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How the Irish Became Settlers: Metaphors of Indigeneity and the Erasure of Indigenous Peoples

In an 1844 article in the London-based *Fraser's Magazine*, Morgan Rattler opens his account "Of the Red Indian" with a story of an Irish landlord attending the Greenwich fair to see "a wild man!" This "wild man" seems to be a Native from North America: he appears with "face covered with a profusion of red, shaggy hair, a regular *glib*, nearly naked, and with a chain about his waist." But as the landlord gets closer, he realizes that the man is one of his own Irish tenants, observing that "the savage seemed to display towards him some uncouth and uneasy signs of recognition." This opening anecdote prepares the way for Rattler's analysis, which depends upon a sustained comparison between the "Ojibbeways" of North America and the "Celtic Irish." In Rattler's words,

Now, really, when I first gazed on these Indians, an impression, almost amounting to conviction, took possession of my mind, to the effect that the chiefs, braves, squaws, and child before me, were neither more nor less than a party of 'the finest peasantry on the face of the earth' (as Mr. O'Connell calls them), who were employed in earning the rent for some flinty-hearted Sassenach landlord.¹

The language here—"neither more nor less"—tells us much of the colonizer's gaze. His "impression" transforms the unfamiliar Indians whom he encounters into the more familiar Irish peasants. It is nearly impossible for Rattler to "see" Indigenous peoples: he wants to describe "the Chippeways themselves," but by viewing them as Irish peasants, he erases actual Ojibwe people.²

1. Morgan Rattler, "Of the Red Indian" *Fraser's Magazine for Town and Country*, 29, 174 (June, 1844), 655. I wish to thank the Moore Institute at the National University of Ireland, Galway, for support of this research.

2. Rattler, 660. I use the term "Indigenous peoples" throughout this essay—although it is not a term that nineteenth-century writers would use—in order to capture the diversity of these peoples, allude to their political claims, and try to avoid language that naturalizes settler colonialism. In the words of Taiaiake Alfred (Kahnawake Mohawk) and Jeff Corntassel (Cherokee Nation), "Indigenesness is an identity constructed, shaped, and lived in the politicized context of contemporary colonialism. The communities, clans, nations and tribes we call Indigenous peoples are just that: Indigenous to the lands they inhabit, in contrast to and in contention with the colonial societies and states that have

Rattler cannot see Indigenous peoples because, for him, Irish and Indigenous peoples appear to be the same. Following the influential work of Nicholas Canny, many Irish Studies scholars would suggest that these similarities emerge from a shared history of colonialism. Canny claims that settlement in Ireland directly shaped the settlement of North America, making the case that the subjugation of Irish people prepared the way for the colonization of Indigenous peoples.³ Numerous later scholars, such as the literary critic Luke Gibbons and the historian David Emmons, have expanded this argument, arguing that racial stereotypes of the Celtic Irish can best be understood through analogies with Native Americans.⁴ For Gibbons, these analogies originate with English settlers, but ultimately shape Irish anticolonial thought by encouraging both racial thinking and a celebration of mythic origins. For many scholars, English analogies that connect Irish and Indigenous peoples through metaphoric “wildness,” “savagery,” and “romantic primitivism” foster both material and affective connections between the two groups of people.⁵

But Rattler’s opening analogy also expresses the troubling legacy of Irish people “playing Indian.” Dressing as an Indigenous person at the Greenwich fair, the Irish tenant actively confuses what Rayna Green (Cherokee) calls “the role” and “the real” in ways that restrict Indianness to the role. In Green’s words, “‘playing Indian’ by non-Indian peoples depends upon the physical and psychological removal, even the death, of real Indians.”⁶ The Irish tenant’s performance

spread out from Europe and other centres of empire. It is this oppositional, place-based existence, along with the consciousness of being in struggle against the dispossessing and demeaning fact of colonization by foreign peoples, that fundamentally distinguishes Indigenous peoples from other peoples of the world.” Taiiaki Alfred and Jeff Corntassel, “Being Indigenous: Resurgences Against Contemporary Colonialism,” *Government and Opposition*, 40, 4 (Autumn, 2005), 597.

3. Canny’s most extensive articulation of this argument appears in *Kingdom or Colony: Ireland in the Atlantic World, 1560–1800* (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2008). Following his work, it is now generally accepted that Ireland “served as a laboratory for American settlement.” Patrick Griffin, “Reckoning with the English,” *Field Day Review*, 4 (2008), 251.

4. Luke Gibbons, “Race Against Time: Racial Discourse and Irish History,” in *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), 150. David Emmons goes so far as to call the Irish “white Indians” when arguing that “the Irish and Indian were becoming analogies for one another” in “Savage Twins: Indians and Irish on the Border.” Emmons, *Beyond the American Pale: The Irish in the West, 1845–1910* (Norman: University of Oklahoma Press, 2010), 141.

5. Elizabeth Cullingford exemplifies this approach, arguing that “The position of Ireland in post-colonial theory depends on the use of analogy as a comparative historical tool.” Elizabeth Cullingford, *Ireland’s Others: Gender and Ethnicity in Irish Literature and Popular Culture* (Notre Dame: Notre Dame University Press, 2001), 2. Later in the same volume she argues that Dion Bouicault’s performance of Indian identity “was ahead of his time” because it suggests “the identification of the Irish with Native Americans.” Cullingford, 174.

6. Rayna Green, “The Tribe Called Wannabe: Playing Indian in American and Europe,” *Folklore*, 99, 1 (1988), 31.

as “wild man” draws on a long history of the English seeing the Irish as savages; but it also erases Indigenous peoples by rendering them superfluous. Indigenous peoples disappear twice: first, through the Irishman’s performance, and second, through Rattler’s account that describes them through the lens of Irish peasants.

