1. In 1882, Ernest W. Lucy commences with an interesting observation his scathing study of a secret society, *The Molly Maguires of Pennsylvania, or Ireland in America* (1882): "It is a trite saying, that the romance of real life is more romantic than that of fiction. And, if we set aside those fictitious, which call in the supernatural to enhance their interest, that saying is not far from the truth. No sensational novel (hardly excepting those of Wilkie Collins) contains incidents more terribly mysterious than many of the facts recurring in the records of human crime and calamity" (2). 1887 -- five years after Lucy's observations -- witnessed the arrival of Sherlock Holmes with the detective's first story, *A Study in Scarlet*, which was featured in *Beeton's Christmas Annual*. Undoubtedly, Holmes outclassed Collins' Sergeant Cuff's forays into detection as he delved into the mysterious, the sinister and the sensational Victorian underworld of crime. But Lucy's generalization becomes more specific. "Among such facts," Lucy continues, "there are few more notable in later years than the long series of crimes committed in the State of Pennsylvania by the secret association known there as the Molly Maguires, with the circumstances which resulted in its ultimate detection, and in the condign punishment of the chief criminals" (3). The Molly Maguires of Pennsylvania could claim their antecedents in and affinity with an agrarian secret organization of the same name, established in Ireland in 1845. [1] It is hardly surprising, therefore, that when William Pinkerton, whose family's detective agency was instrumental in bringing the society to justice, related the Molly Maguire story to Doyle on a transatlantic crossing at the turn of the century that the writer should appropriate it for a Holmesian escapade (Broehl 153). The result was *The Valley of Fear*, published in 1915.

2. *The Valley of Fear* is not Doyle's only story with an Irish theme. However, it is the only Holmes story dealing ostensibly with Irish subject matter. Earlier incursions into Irish political motifs produced "That Little Square Box" (1881), "Touch and Go: A Midshipman's Story" (1886) and "The Green Flag" (1893). These stories, testimonies to Doyle's keen and sympathetic interest in Irish political grievances, are preoccupied with Fenianism. The Fenian Brotherhood, or as it was known in Ireland, the Irish Republican Brotherhood, was a secret society established in America and in Ireland in 1858. Operating under the generic name of Fenianism, this society was committed to Irish physical force separatism (Newsinger 23-6).

3. But Doyle's sympathetic fictional responses are strikingly at odds with his own political convictions during this period. Doyle -- a confirmed Unionist since 1886 -- fought, though unsuccessfully, election campaigns as a Liberal Unionist [2] for Edinburgh Central in 1900 and for Hawick in 1906. However, by 1911 Doyle had considerably modified his position and supported Home Rule. A movement towards Irish Home Rule was a significant evolution for Doyle. Fundamentally, it abrades the unitary concept of Doyle as a quintessential Englishman, patriotically devoted to Crown, empire's defender and empire's apologist. [3] That Doyle was of Irish Catholic parents and born in Scotland complicates his attitude to Irish political demands; as Pierre Nordon proposes. "Conan Doyle might be said to be a Unionist by vocation, although his Irish birth and the Doyle family traditions helped him to understand the emotional strength of Irish nationalism" (62).

4. This study will argue that Doyle's negotiation of his Irish identity, entangled with Irish separatist aspirations and with the colonizing aspirations and norms of Victorian society, is articulated in his fiction. First, the study will examine how Doyle reconciles his relationship with contemporary politics in his little-known Irish short stories. Second, by focussing on the Holmesian canon from an Irish perspective, this research will elucidate, particularly through an examination of the Holmes/Moriarty dyad, how Irishness, and more specifically criminal Irishness, infiltrates that canon.

