

Creating “A Great Ireland in America:” Reading and Remembrance in Buffalo, New York, 1872-1888

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ABSTRACT: Recent writing on diasporas has encouraged a shift away from viewing them as either quantifiable entities or as inevitable outcomes of international migration. Scholars now seek to highlight the ways in which diasporic identities are actively made and remade, and the connections forged both within and between places from such efforts. This paper addresses two dimensions of the process as they related to individuals of Irish birth and ancestry in Buffalo, New York, in the late nineteenth century. The first dimension relates to print culture and the role of the weekly *Catholic Union* newspaper in structuring and circulating a diaspora nationalism with a strong anticolonial identification, the second to the process of performing public acts of Irish nationalist memory that were simultaneously declarations of American loyalty. In the latter case, Robert Emmet (1778-1803), organizer of the 1803 rebellion in Dublin, became the pivotal figure around which a culture of commemoration took shape from the mid-1880s onwards. Together, these two dimensions of reading and remembrance offer examples of how diaspora-related cultural creativity was fashioned and articulated in one place and how it could be used to project a distinct Irish-American community while mobilizing opinions about Ireland’s political future.

Recent writing on diasporas has encouraged a shift away from viewing them as either quantifiable entities or as inevitable outcomes of international migration. In 2005, Rogers Brubaker observed a somewhat chaotic spread of usages of the term “in semantic, conceptual, and disciplinary space” as scholars moved beyond the classical “victim/refugee” notion of diaspora.¹ His was far from a lone critique, and in questioning prevalent assumptions about the coherence, condition, and stability of diasporas, scholars have come to ask how they are brought into being, come alive, or simply “happen.” For Brubaker, diaspora is to be treated as “a category of practice, project, claim, and stance, rather than as a bounded group.”² In a related vein, Martin Sökefeld writes that diaspora is “not simply a ‘given’ of migrants’ existence” but rather something that “has to be effected time and again by agents who employ a variety of mobilizing practices.”³ Migrants thus negotiate not only the particularities of settlement destinations within various national contexts (their “becoming” as Americans, Canadians, Argentinians, and so forth); their attention, and that of their descendants, may become drawn in various ways to those currents of transnational geopolitics that continue to affect their place of origin.

The flight of hundreds of thousands of men, women, and children from famine-scarred Ireland in the late 1840s has been recognized as a formative moment in the making of a modern diaspora.⁴ If a more considered deployment of the term includes a return to the notion of a forced

migration, or a migration that was at least *popularly believed to be* an involuntary one of “exile,” evidence relating to Ireland can be found in sources such as immigrant correspondence and the rhetoric of nationalists, and nowhere more abundantly than in the United States in the second half of the nineteenth century.⁵ Matthew Jacobson uses the vivid phrase “special sorrows” to summarize the general shape of the “diasporic imagination” of the American Irish in a study that also discusses Polish and Zionist nationalism.⁶ Narrations of displacement and the historical injustices of English colonialism, communicated in speeches, newspapers, pamphlets, and letters, were effective in creating not only a coherent picture of an Irish homeland but also a fervent belief in Irish nationhood and a desire that the Irish be free to govern their own affairs. At the same time, the popular idea of a worldwide “Irish race” that was “liberty-loving” wherever they went became reified to the point of being commonsensical. Not only was a primordial sense of ethnicity structured and promoted by a class of educated leaders and publishers, it was also becoming strongly aligned with the majority religious denomination in Ireland and that of the majority of post-famine Irish-born in America: Catholicism.⁷

If the diaspora-related aspects of Irish-American settlement experiences are therefore best seen not simply as a “special case of ethnicity” but also as ongoing works in progress, what merits closer investigation is how they were actively made and remade within and between places.⁸ Kevin Kenny recommends that light be shed on “the connections migrants form abroad and the kinds of culture they produce” in words, images, and material objects; such an approach thus treats diaspora-related “projects,” and their associated geographies, as experimental in nature.⁹ As Elizabeth Mavroudi notes, however, an increased focus on the fluid, malleable and complex reality of diasporas should not neglect how essentialist arguments about their collective “sameness,” including consensus notions of “homeland,” were dynamically and strategically produced in different historical and geographical contexts.¹⁰

This paper addresses two dimensions of the process by which an Irish diaspora culture was fashioned in one particular corner of the United States, Buffalo, New York, between the early 1870s and late 1880s. The first dimension relates to print culture and the role of the so-called “ethnic press,” the second to the role of popular memory and the active promotion of those elevated as heroes of Irish nationalism in particular. As we shall see, these two dimensions of Buffalo’s Irish diaspora culture were integrated to an important degree by the coordinating activities of a small but influential network of male middle-class activists who, bound by a series of overlapping associational ties, remained dedicated to furthering the causes of Catholicism and Ireland at both local and wider scales.

The ethnic press was, and still is, an important component of the making of modern diasporas, and the term invites speculation about not only the content, geographical reach/circulation and audience relating to these newspapers, but also about what makes them “ethnic.” Although a number of Irish journals were available in the United States before the mid 1840s, the famine immigration and the exile of the leaders of the Young Ireland rebellion of 1848 kick-started a new era in Irish-American journalism with New York and Boston emerging as the principal publishing centers.¹¹ While Patrick Meehan’s *Irish American* (New York) left no doubt about its intended audience, the *Pilot*, official organ of the Catholic archdiocese of Boston, was the widest-circulating “Irish”-American weekly circa 1870.¹² The ownership and content of these weeklies also illustrated the division of opinion about what dimension of identity the American Irish should emphasize most in the 1850s, their Irishness or their Catholicism.

The fact that newspapers such as the *Pilot* reached into many Irish communities across the United States brings into focus the possibility of Irish households in Buffalo and elsewhere having access to more than one “ethnic” newspaper and how these could have been influential in creating a diasporic sensibility in a way that was more continuous than sporadic. It also invites

more consideration of how an Irish-American reading public was being created not only in second- and third-tier American cities and towns in which the Irish were numerous, but also in much-understudied rural districts. Catholic diocesan newspapers written in English could, outside the main Irish hubs of Boston, New York, and Chicago, cater to an audience of primarily Irish birth or ancestry without seriously challenging the circulation figures of the *Pilot*. It is in this context that Buffalo's *Catholic Union*, the focus of the first part of this paper, became a weekly where an Irish ethnic and diasporic identity was interpellated and cultivated in the 1870s and 1880s, not least under the influential editorship of Rev. Patrick Cronin.¹³

The second dimension of a diaspora-oriented culture examined here concerns the symbolic and ideological uses of what might be termed "diasporic heroes." The principal hero, and martyr, in this case was Robert Emmet (1778-1803), sometimes referred to as "Bold" Robert Emmet. Although Emmet's rebellion against the British administration in Ireland, staged on the streets of Dublin in 1803, was a failure, and for which he paid the price with his life, his "celebrity status" reached a peak in the final decades of the century when the staging of annual commemorations of his birthday (March 4) became something of a staple across Irish America to the point of rivaling St. Patrick's celebrations in many places.¹⁴ Marianne Elliott has demonstrated how the "Emmet legend" grew in strength over the course of the century, appealing as it did to the romantic and revolutionary imagination within Irish nationalism.¹⁵ Here was a comparatively young man, a Trinity College student born into a middle-class Dublin Anglican family, who was executed for his continued belief that Ireland should govern itself separately as a republic, five years after the failed United Irishmen rebellion of 1798. An anticolonial identification thus became a central ingredient of Irish diasporic identity, fed by the textual and performative remembrances of figures such as Emmet, amongst other means.¹⁶

For all of his seeming suitability as a Great Man, and the exile of members of his family to the United States, the rise of Emmet in Irish America nonetheless had its experimental elements more than fifty years after his death. Heroes, for Geoffrey Cubitt, are those whose existences and reputations receive not only fame and honor in their own lifetime or later, but also "a special allocation of imputed meaning and symbolic significance – that not only raises them above others in public esteem but makes them the object of some kind of collective emotional investment."¹⁷ Discourses of heroic reputations are in turn "products of imaginative labour through which societies and groups define and articulate their values and assumptions, and through which individuals within those societies or groups establish their participation in larger social and cultural identities."¹⁸ The key word here is labor; if the ethnic press in the United States was responsible for bringing a pantheon of Irish mythical, literary, and political heroes to the attention of audiences in multiple places in the second half of the nineteenth century, selecting a small number of these "national assets" to actively commemorate was made to varying degrees by a nexus of national and regional media operators and lower-level activists in places such as Buffalo.¹⁹ Such labor not only upheld a diasporic Irish nationalism but also secured a sense of belonging to the American nation. While Emmet's deeds and death marked moments in an era when attempts to attain Irish independence foundered, the memory of his heroic failure acted as a reminder of the potential still remaining for the achievement of that goal after centuries of colonialism.