In two nineteenth-century Irish nationalist newspapers—the *Nation*, the organ of Young Ireland in the middle of the century, and the *Irish People*, the organ of the Irish Republican Brotherhood, and in the novel *Sally Cavanagh, or, The Untenanted Graves: A Tale of Tipperary* (1869) by Charles Kickham, a contributor to the *Irish People*—we see how representing Indigenous peoples as mere figure of, for example, genocide, wildness, and unjust oppression, actually becomes a way of erasing both their experiences and their existence. These Irish newspapers use analogies in order to suggest that Irish experiences are like Indigenous experiences, but Irish people are not like Indigenous peoples. It produces what Jodi Byrd (citizen of the Chickasaw Nation) calls “a transferable Indianness” that perpetuates colonialism by too easily smoothing over differences and confusing affective connections with material realities.⁷ This “transferable Indianness” allows Irish people to claim affinity with Indigenous peoples in a process that Fintan O’Toole calls turning the “casual identification of the Irish with the Indians . . . into a badge of pride.”⁸ But this affinity and “pride” only solidifies Irish settler identity because the metaphors have material consequences: the dispossession of Indigenous land.

These analogies offer a supplement to the now-familiar narrative, introduced by Noel Ignatiev, of “how the Irish became white”: they speak, rather, to how the Irish became settlers.⁹ Scholars have long noted that Irish nationalists have tended to identify more with white settlers than with Indigenous peoples.¹⁰ Young Ireland’s emphasis on “native feeling” and the Fenian Brotherhood’s articulation of “the right of distinct peoples to self-government” do not extend to Indigenous groups.¹¹ But Irish settler identity is not merely a matter of identification.

7. Jodi A. Byrd, “Arriving on a Different Shore: US Empire at Its Horizons,” *College Literature*, 41, 1 (Winter, 2014), 180.

8. Fintan O’Toole, *The Lie of the Land: Irish Identities* (London: Verso, 1997), 25.

9. Ignatiev argues that the white identity of the Irish in the New World partly depended upon the discrimination of minority groups, and traces “how the Catholic Irish, an oppressed race in Ireland, became part of an oppressing race in America.” Noel Ignatiev, *How the Irish Became White* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 1.

10. Joe Cleary, for instance, observes that “eighteenth- and early nineteenth-century Irish nationalists looked mostly to white settler colonies to highlight their own grievances, and less so to the indigenous native peoples of America or Africa.” Joe Cleary, “Misplaced Ideas? Locating and Dislocating Ireland in Colonial and Postcolonial Studies,” in *Marxism, Modernity and Postcolonial Studies*, ed. Crystal Bartolovich and Neil Lazarus (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), 108.

11. Sara L. Maurer argues that Young Ireland mobilized this “native feeling” as opposed to essentialized identity as a way of regulating proper ownership of the land. Sara L. Maurer, *The Disposessed*

It is a structural position: even when Irish nationalists identify with Indigenous peoples or their experience, they reinforce and reproduce the structures of settler colonialism. As Maile Arvin (Native Hawaiian), Eve Tuck (enrolled member of the Aleut Community of St. Paul Island), and Angie Morrill argue, “Settler colonialism is a persistent social and political formation in which newcomers/colonizers/settlers come to a place, claim it as their own, and do whatever it takes to disappear the Indigenous peoples that are there.”¹² Irish people sometimes quite actively participated in these settler colonial formations, in such ways as fighting in the Indian wars, settling on Indian land, or encouraging American expansion. But even descriptions of how the Irish flourish in America naturalize these formations because they work to claim the land. As one correspondent to the *Nation* phrases it, “In every state in the American union—in every town, city, hamlet through these states, you will meet the honest, industrious Irish peasant a new and an altered man.”¹³ The Irish peasant became “a new and an altered man” by actively accepting, inhabiting, and extending the structures of settler colonialism in America.

Understanding settler identity as a structural position helps demonstrate why what Jason King calls a “politics of empathy” for Indigenous peoples is not enough: it does not lead Irish people to renounce settler privileges or question the settler structures of governance.¹⁴ Irish nationalists use analogies between Irish and Indigenous peoples to assert the reality of Irish colonial history through depictions of unreal American Indians. In the process, they question settlement in Ireland while legitimating and participating in the settlement of America. The doubleness of Irish transnational identity, which claims affinity with both Indigenous peoples and American settlers, extends settler colonial formations through metaphoric constructions of indigeneity that erase Indigenous peoples.

State: Narratives of Ownership in Nineteenth-Century Britain and Ireland (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 2012), 124. The “right of distinct peoples” statement appears in “Two Sets of Principles,” *Irish People*, 1, 4, 19 December 1863, 57.

12. “Decolonizing Feminism: Challenging Connections between Settler Colonialism and Heteropatriarchy,” *Feminist Formations*, 25, 1 (Spring, 2013), 12.

13. “Irishmen at Home and Abroad,” *Nation*, 1 July 1843, 12.

14. King claims that Adam Kidd’s novel *The Huron Chief* (1830) activates this “politics of empathy” by applying the structures of the national tale to Irish and Indigenous peoples. Jason King, “‘Stranger to Our Sympathy’ Radical Romanticism and the Image of the Native American in Adam Kidd’s *The Huron Chief* and *The Vindicator*,” *Canadian Journal of Irish Studies*, 33, 1 (Spring, 2007), 83. King reads this empathy as partly emerging from the fact that Kidd represents an “interracial erotic encounter”—replacing the national tale’s symbolic marriage of Ireland and England with an encounter between an Irish man and an Indigenous woman. King, 87. But the national tale’s allegorical dimension—where marriage represents the integration of Ireland into the British state—suggests that we might be more critical of such encounters and see them part of a larger settler colonial project that depended upon assimilation as well as elimination.