5. Of the heritages which shaped him, his Irish Catholic, liberal-nationalist one undoubtedly presented the strongest claim on Doyle's allegiance. As Catholic landlords, the Doyes had been persecuted by the Penal Laws operating against Catholics in eighteenth-century Ireland. In 1815, John Doyle, Arthur's grandfather, had emigrated to London where he was determined to keep his family traditions and religion alive (Nordon 6). Indeed, the nationalist beliefs of his father Charles Doyle, deeply ingrained in Arthur's psyche, emerge some thirty years later in the Holmes story "His Last Bow" (1917). Here, the detective, masquerading as an Irish-American Fenian, infiltrates pre-World-War-One German intelligence. To attain the necessary credibility for his role, Holmes explains to Watson that he "started [his] pilgrimage at Chicago, graduated in an Irish secret society at Buffalo, gave serious trouble to the constabulary at Skibbereen" ("Bow" 978). Aptly and significantly, the name that Doyle chooses for Holmes' dissimulation is Altamont -- Charles Doyle's middle name.
6. Any attempt to come to terms with his Irish Catholic identity was problematic in the Edinburgh of Conan Doyle's childhood and youth. The Scottish capital's Irish community represented between four and five percent of the town's population by the middle of the century, sufficiently numerous then to establish a distinct and separate ethnic identity. With his Irish name and coming from a family with a strong Irish heritage, Doyle never developed a sense of a Scottish identity. In any case, as Bernard Aspinwall and John F. McCaffrey observe, the Irishman in Scotland was "in the almost impossible position of being able to become Scottish" in contrast to his counterpart in America "who might hope to start as an equal American in the making" (138). Religion was perceived as the greatest obstacle to success. "Irishmen," they continue, "were therefore regarded as incapable of success, especially when measured in terms of material progress, because an obscurantist religion and culture, a sort of inherent national defect, held them down" (130). Although ethnic tensions operated on a much lesser scale in Edinburgh than in Glasgow (148), two incidents in 1867 contributed to an increase in racial conflict throughout mainland Britain.

7. In September of that year, the Fenians perpetrated a rescue operation in Manchester on a police-van carrying their leader, Colonel Kelly. This resulted in the accidental shooting of a policeman, Sergeant Brett, and the subsequent execution of three of the men -- Allen, Larkin, and O'Brien -- involved in the ill-fated rescue. A wave of anti-Irish sentiment ensued, forming a direct antithesis to popular opinion in Ireland where sympathy for the executed 'Manchester Martyrs' resulted in significantly increased support for the Fenian enterprise. [4] In any case, a second incident further compounded hostility to Irish physical force separatism. In another and equally unsuccessful attempt to rescue some of their imprisoned colleagues, the Fenians blew up a wall at Clerkenwell Jail in December 1867. The explosion damaged neighbouring houses and killed and injured a number of innocent people (Lyons 127). After this incident, popular opinion troublingly elided Irishness with Fenianism. Norman McCord notes that "The Times, which had hitherto been fairly scrupulous in its distinction between Fenians and Irishmen in general, faltered somewhat in these angry days. How could Irishmen perpetrate such atrocities?" (42). John Newsinger resurrects the social reformer Annie Besant's eye-witness testimony. In the aftermath of Manchester, according to Besant, "the fiercest race-passions at once blazed out into flame' and it was 'dangerous for an Irish workman to be alone in a group of Englishmen'" (qtd. Newsinger 61).

8. It was in such a climate that the young Doyle grew up -- an era in which Irish social and political grievances impinged upon an inimical British government and society. It was during this period that the Irish were to become increasingly politicized both constitutionally, through the Home Rule Movement, and unconstitutionally, through the physical force separatism advocated by the Fenians. In Memories and Adventures (1924), Doyle records his own encounter with Fenianism while on a visit to Irish cousins in 1866. One day while playing in the stable-yard, the stable-boy rushes to bar the gate and, beckoning the young Doyle to follow, runs to the hayloft. Here they witness a group of approaching Fenians, who -- when they find the gate locked -- expend their curses and fist-shaking on the two watching boys. The tale demonstrates how Fenianism registered on Doyle's consciousness long before the development of his political awareness or understanding. The image of the young Doyle gazing at the manifestation of angry Fenianism is in many ways an externalization of his own sense of a fraught and politicized Irishness.

9. This thematically significant experience helps shape three of his short stories, texts which unmask Doyle's attempt to come to terms with his Irish identity. In fact, in "Touch and Go: A Midshipman's Story," Doyle's Fenian memories are transmuted into a fictional account of three children's encounter with James Stephens, the Fenian leader. Set in 1868, the story involves a young Scottish midshipman who in an attempt to impress his sister's friend takes the girls on a boating adventure in the Firth of Clyde. The children encounter a storm that their flimsy vessel cannot withstand and are rescued on the point of perishing. The rescuers, who mysteriously shield their identities, become nervous at the sight of a British navy gunboat. Apparently, they have jeopardised their own safety in order to land the children on the Isle of Man. Before disembarking, the children promise not to betray their deliverers. If the narrator's youth and Scottish identity are suggestive in this story, his allegiance to his rescuer is equally so. It mirrors Doyle's own attempt to negotiate the two conflicting allegiances converging upon him: Irish separatism and British imperialism.