The performances enacted at these "ethnic events" in honor of Emmet thus supplied an important affective complement to the stories and opinions related in newspapers, all the while facilitating the collective consumption of narrated self-images of what it meant to be Irish and American. Together, these two dimensions of reading and remembrance offer compelling examples of how diaspora-related cultural creativity was forged in one place and how it could be used to mobilize political opinions about Ireland's future. They also enable us to picture "a series of continually re-emphasised diasporic political and emotional connections" within

communities.²⁰ This calendar of diasporic “happenings,” operating at different levels of intensity over time, ultimately mattered when the time came to contribute money to the cause of Ireland. And as nineteenth-century Irish political leaders from Daniel O’Connell in the 1840s to Charles Stewart Parnell in the 1880s well knew, financial support from the American Irish, buoyed up by waves of anticolonial sentiment, could do a great deal of good.²¹

The period from the early 1870s to late 1880s is important for several reasons. In the wake of unsuccessful border raids on Canada in 1866 and 1870 by the most recent champions of Irish republicanism, the Fenian Brotherhood, a new movement for constitutional nationalism took shape in Ireland that sought the return of a Dublin parliament or “Home Rule.” By the late 1870s, the agitation entered a more activist phase with the rise of the charismatic Parnell, the beginning of the Irish “Land War,” and the formation of Land League branches in Ireland and North America. These political developments in Ireland were paralleled by an emerging accommodation in the Irish-American press between proponents of Catholicism and nationalism, as political news from Ireland continued to matter.²² At the same time, the centenaries of the birth of Daniel O’Connell (1775-1847) and Robert Emmet provided Irish America with opportunities to measure its depth of interest in, and evaluations of, the political contributions of two heroes from the homeland.

In the United States, and despite sacrifices made in the Civil War, the combination of lowly economic status, increased political participation, and a steadfast religious loyalty meant that Irish Catholics’ struggle to be accepted as fellow (white) Americans had anything but ended. In local politics, the Irish entered the fray in most big cities and received blame for the rise of the “ex-plebe” ward politician whose dubious moral standards corrupted the rational course of municipal decision-making.²³ The American Catholic hierarchy, meanwhile, continued to face domestic political and media opposition to its push for state-funded education, and those Catholics looking to Europe were repulsed by the invasion of Rome by the Italian Army in September 1870 against the opposition of Pope Pius IX. The construction of a Catholic infrastructure in dioceses and parishes nevertheless continued from the 1870s onward, one that included not only churches, schools, colleges, and other institutions, but also associations and societies that fostered devotional patterns of worship and a press that defended Catholic values. Modest degrees of economic mobility in Irish communities across the republic enabled the emergence of a lay middle-class energy that in turn spearheaded projects of social uplift. In an era of continued anti-Catholic hostility at several levels, it was the defense of not only Catholic pride that was at stake, but also Irish pride. It was in this context that organs such as the *Catholic Union* appeared.

Buffalo, a border city located at the eastern edge of Lake Erie in western New York State, is one into which large numbers of Irish migrated during the nineteenth century, especially between the 1840s and 1860s. By 1880, 10,310 Irish-born residents lived in a city of 155,134, and they, alongside Buffalo’s two other principal socio-cultural groups, Anglo-American “Yankees” and Germans, occupied distinctive positions in the city’s labor market as well as its social geography. In comparative cultural terms, however, Buffalo was quite German; almost half of the population was of this background by the mid 1870s, clustering mostly on the city’s east side, and they possessed a mix of not only middle- and working-class occupations but also religious denominations.²⁴ Of the twenty Catholic churches in the city identified by Bishop Steven Ryan in 1879, ten served German congregants.²⁵ The vast majority of those of Irish birth and ancestry, on the other hand, were working-class Catholics and their south-side concentration close to the waterfront was, in the mind’s eye of many Buffalonians, their primary locality of residence. A *Catholic Union* editorial complained in 1876 that contrasting representations of “the drunkenness of the Celt and the sobriety of the Teuton” had long been “thrown up into our face.”²⁶ But the Irish in Buffalo became known to their neighbors not only for their capacity for alcohol consumption or local political activism; their ability to respond to efforts to right Ireland’s wrongs was also observed

and acknowledged during the era of Fenian border raids.²⁷ With immigration from Ireland at a low ebb, Buffalo's Irish-American community had reached a level of multi-generational maturity by the 1870s that makes it an appropriate place to study the ongoing cultivation of Irish diasporic sensibilities.

Bishop Steven Vincent Ryan was the prime mover behind the formation of what would become Buffalo's new "Irish" paper, the *Catholic Union*. Ryan was Canadian-born and of Irish ancestry and was consecrated the second bishop of Buffalo in November 1868. Top of his agenda was to continue the work of his Irish-American predecessor, John Timon, in building a solid institutional apparatus for the diocese to serve the coming generations of American Catholics. Upon arrival in the city, Ryan would have noted the existence of a German Catholic Young Men's Association, established in 1866 (re-organized as the Buffalo Catholic Institute in 1870) as well as a weekly newspaper for that section of his congregation, *Die Aurora*, founded in 1851. His Irish section likely caused him greater worry, not simply because of problems relating to alcohol and underemployment, but also because of the support for violent revolution in Ireland among sections of the community, something fervently opposed by Timon, in the aftermath of the 1866 raid. Ryan's key windows into this mentality, if he had occasion to consult them, were a series of locally produced and short-lived newspapers such as the *Buffalo Globe*, *Fenian Volunteer*, and *United Irishman*.²⁸

Sections of Buffalo's Irish community thus received regular schooling in anticolonial discourses that pitted the unfortunate Gael against the oppressive Saxon. The three above-mentioned papers were financed by Patrick O'Day, an auctioneer who used his premises to store arms for the local Fenian regiment in the summer of 1866, while James McCarroll, an Irish-born Canadian who supported the William Roberts wing that planned the Canadian raids, participated in the production and editing of at least the *Globe* and *Fenian Volunteer* after arriving in Buffalo in early 1866. The *Fenian Volunteer*, the only one of the O'Day-financed papers with extant issues, invited its readership to form Fenian branches or 'circles' in their communities that would, among other things, help "an oppressed people" to "assimilate themselves more readily to American institutions, customs and manners, than any other on the face of this earth."²⁹ But while Irish immigrant children could then "be taught to love and honor the principles of American freedom," so too would they learn "to regard with abhorrence the name of England, associated as it has always been, with famine, sword and flame, as well the thousand nameless cruelties which have been practiced upon the Irish race from time immemorial."³⁰ The issue of 4 January 1868 claimed that the paper's "city list" contained "two or three thousand names" though this wide interval was used not to boast but rather complain that the numbers of Irish origin in Buffalo merited a potential readership of between ten and fifteen thousand names.³¹ In an effort to drum up advertising revenue, the paper also stated that it was circulating "widely through New York, Pennsylvania, Ohio, and various other parts of this Union, as well as through Canada."³²

The *Fenian Volunteer* matters because it not only attempted to bolster a diaspora-oriented awareness among Buffalo's Irish that was revolutionary in nature, but it also sought to capture the attention of Irish communities within a wider region of the northeastern United States. Correspondence trickled in from towns and counties across New York State and beyond with descriptions of progress in circle formation. Poems such as "The Trust of the Gael," "Erin's Dead," "God Save Ireland," "Remember Allen" and "Song of the Fenian Soldier" combined with articles on the lives of Brian Boru, 1798 Rebellion general Joseph Holt, and the histories of ancient Irish landmarks to present a picture of past Irish glories alongside current dramas. The paper does not appear to have lasted much more than one year, however; the latest extant issue is dated September 5, 1868.³³

In the wake of the second Fenian raid on Canada in 1870, and despite an all-round feeling of dejection and disappointment, those in Buffalo who sought a new outlet for advanced Irish nationalist rhetoric could find it in imported copies of Toronto's *Irish Canadian* (established in 1863) as well as a new weekly founded in New York, the *Irish World*, edited by Patrick Ford. But they would also come to find some acceptable material in the diocesan newspaper founded by Bishop Ryan. Given that the city's Germans were well-served by at least three daily newspapers in their own language in the late 1860s besides *Die Aurora*, Ryan's undertaking could not ignore the diocesan population of Irish birth and ancestry as a distinctive portion of the prospective reading public.³⁴

The first issue of the *Catholic Union* appeared on April 25, 1872 with J. Edmund Burke as editor. Burke was Argentinian-born, Long Island-raised, and spent twenty years in the journalistic business in New York before arriving in Buffalo.³⁵ His opening editorial declared the paper's mission to act "as a defender of Catholic principles, an expositor of Catholic truth; or an adherent to and counselor in the cause of justice and of right."³⁶ Money was critical to the venture's success and it was published by the Buffalo Catholic Publication Company (BCPC; see also Figure 1), an entity organized under the auspices of Bishop Ryan.³⁷ The early cohort of readers was told, for example, of how, "promptly and generously, both Clergy and Laity responded to the call of their Bishop, subscribing the Capital necessary to place the enterprise on a firm and permanent basis."³⁸

There was, for Burke, no guarantee that a paper geared to specifically Catholic interests would succeed. As he opined unsubtly in the fourth issue, "Catholics do *not* take such an interest in supporting the journals devoted to defending them from attacks by Protestants and Infidels."³⁹ Thus, the question of capturing an audience within and beyond a largely working-class urban community must have been seriously considered alongside the question of how much theologically focused discussion to include. Burke was not short of ideas; he had worked for the *Catholic Freeman's Journal* in New York, long-time rival of Patrick Meehan's *Irish American* and now the *Irish World*, and experienced stints at the *Herald* and *Times* as well.⁴⁰ Despite the wording of the opening editorial, there was more to the *Catholic Union* than the mere cultivation of Catholic pride. The editor and his advisors were acutely aware of the largely Irish-American audience they were likely to attract in Buffalo and western New York, and Burke recognized that the literary and political histories of Ireland, as well as its current affairs, were important and legitimate items of entry. The maiden issue included an "Irish News" section, and over the first months, this section took up an average of 1.5 columns per eight-page issue. Readers could learn about everything from land sales in County Meath to the building of new churches and convents, the deaths of priests, public appointments, and the occasional murder. They were also kept informed about developments in the movement for Home Rule and the performances of Irish representatives in the British House of Commons. Burke was more revealing about his Irish reading public in his farewell editorial of April 2, 1874. After reflecting on the newspaper's aim to defend "Catholicity from the attacks, open or covert, that are constantly being made upon it," Burke stated that an additional objective was:

[T]o defend, especially, the Irish race from the venomous and malign slanders which a spirit of bigotry, by no means extinct among non-Catholics, frequently utters against them. I have endeavored to show that the Irish people, whether in their native land or as American citizens, have done nothing that should be counted to their disparagement; that they are as honest in their dealings as upright in their lives, as commendable in their daily walk and conversation, as patriotic

in their acts and intentions, as any other class of men who go to make up our American community, and that they have political rights co-equal with other citizens of whatever name, class or degree.⁴¹

Some prominent local Irish Americans were also heavily invested in the *Catholic Union*. Besides Bishop Ryan, two of the three lay members of the board of directors of the BCPC, George Chambers and John McManus, were influential figures in Buffalo's Irish world. Chambers had served as alderman of the most Irish ward in the city (the south-side first ward) as well as in the state assembly, while McManus was a well-known banker and real estate agent. Both were wired into the local networks of the Democratic Party and served also as executive members of the Buffalo Circle of the Catholic Union, whose aims included the promotion and maintenance of "a spirit of devotion to the Holy Father," the sustenance of "Catholic rights" and the promotion of "just and fair legislation in relation to the Church in America."⁴²

Another organization that brought Chambers and McManus into contact with other young Irish-American men, however, was the Young Men's Catholic Association (YMCA). Through lectures, excursions, debates, and other entertainments, the object of the YMCA was to produce among the members "a wise, harmonious, and well-regulated public opinion or rather judgment on all matters, temporal or spiritual, affecting the interests of the Church of God, dearer to us than our lives."⁴³ While this also reflected the sort of readership the *Catholic Union* sought to mold, Bishop Ryan's expressed hope that the YMCA would become an outlet "where the young men of all nationalities and from the different parishes could congregate" was medium-run thinking at best. McManus served as YMCA president in 1872, and when the association's headquarters of St. Stephen's Hall was completed in 1875 with plans to feature a portrait of famed Irish poet Thomas Moore in the center of a Renaissance-style fresco on its ceiling, its cultural stamp was clear.⁴⁴ Published lists of officers in city directories as well as that of the 112 members involved in an 1876 excursion committee offer further indications of a body of men of mostly Irish birth or ancestry.⁴⁵ It was scarcely surprising, then, that when a need for enlarged facilities arose, the *Catholic Union* moved its headquarters to St. Stephen's Hall in April 1875.⁴⁶ Its president that year, Irish-born James Mooney, would be an important generator of Irish diasporic nationalist energy in Buffalo in the early 1880s; he was also a subscriber to Patrick Ford's *Irish World*.⁴⁷

When J. Edmund Burke stepped down as editor of the *Catholic Union* for family-related reasons in April 1874, Bishop Ryan did not have far to search for a replacement. Over the coming years, Rev. Patrick Cronin (1835-1905) would establish himself as not only a formidable commentator on church-related issues but also a fiercely patriotic defender of Ireland's right to realize its dream of national independence. Unlike Burke, Cronin was Irish-born, spending his early years in Pallaskenry, County Limerick.⁴⁸ Having lost his mother at an early age, Cronin departed Ireland with his father during the height of the famine at fourteen years old. After being ordained and serving as a priest in Missouri, Cronin's talents at oratory and the written word were recognized when he was offered the Chair of Rhetoric at the Seminary of Our Lady of Angels at Suspension Bridge, New York (present-day Niagara Falls) in 1870. Cronin's memories of his early years in Ireland were no doubt dominated by the experience of famine in the vicinity of Pallaskenry. The district suffered a population loss of between 20 and 50 percent between 1841 and 1851, while County Limerick as a whole experienced above-average rates of agrarian and famine-related protest.⁴⁹ Who knows the extent of the stories related to the young Cronin about the departure of other families from the district besides his own, or other tales of eviction or confinement to overcrowded workhouses? Workhouses were built in not only nearby Limerick City but also regional towns such as Rathkeale, Newcastle West, and Glin.⁵⁰

As an expert on rhetoric, Cronin was more than capable of formulating his own anticolonial laments for Ireland. Those reading a *Catholic Union* account of his 1874 St. Patrick's Day sermon, delivered at a solemn high mass in Detroit, could not have failed to be impressed; some were

likely also amused by his melodramatic style. His introductory remarks invited listeners to let their “hearts wander back over the sea” and “dream over the grey ruins of crumbled cross or convent turret,” to think of “King Brian, whom a hundred harps hailed wildly at Clontarf, but who returned to know no more” and then “float down the azure waters of the Shannon to Limerick” while being “proud of Sarsfield’s sword that flashed within its ancient walls.”⁵¹ Cronin’s conclusion, however, positioned Catholicism as a central inspirational force in the long-run survival of a distinctive and separate Irish identity, and provides important insight into his editorial policy and his later participation in U.S.-based activism on behalf of Ireland:

The days of an ancient Erin have long since fled. Her sceptre, like that of Judah, is wielded by another. She hath wept and her tears are of her cheek. Her laws are gone. Her dwellings are desolate. Her children cry for bread all the day long, and the gems she once wore round her fair and youthful brow now adorn the crown of a stranger. But oh! There is one thing they could never tear from her – one which, in her darkest hour, she clings to with all the endearments of affection rendered more tender by sorrow, and that is her faith!⁵²

If Burke had effectively woven Irish affairs into the pages of the *Catholic Union*, Cronin took this editorial policy to a new level. Within two months of his maiden editorial, readers were treated to a continuous stream of writings about the history and geography of Ireland sourced from the *Dublin Nation* and other like outlets. One article with the headline “The Island of Saints: Most Picturesque Land on the Globe” discussed ancient Irish monuments such as the Rock of Cashel, Monasterboice, and St. Kevin’s Monastery in Glendalough.⁵³ About a month later, a full-length piece on Glendalough appeared.⁵⁴ Articles on the city of Cork and the “wilds of Donegal” were also published during these months alongside pieces on eighteenth-century orator and politician John Philpot Curran, writer William Carleton, and Young Irelander Thomas Davis.⁵⁵ Poetry ranged from “The Death of Connor Macnessa – Monarch of Ireland” by T.D. Sullivan to “Evicted” by Daniel Connelly.⁵⁶ In later years, readers would be reminded of the wish of Curran’s colleague, Henry Grattan, first expressed in 1780, “but to breathe, in this our island, in common with my fellow-subjects, the air of liberty” in addition to his resolution to never be satisfied “so long as the meanest cottager in Ireland has a link of the British chain clanking to his rags.”⁵⁷ The cultural idea of an Irish nation, summoned by landscape, poetic, and folkloric imagery, became coupled with a desire for a reassertion of political sovereignty and statehood that, beyond the return of a Dublin parliament, remained quite vague in content.

As the Irish Home Rule movement gained momentum in the mid 1870s, speeches from its leader, Isaac Butt, and others were published in the *Catholic Union* (Figure 1). Readers’ awareness of the physical-force tradition in Irish nationalism was revived occasionally, however, and the paper was unimpressed with Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa’s appeal for “skirmishing” funds in the early months of 1876, for example. Though the *Irish World* notably took up Rossa’s cause, and some funds from Buffalo became channeled to Patrick Ford’s paper, Cronin agreed with the recently deceased Young Irelander John Mitchel in taking a dim view of Fenianism and “the new scheming devices of irresponsible adventurers.”⁵⁸ Yet when news broke about the rescue of six imprisoned Fenians in Western Australia and their transportation to the United States aboard the whaler *Catalpa*, Cronin’s editorial asked: “Is there anyone—any Irishman at least—who does not heartily rejoice at the recent escape of the Fenian prisoners? We believe not; and we do no [sic] wish to believe that there is.”⁵⁹ A story about gallant Irishmen defying Britain and its navy was too good to resist, and not long after, accounts of the rescue and escape featured in the newspaper. Though the *Catholic Union* rejoiced of there being “noble manhood still in Ireland’s sons,” its editorial also urged prayers that “good God may guard them from the claws of the corrupt blatherers.”⁶⁰

Figure 1. News on Irish Home Rule on the front page of the *Catholic Union*, 16 April 1874.

By the late 1870s, a network of *Catholic Union* agents covering more than twenty towns in western New York State was in place, with priests assuming this role in several localities.⁶³ An 1877 advert in the *Buffalo City Directory* described the paper as “the acknowledged medium of address to Catholics” throughout “Middle and Western New York.”⁶⁴ Lists of remittance submitters published in various issues throughout the first half of 1879 suggest the circulation to be approximately two thousand; one wonders what the figure might have looked like were it not for the economically depressed years endured since 1873. More than one third of subscribers came from Buffalo and more than 40 percent of these in turn lived on the streets of the city’s southern wards where a recognizably Irish stamp was present (Table 1).⁶⁵ An analysis of subscriber surnames provides further evidence of a largely Irish readership. Not only is there a near-absence of German names in the lists, but the most common surnames (with ten or more individual entries) are Sullivan, Smith, Ryan, Murphy, and McCarthy.⁶⁶ The “Irish News” column became subdivided by county after August 1876, though this did not mean that all of Ireland’s thirty-two counties featured in this section in every issue.