Luke Gibbons suggests that Irish historians turned to origin stories—stories of an “original Irish civilization”—in part because Irish people and Native Americans faced an analogous experience of racialization.¹⁵ He argues that colonialism in both Ireland and America depends upon representing Native people as part of the land, rather than as owners of or inhabitants on the land. English representations of both Irish and Indigenous peoples as savages lacking a history encouraged Irish nationalists to claim a cultural past—a civilization that predates and exceeds conquest—in order to question the assumptions that underlie British colonial discourse. Young Ireland and its weekly newspaper, the *Nation*, is important to this story, because it sought to cultivate “native feeling” in Ireland by consolidating a cultural past. Whether encouraging the use of the Irish language, asserting the need for Irish history, or collecting Irish ballads, the *Nation* sought to overcome sectarian divisions within Ireland through a shared culture. As David Lloyd contends, Young Ireland’s cultural nationalism depended upon “an obscured but common origin; the question is only how or where to locate that origin.”¹⁶

But if Young Ireland’s claims to a “common origin” cultivates a “racial notion of an original native purity” in Ireland, it contributes to the construction an Irish settler identity in America.¹⁷ Specifically, Young Ireland defined Irish nativity in ways that legitimated the dispossession of Indigenous peoples’ land. The *Nation*’s stated mission—“to create and foster public opinion in Ireland, and make it racy of the soil”—suggests cultural authenticity rooted (however metaphorically) in the land.¹⁸ And, yet, for Young Ireland, being native Irish was a matter of identification rather than a result of relation, kinship, or claims to the land.¹⁹ Distinguishing between the “Saxon” and “native,” one author in the

15. Gibbons, 154.

16. David Lloyd, *Nationalism and Minor Literature: James Clarence Mangan and the Emergence of Irish Cultural Nationalism* (Berkeley: University of California Press, 1987), 63.

17. Gibbons, 155.

18. Charles Gavan Duffy, *Young Ireland: A Fragment of Irish History 1840–1845* (Dublin: M. H. Gill and Son, 1884), 23.

19. In Irish Studies, scholars tend to think about indigeneity as a racial category, and thus see cultural and racial claims to native identity as opposed. But the racialization of Indigenous peoples is an outgrowth of colonialism. As Joanne Barker (Lenape, enrolled member of the Delaware Tribe of Indians) argues, “the erasure of the sovereign is the racialization of the ‘Indian.’” Joanne Barker, “For Whom Sovereignty Matters,” in *Sovereignty Matters: Locations of Contestation and Possibility in Indigenous Struggles for Self-Determination*, ed. Joanne Barker (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 2005), 1. In other words, settler colonial governments racialize indigenous peoples in order to assimilate them, erasing their claims to sovereignty. In Indigenous Studies, indigeneity is at once a claim to sovereignty, a kinship relation, and an identity position. In the words of Alfred and Corn-

Nation contends that, “By ‘native’ the people do no mean of old Irish blood . . . their nativity was confirmed in fact and popular thought, when they identified themselves with the language, character, and policy of the Irish nation.”²⁰ This construction of nativity suggests a stance toward cultural origins—language, character, and policy—as opposed to a kinship relation. As a cultural stance, “native” Irish identity could encompass landlords and tenants, Protestants and Catholics, Anglo-Irish and Irish. Anyone who identified with the proper cultural origins could be made “racy of the soil.”

Precisely because Young Ireland’s construction of “native feeling” was nebulous and inclusive, it could also extend to American land. Young Ireland helped popularize land rights in Ireland by creating, in the words of Sara Maurer, “a vision of property that was also culture.”²¹ But when this vision of property crosses the Atlantic, it suggests that merely identifying with America could justify Irish ownership of Indigenous land. An 1852 review in the *Nation* categorizes the Celt as “aboriginal” when questioning “the secret of the deadly antipathy between aboriginal and colonizing races—and supremely cruel among the latter, the Saxon; which, with the Red Indian, the Australian, the Sikh, the Affghan, the Kaffir, the Tasmanian, or the Celt, has evermore been engaged in a war of extermination.” Despite this early classification, the author goes on to argue that the Celt belongs with the colonizing races, declaring, “Within a century, the Celtic element will inevitably be sovereign in America. . . . We see in America the natural inheritance of such a race.” This claim to a “natural inheritance” is both racial, suggesting that “Anglo-Saxon blood” is unsuited to the American climate, and cultural, suggesting that Irish people’s “love of land and love of arms” makes them particularly fitted for America where “land is as free as air.”²² The fact that the Irish flourish in places of “free” land allows them to claim ownership of the land. Such an argument erases Indigenous peoples from the land while nevertheless finding the origin of American culture in this land. Both racially and culturally, it seems, the Irish people can foster a “natural” relationship to the American landscape and American culture, in part because

tassel, “Building on this notion of a dynamic and interconnected concept of Indigenous identity constituted in history, ceremony, language and land, we consider relationships (or kinship networks) to be at the core of an authentic Indigenous identity.” Alfred and Cornassel, 609.

20. “Saxons,” *Nation*, 16 June 1843, 9.