10. "That Little Square Box" operates as a satire on Fenian scare-mongering. The story's effete and cowardly narrator, Hammond, is making a transatlantic crossing to his native England; he uncovers what he believes is a Fenian/Anarchist plot to blow up the ship, largely based on the fact that the owners of a dubious box (ultimately revealed to contain only pigeons) are named Flannigan and Muller. This story exposes the popular elision of Irishness with Fenianism. But Doyle is not simply articulating cognomenal difficulties. In Flannigan, he portrays an Irish-American who is a cogent reasoner. Taking issue with the Captain's proclamation that the Fenians are too cowardly to blow up the ship, Flannigan argues: "Every secret society has produced desperate men -- why shouldn't the Fenians have them too? Many men think it a privilege to die in the service of a cause, which seems right in their eyes, though others may think it wrong" ("Box" 61). The story underlines Doyle's somewhat complex rapprochement with Irish separatism. Written at a time that corresponded with Fenian bombing campaigns of Britain, the story must have been a difficult endeavour for an Irish-named author.

11. The interplay of colonizer and colonized is keenly examined in "The Green Flag." The story broaches the attempt to articulate Irish nationalist aspirations within the imperial matrix. It exposes the appalling conditions of an Ireland racked with social and political turbulence. It specifically tracks the career of the Fenian Dennis Conolly who escapes arrest by joining the British army. Hence, in a form of reverse colonization, Dennis Conolly, represents a threat to the British army. Conolly is not an exception; the Regiment which he joins, the Royal Mallows, is filled with equally disaffected Irishmen. The Royal Mallows' hatred of British imperialism erupts when they are commanded to fight the Dervishes in Egypt. Under Conolly's command, the Irish soldiers mutiny. Yet when Conolly is exposed to the Dervishes he reneges on his plan The Irish soldiers' realization that they would be exchanging one form of imperialism for another, and perhaps prompted by their innate racism, pressure Conolly to proclaim allegiance to an autonomous Irish nationality. Raising on his bayonet a green flag with an Irish harp, Conolly urges his men to fight for their heritage. The story ends on a poignant note, as the Irish soldiers are annihilated. The flag is discovered by a Dervish chief, who sends it to his leader: "By the colour it might well seem to have belonged to those of the true faith, but the Kaffirs gave their blood
Irish agrarian societies, they targeted the enforcers of authority such as superintendents and watchmen, as well as other miners. Injustice, they operated as a form of rudimentary and violent trade-unionism (notwithstanding the existence of the Working Man's Lodge of Associates). The outbreaks were, in fact, responses of groups of workers to their conditions, drawing upon a tradition of secret organization (95).

Kevin Kenny recounts that the first outbreaks of Molly Maguire activity occurred as early as 1848. It reasserted itself in the 1860s to cover a new form of Irish popular protest, an amalgam of draft resistance, labor activism, and direct, violent action that, from 1862 onward, went under the name of "Molly Maguireism." Michael Beames writes that such societies "are not revolutionary in the sense of aiming to overturn one political order to create a new one, but their willingness to envisage a different set of socio-economic arrangements, in which the central notion is peasant control of landholding, indicates the radical potential in Whiteboyism" (97). Such agrarian secret societies evinced no distinct nationalist ideology or espoused no marked anti-colonial ethos, their striving towards a rudimentary, if violent, form of rural justice for a peasant community represents the development of a proletarian consciousness and peasant social empowerment. Their presence on the Irish agrarian landscape, however, was complex and their relations with landholders, both landlords, tenants and labourers, often devolved into flagrant and meaningless violence. The Landleague leader of the 1880s, Michael Davitt, records that the Molly Maguires "committed many outrages of a shocking kind, which were unjustly fathered upon the larger society" (43).

Post-famine Ireland witnessed the erosion of agrarian secret societies from the rural Irish landscape. However, their legacy, which emigrants brought with them to America, "was a strategy for winning social justice that had originated in Ireland" (Kenny 97). The immigrants quickly joined the ethnic organization, the Ancient Order of Hibernians (Davitt 42), and lodges sprung up in the region from 1845. Many of these lodges became fronts for the more insidious purposes of Molly Maguireism. Michael Beames writes that such societies "are not revolutionary in the sense of aiming to overturn one political order to create a new one, but their willingness to envisage a different set of socio-economic arrangements, in which the central notion is peasant control of landholding, indicates the radical potential in Whiteboyism" (97). In another contemporary account, Robert Kane writes of Arigna, North Roscommon, a hotbed of Molly Maguireism; despite the area's rich iron ore and coal deposits, there existed "a population starving, and eager to be employed at any price. A district capable of setting them at work, if its resources were directed by honesty and common sense" (15).