Source	Number	Percentage
Buffalo	314	35.0
<i>Southern "Irish" wards (1,2,3,13)</i>	130	14.5
<i>Elsewhere in city</i>	184	20.5
Rochester	55	6.1
Lockport	37	4.1
Batavia	26	2.9
Elsewhere in New York State	396	44.2
Other U.S. states	31	3.5
Canada	6	0.7
Unknown	31	3.5
Total	896	100.0

Table 1. Sources of subscribers to the *Catholic Union*, January 1-June 30, 1879 (*Catholic Union*, various issues, January-June 1879).

The paper's circulation field within western New York included Rochester while covering the numerous small communities on the southern Alleghany Plateau bordering Pennsylvania. In small settlements such as Belfast, Cuba, and New Ireland (dubbed "Ireland" in the subscription lists), Irish men and women received copies of the *Catholic Union* as well as those residing in towns such as Lockport, Batavia, Medina, Le Roy and South Byron, on the plain between Buffalo and Rochester. Ten years earlier, reports on the progress of local Fenian "circles" in places like Batavia appeared in the pages of the *Fenian Volunteer*; while the consumption of Irish news, history and culture had continued in such localities, changes in their readers' attitudes toward advanced Irish nationalism are harder to track.⁶⁷ Beyond this core hinterland, other readers lived in New York City, Brooklyn, Boston, San Francisco, towns in Midwestern states, and Canadian cities such as Ottawa and Halifax.⁶⁸ While the vast majority of subscription remittances were reported at the scale of the individual, newspapers circulated not only within, but also frequently between, households. There were also institutional subscribers such as branches of the Catholic Mutual Benefit Association and the Sisters of Mercy. While subscribers were mostly male, 160 were either individual women or orders of nuns. The transmission of nationalist ideas was never simply the domain of men. In the wider scheme of things, however, the circulation of the *Catholic Union* paled when compared to heavyweights such as the *Irish World* and *Boston Pilot*.⁶⁹ The *World's* circulation had grown to more than twenty-five thousand in less than ten years, while the *Pilot's* was at least fifty thousand.⁷⁰

Although the *Catholic Union's* opening editorial proclaimed its place within the process of building the infrastructure of a Catholic English-speaking community in Buffalo, what emerged within the first eight years was a newspaper largely oriented to the Irish in the city and its region, one whose editorial policy kept them informed of social and political issues in the homeland while educating them on its history and people. All in all, a vision of Ireland as an island in the eastern Atlantic whose ancient laws, traditions, and landscapes had been all but destroyed by seven centuries of colonialism had become fortified. The paper was locally produced and had a largely regional field of circulation, but it became drawn into both national and transatlantic geographies of press and political activity. Its readership was regularly encouraged to think, and to then presumably talk, about the Irish nation as a legitimate cultural and political phenomenon.

Cronin's intervention into the question of Ireland's future reached new heights, however, as it became clear that his country of birth was suffering a major agricultural and humanitarian crisis in the autumn of 1879. Within eighteen months, Cronin would spearhead committees to host the new face of Home Rule, Charles Stewart Parnell, administer the collection of funds for Irish relief, occupy a vice-presidential position in the Irish National Land League of America (INLLA), and promote the formation of branches of that organization within "Irish" parishes in Buffalo.⁷¹ The visit of Parnell in January 1880 momentarily elevated the level of diasporic engagement among those of Irish origin. Parnell's months in the United States and Canada took in more than sixty cities and was cut short only by the calling of a general election in the United Kingdom. Though the rural depression of 1879 and the possibility of renewed famine framed his mission, Parnell nonetheless reminded his listeners in Buffalo and elsewhere of the wider political struggle for Irish nationhood and the ending of the estate system of land ownership in Ireland. He also notably celebrated the fact of how in traveling across the Atlantic, he had come to find "a great Ireland in America."⁷²

The consequences of a shared Irishness within the YMCA ranks also became apparent when prominent members came to the fore in committees struck to collect relief funds and establish Land League branches. James Mooney was the most notable in this regard, but he was also a member of the Clan na Gael, a North American organization supportive of revolution in Ireland whose mission was to ensure a presence if not a dominance within the expanding network of American Land League branches.⁷³ Clan na Gael also took the lead in organizing Parnell's itinerary, and the resolutions and reception committees struck to welcome Parnell in Buffalo, moreover, included one Patrick O'Day, very likely the old *Fenian Volunteer* publisher.⁷⁴ In 1882, as if to illustrate the Clan's success at infiltration, Mooney became president of the INLLA. Cronin, meanwhile, ensured that each new development across the Atlantic was given coverage in the newspaper and, when appropriate, editorialized with his usual fire. For months after the Parnell visit, the paper faithfully recorded individual and group contributions to the Parnell Irish Relief Fund by city ward, published the views of nationalist writers such as the Nun of Kenmare on the state of Ireland, and covered in detail the founding of Land League branches in the city the following year.⁷⁵ With both Cronin and Mooney influential in the organization, the first annual convention of the INLLA took place in Buffalo in January 1881 where St. James' Hall "was decorated with emerald banners and the stars and stripes."⁷⁶ No less than twelve columns were devoted to a mass meeting held in the city the following month to protest what would become the Protection of Person and Property Act. This enactment of the latest coercion bill in Ireland prompted a familiar first resolution that reminded those assembled of "eight hundred years of merciless persecution."⁷⁷

By 1885, Rowell's *American Newspaper Directory* designated the circulation of what was now the *Catholic Union and Times* to be not greater than ten thousand, putting it on a par with the *Irish Canadian* but still in the second division compared to the *World* and *Pilot*.⁷⁸ Through the previous decade and more, the newspaper had played an important role in framing and structuring a diasporic nationalism among sections of the Buffalo Irish. While supporting constitutional efforts to find a solution to the Irish question, it retained interest in, and at times sympathy for, men who had preferred more violent responses. An important element within the popular anticolonial nationalism it promoted, however, was the selection and glorification of Irish heroes. By the second half of the 1880s, one hero in particular had acquired special status – Robert Emmet.

Many Irish Buffalonians, and certainly their literate middle-class leaders, were aware of the narrative of Emmet's life and sacrifices by the time of his centenary in 1878. The small Irish elite had long toasted him at St. Patrick's Day dinners and, as mentioned, a portrait of his boyhood friend Thomas Moore was planned to occupy the center of the ceiling of St. Stephen's

Hall. From the era of the famine immigration until the late 1850s, at least nine separate editions of three different Emmet biographies were published in New York, Boston, Philadelphia, and Charleston, South Carolina, and some of this material likely made its way to Buffalo.⁷⁹ In at least one extant issue of 1868, the *Fenian Volunteer*, dutiful to the last, printed Emmet's famous final words where he forbade his epitaph from being written "until Ireland takes her place among the nations of the earth."⁸⁰ By the mid 1870s, a so-called Emmet Benevolent Association was in existence in the city, likely the creation of local Clan na Gael members or supporters, and it periodically organized entertainments and lectures to raise funds to aid the Fenians rescued from Australia.⁸¹ Emmet had potential to serve not only as a point of reference for how the Buffalo Irish (and their sympathizers) thought about Irish independence but also for how the Irish were to be (favorably) placed within the American polity through the parallels drawn between him and that other well-known anticolonial, George Washington. If the project of mobilizing Irish pride was to remain vital, Emmet was a more than useful symbol.

The visible elevation of selected Irish heroes above a general pantheon was less straightforward than it may seem, however. In August 1875, Buffalonians of Irish origin were invited to acknowledge the centennial of Daniel O'Connell, and the *Catholic Union* reported enthusiastically on the "world-wide celebration" honoring the man known as Ireland's "Liberator."⁸² Uncertain weather conditions seemingly put paid to the possibility of an outdoor celebration, and so a pontifical mass at St. Joseph's Cathedral was combined with a lecture in St. James' Hall by Rev. P.N. Lynch, the Bishop of Charleston. The latter was a decidedly respectable affair, with Bishop Ryan present on the platform alongside the Mayor, a number of judges, a local Irish-born alderman, and other dignitaries.⁸³ While those assembled appreciated Bishop Lynch's reminder that "the penal code was like a dark cloud" in Ireland at the time of O'Connell's birth, the clergyman's discussion of O'Connell's achievements concentrated largely on Catholic Emancipation. Lynch had nothing to say about O'Connell's efforts to secure the repeal of the Act of Union binding Britain and Ireland since 1801, and summed O'Connell up as "one who appealed to reason and logic, and not brute force and bribery."⁸⁴ The contrast to the violent approach advocated by the Fenians and Young Irelanders was doubtless not lost on listeners and readers. Although Rev. Cronin was not present to hear Lynch (he spoke at the corresponding celebration in Detroit), a subsequent *Catholic Union* editorial concluded with an expression of surprise and pain "at the ungrateful apathy displayed by our countrymen in this city on the occasion of the centennial anniversary of [O'Connell's] birth."⁸⁵

Three years later, the centenary of Emmet's birth was marked by the YMCA through a recreation of his infamous trial. In what may have been a dry run of sorts, a performance of the trial was staged in St. Stephen's Hall the previous July 1877 and was attended by "a very large audience" though the reenactment was felt by the *Catholic Union* correspondent to have "many defects."⁸⁶ On this occasion, the role of Emmet was played by ex-president John McManus, who was joined by no less than thirty-two other cast members, all men. The primary defect was the evident (and somewhat ironic) failure to sufficiently capture "the true appearance of a British law court" within the hall; the journalist mocked "the gathering together of all the lawyers both for crown and accused at one small table in left centre, as though they were playing a game of poker on the sly" and described the costumes (the judge's excepted) as "farcical."⁸⁷ Such language, if nothing else, points to the experimental aspects associated with the production of a diasporic spectacle. If, as Paul Connerton argues, habit is a vitally important component in the production of collective memory, these Irish activists were not yet habituated enough in facing the challenge of publicly commemorating Emmet beyond the toasts of St. Patrick's Day dinners.⁸⁸ Though the subsequent attempt to recreate the trial at St. James' Hall in March 1878 was judged to have "passed off quite creditably," the diocesan organ felt that it would have attracted "a larger audience" but

Life For His Country.

