 1895.
[93] *United Ireland*, February 2–April 13, 1895.

the prison, being afterwards handed over to the care of the chaplain."[94] Of three total paragraphs, the last is dedicated to an update on Lord Alfred Douglas's disagreements with his father, this time about a "fracas" between Queensbury and Lord Douglas of Harwick. The resigned but depressing picture painted of Wilde's near future in prison is set into stark contrast with Queensbury, who continued to cause trouble and who was the instigator of the entire Wilde trial. It is as if O'Brien, finally expressing an opinion on the trial itself, wanted readers to feel sorry for the Irishman and to sneer at the Englishman. The column itself is sandwiched between a critique of the British Treasury and a story about Mr. R. S. Hudson, who was providing drinking troughs for dogs outside of grocery shops around Ireland.[95]

Though an aristocrat who spent most of his time in England, in the end, Wilde was Irish. As with Thomas Connell Duffy, Martin Mellett, James Farthing, or any other Irish man accused of having sex with another man, there was a clear and calculated effort to affirm Irish sexual purity and to cast such cases as instances of English injustice or treachery. When the verdict came down, the reporter for the *Freeman's Journal* (which was again under strong leadership, that of Thomas Sexton and MP-journalist Tim Healy, who broke the Dublin Castle scandal in 1884) wrote that "the result . . . undoubtedly occasioned profound surprise among the public, as it did among those in court, including the prosecuting counsel."[96] While the correspondent admitted that there was not a "shadow of a doubt as to his guilt," he went on to describe two visions of Oscar Wilde that conveyed, even in the certainty of his guilt, the author's feeling for his fellow Irishman:

> [When] I again saw Oscar Wilde . . . a more shocking contrast could not possibly be conceived. The aspect of sleek, well-fed luxuriousness had vanished, the cheeks were lined and flabby, and wore a most unearthly colour. His eyes were bloodshot and expressive of the last stage of acute terror—the eyes of a man who might at any time get a fatal seizure from overstrain. His hair was all in disorder, and he crouched in a corner of the dock, with his face turned towards the jury and the witness box, his head resting against his hand, so that it was almost hid from the public.[97]

In moving language, the author described a man beaten and torn down by the English justice system, and he then explained the validity of Wilde's defense. Though he assured readers that he did not condone Wilde's life or deny the validity of the judgment, he saw the entire fiasco as a failure of Wilde's lawyer, Edward Clarke, to adequately defend Wilde. The author also snarkily asked, since Wilde was only one of fifty others just like him who ran

[94] "The End of the Wilde Case," *United Ireland*, June 1, 1895.
[95] "The End."
[96] "From Our Own Correspondent, by Special Wire," *Freeman's Journal*, May 27, 1895.
[97] "From Our Own Correspondent."

in the theater and musical circles, where were their convictions? Echoing the language used in the Thomas Connell Duffy case, the author insisted that the corruption of the English judicial system had once again been set against an Irishman: "We all know what trial by jury is—in England. It is the palladium of English justice. . . . It is a peculiarly English institution which the miserable 'Celtic fringe' is quite incapable of appreciating or utilising at its proper value."[98] Wilde, in other words, was just one of many Irishmen subjected to the whims and corruptions of English courtrooms. The author corroborated his suspicions with a quote from *Lloyd's Newspaper*, which reported that there was a "strong suspicion that the first jury with its hopeless disagreement was not entirely free from the taint of corruption."[99] Even while acknowledging the inconvertible truth that Oscar Wilde, an Irishman, was guilty of same-sex desire, the nationalists returned to their fail-safe position by pointing the finger at the English. If the primary goal of this kind of news coverage was to pin the actual sexual indiscretion on the English, a suitable Plan B was to point out the more general injustices of English rule.

Blaming colonial oppressors for the importation of sexual deviance, particularly homosexuality and prostitution, is a common theme in colonized-colonizer relationships.[100] The persistence of these supposedly imported behaviors after establishment of Irish independence in 1922 was an embarrassment, and, like many postcolonial governments, the Free State responded with measures to silence, hide, and eradicate the perceived sexual deviance through policing and censorship. By constructing a sense of otherness around two concepts—sexual immorality and English colonial oppression—the Irish created artificial distance between a pure Irish identity and the foreignness of Englishness and homosexuality.