The Irish who travelled to the rich Pennsylvania coal fields discovered little change in their circumstances. Absentee landlords were replaced by absentee mine-owners; wages were equally low; and workers were often compelled to shop in the company store where prices were exorbitantly high. Mining was for the majority of the Irish an alien industry. The unskilled Irish were forced to join the low-status labouring ranks, while their English and Welsh fellow workers occupied the better paid and more socially prestigious mining positions. Ethnic divisions consequently ensued. "All the past hatreds and slights," records Wayne Broehl, "came welling up again, and the mining patches were quickly divided, physically and socially, along ethnic lines. Soon the Irish turned to protective societies" (85) The immigrants quickly joined the ethnic organization, the Ancient Order of Hibernians (Davitt 42), and lodges sprung up in the region from 1845. Many of these lodges became fronts for the more insidious purposes of Molly Maguireism, an illegal secret society whose membership was exclusive to Irish Catholics or Catholics of Irish descent.

Kevin Kenny recounts that the first outbreaks of Molly Maguire activity occurred as early as 1848. It reasserted itself in the 1860s to cover a new form of Irish popular protest, an amalgam of draft resistance, labor activism, and direct, violent action that, from 1862 onward, went under the name of "Molly Maguireism." Seemingly engendered by a sense of social and economic injustice, they operated as a form of rudimentary and violent trade-unionism (notwithstanding the existence of the Working Man's Benevolent Association). Their approach was regional or even individual as opposed to collective. Similar to the activities of the Irish agrarian societies, they targeted the enforcers of authority such as superintendents and watchmen, as well as other miners. Kenny notes that Elements of greed, dishonesty, and brutality entered into the picture, as they often do in human affairs; some of the
The apparent invisibility of secret society brethren, their ability to merge into the city or landscape or seek anonymity in an environment complicit through sympathy or fear, is a theme that reverberates through the Holmesian canon. The Ku Klux Klan in "The Five Orange Pips" (1891) bequeaths a trail of murders that look like suicide or accidental deaths. However, Doyle's naming participants in the Molly Maguire violence were not fighting for social justice in any meaningful sense, being animated instead by strictly individual grievances. But most of the violence bore either a primary or secondary connection to labor relations, the assassination of public officials and Welsh miners and gang members because it was part of a general interethnic conflict that had its material base in patterns of discrimination in the workplace. (185)

The Pennsylvanian Mollies, whose surnames bespeak their origins in North-Central and North-Western Ireland, transplanted the crude activities of the parent organization to their new homeland which in its rugged and wild landscape topographically mirrored, in many respects, their former home (see Kenny 42-44). Coffin notices were posted to those who were to suffer the Mollies' retributive justice. Anonymity was insured by transporting a Molly from another county to perform the crime, the compliment being repaid when a similar deed was required on the assassin's own territory.

18. By the 1870s, Franklin B. Gowen, President of the Philadelphia and Reading Railroad (one of the largest companies in the region), believed it was time to intervene. "Already his life was full of contradictions," Broehl reports. "He was of Irish descent but a Protestant, a long-time resident of the coal regions but now its absentee master-holding his power as president of the rail and coal companies the economic life of the region" (132). Gowen was anxious not only to break the power of the Molly Maguires but also to destroy the insensively peaceful organizing movement, the Workingman's Benevolent Association (Kenny 80). Gowen approached Allan Pinkerton's detective agency. Pinkerton provided an ideal agent, James McParlan, a Catholic and a native of County Armagh, who quickly infiltrated the society, in a manner reminiscent of Holmesian finesse. Gaining the confidence of the Molly inner circles, McParlan allegedly operated as an agent provocateur, inciting Molly outrages to gain sufficient evidence to bring them to justice. Despite Molly suspicions as to his real identity, McParlan escaped to Philadelphia on March 7, 1876 (Broehl 289). However, at this stage he had collected enough evidence to provide sufficient testimony at the subsequent Molly trials to hang twenty members of the organization.

19. Like A Study in Scarlet and The Sign of Four(1890), The Valley of Fear is set in two separate locations. It opens with Holmes, in England, decoding a message bought from a treacherous Moriarty subordinate, Porlock. Successfully deciphered by the detective, the message unveils an assassination plot. Shortly after, Inspector McDonald arrives at Baker Street to corroborate the document: a murder has indeed been committed in Birlstone in Sussex. The scene of the crime reveals a dead body whose face is mutilated beyond recognition by a shotgun blast at close range. Holmes reveals that the victim is not in fact the intended recipient, John Douglas, but his prospective assassin Ted Baldwin, a Pennsylvanian and member of a notorious secret society, the Scowrers, and who had travelled to England with the intention of murdering Douglas. When Douglas is lured by Holmes from his refuge in a secret passage, he admits that in former days he had operated as a Pinkerton detective and infiltrated the Pennsylvania Scowrers, bringing its members to justice. Adopting the alias of Douglas, he spends the rest of his life evading the vengeance of the remaining members of the society; he retreats to the secluded English countryside of Sussex, where he is unearthed by Baldwin. If his altercation with Baldwin results in the latter's death, it also provides Douglas with a plan to exchange identities with the dead man in the belief that by propagating the myth of his death his future safety would be ensured.

