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“What are the Irish Catholics Fighting for?”:

The *Pilot*'s Creation of An Alternative Archive to American Nativist Amnesia During the Civil War*

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Abstract

An institution with its very own systems of remembering, forgetting, memorizing and presenting, the *Boston Pilot*, an Irish ethnic newspaper, directly and indirectly aimed to shape an identity for the Irish community in the United States. Parallel to many alternative systems of archiving, the *Pilot* distrusted the archive of the hegemonic other and created an archival organization to avoid societal and historical amnesia. In this sense, the series of “Records of Irish-American Patriotism” written by Michael Hennessy is an important asset for the paper as the series documents the heroic acts of the Irish Brigade and Irish American soldiers, and creates an alternative archive of its own together with the news and editorials published in the *Pilot*. Additionally, the *Pilot*'s racially motivated lexicon over the course of the Civil War will be analyzed to understand further how this alternative archive influenced its readers and their perception of African Americans.

Keywords: The *Boston Pilot*, Archive, Michael Hennessy, Whiteness, Nationalism, Irish Americans.

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“Katolik İrlandalılar Ne İçin Savaşıyor?”:

Pilot’ın İç Savaş Sırasında Amerikan Milliyetçi Bellek Yitimine Alternatif bir Arşiv Oluşturması

Öz

Kendi hatırlama, unutma, ezberleme ve sunma yöntemleri ile bir kurum olan İrlandalı etnik gazete *Boston Pilot* dolaylı ve dolaysız olarak Amerika Birleşik Devletlerindeki İrlandalı halk için bir kimlik şekillendirmeyi amaçlamıştır. Birçok alternatif arşivleme sistemine paralel olarak *Pilot* hegemonik (üstün) ötekinin arşivine güvenmemiş; sosyal ve tarihi bellek yitimini önlemek için arşivsel bir tertip kurmuştur. Bu bağlamda, Michael Hennessy tarafından yazılan ”Records of Irish-American Patriotism” (İrlandalı-Amerikalı Vatanseverlik Kayıtları) serisi, bu serinin İrlandalı askeri birliklerin ve İrlandalı Amerikalı askerlerin kahraman eylemlerini belgelemesi ve *Pilot*’ta basılan haberler ve editoryaller ile beraber başlı başına alternatif bir arşiv oluşturması bakımından gazete için önemli bir araçtır. Buna ek olarak *Pilot*’ın İç Savaş zarfındaki ırksal olarak güdümlü kelime dağarcığı, bu alternatif arşivin okurları ve bu okurların Afrikalı Amerikalıları algılamasını nasıl etkilediğini daha iyi anlamak adına incelenecektir.

Anahtar Kelimeler: *Boston Pilot*, Arşiv, Michael Hennessy, Beyazlık, Milliyetçilik, İrlandalı Amerikalılar.

In 1862, the Adopted Citizens’ Association resolved after a meeting that they would offer their services “to restore the Federal Union to its pristine lustre and maintain the Constitution as transmitted to us from our political progenitors; notwithstanding our long and unnecessary ill-treatment in this State-in the sense of being studiously denied equal rights and privileges with our fellow citizens of native birth” (sic).¹ This statement reflects the general resentment of the Irish as they were called up to fight for the country in which they were

discriminated. Nevertheless, approximately 144,000 Irish served in the Union ranks during the Civil War, forming the highest participation among ethnic groups in the Union Navy at 20.4 per cent, with the hope of elevating the status of their people (O’Grady 47; Bennett 235). The *Boston Pilot*, a Boston-based Irish ethnic newspaper, too, supported the Union cause, regardless of its discontent with abolitionism; but when it felt that the efforts of Irish-Americans were minimized, it resolved to write its own history of Irish-American valor and thus create an archive that would rather stand as a monument.

The US Civil War was a turning point for the *Pilot*, which minimized its formerly dominant religious concerns in favor of becoming an instrument to prove the loyalty of Irish citizens to the Union. “Records of Irish-American Patriotism” was published weekly from 1862 to 1866, documenting the heroic acts of the Irish Brigade and Irish American soldiers, creating an alternative archive of its own, a collection of memories proving the entrenched attachment of the Irish to the American nationality. Michael Hennessy (Laffan), the author of this series, says that by publishing this column about patriotic Irish American soldiers “much good can be done for our race.”²² Laffan’s column basically consists of three different parts. He opens the column with a letter to the editor and proceeds to corresponding news articles published in other newspapers. Lastly, he dedicates a part of this column to narrate the lives of prominent Irish American soldiers and includes letters from soldiers. Laffan’s column is like a scrapbook, where he collects every news article and information related to the efforts of Irish American soldiers in the Civil War. With the publication of this series, Laffan establishes a memory of patriotic Irish Americans whose sacrifices contributed to the Union cause. This paper analyzes the fortification of the Irish American identity with military service, Union loyalty and patriotic expression by examining the factual self-assertion of Irish patriotism in the Civil War, as represented in the *Pilot* and Laffan’s column.