21. Maurer, 122.

22. “Celt and Saxon,” *Nation*, 17 January 1852, 12. As Jason King concludes in his study of the *Nation*’s representations of Canada, “its failure to empathize with Native Americans, unlike French-Canadians, as fellow travelers in the struggle for self-determination was fairly typical of the *Nation*’s attitude toward non-European colonial subjects in general.” King, “‘Their Colonial Condition’: Connections Between French-Canadians and Irish Catholics in the *Nation* and *Dublin University Magazine*,” *Éire-Ireland*, 42, 1–2 (Spring–Summer, 2007), 127.

they, too, are “aboriginal.” Statements like this hardly suggest a shared history between Irish and Indigenous peoples. On the contrary, they illustrate how Irish arguments for self-determination actively obscured and worked against Indigenous claims to sovereignty.

The most explicit version of Irish nationalists’ “native feeling” that contributes to the dispossession of Indigenous peoples’ lands is the myth of Irish origins for Indigenous tribes. This myth circulates within a “Letters from America” series in the *Nation* that forges political connections between Ireland and America and offers advice to recent and prospective Irish emigrants. While celebrating America because it is “free . . . from the power of the terrible aristocracy which has hereditarily oppressed [the Irishman],” the author acknowledges that Indigenous peoples have been alienated from their lands by describing how “those aboriginal inhabitants which the white man found on this continent—have been pushed back towards the west, from settlement to settlement.” But after noting that the “white population”—Irish people included—are the “natural enemies” of these Indigenous peoples, he then alludes to a “tradition extant that some tribes of those Indians are of Irish descent.” He writes,

In “O’Halloran’s Ireland,” treating of the twelfth century, we are informed, that “this year” (1169) *Maidoe, or Maidog*, third son to Owen Gwinith, Prince of North Wales, by an Irish princess, finding his country in great commotion, and his brothers engaged in civil wars against each other, retired to his maternal property of Clochran, in Connaught; and being a prince of great experience in maritime affairs, he fitted out a number of ships, in which he sailed from Ireland (say my authorities, *Clin* and *Stow*) so far north and west as to discover lands till then unknown; and these regions, in the opinion of the antiquarian, Humphrey Lloyd, and others, must have been part of New Spain. If so, Irishmen and Welshmen may claim the honor of this discovery prior to Columbus or Americas Vespasius.²³

The description of this “extant” tradition is more important for the affect it mobilizes than the authority it cites, for it activates a form of “native feeling” that extends to America.

This myth of Celtic Indians persists across Irish history: the *Nation* cites eighteenth-century Irish antiquarians who explain the legend, and more recently, Paul Muldoon dramatizes a version of this myth in *Madoc: A Mystery*.²⁴

23. “Letters from America No. IX,” *Nation*, 24 June 1843, 9.

24. Paul Muldoon, *Madoc: A Mystery* (London: Faber and Faber 1990). Scholars have mixed responses to Muldoon’s representation of Indigenous peoples. For Jacqueline McCurry, Muldoon’s “Indians register as flesh and blood individuals” and cultivate antisectarian politics. McCurry, “A Land ‘Not ‘Borrowed’ but ‘Purloined’”: Paul Muldoon’s Indian,” *New Hibernia Review*, 1, 3 (Autumn 1997), 46. But Andrew Fox questions Muldoon’s metaphorical use of Native American identity and culture, contending that “it reduces Native identity to a tool with which to explore issues of Irishness.” Andrew Fox, “Transnational Displacement: ‘Native American Material’ in Paul Muldoon’s *New*

Thomas D'Arcy McGee—a contributor to the *Nation* and founder of the New York *Nation*—opens his 1851 *A History of the Irish Settlers in North America*, with a different version of this myth. He draws on thirteenth-century accounts to argue that long before Columbus crossed the Atlantic, the land between Virginia and Florida was “peopled by the Irish” and formed a “‘Great Ireland’ beyond the western sea.”²⁵ Although he acknowledges that this mythic Great Ireland may not be grounded in facts, McGee nevertheless concludes that it is an important lens through which to understand Irish emigration. In his words, “The dates and details we must leave to the antiquarians, while we endeavor to show what modern emigration has done to accomplish the legend.”²⁶ Such a conclusion legitimates “modern emigration” through an original myth regardless of whether this myth is historically accurate.

In the *Nation*, bringing up this tradition has three effects. First, it separates Irish people from the “white population” that oppresses these tribes. Second, it reinforces the idea of an Irish cultural past, suggesting that the Irish can claim “the honor of this discovery prior to Columbus.” And finally, it imposes an origin story onto Indigenous peoples. This legend of Irish origins produces the ultimate figurative flexibility: Irish people can claim to be Indigenous, while also claiming “the honor of this discovery prior to Columbus.”²⁷ Creating the dynamic that Philip Deloria associates with playing Indian—a “dialectic of simultaneous desire and repulsion”—these shifting metaphors allow the author to define Irish people through both the colonial oppression they face (“the terrible aristocracy”) and their success in conquering new lands (the “honor” of discovery).²⁸ They function as a particularly Irish form of what Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang call “settler moves to innocence,” that is, ways of assuaging guilt or responsibility for colonialism without changing one’s complicity in colonialism.²⁹ For if Indigenous people are of Irish origin, then Irish people can preserve settler privilege without guilt by claiming affinity to them. Such metaphors erase Indigenous peoples’ own claims

Weather,” *New Hibernia Review*, 17, 4 (Winter, 2013), 65. If Muldoon’s treatment of the Madoc legend seeks to question the ideology of British empire, his explanations for his poetry veer into a performance of indigeneity. Explaining why he draws on “system of imagery from Native America,” he declares: “It’s very simple. I think it’s almost as simple as this: I’ve always wanted to be an Indian. When I was a child I had a tent, a bow, and arrow. I still have a bow and arrow.” James S. F. Wilson, “Paul Muldoon, the Art of Poetry No. 87,” *Paris Review*, 169 (Spring, 2004), <http://www.theparisreview.org/interviews/30/the-art-of-poetry-no-87-paul-muldoon>.