20. Though based on indigenous-Irish and immigrant-Irish history, Doyle's approach denudes the tale of many of these particulars. He retains the Pinkerton detective's Irishness, but robbs him of a distinctively Irish name, as the James McParlan of fact becomes Birdy Edwards of fiction. The Ancient Order of Hibernians becomes the Eminent Order of Freemen. The racially specific Molly Maguires are renamed the Scowrers. If the historical Molly Maguires were patronymically Irish, Doyle's Scowrers share Irish, Scottish and English names. Hence, he purges the novel of any sense that criminality is racially determined. Writing to The Strand's editor Greenough Smith, Doyle explains that the story like A Study in Scarlet is situated in both America and England but "In this case it is the Molly McQuire [sic] Outrages in the Coalfields of Pennsylvania tho' I change all names so as not to get into possible Irish politics" (qtd. Kestner 156). Yet Doyle's reasons for neutralizing the Irishness of this story have more to do with the negotiation of his Irish heritage. Such attempted neutralization and indeed, invisibility infuse the Holmesian canon.

21. Occlusion of criminal Irishness is more explicit when we examine Moriarty's faction, which retains its decidedly nebulous and pernicious quality throughout the canon. Moriarty's organization is never defined, never named. Holmes' informant in The Valley of Fear is called Porlock - his name a play on the detective's forename. Indeed, he informs the detective "that his name was not his own, and defied [him] ever to trace him among the teeming millions of this great city" (Fear 4). Anonymity is buttressed by personal detachment and hierarchical camouflage. Moriarty is "so aloof... from general suspicion -- so immune from criticism -- so admirable in his management and self-effacement" (Fear 5). Equally, his second-in-command, Colonel Sebastian Moran, is "as aloof and guarded and inaccessible to the law as himself" (Fear 28).
"Ha! It came like that, did it?" said Holmes, thoughtfully. "Well, I've no doubt it was well stage-managed."

"You mean that you think there was no accident?"

"None in the world."

"He was murdered?"

"Surely!"

"So I think also. These infernal Scowrers, this cursed vindictive nest of criminals-

"No, no, my good sir," said Holmes. "There is a master hand here. It is no case of sawed-off shotguns and clumsy six-shooters. You can tell an old master by the sweep of his brush. I can tell a Moriarty when I see one. This crime is from London, not from America."

"But for what motive?"

"Because it is done by a man who cannot afford to fail—one whose whole unique position depends upon the fact that all he does must succeed. A great brain and a huge organization have been turned out to the extinction of one man. It is crushing the nut with the hammer—an absurd extravagance of energy—but the nut is very effectually crushed all the same."

"How came he to have anything to do with it?"

"I can only say that the first word that ever came to us of the business was from one of his lieutenants. These Americans were well advised. Having an English job to do, they took into partnership, as any foreign criminal could do, this great consultant in crime. From that moment their man was doomed. At first he would content himself by using his machinery in order to find their victim. Then he would indicate how the matter might be treated. Finally, when he read in the reports of the failure of this agent, he would step in himself with a master touch. You heard me warn this man at Birlstone Manor House that the coming danger was greater than the past. Was I right?" (Fear 304-06)

Holmes's explanation of Moriarty's intervention in the eradication of Douglas is hardly satisfactory. That the master criminal's reputation rests on the annihilation of a middle-aged and retired Pinkerton detective is improbable or indeed spurious. Rather, Moriarty's desire for Douglas' death is based upon Moriarty's alignment with American, and by extension Irish, secret societies, notably Fenianism and its counterpart Clann-na-Gael. Doyle, then, is unobtrusively allaying Moriarty and his criminal organization with Irish physical force separatism.