During the course of the Civil War, the *Pilot*’s discourse encouraged Irish immigrants to embrace the Union cause as a way to prove their loyalty to the American nation and its values (L. Rhodes 98). Therefore, the question of nationalism evolved into a battle of belonging to the American community through these issues. In *Nations and Nationalism*, Eric Hobsbawm states that national identification “can change and shift in time” (11), and this argument suggests that

there are no fixed national identities. In order to tease the concept of fixed and adapting identities, I will focus on the paper's attempts to direct Irish Americans toward this new chance to prove their worth as citizens. The Draft Riots also become an important aspect of the discussion in order to examine racial lines and the transition of the Irish to whiteness. The importance of archival creation and the *Pilot's* role as an alternative archive to the State archives are analyzed to understand further the politics behind the Irish American paper's formation of a commemorative site for its countrymen. The emancipation, along with the creation of racial discourse and the articulation of whiteness, supports further the *Pilot's* role as an alternative archive because it is through the authority of whiteness that the *Pilot* attains its powerful voice in establishing a counter-archive to nativist amnesia.

A Matter of Forgetting and Remembering: The Archive

State archives and nativist archives tend to leave out the misdeeds of the state and distort its failures. Since it is an act of creating a bright past behind the cabinets of museums, one must remember that creating an archive is a fragile act of applying collective and selective memories. What one decides to leave out or include in this creation shows the nature of the archive. The power holders draw up the guidelines of remembering and forgetting in these archives, by demonstrating the chosen memories and incidents that in fact do not reflect the whole truth, but only an exclusive selection of it. What is or needs to be forgotten is discounted from historical memory. Forgetting is another type of omission for it intentionally or unintentionally omits certain remembrances from the archival entity. This causes a break in the wholeness of the archive, and so makes the expectation of justice from the archive unattainable, turning the archive into "a centre of interpretation" (Osborne 52).

The archive is generally associated with the sovereign power and its governmental authority over the formation of an official history of the state. This official history acts as the uniting connection for members of the nation, under which they form a whole by accepting the given past of the state. As the sociologist Mike Featherstone states, the sovereign owns the power of relocating and reorganizing the archives of the less privileged groups, and also the sovereign gathers "the archivists

and scholars who operate with their own dominant classifications and value hierarchies to produce their own official history” (592). History writing, as a result, is an unnatural process; it is based on the events that enhance the nationalistic rhetoric that depicts the valiant and just past of a state. It is very rare for states to acknowledge holocausts, genocides, and unfair political interventions in the domestic affairs of less powerful countries or groups because history—including contemporary history—is recorded to prove the sine qua non-existence of the sovereign above the less-privileged. Therefore, the material available for research may already be a construction, representing the governmental authority within the archive. However, archives also offer “a surplus of materials which enable adversary readings” (Lynch 79). In this article, the *Pilot* archives from the Civil War are studied to engage in the adversary reading it provides, since the paper strongly believed in the exterminating effects of the native press regarding Irish participation in the Civil War.

An institution with its very own systems of remembering, forgetting, memorizing and presenting, the *Pilot*, directly and indirectly aims to shape an identity for the Irish community in the United States. Parallel to many alternative systems of archiving, the *Pilot* distrusts the archive of the hegemonic other and creates an archival organization to avoid societal and historical amnesia, as this article will explain below. The problem with creating an archive in order to reinforce remembrance lies in its inclination to disregard the unrelated, or worse, to archive with perceptive selectivity in regard to the topic. The *Pilot*'s role as a paternal figure for the Irish, apart from offering them an “imagined community” under which they can unite, also lies in its institutional archiving of Irish history. The *Pilot* undertakes the role of the archivist and collects the history of the Irish in Ireland and the United States with the intention of protecting that valuable information. Thus, the paper acknowledges itself more powerful than the individual efforts and provides Irish Americans with the paternal roof to gather and house their history. Additionally, it demonstrates the histories of the Irish community in both countries with the aim of proving the Irish to be a people representative of a proud history. The challenge lies in contrasting the everyday archives of nativist Americans such as newspapers, which disregarded, omitted or even erased the Irish from specific arenas of history. At this point, it is safe to mention the institutional amnesia of the receiving culture in history

making, an amnesia triggered by nationalistic feelings, conceding no debt to the other, reinforced by the strong desire to remain debtless to the foreigner in order to avoid fraternal responsibilities. If the other is different than the receiving culture on platforms regarding finance, race and religion, then the receiving culture holds power to form ways to disregard the other's contributions. Though a delicate subject, an archive is a show of strength on both parts. It demonstrates that the receiving culture holds the power to shape the history that satisfies its interests, and yet it also shows that the other has the power to rise against the State-made or nativist archives of the receiving culture and create an archive of its own as an anarchic act of refusal.

Nevertheless, one must be very careful when using refusal against State powers and offices in the case of the *Pilot's* opposition, since such an act would mean challenging governmental authority—something the *Pilot* advises the Irish to abstain from. Indeed, the *Pilot* opposed American print culture that denied the Irish military honors. Seeing an archive created by the receiving culture's ideas of them, the *Pilot* toiled to form an ethnic archive for the Irish giving them the honorary status of defenders of the American Union, and white status as racial equals of native-born Americans. The resentment at being turned into an invisible asset of the Civil War and being ranked below the African American soldier in terms of courage and loyalty led the Irish American paper to create an archive to prove otherwise. The credibility of their archive is also questionable, since their aim to prove the American nation wrong dominated their ethnic history formation. It is an archive of relativities and hegemonic power structures even across the spectrum of ethnic groups. The *Pilot's* agenda in the formation of an alternative archive could not escape the same power relationship the paper resented. Since the Irish American paper situated its people above the African American, it distorted the black man's presence in the Civil War or even erased their presence in it in order to form the archive that would benefit them in the way they expected.