1 civilization instinctively recoils
of blood. The sight of human
the strong arm, and sickens the
ad causes to turn away in horror
ld took into the very jaws of
cet terrible shapes.

plation of the same here pre-
e an outrage to our best feelings
fancy picture. Even did it re-
justice punishing some great of-
ficiency," we could find no pleasure
contemplation. But the awful
ri Emmet has a solemn signifi-
cant for us that forces us to look
nk upon it.

a sacrifice on the altar of principles which each of us to-day hold holier than life. Could the ordered Emmet follow out its imposed unobscuredly to the end, made that picture familiar: forced one million of men to be in order to dangle in the air the of another million. The mill-told rose heaven and earth, but day was no less miles. Each

der was no less unjust. Look at it! It records an act of wrong in the part of a government, in enlightened age, when in every community but only are bloody crime repudiated as inhuman, and inhumanizing in its effect, but even death in any shape out against its unwarrantable inhuman society.

History of British assumption over-education of its victims the Irish and have been forced over and over it, if not applauding, witnessing in public of the noble and leading political opinions unsuc-

I thought to do for Ireland what Washington did for the American (few years before). He joined the Society of the Cincinnati, catching a ray of the new light—America and France, dreamed and worked for openly and establishment of a Republic in Ireland—through the abolition of feudalism, and trade restrictions and kept the Irish people in a state of ignorance actually festering and plans of the United States on America, he was the and accomplished all his aims (Trinity College, Hartford and Virginia as young men) and a large fortune and had a beautiful wife, beautiful, and virtuous women of Ireland (for a young man).

for a young man:
 saw his less fortunate country-
 men writhing under the whip and
 forced robbery, he saw that
 if the rule and break the whip
 air assistance. His tactics and
 tion placed him in the front
 and later when British soldiers
 crushed the 1897 rebellion,
 fell into the clutches of British
 ide to bear all the strength of

September, 1803, he was appointed a special commissioner of the navy and witnessed himself with that quiet fortitude the most certain marks of the divine language would be the nobility manifested in the person who is eloquently and indubitably character.

was given into a considerable number allowed it all to pass. He challenged neither witness, nor did he permit his counsel of defence.

The jury was therefore very leaving the box they handed guilty.

The clerk of the court turned in order that the force might

in full darkness occurred: the out lamps, Emmet had been miserable dock. Refreshment crossed his lips, and the which he was coupled up with sphere pervading that den of of fail to tell on his spirit and

But no sign of exhaustion or shadow of fear was on his gitation in his movements as, front of the dock, and looking his marvellous judges, he gave declaration of principles and character in his dying speech halcyon, and lives to comfort is countrymen forever.

consigned to the work is the
at ever pulsed in freedom's
is removed to Newgate prison
with fetters and cast into
ially appointed for condemned
this miserable retirement be
few hours to the prison of hard
a half miles distant. On eun
one of the jailers—a man
taken on suffering without a
sore when he beheld a man's

tears when he beheld Emmet's
nude, for the fetters gripped his
mercifully as to lacerate the
clothing with the remembrance
of F. M. Neil day the carriage
r him to the scene of execution
t left Wilmamham, containing
clergymen of his persuasion.
llowed by columns of cavalry
carriage moved slowly on its
in resembling a funeral march.

resembling a funeral march, the procession halted. Emmet climbed the ladder with alacrity, as were pinioned. He was ex- an oration, but his was not the pular display. His death was and the purity of his prin- was sufficient. But he could e people he loved so dearly farwell sentence, and, there- them he pronounced the few

ords:—"My friends, I die in
iments of universal love and
a all man." Then, helping to
vound his neck, he stood on the
nd of which was now tilted by
and in a few brief moments the
youth was in the presence of
se judgement is not as the judg-

Figure 2. Depic



GIVING HIS LIFE FOR HIS COUNTRY.—DECAPITATION OF ROBERT EMMETT

THE EXECUTIONER (holding up the Head of Emmet).—"Behold the Head of a TRAITOR. Long-Live the King!"

Years have rolled on in their appointed course, shadowing many a momentous event of history, witnessing a myriad of Wars that	the world - men - of whom the world was not worthy; watching it decay, in mountains, and in deserts, and in the heart of all that's left.	(We gathered around them, and a succeeding generation built monuments to them. But the people	said, self-sacrificing Irish Martyr was honored. Now, his Martyr has triumphed. But in death
---	---	---	--

WASHINGTON

How those Cities
Emmet's A

SPEECH OF GEN.

AT THE NATK

HOW THE MERRY OF IN-
CRED REVEALS THE IN-
GRAND BANQUET—THE
MOVE IN THE HOUSE D
OF A BURNING ENEMY AT
WASHINGTON

Editor Irish World:
Last night the Irishmen
in Washington commetered
Emmet by a banquet at El
At 9 o'clock P. M. about
invited guests, sat down.

pared for the occasion. The cloth the real business of President, Dr. Thos. Antis order, and the Secretary 7 ing named gentlemen, ex- invitations extended to the pressure of previous eng prevented them from join- Hon. Isham G. Harris, Hon. A. Logan, Hon. Chas. A. Young, Hon. A. M. Wedde G. Mesick, M. C. Hon. T.

Ohio, the first toast of the
was drunk standing. The
States, the land we live
Hon. W. M. Springer, who
sympathy with the object
deeply grateful for the p
the commemoration of t
pursued patriots and tru
Used A man whose as
beacon lights not alone t

The third toast, "Emm when his epitaph shall be by Dr. Thomas Antisell, speweth the various men-

justly the various revol
culmination was the m
doctor also epitomized
his sacrifice, and his doo
Irish people revere his
name.

Mr. L. E. Gibson then
name." Mr. Arthur res
"Ireland—Granny Uille,"
"Oh, Erin's Hills."
"France and our sister
world" was responded to

Dr. D. J. Kelly said a response to the toast of "Meagher and O'Brien."

Mr. P. J. Donahue was eloquent, forcible and pe-
tose. "The Bench and Bar."
This closed the regular
pleasant hour was spent in
music and song.
Before adjourning it was
society to be called the 1
and a committee was ap-
pointed to be submit
by the committee which

THE DAY IN

MARYLAND INSTITUTE FOR
AUDIENCE—SPEECH OF
TO SEE EMERSON'S EPITAPH
HAS COME. THE DAWN
FOR DISTANCE."
The anniversary was cel-

the auspices of the Rob
riation at the Maryland
was made by Major Gen
States Senator from Min
large and enthusiastic pos
Irish and American flags.
Ignatius, Captain Daniel
Knights of St. Peter. Cap
attended in a body, and
Knights of St. Patrick w
stage were ex-Governor
Controller Yarnall, City

Controller VANANANT, Olin
Cory, Dr. A. P. Clark, JAZZ
McDougal, Fathers Cory
Peter McCoy, F. C. O'Con
music played a number o
William McWilliams pres
ing address, in which he
did not own their coun
its day were never stain
Ireland is not dead, bu
ature. (Applause.)
The famous speech mad

General said he did not feel very business of the Senate, which like a satisfactory council, which in the shape of the published in Ireland and the patriot in 1803. The Irish heart as long as the was made Emmet's whole

made Emmet's whole
country his mind
upon immortality. Who
all the lords of England
workmen types of Irish
Irish history, and every
country of his nativity
noble character, and is
and tragic fate. He was
fool, fearless, ready for
characteristic of the Irish
"In Union The

Would Irishmen imitate thirteen American Colonists fight them against one? The Irish nation is one in Europe, for it always pre- tains that accompany it are often inconsiderate, and we ought to our own interests. You will never see an Irish Hebechild, and when you rich you can bet your boot snatch blood in his veins.

The Irish country, heart
been open to the stranger,
land have come from cons
unworthy of it. Cromwe
quering Ireland, and that
ing and packing the whole
the word became—"to Con
that little province Irish
world, and there is a pret
this country. If every
his veins were taken from

March 1879

Figure 2. Depiction of the execution of Robert Emmet on the front page of the *Irish World*, 8 March 1879.

for "the lack of sufficient advertising."⁸⁹ McManus did not return in the role of Emmet; he now acted as one of Emmet's two counsels with the role of the Great Man assumed by YMCA financial secretary James Murphy.⁹⁰ Onstage participation was also stripped down somewhat, with only fourteen men taking part.