24. Clan-na-Gael, a Fenian splinter group established in June 1867, represented the extreme wing of Irish-American nationalism. An oath-bound secret society open to those of Irish birth or descent, it was "fated to leave its heavy mark upon the pages of [a] half-century's history" (Le Caron 107). The "Clan's members took a solemn oath to take up arms to establish an Irish Republic when called upon by their leaders" (Short 28). Significantly, as Kenny records, Clan-na-Gael filled the vacuum left by the eradication of the Molly Maguires and established itself in this Pennsylvanian coal-mining region in 1876. "Because of its extremism, its secrecy, and the association of its members elsewhere in the United States with the AOH, Clan-na-Gael was quickly identified with Molly Maguireism" (Kenny 280). Such identification seems to have been acknowledged by the Clan itself. As the chairman of the Clan executive, Dr William Carroll, wrote to the Fenian John Devoy on January 12, 1876: "We are very glad to get a footing in the coal region, where hitherto all kinds of so-called Irish societies have held ground to the exclusion of the only really Irish Society of which I have any knowledge" (qtd. Broehl 323).

By the end of the 1880s, the time during which The Valley of Fear is set, Clan-na-Gael had become notorious in mainland Britain. Between 1880 and 1887 English and Scottish cities were constantly threatened with bombing attacks committed by the Clan and by the Skirmishers, a sister organization established by another Fenian leader, Jeremiah O'Donovon Rossa. The interconnected nature of these organizations and the fact that they drew from the same pool of men are underlined by an historical anecdote. Patrick O'Donnell, a cousin of some of the Pennsylvanian Mollies who had spent some time with his Pennsylvanian relatives, became involved in the May, 1882, murders of the newly appointed Chief Secretary for Ireland, Lord Frederick Cavendish, and his Under-Secretary T. H. Burke. [5] These Dublin assassinations subsequently became known as the Phoenix Park murders, committed by an unknown secret society called 'The Invincibles.' One of the assassins, James Carey, escaped the noose by turning state's evidence and on his testimony five men were hanged. Shortly afterwards, Carey set sail for South Africa -- coincidentally the same destination as detective Douglas in The Valley of Fear -- and intriguingly he was to meet a similar if less ambiguous fate. Aboard the ship, Patrick O'Donnell shot Carey dead (see Kenny 207-08).

25. In "The Adventure of the Final Problem" (1893) Holmes states that Moriarty is "the organizer of half that is evil and of nearly all that is undetected in this great city" ("Problem" 471). Moriarty later warns Holmes: "You stand in the way not merely of an individual but of a mighty organization, the full extent of which you, with all your cleverness, have been unable to realize" ("Problem" 472-73). The connected nature of nineteenth-century Irish and Irish-American secret societies, Moriarty's connection with the Pennsylvanian...
Mollies, and his warning to Holmes that the detective has failed to unmask the full extent of the organization, place Moriarty within the Fenian nexus.

27. With his interest in genealogical research, Doyle would have recognized ‘Moriarty’ as a distinctively Irish name. Posternity has linked the name with Fenianism through its ironic connection with the Bishop of Kerry, Dr David Moriarty (1814-77). This Moriarty, appointed bishop in 1856, was in fact a Unionist. Peadar Mac Suibhne recounts: “Regarding politics he was a child of his age: he did not want separation from England. He rarely mixed in political life and when he did so his views did not always run with the current of national sentiment” (189-90). Though by no means an exception within the Irish Catholic ecclesiastical hierarchy, Moriarty was probably the most vocal opponent of Fenianism. On the collapse of the Fenian uprising in 1867 -- one of the strongest outbreaks of which occurred in the Bishop's own diocese of Kerry -- Moriarty famously addressed his congregation on the subject on Sunday February 18:

If we must condemn the foolish youths who have joined in this conspiracy, how much must we not execrate the conduct of those designing villains who have been entrapping innocent youth, and organising this work of crime. Thank God they are not our people, or, if they ever were, they have lost the Irish character in the cities of America; but beyond them there are criminals of a far deeper guilt. The men who, while they send their dupes into danger, are fattening on the spoil in Paris and New York. The execrable swindlers who care not to endanger the necks of the men who trust them, who care not how many are murdered by the rebel or hanged by the strong arm or the law, provided they can get a supply of dollars either for their pleasures or for their wants. O God's heaviest curse, His withering, blasting, blighting curse is on them. I preached to you last Sunday on the eternity of Hell's torments. Human reason was inclined to say “it is a hard word and who can bear it!” But when we look down into the fathomless depth of this infamy of the heads of the Fenian conspiracy, we must acknowledge that eternity is not long enough, nor hell not enough to punish such miscreants. ([The Freeman's Journal] 2)

Thus Moriarty preached himself into the annals of militant Irish nationalism. Cardinal Cullen, Primate of Ireland, though vehemently anti-Fenian, was not pleased: “He is much to be blamed . . . for so foolish an exaggeration . . . I wish he could be called to account for it” (qtd. Mac Suibhne 190). The fact that the name Moriarty is intrinsically associated with opposition to Fenianism must have impinged on the young Conan Doyle, who would not have been the first to appropriate and invert the name of the Bishop. Bishop Moriarty's stance was well recorded in The Times. Indeed, the paper recorded on February 18, 1867, that it had 'been requested' to state that the 'Fenian chief, Captain Moriarty,' is not related to the distinguished Roman Catholic Bishop of Kerry, the rector of Tralee, nor to any gentleman of the same name in Her Majesty’ naval, military, or civil service. His proper name is said to be Shea ([The Times] 12).