Interestingly, the archive building of the *Pilot* starts simultaneously with the Civil War. Aware of the native inclination to leave out or minimize the contributions of the Irish in the war, the *Pilot* does not wait to leave the war in the past to start an archive. Rather, their archive is an ongoing process created alongside the war. Therefore, it is not right to say that archiving is only related to the past. It has ties to the past in the sense that it claims it. Yet, it also secures

the present, demonstrating an alternative history in the columns of the paper and in the minds of its readers. This act of reaching out to the readers--museum visitors--is different from the accepted course of being visited. The paper as an archive changes the museum/archive relation by omitting the rules of physical contact. Instead of having visitors who observe its artifacts, it visits them in their familiar place, bringing the archival information into the home of the reader, thus removing the unfamiliar authority of the museum. Yet, it interacts with the reader in this non-museum and not-visitor equation of archival transmission through letters from readers. Indeed, apart from the news, the archive of the *Pilot* is collectively created with the Irish and Irish Americans who fought in the Civil War, or who held information on such people. Therefore, the ethnic archive is a collective effort. It does not dismiss the singular efforts of its members; on the contrary, it uses their input in becoming a whole. What the receiving culture aims to do by deconstructing ethnic culture is resisted by the ethnic group's construction of an alternative collective memory. The community avoids disintegration as a group while attempting to affiliate with the native community on a national level.

This archive is important because it shows that the Irish felt that their sacrifices were underrated and unappreciated. The resentment they felt springs from a deep fear that their men anonymously died, and that if it was not for the *Pilot* their names would be forgotten together with the sacrifices of the Irish race. The desire to create obituaries, making lists of the dead and wounded soldiers, giving letters and first-hand accounts of the war from Irish soldiers, is the equivalent of creating a memorial for their own heroism. The idea of not being acknowledged for their heroic deeds—and all this under the fire of Know-Nothings—the urge to prove their Americanness and loyalty to their adopted country, and most of all the inevitable desire to immortalize the names of the fallen to show that they are not forgotten led them to write their own history. For example, the resentment felt towards the Americans on the subject of the percentage of the Irish soldiers in the Union army was one of the recurring topics the newspaper wrote on. They objected to the declaration that Irish soldiers formed twelve per cent of the Union army. To this, the *Pilot* answered bitterly, expressing their conclusion that this was an attempt to steal the military honors of the Irish.³ A reader openly states in a letter addressed to the proprietor of the *Pilot*, Patrick Donahoe, that the government is biased when it

comes to the claims of the Irish Brigades and that there are hostile sentiments toward the Irish. He states “[t]hat we fought bravely is all we claim,”⁴ and moves on to say that the efforts of the Irish are underrated, because according to him, the percentage of the Irish in the Union ranks is forty percent. While they work hard in the newspaper to prove that the Irish are an indispensable part of the Union army, the news articles published in the nativist papers create a counter-archive and minimize their contributions to the Union cause. It is interesting to see the constant references to volunteering both in these articles and in columns. The *Pilot* takes pride in the free-willed enlistments of the Irish and views it as more patriotic than being drafted. However, the Draft Riots complicated this situation since the Irish rioted against the authorities, contradicting the *Pilot*'s guidance of obedience to state laws.

Seeking Justice: “Records of Irish-American Patriotism” as an Alternative Archive

Before answering the question asked in the title of this article “What did the Catholic Irish fight for,” the question of what they did not fight for will be answered. First of all, they did not fight to be underappreciated. Many Irish believed that fighting in the Union ranks would prove their loyalty to their adopted country and earn them respect, as well as lead to full acceptance into the American nation. Therefore, the print culture became an avenue for them to emphasize the contributions of their countrymen to the protection of their adopted country's constitution. Irish Americans, as Kerby Miller suggests, wanted to change the prejudice “that Irish Catholic immigrants constituted a dangerous, unassimilable, and permanent proletariat” (496). Therefore, one of the reasons the Irish Catholic fought in the Civil War was to change this prejudice by becoming a part of the war and so guaranteeing easier access to equal social and political rights. In order to become a fraternal nation, they first had to become brothers in arms to display their identification with the American identity.

The second answer to the question is that the Irish Catholic did not fight to be forgotten. The *Pilot* stresses the contribution of Irish Catholics as volunteers; nevertheless, it also acknowledges that history will forget the role of the Irish in the Civil War, noting

in “Catholics and the War” that “[h]istory will do us justice—but not contemporary history.”⁵ Hence, one more reason for them to write their own history. One of the most influential efforts of the newspaper in this sense is the publication of Laffan’s “Records of Irish-American Patriotism,” which acted as a site of commemoration for the Irish brave in the Civil War. According to Laffan, this was an attempt to build an archive for Irish heroes in America. Laffan, believing that the written word signified more than the spoken word, called on Irish Americans to help him create this archive in order that any heroes and heroic acts of their race were not forgotten. By giving accounts of the war’s proceedings, biographies of the Irish officers, their letters, and most importantly by publishing lists of the wounded and dead Irish soldiers, Laffan creates an archive that would speak for the sacrifices of the Irish race on the continent when the Americans forgot about their bravery. In the first of this series, he mentions that even though the Irish fought in the Revolutionary War, the only thing that is left of them are their names. This is problematic according to Laffan; “Hence, we are unable to show, by positive proof, how largely our people contributed to the establishment and advancement of the Republic.”⁶ Therefore, to remind the nativists of the forgotten Irish valor, this column in essence raises a memorial and urges Irish Americans to create, collect, save and establish an archive of the deeds of the Irish people to be used “when the authentic history of our race in America shall be diligently investigated and carefully written.”⁷