The popular belief that the English brought sexual immorality to Irish shores and that it could be (and was) expelled once the Irish seized their independence helps to explain how independent Ireland approached "deviant" sexual behavior. In particular it complicates the sparse but important scholarship on the policing of same-sex sex, female prostitution, and premarital sex in twentieth-century Ireland. While the depiction of sexual immorality as a foreign import is not unique to colonial and postcolonial states, how the Irish press depicted sexual immorality after independence is representative of the postcolonial experience. As I have argued elsewhere,

[98] "From Our Own Correspondent."

[99] "From Our Own Correspondent."

[100] Neville Wallace Hoad, "White Man's Burden, White Man's Disease: Tracking Lesbian and Gay Human Rights," *African Intimacies: Race, Homosexuality, and Globalization* (Minneapolis: University of Minnesota Press, 2006), 103–15; Basile Ndjio, "Post-colonial Histories of Sexuality: The Political Invention of a Libidinal African Straight," *Africa: The Journal of the International African Institute* 82, no. 4 (2012): 609–31, 122; and Ian Lumsden, *Machos, Maricones, and Gays: Cuba and Homosexuality* (Philadelphia, PA: Temple University Press, 1996), 55–80.

urban authorities in independent Ireland pursued far more concentrated and extensive policing of male same-sex sex and female prostitution than had any English administration.[101] The uptick in policing reflects both the rejection of nonconforming sexual behaviors and an explicit attempt to establish a more moral state. Eradicating sexual immorality, or at least visible sexual immorality in the streets of Dublin, was viewed as an essential component of the eradication of "the standing pool of Saxon life," which had infected Ireland during the colonial period. This association of the English with immoral sexual behavior had far-reaching consequences. The nationalist media's selective coverage of sodomy cases and sex scandals and the deflection techniques they used in describing the cases of Irishmen found guilty by English judicial systems were examples of a specific nineteenth-century Irish mythology. Irish independence was supposed to have expelled unnatural offenses of English origin: prostitution, divorce, premarital sex, and homosexuality. With the possible exception of divorce, however, these behaviors failed to disappear in twentieth-century Ireland.[102]

The nationalists helped to create public perceptions about what was Irish and what was not. This is evidenced in the life and memory of Sir Roger Casement, who was arrested and executed for treason as a leader of the 1916 Easter Rising. Casement's investigation of corrupt imperialism in places like the Belgian Congo and Brazil made him an international celebrity; it was not only the Irish who considered him a hero. When he retired from the British diplomatic service, he joined the nationalist cause, and in 1916 he went to Germany to get volunteers and guns for the Irish Republican Brotherhood's planned Easter Rising. He failed in his mission and was arrested on his way back to Ireland. Immediately after his arrest, many demanded his release. The British government then leaked what were allegedly his private diaries, which described the sexual encounters he had had with men. Overnight, it seemed, he lost every friend he ever had. As Brian Lewis and Kathryn Conrad have shown, in the decades after his death the heated debates about whether or not the diaries were forgeries hinged on a high-stakes question: Was he or was he not a homosexual?[103]

[101] Averill Earls, "Queering Dublin: Same-Sex Desire and Masculinities in Ireland, 1884–1950" (PhD diss., University at Buffalo, 2016), x–xxvi, 38–60. See also Morgan Denton, "Open Secrets: Prostitution and National Identity in Twentieth-Century Irish Society" (PhD diss., University at Buffalo, 2012), 257–63.

[102] For examinations of same-sex sex in twentieth-century Ireland, see Diarmaid Ferriter, *Occasions of Sin: Sex and Society in Modern Ireland* (London: Profile Books, 2009); Chrystel Hugh, *The Politics of Sexual Morality in Ireland* (London: Palgrave Macmillan, 1998); and Earls, "Queering Dublin" (this article is adapted from the first chapter). For a history of prostitution spanning the better part of the twentieth century that serves as a nice complement to Maria Luddy's *Prostitution and Irish Society, 1800–1940* (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2007), see Morgan Denton, "Virginal Mothers and Common Prostitutes: Policing Female Sexuality in Ireland," in *Women Who Belong*, ed. Marsha Robinson (London: Cambridge Scholars Publishing, 2013), 65–85.