25. Thomas D’Arcy McGee, *A History of the Irish Settlers in North America: From the Earliest Period to the Census of 1850* (Boston: American Celt Office, 1851), 20.

26. McGee, 22.

27. “Letters from America No. IX” *Nation*, 24 June 1843, 9.

28. Philip Deloria, *Playing Indian* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1998), 3.

29. Eve Tuck and K. Wayne Yang, “Decolonization is not a Metaphor,” *Decolonization: Indigeneity, Education and Society*, 1, 1 (2012), 10.

to origins and to the land, both in the assertion of discovery, and in the attribution of origins that prevent Indigenous accounts of their own origins.

Throughout the *Nation*, analogies between Irish and Indigenous peoples execute a multivalent narrative erasure. These analogies represent the experience of Indigenous peoples as a possible future that threatens Irish people, one that the Irish people will, ultimately, avoid. What results is a sense that, although Irish and Indigenous peoples are different and have different histories, there are brief, shocking moments of similarity to remind readers of such difference. An 1851 article taking stock of the national schools in Ireland exemplifies this structure with the warning, “without education, we might apprehend that the Irish race would go the way of the Esquimaux, or the Red Indians.”³⁰ The “Red Indians” appear as a possible future that threatens Irish people, but action—in this case, education—will ensure that the Irish follow their proper path and survive. Analogies like this not only naturalize the disappearance of Indigenous peoples (“the way of the Esquimaux” is, after all, to disappear), they also give figurative flexibility to Irish identity that allows Irish people to identify with Indigenous peoples even as they assert their differences.³¹

These analogies increased in the midst of the Famine, as writers conveyed the extent of the devastation and their fears of cultural loss by comparing Irish and Indigenous peoples’ experiences. They have the same doubleness—a statement of similarity that actually reinforces differences. An 1846 article notes that Indigenous peoples are the only other people facing such pervasive hunger, remarking that “*They* are the only human beings we read of who fare as ill as the Irish are like to do this year.” In this sentence, the present that Indigenous peoples inhabit threatens to become the future for Irish people: Indigenous peoples “fare . . . ill,” while Irish people “are like to” fare an equal misfortune. The author is implicitly anti-Indian, for he naturalizes the suffering that Indigenous people confront to question the suffering of Irish people. He implies that Indigenous peoples are merely textual phenomena—figures that are “read of” rather than encountered. He also suggests that—unlike the Irish—the death of Indigenous peoples is inevitable: “In the heart of North America, indeed, at the roots of the Rocky Mountains, there are certain tribes of red Indians, not knowing their own names, or the name of a God, who are said to pine away silently, tribe after tribe, as the buffaloes grow scarce upon their arid pastures.”³² These metaphoric Indi-

30. “The Muster Roll of the Next Generation” *Nation*, 15 August 1851, 9.

31. Analyzing “the ruse of analogy” in the context of blackness, Frank Wilderson reaches a similar conclusion, suggesting that “it is a mystification and an erasure because whereas Masters may share the same fantasies as Slaves, and Slaves can speak as though they have the same interests as Masters, their respective grammars of suffering are irreconcilable.” Frank Wilderson, *Red, White and Black: Cinema and the Structure of U. S. Antagonisms* (Durham: Duke University Press, 2010), 37.

32. “National Resources—Unnational Government,” *Nation*, 3 October 1846, 10

ans are out of touch with their own origins (“not knowing their own names”) and suffer because of their natural environment (“arid pastures”), rather than from colonial misgovernment.

This analogy has a similar structure to one of the most famous—and most frequently cited—of English analogies that connect Irish and Indigenous peoples, which reportedly appeared in the *Times* in the midst of the Famine, though it is in fact difficult to locate the line in the newspaper itself.³³ According to Irish nationalists, an editorial triumphantly declared that “In a few years more, a Celtic Irishman will be as rare in Connemara as is the Red Indian on the shores of Manhattan.”³⁴ Following the Famine, numerous Irish writers mention this line to legitimate Irish nationalist anger and to question British responses to the disaster. An 1886 article in the *Nation* notes that during the forty years since the *Times* published their “infamous prophecy,” the British government has continued “to labour towards that end.” They return to this prophecy because it exemplifies the “defamatory propaganda” of the British press, on the one hand, and justifies Irish anger toward British government on the other.³⁵ Irish writers include the prediction in their accounts of the Famine and the Irish press refers to it in connection to Irish history or current debates about British governmental policy, emigration, and tourism long after the Famine’s end—down to our own day, in fact.³⁶ Scholars also frequently cite the *Times* editorial to legitimate Irish nationalist anger towards the British and show the genocidal logic at work in the British press. Kerby Miller argues that it is “no wonder” that Irish people resented such “callous statements.”³⁷ Similarly, James S. Donnelly, Jr., claims that Jeremiah O’Donovan Rossa had “this grossly insensitive comment” in mind when calling for vengeance years after the Famine.³⁸

33. Citations of the line refer to secondary sources claiming that this prophecy appeared in the *Times*, rather than the primary source. James S. Donnelly, Jr., and Donal Kerr, for instance, cite A. M. Sullivan, while subsequent scholars cite either Donnelly or Kerr. If A. M. Sullivan was the original source for this line, it makes sense that it spread so quickly. As editor of the *Nation*, he could refer to it both in the newspaper and his popular histories. A. M. Sullivan, *New Ireland: Political Sketches and Personal Reminiscences* (London: S. Low, Marston, Searle, and Rivington, 1877), 286.