Laffan states that the Irish should be more active in proving the contributions of their race to the strength and independence of the United States. His call to the Irish for unity in raising a memorial explains what the Irish should do and why:

Were Irish-Americans true to themselves, and alive to the necessities of their position, they would have a vigorous historical society in New York, with several co-operative societies throughout the country, diligently engaged in bringing together all the scattered memorials of the Irish race in America; all the evidences of our devotion to our adopted land--of our share in the great work of establishing its independence, and the still more important struggle for the preservation of its unity, as the source of its strength and prosperity.⁸

Laffan urges the Irish to stand up for what they contributed to the success of North America in the war. Furthermore, he suggests the establishment of a historical society for the purpose of creating an archive. The collective effort in the formation of an archive is an essential deed for Laffan, since it will bring together the members of the Irish race, creating a communal feeling among them to seal further the fraternal bond. Acknowledging the place of the Irish in society as influential, he insists on using this influence in improving their social conditions and self-esteem.⁹ Even though he views the Irish as a prominent aspect of the American nation, the other papers do not publish the same information:

Some unfair calculator has published that the proportion of the Irish in the war is only *twelve per cent*. No man who has eyes and ears open can give credence to this. There is not a single regiment in the army in which Irishmen do not abound--and a great many regiments are altogether Irish. The regiments in which they are least, they count twelve per cent. Our military honors cannot be taken from us by pilfering of this description. Without the Irish, the rebels would have seized many of our northern cities long since.¹⁰

While the newspaper struggles to prove that the Irish were a significant part of the Union army, this kind of news working to minimize their contributions to the Union cause has the opposite effect. A letter from a reader, who signed under the penname 'A CELT,' labels the government and American people both as dismissing and deprecatory, because of their reluctance to acknowledge the role of the Irish in Union success. In this letter, the author states his gratitude to the US for providing the Irish race an asylum during difficult times; however, he criticizes the statement about the 12 per cent Irish participation in the army, which according to the author was forty per cent. In the letter, the author mentions the role of the Irish press in setting the record straight about these misstatements.¹¹ It is the wish of the author, Laffan and the *Pilot* that the majority will recognize their efforts. Laffan fights against this counter-archive, which undermines their efforts in creating an alternative one with the security and proof of the written word. The continuous call for collecting evidence of martial success is repeated vigorously in many issues, and moreover, it turns into a mission of rescue and archeology. Laffan asks the readers "to endeavour to rescue

from oblivion the names of all our brave countrymen engaged in the present war for the enforcement of our constitutional laws and the legitimate authority of our Government.”¹² Laffan’s call for the Irish Americans to excavate memories and names of the past is the work of the archeologist or the archivist. Since the information necessary for this alternative archive needs to be excavated from memories of the heroism of ordinary Irish Americans, entrusting in them the duty of excavation and collection of those memories is a logical move on Laffan’s part in his search for sources. Accordingly, letters from readers poured in boasting about the heroism of Irish soldiers fighting in the ranks of the Union Army. In those letters, soldiers sent in the names of their courageous commanders and comrades to save those names from being forgotten.

In creating this archive with the help of their Irish American community, Laffan and the *Pilot* also aim to improve the socio-economic and national position of the Irish in the United States. In this process, the *Pilot*’s views on the place of the Irish American citizen within mainstream society change dramatically over the years following the start of the Civil War. In 1862, Laffan mentions that Irish Americans are “a power in the land, felt and recognized,” and he suggests that the Irish should work to continue that influence in order to gain social advancement and self-respect.¹³ His views on the status of the Irish in the United States show the improvement already made regarding their perception. The United States is a place where the Irish can flourish economically and socially, and according to Laffan, if the Irish strive to advance further how they are perceived by the majority, then they will have the chance to stay in favor perpetually. Moreover, the following week an article named “Emigrants Wanted” appears in the *Pilot* that warns the Irish immigrants not to consider Canada as a destination to build a life, and instead to prefer America saying that, “[h]ere there is citizenship and employment for all.”¹⁴ Like Laffan, the *Pilot* also thinks that America offers a better future for the Irish, and that it should be the destination of those aiming for success. Both Laffan and the *Pilot* suggest that America can provide the Irish with the necessary means to become legal members of it, unsuspecting any discrimination in the process.

By January 1864, however, their views on the condition of the Irish in America change drastically. They publish clippings from the editorials of the nativist and abolitionist papers, objecting to them as

they value the black man over the Irish and disregard their contributions to the Union. This leads the *Pilot* and Laffan to express disillusionment with America. In the editorial “The Irish in Massachusetts,” the *Pilot* states that the Irish have done well in America against all odds, when it is considered that “strangers in a strange land, with no home of comfort in which to find shelter and repose,--meeting with scant sympathy, that blessed influence which is to a wanderer on a foreign shore, like a refreshing and invigorating cordial--with no special charm upon any one, and only the general claim which a common humanity gave them.”¹⁵ Now, the paper accuses America of not welcoming the Irish and being indifferent to their existence. This statement is the complete opposite of what the paper said two years ago as they wrote to encourage immigration to the United States. After three years of participation in the war in large numbers, the Irish still feel a foreign and detached part of the country for which they fight. They mention that the war should have helped to change the way the Irish are perceived by the native-born Americans, for only that would “elevate and improve both races, establish stronger bonds of fraternal feeling, and be productive of permanent good to each.”¹⁶ Regardless of the disillusionment, Laffan continues to publish materials about the Irish American support for the Union cause. This shows that the formation of an alternative archive is a consistent endeavor that cannot be disheartened by the inhospitable attitude of the receiving culture.