The St. James' Hall event did not spell the end of Emmet-related activities in Buffalo in his centenary year, however. While American lithographers were busy producing at least three different images of Emmet at this time, his execution was pictured in prints sold by the Buffalo-based Gies and Company.⁹¹ Also, in November 1878, the Forrest Dramatic Company presented a three-act play about Emmet for the benefit of the Church of the Immaculate Conception. This was the play written by James Pilgrim and produced in New York on the occasion of the fiftieth anniversary of Emmet's death in 1853.⁹² It is not known how accepting Buffalonians were of a play in which Emmet's love interest was not Sarah Curran but "his wife" Maria, and those now critically attuned to representations of the "stage Irishman" may well have winced at the sight of "Darby O'Gaff, a sprig of the Emerald Isle." And though the play did at least close with Emmet's final words to stir the blood of the audience, the force of his language was likely soon diluted by the "laughable farce" of "The Widow's Victim" that followed on to close out the evening.

Some Irish households in Buffalo received their understandings of Emmet's legacy from more than just the *Catholic Union*, local lithographers, and travelling stage companies, however. The *Irish World* was a rapidly rising star in the Irish-American press and had a readership in Buffalo as in many other American places. The image of Emmet's execution it published in 1879 (Figure 2), crude as it is, likely paralleled what Gies and Company was offering, and the paper also characteristically exaggerated the sense of an Irish America rising simultaneously in celebration of Emmet's 101st. Aside from the largest cities, the *World* reported on celebrations in Newark, New Haven, St. Louis, Indianapolis, New Orleans, Charleston, and many other places. The levels of participation at these affairs did not always merit "mass meeting" status, however. In Buffalo, for example, the Irish Rifles and Emmet Benevolent Association celebrated Emmet's 101st birthday in the city's downtown armory at which "Emmet's speech was recited with much force and vigor by Mr. M.J. Sullivan of Company A, I.R."⁹³

The *Irish World* also clarified to its readership why Emmet was a worthier figure of celebration for supporters of Irish nationhood than O'Connell. Whereas George Washington and William Tell were honored for their respective rebellions against tyranny, the *World* declared O'Connell to be "*an avowed British subject and not an Irish Nationalist*; and during the fifty years he was on the political stage, he never once expressed a contrary wish. Not once!"⁹⁴ O'Connell's pacifism did not hold him in good stead in this account, and his movement to repeal the Act of Union was argued to leave the Irish still "fast bound to the throne of England."⁹⁵ Defining a nation as "the unity of a people inhabiting a common country, and owing allegiance to and protected by one government under a common flag," Emmet was in contrast lauded by the *Irish World* as "the fittest type of the principle of Irish Nationality known to the men of this generation."⁹⁶ Unlike Emmet, O'Connell did not fit comfortably, if at all, within the ranks of anticolonial Irishmen. It was no surprise, for example, that a precursor to the Fenian Brotherhood, formed in New York in early 1855 by ex-Young Irelander Michael Doheny, was named the Emmet Monument Association, or that the twenty men arrested in Cincinnati in January of the following year for planning a filibustering mission to Ireland were members of a "Robert Emmet Club."⁹⁷

Public commemorations to Emmet in Buffalo were not especially marked for some years after his 101st birthday. A lecture and concert took place in 1880, though the recent Parnell visit likely concentrated most peoples' attention; the early months of 1881 witnessed the formation of Land League branches in the city, and in 1883, the anniversary was overshadowed by a Land League meeting held to raise money for the alleviation of hunger in southern and western

Ireland.⁹⁸ Although "exercises" had been prepared "in honor of Emmet's birthday" by the branch, the length of the meeting precluded them from being undertaken.⁹⁹ In 1884, Bishop John Ireland of Minnesota passed through the city at the same time as John Redmond, a member of Parnell's Irish Party in Westminster, though it was the former whose message commanded widespread coverage in the *Catholic Union and Times*. In 1885, attempts to collect for Parnell's recently-launched Parliamentary Fund to pay the salaries of Irish Party members in Westminster seem to have preoccupied Cronin and his lay activist colleagues. These efforts paid dividends on a wider scale; as Michael Keyes has recently claimed, "the 1885 election, with its unprecedented eighty-six seats for the Irish Party, was funded more or less exclusively by American money."¹⁰⁰

The first Emmet commemoration of any significance in Buffalo since 1880 does not, therefore, seem to have taken place until March 1886 when the Irish Party held the balance of power at Westminster and a bill concerning Home Rule was imminent. The affair, held at St. Stephen's Hall, was organized by the local branch (403) of the Irish National League of America (INLA), the successor of the INLLA now focused on the return of a Dublin parliament rather than land reform, and proceeds were again to be donated to Parnell's parliamentary fund. Cronin chaired the entertainment committee, one of several struck to organize the event.¹⁰¹ A *Catholic Union and Times* editorial was unambiguous in its message that Emmet "stands first in the gloried ranks of Ireland's patriot martyrs who [...] yielded up his golden life, with Spartan fortitude, for his enslaved and buffeted Motherland."¹⁰² No amateur attempt was made to reconstruct Emmet's trial on this occasion. Among the evening's attendees were Mayor Philip Becker, diplomat James Putnam, and local intellectual Rowland B. Mahany. The program opened "with a medley of Irish airs, beautifully played by Professor Poppenburg's superb orchestra" with the eulogies to Emmet delivered by Mahany and Putnam, both of whom were American born and of the belief that the recent successes of the Home Rule and Land League movements, for which they praised Parnell and British Prime Minister William Gladstone, would speed the writing of Emmet's epitaph.¹⁰³ Mahany chose language familiar to his listenership: "For Ireland the battle of freedom is well-nigh won. The struggle of centuries is drawing to a close, a struggle illumined on the one side by undying and heroic patriotism, and on the other darkened by oppression so merciless and fearful, that philanthropy might well seem banished from a world quiescent in the perpetration of such crime."¹⁰⁴ When seen from the distance of an American republic increasingly comfortable in its diplomatic relations with Britain, this sense of the speedy arrival of self-government in Ireland was optimistic, even if its supporters were aware of the House of Lords veto. Yet the bill was defeated in the House of Commons in June, precipitating a split in Gladstone's Liberal party.

Political setbacks on the eastern side of the Atlantic did not spell the end of diasporic engagement among Buffalonians of Irish origin, but it remained incumbent upon the small network of leaders headed by Cronin and Mooney to keep this going. They did so, and retained Emmet anniversaries for the purpose. Branch 403 of the INLA assumed organizational duties once more in 1887 and 1888, having elected Civil War veteran Anselm J. Smith as president. Born in Toronto, Smith had taken part in the production of the Emmet trial in 1878, acting as one of the accused's lawyers.¹⁰⁵ In 1888, Buffalo attorney P.W. Lawler took to the podium at St. Stephen's Hall for that year's commemoration where a "handsome oil painting of Emmet hung over the platform" and his final words were "spread upon a white banner extending the width of the hall."¹⁰⁶ While Lawler was sure to use these words in a speech in which he positioned Emmet as "the guiding spirit" in Ireland's struggle for "national independence," he also structured his narrative so as to juxtapose the persistence of British colonialism in Ireland alongside the progress made by the Irish in America.¹⁰⁷ With the Plan of Campaign against landlords ongoing in Ireland, Lawler related how the purpose of rackrenting was "to accomplish the people's ruin [...] their little homes, the last refuge from the piercing winter's blast, are razed to the ground, while the

aged and hoary sire struggling in the grasp of death is begging, praying that he may be permitted to die beneath the roof where he was born, or dragged upon the wayside to breathe his last on earth."¹⁰⁸ Cronin could hardly have written it better. At the same time, Lawler reiterated Irish contributions to the American Revolution and Civil War, arguing that "their love and duty to the land of their adoption are none the less true because they cling with fond and endearing [sic] recollection to the land of their nativity. They are a fixture here, they are a part and parcel of this country, they have contributed materially to its development as they have to the preservation of its institutions."¹⁰⁹ That passage was not far from the words chosen by J. Edmund Burke in his final editorial for the *Catholic Union* in 1874, but it would not have been out of place in the *Fenian Volunteer* either. The Emmet commemorations of these years, then, offered spectacles of Irish-American diaspora nationalism where intergenerational (and mostly male) bonds were strengthened in such a way that ensured, at the very least, the active transfer of ideas about Irish ethnic exceptionalism in Buffalo. The Irish remained a distinctive group in America, and appreciable numbers of them, including the American born, continued to take an active interest in the course of Anglo-Irish politics as well as aspects of Irish culture, past and present.

Public remembrances of Emmet in Buffalo continued into the 1890s and early 1900s, organized for the most part by newly formed divisions of the Irish Catholic fraternal order, the Ancient Order of Hibernians (AOH). Audiences and stage performers alike were indeed becoming habituated to the practice of remembering Emmet. The 1903 centennial of Emmet's final year was, however, marked by rival events in the city, as the moderate Home Rule-supporting resolutions passed at the AOH event were countered by the militant "Irish Nationalists" taking their cues from the recently-reunited Clan na Gael.¹¹⁰ The AOH and Nationalists continued to honor Emmet in the years leading up to the First World War as the political situation in Ireland became more fraught. In the aftermath of the 1916 Rising in Dublin and the execution of fifteen of its leaders, however, a new set of martyrs who had laid down their lives for Irish freedom were now set to be recognized and commemorated.¹¹¹ In this latest phase of diaspora-making in Buffalo and other American places, the Irish nationalist pantheon was reconfigured.