34. Kerby A. Miller, *Ireland and Irish America: Culture, Class, and Transatlantic Migration* (Dublin: Field Day Publications, 2008), 72.

35. *Nation*, 23 January 1886, 1. The article draws upon the analogy to assert Irish survival, saying “an Irishman by the Shannon’s side is not so great a rarity as a Red Indian by the banks of the Hudson.”

36. For instance, the *Connacht Tribune* alludes to this analogy in a 1955 article on emigration, “Emigration Increase.” *Connacht Tribune* 7 October 1955, 9. More recently, an Irish senator cited it in debates about the Shannon airport. “Mass Meeting on Shannon,” *Irish Press*, 5 May 2012, 58. These are just a few times that the line appears in twentieth-century newspaper articles and editorials.

37. Miller, 72.

38. James S. Donnelly, Jr., *The Great Irish Potato Famine* (Phoenix Mill: Sutton Publishing Limited, 2001), 229.

But the frequent citation of this line is troubling in another way: it establishes claims of Irish genocide by naturalizing the disappearance of “the Red Indian.” Once again representing a possible future for the Irish people, “The Red Indian” is only important insofar as it is gone—people who used to, but no longer, inhabit “the shores of Manhattan.” Tellingly, early references to this analogy celebrate Irish survival in the face of English plans for their extermination, noting that the Irish “had the power and the will to traverse [England’s] designs, and utterly to confound and to baffle her,” partly because of their success in America.³⁹ Later, in the Irish Republican Brotherhood’s paper, the *Irish People*, statements of Irish survival explicitly differentiate Irish and Indigenous peoples. One article suggests, “we must be allowed mildly to observe, that it may not be quite so easy to get rid of us as of Bushmen and Maoris. There is something in belonging to the Caucasian race, even in its Celtic branch.”⁴⁰ Claiming racial superiority for the Irish people, the article reinforces the sense that Indigenous peoples are a mere metaphor for their own disappearance. For this reason, the *Times* analogy travels as a prophecy that does not come to pass: the English threaten genocide, but the Irish, unlike Indigenous peoples, thwart these plans. The fact that Irish people survive in part because they are an engine of Indigenous dispossession, rearticulated as a quaint and inevitable cultural project—the transformation of Natives into “a rarity”—is not mentioned, nor do these authors note that Indigenous peoples also survive despite the multiple policies that encourage their extermination.

Together, these origin stories and analogies give Irish identity a figurative flexibility while stabilizing Indigenous peoples as people of the past—who nevertheless lack a past. Even Gibbons’s argument, which seeks to foster connections between Irish and Indigenous peoples, subtly stabilizes settler structures in two overlapping ways: by approaching “Native American” as a racial category, and by implicitly defining Native American identity as an origin, rather than as a heterogeneous and dynamic position. Irish cultural history has made Irish Studies scholars attuned to the shifting constructions of race over time—acknowledging the ways in which race is a state formation and a structural position, rather than a static identity.⁴¹ And yet, many Irish Studies scholars continue to understand “Native American” as a stable racial category. Mark Rifkin historicizes how United States law constructs a “racial Indianness” in the nineteenth century in part to transform Native peoples into a “population” in ways that

39. “Anglo-Saxon Ideas,” *Nation*, 13 June 1856, 9.

40. “The ‘Saturday Review’ on Ireland,” *Irish People* 1, 3, 12 December 1863, 41.

41. David Lloyd, for example, examines the “the structural positioning of the Irish as subjects radicalized differently and differentially in each domain.” David Lloyd, “Black Irish, Irish Whiteness and Atlantic State Formation,” in *The Black and Green Atlantic: Cross-Currents of the African and Irish Diasporas*, ed. Peter D. O’Neill and David Lloyd (New York: Palgrave Macmillan, 2009), 18.

translate “native geopolitical formations into the terms of settler governance.”⁴² By stabilizing “racial Indianness”—the outgrowth of this colonial process—one also stabilizes the assumptions of the settler colonial government.

Irish origin stories and analogies contribute to the construction of an Irish settler identity that depends as much upon the manner in which Irish people claim to share history with Indigenous peoples as on the way in which they differentiate themselves from them. These moments of connection that ultimately perpetuate settler colonial structures show that what Jason King calls the *Nation*’s “failure to empathize with Native Americans” is more complicated than a mere lack of empathy.⁴³ The *Nation* establishes a dynamic of asserting Irish similarity to and difference from Indigenous peoples in ways that extend innocence to Irish settlers while making Indigenous peoples disappear twice—both in articulations of difference and in articulations of similarity.

In one particularly startling moment of Charles Kickham’s novel, *Sally Cavanagh, or, The Untenanted Graves: A Tale of Tipperary* (1869), the stalwart Brian Purcell is overcome by the fact that his old family friends must go to the poor house. He shoots his loyal dog so he “might help to keep some poor family from starvation,” and then leaps over a fence, running away “without his hat, like—like a wild Indian.”⁴⁴ This allusion to “a wild Indian” is a seemingly throwaway line that captures Brian’s desperation and disheveled appearance. And yet, it contributes to the novel’s political message—that unjust landlords and unfair systems that seek to “tame” the Irish actually produce the very wildness they ostensibly oppose. Early in the novel, the villainous landlord asserts, “I’ll see you tame enough yet” (SC 8) but instead of creating docile tenants, he creates ghosts: the “untenanted graves” that the title refers to.⁴⁵ But if this allusion helps teach readers about colonial structures, it also reinforces the “Indian as a figure of exceptional alterity” that, as Mark Rifkin warns, implicitly shores up the settler state.⁴⁶ The “wild Indian” functions like the titular character, Sally Cavanagh’s, madness: a limit to discourse, a metaphor for the problems of colonial governance. Although this metaphor helps convey the problems of colonialism

42. Mark Rifkin, “Making Peoples into Populations: The Racial Limits of Tribal Sovereignty,” in *Theorizing Native Studies*, ed. Audra Simpson and Andrea Smith (Durham: Duke University Press, 2014), 155.