The *Pilot* thanks Laffan for informing people of the service the Irish Catholic offered to the United States prior to the publication of the last edition of the “Records of Irish-American Patriotism.” In the editorial, the *Pilot* states that “[w]ithout his researches, we should be in the dark in relation to the glorious achievements of our race; and our brethren of other nationalities would have remained in ignorance of the services rendered to the Union by the Irish-American population.”¹⁷ They put more emphasis on the chosen ignorance of the native and immigrant others, implying that the archival research was imperative for the recognition of their sacrifices. Laffan’s column becomes highly successful since it reaches many readers and enhances their knowledge of war-related incidents and personal narratives. Due to the success achieved by the “Records of Irish-American Patriotism,” the *Pilot* decides to publish a new series under the same title. Therefore, the paper and Laffan proceeds to create a new division to their alternative archive with the end of the war. The new series of the column is

announced as “a collection of authentic sketches of eminent men of our race” since colonial times, and Laffan notes that this new collection will act as “proof undisputable” respecting their services to America.¹⁸ He also stresses the need of an archive in this area since the subject of the illustrious Irish in America is an “almost wholly neglected field of historical research.”¹⁹

The Black Man as the Nemesis of the Irish: The *Pilot* as an Archival Monument Reinforcing Racism

Crushed by the wheels of the power structure, Irish Americans and Irish immigrants struggled to be accepted into the mainstream American population since this acceptance would offer opportunities for labor and equality. Manual jobs, which were available to the Irish, also complicated their status as equals of the white American, since the mainstream American community had their prejudices and considered the Irish laborer more equal to the African American man. Therefore, the third answer to the question “What did the Catholic Irish fight for?” lies in the racial tension between them and African Americans. The Irish did not fight for the emancipation of the black man. This was a milestone, for, as Noel Ignatiev argues, the politically powerful Irish completed their transformation to Americans by establishing their difference from the African American slave with a proslavery discourse (38).

The artificial differences created to contrast manmade races helped the Irish to pass as white. Furthermore, this passing provided them with the power to subjugate the black race, a consolation for the poorest classes of the white race whose only possession in terms of social elevation consisted of their skin color. Even though the Irish were oppressed in their native land, they learned to oppress racial and ethnic others as a result of their American identity acquisition. As Forrest G. Wood mentions, the Irish living in rural areas in large numbers had “monopolized the unskilled labor,” and alarmed at the suggested equality with the freed slaves; they became “probably the demagogues’ most combustible human kindling” (23). To prove how loyal they were to the American racial values, they attacked abolitionism as a movement. The main assets in this attack were “the Catholic hierarchy, led by John Hughes, bishop and archbishop, together with the official

and the unofficial Irish Catholic press” (Allen 1:178). The Irish attacked abolitionism for the opposite meant interfering in American politics. Moreover, the white status of the Irish allowed them to claim their racial superiority at the expense of the black man (Harris 1759).

The news on abolitionism is yet another side to the creation of the *Pilot*'s alternative archive since this archive is clearly white in its racial identification, situating the Irish as the members of the white race as well as patriotic American national subjects. The *Pilot* makes it extremely clear that the Irish Catholics are not fighting for the freedom of the blacks. In this sense, the tone of the editorials drastically changes following the Emancipation Proclamation. Before December 1862, the South was represented as the source of the hardships the country was going through. The change of lexicon in the articles indicates the emphasis the newspaper puts on the idea of racial subordination and domination. The constant repetition of the words black and white in relation to an anticipated black rebellion and the white man's dreaded subordination is a significant device they use to draw attention to the subject.

The proslavery discourse in the *Pilot* goes through different phases. Even though they are not fond of the African American before the Civil War, the representation of blacks is milder when compared to their representation in the *Pilot* after the Emancipation Proclamation. No matter how superior the Irish saw themselves to the black man, the perception of the native-born Americans was not necessarily the same. The *Pilot* objects to the opinion of the Americans in the editorial “Harper's Weekly on Negroes,” since in 1863 *Harper's Weekly* proposed that blacks have done more than the Irish in the recent war.²⁰ Almost in a threatening tone, the *Pilot* says that the Irish have done more for America than both the blacks and the white American. The *Pilot* declares that the Irish as an immigrant race did not start this war, but nevertheless fought for a nation that, according to them, turned a cold shoulder to the Irish immigrants.²¹ In Laffan's columns, for instance, the author is free to present the archive that he wants to pass on to other generations. So, he honors the dead soldiers for having redeemed the living Irish as the members of a nation they are fighting to join. Nevertheless, in real life there is controversy between the Americans and Irish Americans about the latter's contributions to the Union; interests of nationalism and whiteness collide when it comes to recognizing the Irish as nation-building white American citizens. The