28. In the Valley of Fear, Inspector MacDonald, albeit inadvertently, substantiates the connection with the Irish bishop. Recalling an interview with Doyle's Moriarty, the inspector describes his erudite opponent: “He'd have made a grand meenister, with his thin face and grey hair and solemn-like way of talking. When he put his hand on my shoulder as we were parting, it was like a father's blessing before you go out into the cold, cruel world” ([Fear] 22). In "The Final Problem" Holmes similarly describes his arch-enemy: "He is extremely tall and thin, his forehead domes out in a white curve, and his two eyes are deeply sunken in his head. He is clean-shaven, pale, and ascetic-looking, retaining something of the professor in his features” ([Problem] 472). Although, Holmes does not mention it, the description would also fit a clergymen.

29. However, the detective also provides a more sinister description of the Napoleon of crime and one that aligns him with stereotypes of nineteenth-century Irish political activists: "his face protrudes forward and is forever slowly oscillating from side to side in a curiously reptilian fashion" ([Problem] 472). The equation of Moriarty with a snake invokes L. Perry Curtis' findings that "during the 1880s some of London's finest comic artists simianized sea serpents in cartoons about the physical force element in Irish nationalism" (118). In any case, Moriarty's connections with criminal Irishness are further evinced in one of Doyle's plays, Sherlock Holmes: A Drama in Four Acts (1922), Here Moriarty's criminal underlings are endowed with the Irish names of Thomas Leary, 'Lightfoot' McTague, and O'Hagan [6] -- thus strengthening the connection with a criminal Irishness.

30. Moriarty's criminal organization mirrors Fenian groups. In The Valley of Fear, Holmes details that "Moriarty rules with a rod of iron over his people. His discipline is tremendous. There is only one punishment in his code. It is death" ([Fear] 29). The secret nature of the organization dictates that only three of its members are exposed in the canon: Porlock, the treacherous subordinate; Moriarty; and Colonel Sebastian Moran. Theoretically the Fenian organization propounded similar anonymity. Each new recruit supposedly knew only his direct superior. In practice, however, as John Devoy explains, this was not the case:

Every man knew all the members of his own Circle and practically those of every other circle in the town. . . . The Centre, or head of the Circle (who was supposed to have the rank of Colonel) was known as “A”, and he was allowed to have nine “Bs” or sub-Centres (Captain); each “B” had nine “Cs” (Sergeants) if his quota was full, and every “C” had nine “Ds”, who were privates. (27)

Moriarty, whose military title is derived from his service with "Her Majesty's Indian Army" (Doyle, "The Empty House" 492), holds the same rank as a Fenian Head Centre. In 1865, according to Devoy (who was responsible for recruiting Fenians from the ranks of the British army), sixty percent of the rank-and-file British forces were Irish or of Irish descent (130) -- a point recalling the disaffected soldiers of "The Green Flag."

31. Moran is an interesting study. Although the Holmesian character is born in London and educated at Eton and Oxford ([House] 494), the name can be geographically placed in its native Irish context (see Mac Lysaght 165). In "The Empty House," Moran has murdered Ronald Adair, his former partner at cards, with a shotgun blast to his head. Reminiscent of the corpse in The Valley of Fear.
32. It is apt to conclude the canon’s links with Fenianism by returning to the first Holmesian novella. Doyle’s study of a secret society in *A Study in Scarlet* intriguingly suggests a connection with Irish physical force separatism. Here, John Ferrier and his adopted daughter Lucy are persecuted by an insidious and nebulous Mormon secret society. When Ferrier refuses to allow a member of the brotherhood to marry Lucy, they must try to escape -- with the help of Lucy’s secret and non-Mormon fiancé, Jefferey Hope. After two days of travelling over rocky terrain, their provisions become scanty, and Hope, a trapper, leaves to search for fresh supplies. When he returns he finds that the power and strength of their pursuers is relentless. Ferrier has been murdered and Lucy returned to a fatal marital destiny.