43. King, “Their Colonial Condition,” 127.

44. Charles Kickham, *Sally Cavanagh, or, The Untenanted Graves: A Tale of Tipperary* (Dublin: W. B. Kelly, 1869), 157; hereafter cited parenthetically, thus: (SC 157).

45. He mutters this to himself while his tenant, Connor O’Shea, looks at him “savagely.”

46. Mark Rifkin, “The Transatlantic Indian Problem,” *American Literary History*, 24, 2 (Summer, 2012), 338.

in Ireland, it also transforms Indigenous peoples into mere figures, evacuating their history and perspectives.⁴⁷ As Rayna Green warns, “metaphor signs the real Indian’s death warrant.”⁴⁸

Charles Kickham started writing novels while imprisoned for his role in the Irish Republican Brotherhood and his contributions to the *Irish People*. Suppressed in 1865, this short-lived newspaper sought to educate the Irish public by warning them against constitutional reform and other sham nationalisms and insisting that Ireland will “be a free and sovereign state . . . owned and ruled by the *Irish* people, and not by any other race or people.”⁴⁹ Like Kickham’s *Sally Cavanagh*, the *Irish People* routinely reminds readers that England sought—and continued to seek—to render the Irish people ghosts. In a single issue in 1862, for instance, separate articles insist that British domination, “strikes at the very existence of the Irish race” and warn that the “alien laws” from England “are made to murder *him* as they have murdered so many millions before him.”⁵⁰

The Famine dead haunt these articles, both as examples of Britain’s misgovernment and glimmers of revolutionary possibilities that need to be acted upon. In an ongoing series, “A Retrospect,” the author moves between past and present to lament the trauma of the past and to assert that now is the time to fight for independence. These articles mention the “floating coffins” of the emigrant ships heading to America and “the bones of our kindred who escaped from the charnel-pit of the workhouse, to find a grave at the bottom of the stormy Atlantic” in order to assert “useful truths” that such trauma taught the Irish people.⁵¹ They show how the ghosts of the Famine haunt Irish history and the British state, while implying that the Irish people can help lay these ghosts to rest by acting on the revolutionary possibilities of the past.

In “Leaves From a Journal,” a series in the *Irish People* that narrates Kickham’s journey to the United States for the national convention of the Fenian Brotherhood in Chicago, Kickham again presents Indigenous peoples as figures of, in Rifkin’s words, “exceptional alterity.” While crossing the Atlantic, Kickham compares his experience with that of famous settlers, declaring: “The spirit of the hero, too, is within you—you are a Columbus, a Washington—what you

47. Joy Porter argues that this is an ongoing problem in Irish representations, arguing that “Irish imagic relationships to Indians have reinscribed stereotype and reinforced colonial divisions.” Joy Porter, “The North American Indians and the Irish,” *Irish Studies Review* 11, 3 (August, 2003), 263. Porter refers specifically to scholarship by Elizabeth Cullingford and Luke Gibbons and literature by Jennifer Johnston, Frank McGuinness, Roddy Doyle, and Seamus Heaney.

48. Green, 37.

49. “Federal Enlistment,” *Irish People*, 5 March 1864, 233.

50. “Soon or Never!” *Irish People*, 12 December 1863, 40; “Felon-Setting,” 40.

51. “A Retrospect,” *Irish People*, 26 December 1863, 73.

will.”⁵² As he approaches American shores, however, the discourse changes and shadowy Indigenous figures displace the heroic Columbus. In Kickham’s words: “a phantom—a phantom to which I scarcely ever gave a thought in my life—glides before me now. Its presence affects me like the shadow of a sin that must be atoned for. It is the shadow of the Red Man.”⁵³ The figurative language is telling as the assertive claim, “you are Columbus” gives way to the more ambiguous Indigenous “presence” which feels like “the shadow of a sin.”

Like the analogies from the *Nation*, Kickham’s account gives Irish people figurative flexibility. They can oscillate between two metaphoric identities, both the imperial hero and the phantoms that haunt this hero. But Kickham’s account also has another dimension—ghostliness. In Ireland, the politics of haunting are often anticolonial. In *Sally Cavanagh*, for instance, the ghosts of Sally Cavanagh’s dead children at once symbolize the violence of the colonial regime and the political possibilities that persist in the midst of the regime. For if an unjust landlord causes the death of these children—turning them into ghosts—the fact that they return to their mother “when the stars do be shinin’” (SC 189) suggests that their family structure transcends this violence. The ghostly return of her dead children prefigures the return of her living child from America, who, after fighting for America in the Civil War, comes home to fight for Ireland. These ghostly children suggest the doubleness that David Lloyd associates with the specters of the Famine: they at once represent the violence of colonialism and “an alternative track of human unfolding that is at once there and not there.”⁵⁴ They haunt the colonial state as symbols of its violence and signs of what the state cannot control or contain.