[103] Kathryn Conrad, "Queer Treasons: Homosexuality and Irish National Identity," *Cultural Studies* 15, no. 1 (2001): 124–37; and Brian Lewis, "The Queer Life and Afterlife of

B. L. Reid's 1976 biography described Casement as "fragmented, and . . . elusive."[104] Casement's biographers, critics, and friends grappled with his memory and how his sexuality fit in Irish history. The homophobia of a Free State founded on a mythology of Irish sexual purity and the Englishness of same-sex desire excluded Casement, or at least his sexuality, from narratives of Irish nationalism. It took most of the twentieth century, the Celtic Tiger, and a long grappling with sexuality more generally for Ireland to accept that Casement could be both a gay man and an Irish patriot.[105]

The belief that the English are corrupted and the Irish are pure persisted well into the twentieth century. When historian Maria Luddy was giving public talks about Irish prostitution in the 1980s, two audience members in Limerick chastised her for talking about "such a subject" and "thanked God the British had gone, as there had been no prostitution in Ireland since."[106] David Beriss was marching with the Irish Gay and Lesbian Organization in a New York City St. Patrick's Day Parade in the 1990s when he saw a little old woman holding up a sign that said, "If you're gay and you're Irish, your parents must be English."[107] Beliefs in Irish purity and English corruption were written into the fabric of independent Ireland and embraced by its people. Historians have described the extreme efforts to eradicate sexual immorality in postcolonial Ireland. Morgan Denton has described how the Free State's metropolitan police force drove prostitutes off the streets with constant harassment, and James Smith has described the horrifying ways that unmarried mothers were forced into confinement and servitude in the many Magdalene asylums.[108] Sexual indiscretions were carefully hidden behind high walls and punished with forced labor. Homosexuality was similarly taboo, though it continued to be part of the urban landscape; working-class men found partners in public lavatories and parks, and middle- and upper-class men found each other at house parties, despite the efforts of the postcolonial Irish police to catch and entrap them.[109] Expelling the English did not stop men from having sex with men, women from advertising their sexual services on the streets, or men and

Roger Casement," *Journal of the History of Sexuality* 14, no. 4 (2005): 363–82. For more on the life, humanitarianism, and legacy of Roger Casement, see W. J. McCormack, *Roger Casement in Death, Or, Haunting the Free State* (Dublin: University College Dublin Press, 2002); and Dean Pavlakis, *British Humanitarianism and the Congo Reform Movement, 1896–1913* (Farnham, Surrey: Ashgate, 2015).

[104] B. L. Reid, *The Lives of Roger Casement* (New Haven, CT: Yale University Press, 1976), xv.

[105] Susannah Bowyer, "Queer Patriots: Sexuality and the Character of National Identity in Ireland," *Cultural Studies* 24, no. 6 (2010): 801–20.

[106] Luddy, *Prostitution*, 1.

[107] David Beriss, "Introduction: 'If You're Gay and Irish, Your Parents Must Be English,'" *Identities: Global Studies in Culture and Power* 2, no. 3 (1996): 189–96.

[108] Denton, "Open Secrets," 95–188; and James M. Smith, *Ireland's Magdalen Laundries and the Nation's Architecture of Containment* (Notre Dame, IN: University of Notre Dame Press, 2007), 44–84.

[109] See Ferriter, *Occasions of Sin*; and Hugh, *The Politics.*

women from having extramarital and premarital sex. Making Irish sexual purity part of the nationalist mythology only created a prison of idealized sexual purity that minoritized citizens who fell outside of the sex and gender norms of the postcolonial state.[110]

Well before Bishop Fogarty's 1919 letter, the correlation of Englishness and sexual immorality was a political tool in the war against English imperialism. Over the course of the nineteenth century, readers loyal to nationalist papers like the *Freeman's Journal* and the *Examiner* would have grown accustomed to the frequent assertions in editorials and scandal coverage that the English were responsible for the importation of sexual immorality, particularly that most heinous of sins: same-sex sex. This readership was further assured that sodomy was so rare among Irishmen that any guilty verdict should be questioned. For a political movement hinging on the moral authority of the governing entity, whether of England ruling Ireland or Ireland governing itself, Ireland's purity and England's corruption were essential concepts. More than only a political tool, this assumption was a measure for shaming, persecuting, and hating those perceived as sexually immoral, both the "English" corrupters and the native Irish who did not or could not conform. Long after the English left the Irish to their own devices, the legacies of Anglo-Irish tensions continued to influence the way Irish people treated one another. More importantly, however, the lasting impact of nineteenth-century Irish nationalist newspapers is a testament to the power of media in shaping our world, past, present, and future.

About the Author

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[110] Kathryn Conrad explores some of these themes in *Locked in the Family Cell: Gender, Sexuality, and Political Agency in Irish National Discourse* (Madison: University of Wisconsin Press, 2004).