inclusion of the Irish in the Civil War demonstrates that they viewed themselves as members of the white race, since it was their skin color which opened the “golden door” for them (Jacobson 8). This defense of the white skin would later “turn them into self-defined white ones,” showing how the Irish had to fight for their claim on whiteness and the rights that come along with it (Brodkin 65). However, as Roediger says, even though the Irish were “loudly white,” they were not commonly acknowledged *per se* (123). Moreover, the *Pilot’s* resentful tone was inflamed with the rising numbers of the dead Irish soldiers on the battlefield. The paper’s proprietor Patrick Donahoe’s role as the treasurer of the Ninth Regiment, composed entirely of naturalized Catholic Irish Americans, was another source of resentment since he worked hard for the preparation and recruitment of the Ninth Regiment (Foik 173; Macnamara 5; O’Connor 105). The paper is offended by the abolitionist turn in the course of the war, stating that the Irish soldiers fought and died for the cause of the Union and not for the abolition of slavery. Blaming the politicians at Washington—and specifically Lincoln—for their loss, the paper frequently mentions the enlistment of Irish American soldiers of their own free will.

In 1862-63, a rapid increase in hostility towards African Americans could be evidently observed in the *Pilot’s* discourse. The economic and psychological burden of the ongoing Civil War, the recruitment of the black soldiers to the Union ranks in 1862, the declaration of the Emancipation Proclamation on January 1, 1863, and later the creation of the black troops in May 1863 intensified the racial tension between the African Americans and Irish Americans, leading the way to the Draft Riots of July 1863. Starting with the Proclamation, the *Pilot’s* news coverage is revealing in this sense. According to the news published during this period, the black soldier lacks the bravery of the Irish; he is a thief who steals guns from the Union army and a violent man who massacres white families in acts of revenge. The *Pilot* uses its pages cunningly for the purpose of creating a negative black image; for instance, it quotes news articles from the American papers glorifying the black man but criticizing and even discrediting the Irishman on the same page, arranged so that the reader would read the news articles on the glorified black soldiers and then move to reading the article or editorial on the discredited Irishman, in that order. The *Pilot’s* printing of these materials in this order is possibly intentional, and even politically indoctrinating. This way, the *Pilot* passed its

ideas onto its readers in such a subtle way that its growing resentment transmitted to its readers in the form of anger. For that reason, the news created a contemporary memory for the reader, whose resentment to the government gradually turned into anger at the African American man.

This strategy understates and impugns the efforts of the black soldiers in the Union Army to prevent ‘unjust’ comparisons made in the nativist papers between the Irish and black brigades. Economically and socially neglected yet drafted, the Irish Americans felt insulted by the exultation of the black soldier. Following the news of black heroism in the Union ranks, the *Pilot* starts publishing news that aims to smear the black soldiers. For example, news on treacherous black soldiers helping the Confederate soldiers,²² articles on the inapt nature of integrating black soldiers into the Union forces,²³ news on the black males crossing the Canadian border to avoid the draft,²⁴ statements about the decrease in black enlistments to which they comment that “[t]he ‘contrabands’ can neither be bought nor persuaded,”²⁵ and corresponding articles derived from other newspapers on the laziness of the black soldiers²⁶ find their place in the *Pilot*. Moreover, the *Pilot* notes the reactions of the Irish soldiers to the recruitment of the black soldiers in the Union army, which range from sarcastic hostility to considering them a useful contribution under certain circumstances. For example, some soldiers said “‘the niggers had as good a right to be shot as anybody.’ Others said it was all wrong, and ‘niggers had no business to be soldiers anyhow;’ and still another class of soldiers said they had no objection to colored soldiers, but they wanted white officers.”²⁷ According to this article, some soldiers even signaled disorder at the idea of getting orders from black officers or being kept on equal terms with them.

The enmity towards the African Americans grew deeper when the Conscription Act was passed in 1863, requiring white men to enroll in the army unless they could find a substitute for themselves, or pay \$300 to escape the draft (Bailyn, et al. 469). Poor classes of laborers were outraged, for this meant that they would lose their jobs to blacks while fighting for blacks. The amount of money needed for escaping the draft was beyond the reach of the workingman, creating a situation that distressed them as a group subjected to the unfair treatment of the abolitionist government. In July 1863, the outraged group attacked the government buildings in New York to show their discontent with the draft. The attack on the buildings later turned into attacks on African

Americans and the properties of rich white men. The majority of the attackers were identified as Irishmen, and the burning of the Colored Orphan Asylum, as well as the sight of African American men hanging from lampposts, damaged further the Irish American image, negatively contributing to the perception of indignant Irish mob. According to Laffan, the \$300 fee was the provocation for the Draft Riots, along with the belief that “the Federal Administration had repeatedly violated the laws of the land, the working classes rashly, though not surprisingly, despaired of legal protection, and madly resorted to violent measures to secure even handed justice.”²⁸ In his column, Laffan addresses the blacks in a sympathetic tone, but no matter how impulsive he finds the riots he understands and justifies the cause behind it.