When Kickham represents Indigenous peoples as a “phantom” that represents “the shadow of the sin” however, he denies them the same doubleness. Their presence questions the violence of American ideology—Kickham seems to interrogate whether America is “free soil”—but they do not suggest alternative possibilities. Instead, rendering Indigenous people ghosts becomes a mode of acknowledging colonialism while avoiding the responsibilities for colonialism—in other words, a settler move to innocence. For Kickham, Indigenous peoples are merely the “shadow of a sin,” a troubling ghost that arises out of nowhere (“a phantom to which I scarcely ever gave thought in my life”) and then disappears once more. The fact that this “phantom” represents the mere “shadow of the Red man” implies that Indigenous peoples have already disappeared, that nothing is left but a faint, reflected image. Tellingly, Kickham’s journal quickly moves from

52. “Leaves From a Journal,” *Irish People*, 12 December 1863, 43.

53. “Leaves From a Journal,” *Irish People*, 26 December 26, 1863, 78.

54. David Lloyd, “The Indigent Sublime: Specters of Irish Hunger,” *Representations*, 92, 1 (Fall, 2005), 155.

this “shadow” that causes him guilt to the triumphant declaration, “and now, magnificent Democracy, I kiss the hem of your garment. Bunker Hill, I worship you.”⁵⁵ As a result, American settler colonialism appears to be a discrete event located in the past rather than ongoing structure that endures in the present.⁵⁶ In Kickham’s account, there is “a sin that must be atoned for” rather than many, ongoing sins.

Understanding the colonization of Indigenous peoples as an event that happened in the past allowed Irish nationalists to ignore their own complicity in settler colonialism, on the one hand, and to blame England and the Anglo-Saxon race for the colonization of Indigenous peoples, on the other. For instance, the *Irish People* has an entire article describing the conflict between the Maori and the Anglo-Saxons in New Zealand (after publishing the article that declares that it “may not be quite so easy to get rid of us as of Bushmen and Maoris”) that criticizes the “race of grasping white men, one of the most rapacious races (perhaps the most rapacious)” who “began to look on the fertile soil of the Maories’ island home with a covetous eye.”⁵⁷ Not surprisingly, the description of the particular events in New Zealand concludes with an allusion to Ireland as the author laments “the unconquerable propensity of the Anglo-Saxon to plunder the lands of other people—a propensity which manifests itself most strikingly alike in Ireland and New Zealand.”⁵⁸ Portraying settler colonialism as an outgrowth of a racial “propensity,” rather than a structure, reinforces the sense that Britain is the origin of settler colonialism across the globe. It allows Irish people to express sympathy for people like the Maori or the “shadow of the Red man” without recognizing the ways in which Irish people also inhabit and perpetuate settler colonial structures.

Ultimately, the tropes of haunting and ghostliness do not travel to America with the same anticolonial politics because they do not suggest glimmers of alternative—in this case, Indigenous—possibilities. Instead, they reproduce the conventional tropes of settler colonialism where, as David Treuer (Leech Lake Ojibwe) puts it, “Indians and Indianness persists as ghosts persist: as hovering presences that can be evoked and appealed to, linked to life but separate from it, no longer a reality, or in reality.”⁵⁹ The ghosts of Sally Cavanagh’s dead children—however unreal—very much represent real political possibilities at odds with the British colonial state. By contrast, the “shadow of the Red Man” evokes Indigenous presences only to confirm that Indigenous people and the political

55. “Leaves From a Journal,” *Irish People*, 26 December 1863, 78.

56. Patrick Wolfe, *Settler Colonialism and the Transformation of Anthropology: Politics and Poetics of an Ethnographic Event* (London: Cassell, 1999), 2.

57. “The Maories and the Anglo-Saxons,” *Irish People*, 23 July 1864, 552.

58. “The Maories and the Anglo-Saxons,” 553.

59. David Treuer, *Native American Fiction: A User’s Manual* (St. Paul: Graywolf, 2006), 73.

possibilities they represent are unreal. Kickham firmly links Ireland and America's political futures, implying that the "free soil" that he momentarily questions will bring "life and home to hunger-haunted homes and sorrow-stricken hearts."⁶⁰ Because America will help lay Irish ghosts to rest, Kickham cannot confront the ghosts that haunt American settler colonialism.

As Eve Tuck and C. Ree suggest, "attending to ghosts" can be a mode of decolonization.⁶¹ When ghosts become realities—sites of "relentless remembering and reminding that will not be appeased by settler society's assurances of innocence and reconciliation"—then these ghosts are not only figures of colonial violence, but signs of Indigenous alternatives that continue to this day.⁶² By contrast, Kickham's representation of Indigenous peoples as phantoms operates as a mode of forgetting. He alludes to Indigenous peoples so that they can disappear once more, denying them the political effects of Irish ghosts. In this way, he also enacts a double disappearance of Indigenous peoples—by identifying with imperial heroes, like Columbus, and by rendering them ghosts in order to relegate them to the past.

Understanding how analogies, allusions, and statements of similarity with Indigenous peoples can actually extend settler colonial structures helps us to rethink the relationship between Irish and Indigenous peoples. The truth is that the empathy and affinity that Irish Studies scholars frequently claim Irish people have for Indigenous peoples often functions much like Irish nationalist representations of Indigenous peoples themselves—that is, as metaphors detached from material practices and acts. Claims of shared histories of colonialism that evacuate Indigenous histories only participate in settler colonial formations. Instead of a politics of empathy that ultimately extends innocence to Irish settlers, we need a politics that acknowledges Irish people's ongoing participation in settler colonial formations.

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60. "The Chicago Fair" *Irish People*, 20 February 20, 1865, 200.

61. Eve Tuck and C. Ree, "A Glossary of Haunting," in *Handbook of Autoethnography*, ed. Stacey Holman Jones, Tony E. Adams, and Carolyn Ellis (Walnut Creek, CA: Left Coast Press, 2013), 647.

62. Tuck and Ree, "Glossary of Haunting," 642.