In seeking to elucidate how projects aimed at shaping an Irish "diaspora consciousness" were undertaken in Buffalo in the 1870s and 1880s through the lens of material culture and public events, this paper has argued that the regular circulation of ideas about Irish-related things depended upon the time and money of a small group of promoters and activists, spiritual and lay, whose concerns often extended to other areas, such as the ongoing cultivation of a respectable public Catholicism and loyalty to American institutions. In its depiction of how the webs of interaction between committed individuals in this social field served to structure and underline a group-level consciousness in one place, the paper has also sought to show how a local picture connected to wider geographies. The patterns of reading and remembrance discussed in Buffalo were paralleled in other North American cities in ways that provided the foundations of a network within which Irish diaspora nationalism could retain vitality after the death of Parnell in 1891 and the onset of lean years in the Irish nationalist movement. This network that shaped a coherent Irish diaspora consciousness thus contained within it a series of creative and experimental projects that also possessed local, regional, and inter-city dynamics. Within its Buffalo node, the YMCA, the *Catholic Union*, and Robert Emmet all played important roles at different times in the projection of an Irish-American community that, although largely focused on its immediate situation in the United States, continued to cast its eyes at varied levels of intensity on the affairs of the homeland. This mattered to the ongoing construction of what Charles Stewart Parnell regarded as a "great Ireland in America" not least because, for all of his efforts and the hope they generated, Ireland's political dilemmas remained unresolved. It also mattered that, despite the presentation of Protestant Irish heroes such as Emmet, Parnell, Henry Grattan, Thomas Davis, John Mitchel, and others in text and performance, the consuming and approving audience was largely Catholic.

NOTES

- 1 Rogers Brubaker, "[The 'Diaspora' Diaspora](#)," *Ethnic and Racial Studies* 28, no. 1 (2005): 1-19, 1.
- 2 Brubaker, "The 'Diaspora' Diaspora," 13.
- 3 Martin Sökefeld, "[Mobilizing in Transnational Space](#)," *Global Networks* 6, no. 3 (2006): 265-284, 277.
- 4 See, for example, the chapters in Section VI "The Scattering," in *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine*, eds. John Crowley, William J. Smyth, and Mike Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2012), 492-567. For a critical take on the use of the term diaspora in historical writing on Irish emigration, see Donald Harman Akenson, "Diaspora, the Irish, and Irish Nationalism," in *The Call of the Homeland: Diaspora Nationalisms, Past and Present*, eds. Allon Gal, Athena S. Leoussi, and Anthony D. Smith (Leiden and Boston: Brill, 2010), 169-217.
- 5 See Kevin Kenny, *Diaspora: A Very Short Introduction* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 2013). The classic study of an "exile motif" within Irish emigrant correspondence is Kerby A. Miller, *Emigrants and Exiles: Ireland and the Irish Exodus to North America* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1985).
- 6 Matthew Frye Jacobson, *Special Sorrows: The Diasporic Imagination of Irish, Polish, and Jewish Immigrants in the United States* (Cambridge, Massachusetts: Harvard University Press, 1995).
- 7 See Timothy J. Meagher, "Irish American Nationalism," in Meagher, *The Columbia Guide to Irish American History* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), 198-213.
- 8 Sökefeld, "Mobilizing in Transnational Space," 266.
- 9 Kenny, *Diaspora: A Very Short Introduction*, 12.
- 10 Elizabeth Mavroudi, "[Diaspora as Process: \(De\)Constructing Boundaries](#)," *Geography Compass* 1, no. 3 (2007): 467-79. For other geographical perspectives, see Caitríona Ní Laoire, "[Introduction: Locating Geographies of Diaspora](#)," *International Journal of Population Geography* 9, no. 4 (2003): 275-280.
- 11 See William Leonard Joyce, "Editors and Ethnicity: A History of the Irish-American Press, 1848-1883," Ph.D. dissertation, University of Michigan, 1974, 19-73.
- 12 Cian T. McMahon, "Did the Irish 'Become White'? Global Migration and National Identity, 1842-1877," Ph.D. dissertation, Carnegie Mellon University, 2010, 291. The *Pilot's* circulation was circa forty-five thousand, that of the *Irish American* circa thirty-five thousand.
- 13 The concept of interpellation emanates from Louis Althusser, but its application here draws from Gerry Kearns "Nationalism and the Public Sphere: *The Nation Newspaper* and the Movement for the Repeal of the Union," in *At the Anvil: Essays in Honour of William J. Smyth*, eds. Patrick J. Duffy and William Nolan (Dublin: Geography Publications, 2012), 393-419.
- 14 See Charles Fanning, "[Robert Emmet and Nineteenth-Century Irish America](#)," *New Hibernia Review*, 8, no. 4 (2004): 53-83.
- 15 Marianne Elliott, *Robert Emmet: The Making of a Legend* (London: Profile Books, 2004).
- 16 For a discussion of attempts made by Irish and Irish-American nationalists, possessed of such anticolonial sentiment, to influence U.S. diplomatic relations with Britain between the 1840s and 1880s, see David Sim, *A Union Forever: The Irish Question and U.S. Foreign Relations in the Victorian Age* (Ithaca, NY: Cornell University Press, 2013).
- 17 Geoffrey Cubitt, "Introduction: Heroic Reputations and Exemplary Lives," in *Heroic Reputations and Exemplary Lives*, eds. Geoffrey Cubitt and Allen Warren (Manchester, United Kingdom: Manchester University Press, 2000), 3.
- 18 Cubitt, "Introduction: Heroic Reputations and Exemplary Lives," 3.
- 19 The term "national assets" is taken from Cubitt, "Introduction: Heroic Reputations and Exemplary Lives," 18.

- 20 Donald M. MacRaild, "'Diaspora' and Transnationalism: Theory and Evidence in Explanation of the Irish World-Wide," *Irish Economic and Social History* 38, no. 1 (2006): 51-58, 55.
- 21 See Michael Keyes, *Funding the Nation: Money and Nationalist Politics in Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 2011).
- 22 Joyce, "Editors and Ethnicity," 154.
- 23 The term "ex-plebe" is taken from Robert Dahl, *Who Governs? Democracy and Power in an American City* (New Haven, Connecticut: Yale University Press, 1961), 32-51.
- 24 Andrew P. Yox, "Bonds of Community: Buffalo's German Element, 1853-1871," *New York History* (April 1985): 141-163.
- 25 "Bishop Ryan," *Catholic Union*, 5 March 1879: 5. For more on the background of Irish settlement in Buffalo, see William Jenkins, *Between Raid and Rebellion: the Irish in Buffalo and Toronto, 1867-1916* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2013).
- 26 "A Native of the German Empire," *Catholic Union*, 30 March 1876: 5.
- 27 For more on these raids, see Hereward Senior, *The Last Invasion of Canada: the Fenian Raids 1866-1870* (Toronto: Dundurn Press, 1991) and Peter Vronsky, *Ridgeway: The American Fenian Invasion and the 1866 Battle that made Canada* (Toronto: Allen Lane Canada, 2011). The Buffalo Irish response is discussed briefly in Jenkins, *Between Raid and Rebellion*, 183-4.
- 28 See *History of the City of Buffalo and Erie County, Volume 2*, ed. H. Perry Smith (Syracuse: D. Mason & Co., 1884), 350. I am also grateful to Michael Peterman of Trent University for information on the O'Day-McCarroll partnership.
- 29 "Formation of 'Circles,'" *Fenian Volunteer*, 24 August 1867: 2. For more on McCarroll, see Michael Peterman, "From Terry Finnegan to Terry Fenian: The Truncated Literary Career of James McCarroll," in *Irish Nationalism in Canada*, ed. David A. Wilson (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2009), 140-59. Extant copies of the *Fenian Volunteer* are available at the National Library of Ireland, Dublin.
- 30 "Formation of 'Circles,'" *Fenian Volunteer*, 24 August 1867: 2.
- 31 "Our City Circulation," *Fenian Volunteer*, 4 January 1868: 3.
- 32 "Important to Advertisers," *Fenian Volunteer*, 15 February 1868: 4.
- 33 See <http://www.nli.ie/en/NewspapersDetails.aspx?IndexNo=10554> (accessed 28 June 2014).
- 34 These were the *Demokrat* (established 1837), the *Freie Presse* (1855), and the *Volksfreund* (1868). See George P. Rowell & Co's *American Newspaper Directory* (New York: George P. Rowell and Co., 1879), 220.
- 35 See "What They Think of Us," *Catholic Union*, 13 June 1872: 4, and "Death of J. Edmund Burke," 18 January 1877: 4.
- 36 "Salutatory!," *Catholic Union*, 25 April 1872: 4.
- 37 "The Catholic Union, A Weekly Journal," *Catholic Union*, 20 March 1873: 1.
- 38 "The Catholic Union, A Weekly Journal," *Catholic Union*, 20 March 1873: 1.
- 39 "The Duty of Catholics to Support a Catholic Press," *Catholic Union*, 23 May 1872: 4. Original emphasis.
- 40 "Death of J. Edmund Burke," *Catholic Union*, 18 January 1877: 4.
- 41 "Valedictory," *Catholic Union*, 2 April 1874: 4.
- 42 "The Buffalo Circle of the Catholic Union," *Catholic Union*, 16 May 1872: 4.
- 43 "St. Stephen's Hall - Young Men's Excursion," *Catholic Union*, 22 June 1876: 4.
- 44 "Fine Frescoing," *Buffalo Courier*, 26 October 1875: 2.
- 45 For Bishop Ryan's sentiments, see "Bishop Ryan," *Catholic Union*, 5 March 1879: 5; excursion data is provided in "Young Men's Excursion," *Catholic Union*, 22 June 1876: 8.