On the other hand, the *Pilot* is completely outraged by the riot for it harms the law-abiding, peaceful Irish American identity the paper tries to create for the immigrants. The newspaper’s tone slightly changes on the position of the black man in the current situation. Even though the *Pilot* initially circulates vicious portraits of the black man, the paper later attenuates the tone of its racial slurs in an effort to pacify angry mobs of Irish laborers. All of a sudden, the black man is cleared of everything with which he has been charged. His color is not his fault, “God made him;” his idea on his equality with the white man is the fault of the abolitionists, and even his employment in the jobs of the Irish is a good thing, for the paper wishes “that the black man was employed for all the drudgery done in our cities and manufacturing towns, thereby driving the Irish laborer where his services will be rewarded—THE GREAT WEST—where he can be secure from the taunts of the Know-Nothing, and where he can bring up his children in the faith of his fathers without molestation.”²⁹ Moreover, the *Pilot* views the Draft Riots as a crime, the culprits of which will be liable to God. Hence, the paper uses religion as a means of suppression rather than warning them using their national identity and citizenships.

On August 1, 1863, Laffan writes in response to what he addresses as the radical editors of mainstream newspapers such as the *Tribune* and *Post*, which discriminated against the Irish labeling them a foreign and brutal mob. Following this, in a clipping from the article of the editor-in-chief of the *World*, the reader is shown that all that the Irish sacrificed throughout these years “was in a moment forgotten.”³⁰ Laffan then states that even though these men are proud to be of Irish nationality, they are, nevertheless “American citizens, entitled to be

dealt with and recognized as such, and not to be invidiously spoken of and to as an “Irish,” and a “foreign element. ... If we are to be referred to as a distinct element of the national power, the only legal and admissible designation is that of Irish-Americans.”³¹ This statement is the claim of a long-deserved recognition in the eyes of Laffan. It is also proof that the creation of an archive collecting the good and heroic acts of the Irish is essential, since the receiving culture is inclined to forget or disregard them. Regardless of the *Pilot*'s rejection of large numbers of Irish participating willingly in the riots, Ignatiev notes that “[t]he number of Irish who took part in the riots was not less than the number who wore the blue uniform” (104). According to him, the large number of Irish participants is proof of their belief regarding this topic. However, in its effort to reform the image of the Irish American, the *Pilot* starts publishing articles that distinguish the ruffians from the Irish. In an effort to counter the effects of these disloyal, violent, mob-like Irish depicted in mainstream news, the paper pieces together a new archive in the following weeks, where it publishes news of Irish heroism and loyalty together with news on African American violence and disloyalty to the Union army.

Even though the *Pilot* adopts a milder tone during the riots, it returns to its anti-abolitionist attitude after the situation settles down. In an editorial, the fight for jobs between white and black laborers, the familiarity of the blacks to servile circumstances and the fear of amalgamation of the two races are presented to the reader as the underlying reasons for the editor's opposition to abolition. The editor accepts the merits of the abolition of slavery, but he believes that emancipation can be achieved only at the expense of the poor classes of white laborers, especially the Irish. An article appears in *Harper's Weekly* that actualizes the fears of the paper about the superiority of the African Americans to the Irish race. The editor resents *Harper's Weekly* querying the contributions of the Irish to America when compared to the contributions of their nemesis to the country within a short time. In the eyes of the editor, the feared amnesia of the native population is setting in, but the editor considers it his duty to remind them of the heroic past of the Irish on the continent. According to the paper, then, the creation of an alternative archive is justified once more, in view of the prospects of a future hostile attitude towards the Irish. However, the editor believes in the superiority of the Irish race, not only to the black race but also to the deteriorating white native population. He says,

The plague of “nigger on the brain,” will soon have exhausted all its strength, the black will lose his apotheosis, abolitionism will be put under foot, the nativism now rampantly springing up here and there will regret its audacity; religious intolerance, like that of the Harpers, will effect nothing but contempt for its upholders, and the Irish race in America will be forever in predominance.³²

This sentence demonstrates the insuppressible anger directed at the native-born Americans for not acknowledging the great sacrifices made by the Irish population, who not only fight for a country they have adopted but also work in back-breaking jobs that actually construct the country. In these articles and editorials, the immigrant is guided towards the jobs that will set a line that differentiates between him and the black man. Unfortunately, these arduous jobs do not elevate the Irish over the black man, resulting in the humiliation of the whole race; still, the paper is also aware that a country can only be built where the construction starts from the ground. Knowing that they are the constructing power, the editor’s harsh tone becomes even threatening, declaring their prospective predominance and progress in America.

In conclusion I want to answer the question asked in the beginning with the words of the newspaper: “What are Irish Catholics Fighting for?” It is important to look at the people experiencing history, and hearing what they have to say about certain events. In an editorial published in 1865, the editor asks this question. The answer? They are fighting for a country, for liberty, equal laws, equal rights and equal privileges, for the Union, and for freedom of faith.³³ And yet, the language of the editorial suggests that the Irish American has lost his faith in receiving what he fought for. Fearing that their sacrifices will be ignored by Americans, that their history will exclude the Irish as a contributor to the cause of the Union, the *Pilot* writes a history for Irish Americans in an attempt to immortalize the fallen sons of Erin, whose names have been secured in writing, to be found years later by historians, if not found by the contemporary historian himself.