- 46 "Our New Volume - Ourselves," *Catholic Union*, 22 April 1875: 4.
- 47 Mooney is listed as a subscriber in *Irish World*, 19 February 1876.
- 48 The following details of Cronin's early life are taken from Grace Carew Sheldon, "Buffalo of the Olden Time," *Buffalo Times*, 30 November 1909.
- 49 William J. Smyth, "The Province of Munster and the Great Famine" in *Atlas of the Great Irish Famine*, eds. John Crowley, William J. Smyth, and Mike Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2012), 359-370, 368.
- 50 Glin was an auxiliary workhouse housing between 400 and 800 inmates; the Limerick City and Newcastle West workhouses housed between 2000 and 4250 people in contrast. See Figure 5 in Smyth, "The Province of Munster," 363.
- 51 "St. Patrick's Day in Detroit - Sermon by Rev. Fr. Cronin of Buffalo," *Catholic Union*, 26 March 1874: 5.
- 52 "St. Patrick's Day in Detroit - Sermon by Rev. Fr. Cronin of Buffalo," *Catholic Union*, 26 March 1874: 5.
- 53 "The Island of Saints: Most Picturesque Land on the Globe," *Catholic Union*, 21 May 1874: 2.
- 54 "Glendalough," *Catholic Union*, 18 June 1874: 3.
- 55 These articles appeared in the *Catholic Union* in the following order: "The City of Cork," 30 April 1874: 3; "The Wilds of Donegal," 28 May, 1874: 3; "John Philpot Curran," 23 April, 1874: 6; "William Carleton," 25 June, 1874: 6; and "Thomas Davis," 7 May 1874: 2-3.
- 56 T.D. Sullivan, "The Death of Connor Mac Nessa - Monarch of Ireland," *Catholic Union*, 16 April 1874: 2; and Daniel Connelly, "Evicted," *Catholic Union*, 23 April 1874: 2.
- 57 "Henry Grattan on the Duty of Irishmen," *Catholic Union*, 6 April 1876: 7.
- 58 "Salutary Home Truths," *Catholic Union*, 13 April 1876: 4. Cronin admired Mitchel and serialized the latter's *Jail Journal* in the paper in the spring and summer of 1875 following his death. For more on Rossa's Skirmishing Fund and the *Irish World*, see Niall Whelehan, "[Skirmishing, The Irish World, and Empire, 1876-86](#)," *Eire-Ireland*, 42, nos. 1-2 (Spring-Summer 2007): 180-200; and Adrian N. Mulligan, "[A Forgotten 'Greater Ireland': The Transnational Development of Irish Nationalism](#)," *Scottish Geographical Journal*, 118, no. 3 (2002): 219-34.
- 59 "The Escaped Fenians," *Catholic Union*, 22 June 1876: 4.
- 60 "The Escaped Fenians," *Catholic Union*, 22 June 1876: 4.
- 61 "Irish Home Rule," *Catholic Union*, 23 October 1878: 4. For a later critical editorial, see "Dr. Butt's Leadership," *Catholic Union*, 24 December 1878: 4.
- 62 "Irish Home Rule," *Catholic Union*, 23 October 1878: 4.
- 63 For a sample list, see "Local Agents," *Catholic Union*, 4 January 1877: 8.
- 64 *Buffalo City Directory for the Year 1877* (Buffalo, New York: Courier Co., 1877), 215.
- 65 All of the subscribers to the *Catholic Union* listed in issues between the beginning of January and the end of June were entered into a database. A total of 925 entries was recorded, and when repeat subscribers were omitted, the revised total was 896. *Rowell's American Newspaper Directory* (1879), 220, indicates a circulation of not more than three thousand. The southern "Irish" Buffalo wards 1, 2, and 3 are mapped in Jenkins, *Between Raid and Rebellion*, 83. Ward thirteen is a suburban extension of ward 1 and although largely rural in 1879, contained a social mix comparable to the other southern wards.
- 66 Other prominent subscriber surnames were Brennan, Carroll, Collins, Kelly, Mahoney, Maloney, O'Brien, O'Connor and Sheehan.
- 67 "Fenianism in Batavia," *Fenian Volunteer*, 15 February 1868.
- 68 See, for example, the columns headed "Remittances" in *Catholic Union*, 29 January; 12 February; and 26 March 1879.

- 69 Rowell's *American Newspaper Directory* (1879), 220.
- 70 Rowell's *American Newspaper Directory* (1879), 238, 146.
- 71 See Jenkins, *Between Raid and Rebellion*, 204-7.
- 72 "Parnell!," *Catholic Union*, 29 January 1880: 4.
- 73 See Michael Funchion, "Clan Na Gael," in *Irish-American Voluntary Organizations*, ed. Funchion (Westport, Connecticut: Greenwood Press, 1983), 74-93. The Clan had largely superseded the Fenian Brotherhood by the early 1870s and organized the *Catalpa* rescue; see Sim, *A Union Forever*, 133, 138.
- 74 "Parnell!," *Catholic Union*, 29 January 1880: 4.
- 75 For the Nun of Kenmare's views, see "The Nun of Kenmare on 'The Irish Question'," *Catholic Union*, 3 and 10 March 1881: 5.
- 76 "Irish Land League," *Catholic Union*, 20 January 1881: 5.
- 77 "No Coercion!," *Catholic Union*, 24 February 1881: 4.
- 78 George P. Rowell's *American Newspaper Directory* (New York: George P. Rowell and Co., 1885), 352, 603, 376, 227.
- 79 Fanning, "Robert Emmet," 59.
- 80 "Last Words of Robert Emmett," *Fenian Volunteer*, 4 January 1868: 1.
- 81 *Irish World*, 11 November 1876.
- 82 "O'Connell's Day," *Catholic Union*, 5 August 1875: 5.
- 83 "O'Connell's Day," *Catholic Union*, 5 August 1875: 5.
- 84 "O'Connell's Day," *Catholic Union*, 5 August 1875: 5.
- 85 "O'Connell and George Francis Train!," *Catholic Union*, 12 August 1875: 4.
- 86 "The Critique," *Catholic Union*, 19 July 1877: 4.
- 87 "The Critique," *Catholic Union*, 19 July 1877: 4.
- 88 For a discussion of the element of "habit-memory" within the wider concept of social/collective memory, see Paul Connerton, *How Societies Remember* (Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press, 1989), 25-36.
- 89 "Robert Emmet," *Catholic Union*, 7 March 1878: 5.
- 90 "Robert Emmet," *Catholic Union*, 7 March 1878: 5. Murphy was also the recording secretary for the aforementioned Catholic Union, Circle of Buffalo, in 1878, with McManus acting as its corresponding secretary.
- 91 Fanning, "Robert Emmet," 65.
- 92 "Dramatic Presentation," *Catholic Union*, 20 November 1878: 5; Patrick M. Geoghegan, *Robert Emmet: A Life* (Montreal and Kingston: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2002), 269. See also James Pilgrim, *Robert Emmet: The Martyr of Irish Liberty, A Historical Drama in Three Acts*, rev. by Charles Townsend (New York: Dick and Fitzgerald, 1903), available at www.archive.org (accessed 4 June 2014). Sarah Curran was the youngest daughter of John Philpot Curran (mentioned in the main text) and was the great love, though never the wife, of Robert Emmet.
- 93 "The Day in Buffalo," *Irish World*, 22 March 1879.
- 94 "Robert Emmet," *Irish World*, 8 February, 1879: 4. Original emphasis.
- 95 "Robert Emmet," *Irish World*, 8 February, 1879: 4. For more on the American context of O'Connell's repeal campaign, see Sim, *A Union Forever*, 11-38.
- 96 "Robert Emmet," *Irish World*, 8 February, 1879: 4.
- 97 Elliott, *Robert Emmet*, 178; Sim, *A Union Forever*, 74-84.
- 98 See "Robert Emmet," *Catholic Union*, 4 March, 1880: 5, where the report declares: "If ever there was a time when the memories of Emmet should be kept green it is now."
- 99 "The Land League," *Catholic Union and Times*, 8 March 1883: 5.

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- 100 Keyes, *Funding the Nation*, 163.
- 101 "Irish National League," *Catholic Union and Times*, 18 February: 5, and "An Enthusiastic Meeting," *Catholic Union and Times*, 4 March 1886: 5.
- 102 "Emmet's Day," *Catholic Union and Times*, 4 March 1886: 4.
- 103 "Emmet's Day!," *Catholic Union and Times*, March 11 1886: 5.
- 104 "Emmet's Day!," *Catholic Union and Times*, March 11 1886: 5.
- 105 "Emmet's Day," *Catholic Union and Times*, 10 March 1887: 4; "The Critique," *Catholic Union*, 19 July 1877: 4.
- 106 "Emmet's Day," *Catholic Union and Times*, 8 March 1888: 5.
- 107 "Emmet's Day," *Catholic Union and Times*, 8 March 1888: 5.
- 108 "Emmet's Day," *Catholic Union and Times*, 8 March 1888: 5.
- 109 "Emmet's Day," *Catholic Union and Times*, 8 March 1888: 5.
- 110 Jenkins, *Between Raid and Rebellion*, 312.
- 111 Jenkins, *Between Raid and Rebellion*, 352.