This history reveals the construction of an alternative archive to contribute to the nationalistic identity of the Irish American. It also reveals the opinion of the *Pilot* towards abolitionism and presents its pro-Union but anti-abolitionist attitude. This seems contradictory;

however, when we take into consideration the racial enmity and the labor rivalry between blacks and the Irish, this contradictory attitude sounds reasonable. After the Emancipation Proclamation, the *Pilot* shows its resentment saying that, “after nearly two years’ fighting for the Union, as it was, and as it ought to be, we find ourselves engaged in an abolition war.”³⁴ The *Pilot* constantly mentions that the Irish fight for the Union, which is their attempt at full-inclusion in the American nation, and the paper states that they fight for the Union Cause and not for Emancipation. In their case, being a member of the American nation does not mean supporting the Lincoln government in freeing the enslaved African Americans. Rather, the *Pilot* believes that it is the Irish American’s duty to help the Union when the unity of the nation is threatened, but the paper also believes that the American laws that protect slavery should be respected by all. Nevertheless, the *Pilot*, as an institution for the advancement of the Irish, fights its own battle with nativist prejudices towards the Irish by creating an anti-abolitionist discourse and constructing an alternative archive.

Notes

- ¹ “Proscription in Rhode Island.” *The Pilot* 27 Sept. 1862 (25.39) 3:6.
- ² Hennessy, Michael. “Records of Irish-American Patriotism.” *The Pilot* 27 Sept. 1862 (25.39) 2:1.
- ³ “Proportion of the Irish in the War.” *The Pilot* 18 Oct. 1862 (25.42) 4:5.
- ⁴ “The Irish in the Army. —Why is the Gallant Shields Shelved?” *The Pilot* 8 Nov. 1862 (25.45) 4:6.
- ⁵ “Catholics and the War.” *The Pilot* 18 Apr. 1863 (26.16) 4:2.
- ⁶ Hennessy, Michael. “Records of Irish-American Patriotism.” *The Pilot* 1 Nov. 1862 (25.45) 5:1.
- ⁷ Hennessy, Michael. “Records of Irish-American Patriotism.” *The Pilot* 1 Nov. 1862 (25.45) 5:1.
- ⁸ Hennessy, Michael. “Records of Irish-American Patriotism.” *The Pilot* 4 Oct. 1862 (25.40) 5:1.
- ⁹ Hennessy, Michael. “Records of Irish-American Patriotism.” *The Pilot* 11 Oct. 1862 (25.41) 5:1.
- ¹⁰ “Proportion of the Irish in the War.” *The Pilot* 18 Oct. 1862 (25.42) 4:5.
- ¹¹ “The Irish in the Army. —Why is the Gallant Shields Shelved?” *The Pilot* 8 Nov. 1862 (25.45) 4:7.
- ¹² Hennessy, Michael. “Records of Irish-American Patriotism.” *The Pilot* 1 Nov. 1862 (25.44) 5:1.
- ¹³ Hennessy, Michael. “Records of Irish-American Patriotism.” *The Pilot* 11 Oct. 1862 (25.41) 5:1.

- ¹⁴ “Emigrants Wanted.” *The Pilot* 18 Oct. 1862 (25.42) 2:1.
- ¹⁵ “The Irish in Massachusetts.” *The Pilot* 30 Jan. 1864 (27.5) 4:3.
- ¹⁶ “The Irish in Massachusetts.” *The Pilot* 30 Jan. 1864 (27.5) 4:3.
- ¹⁷ “A New Feature.” *The Pilot* 30 Dec. 1865 (28.52) 4:2.
- ¹⁸ Hennessy, Michael. “Records of Irish-American Patriotism.” *The Pilot* 6 Jan. 1866 (29.1) 5:1.
- ¹⁹ Hennessy, Michael. “Records of Irish-American Patriotism.” *The Pilot* 13 Jan. 1862 (29.2) 5:1.
- ²⁰ “Harper’s Weekly on Negroes.” *The Pilot* 22 Aug. 1863 (26.34) 4:2.
- ²¹ “General Meagher’s Irish Brigade.” *The Pilot* 30 May 1863 (26.22) 4:3.
- ²² “More Negro Treachery.” *The Pilot* 15 Nov. 1862 (25.46) 4:4.
- ²³ “Negroes in the Army.” *The Pilot* 7 Feb. 1863 (26.6) 5:5.
- ²⁴ “The Gatherer.” *The Pilot* 11 July 1863 (26.28) 7:1.
- ²⁵ “Events—Foreign and Domestic.” *The Pilot* 11 July 1863 (26.28) 5:5.
- ²⁶ “Negro Bravery.” *The Pilot* 29 Aug. 1863 (26.35) 4:3.
- ²⁷ “Arrival of the First regiment of Black Soldiers in N. Orleans.” *The Pilot* 14 Feb. 1863 (26.7) 5:4.
- ²⁸ Hennessy, Michael. “Records of Irish-American Patriotism.” *The Pilot* 25 July 1863 (26.30) 3:6.
- ²⁹ “Riots Between White and Black Laborers.” *The Pilot* 18 July 1863 (26.29) 4:4.

³⁰ Hennessy, Michael. “Reports of Irish-American Patriotism.” *The Pilot* 1 Aug. 1863 (26.31) 5:2.

³¹ Hennessy, Michael. “Reports of Irish-American Patriotism.” *The Pilot* 1 Aug. 1863 (26.31) 5:3.

³² “Harper’s Weekly on Negroes.” *The Pilot* 22 Aug. 1863 (26.34) 4:2.

³³ “What are the Irish Catholics Fighting For?” *The Pilot* 22 Apr. 1865 (28.16) 2:1.

³⁴ “The Emancipation Proclamation.” *The Pilot* 10 Jan. 1863 (26.2) 4:3.

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