33. The Mormon secret society assumes a greater significance when examined in relation to a satirical Stevenson novel. Nordon notes: “In 1885 Stevenson published *The Dynamiter*, and the Mormon episode called ‘The Story of the Destroying Angel’ in this book provides the source . . . of the plot of *A Study in Scarlet*. Conan Doyle took from it the Mormons as a subject, the atmosphere of some of the incidents, and perhaps the heroine’s name” (228). The heroine of Stevenson’s novel tells the impressionable Challoner a fictionalised story of her life in an oppressive Mormon community, her father’s execution for contravening the law, her escape to England, and her attempt to flee her Mormon lover. Promising that he will deliver a package to her supposed relatives at a Glasgow address, Challoner, on handing over the package, discovers that it contains a warning to an ominously named McGuire. On receipt of the message McGuire hastily flees, leaving the suspicious Challoner to make his own escape from the house. The predicament in which Challoner has become unwittingly involved is in fact a machination of an unnamed, militant Irish nationalist organization committed to dynamiting public buildings in Britain. The novel chronicles the period between 1880 and 1887, when O’Donovan Rossa’s Skirmishers and Clan-na-Gael were actively planting their bombs in British cities. Stevenson’s farcical treatment of the dynamiters in this story is outweighed by the preface; there, horror is reserved for the Irish Home Rule leader, Charles Stewart Parnell, who “sits before posterity silent” (Stevenson v) and allows the bombing campaigns to continue. Thus, thanks to Stevenson, when Doyle treats of the Mormon secret society and recounts Jefferson Hope’s unobtrusive scouring of London in a hansom cab to assassinate the Ferriers’ murderers, militant Irish nationalism cannot have been far from his mind. The first Holmes novella, like his final one, forges connections between Irish and American secret societies.

34. “Arthur Conan Doyle,” comments Curtis, “created an arch villain of crime worthy of Sherlock Holmes’s Anglo-Saxon mettle with the good Kerry name of Moriarty” (97). Richard Gerber continues in a similar vein:

That Holmes’ mortal enemy bears a Celtic-Irish name is not by chance. Conan Doyle was an Irishman by descent and religion on both sides of the family, but he identified himself most stoutly in his whole behaviour with the prototype of an English gentleman, and upheld the English side in the struggle to the death between Ireland and England. From this viewpoint the Irishman is the hostile rebel and the element in himself which Conan Doyle sought to suppress. (qtd. Redmond 98)

Clearly, Doyle’s negotiation of his Irish identity is demonstrable in his fiction. At the same time, the detective’s name belies his Anglo-Saxon purity. Edward MacLysaght notes that Sherlock is “of early English origin” but the Sherlocks comprised “one of the important families established in Ireland after the Anglo-Norman invasion, the Sherlocks became completely hibernicized” (165). However, it is the Holmes story, “The Final Problem,” which finally shatters the concept of identitarian unity and racial purity. Here, the hunted Holmes flees to Europe to avoid his persecutor. Detected by his criminal Other, Holmes and Moriarty plunge over the Reichenbach Falls locked in a mutually destructive embrace.

35. Doyle’s rapprochement with his Irish lineage permeates his fiction. The early short stories examine militant Irish nationalism while attempting some understanding of the social conditions that propagate such extreme political movements. The Holmes stories investigate the nature of the secret society: Moriarty’s criminal gang, the Pennsylvanian Scrowers who invoke Irish Molly Maguireism and finally Fenianism. Although the canon covertly alludes to Irish political extremism in its inherited form in *The Valley of Fear*, Fenianism is never directly broached in the canon. Nonetheless, this study has demonstrated that it is through the medium of the nebulous Moriarty that Fenianism is encountered. If the arch-criminal’s organization presents the greatest challenge to the detective, his Irish ancestry and allegiance were similar challenges to his creator. If *The Valley of Fear* is cathartic for Doyle, “His Last Bow” -- Holmes final foray as a detective -- represents a sense of closure. Here Moriarty is defeated and the Fenian masquerade is exposed as a ploy in the defeat of a German spy. If, after this, Holmes resorts to bee-keeping, Doyle retreats into the world of spiritualism - a world where the conflicting demands of British imperialism and Irish nationalism would have no place.

Notes

1. According to J. Anthony Lukas, “If there was ever a woman named Molly Maguire, who she was remains a matter of scholarly dispute. In Ireland, the bravos who adopted the name disguised themselves by dressing in women’s clothing and smearing their faces with burnt cork. The name resurfaces in Pennsylvania in 1860-63, during agitation by Irish coal miners against the Civil War draft” (177). Lukas relies upon F. P. Dewees’ *Molly Maguires: The Origin, Growth and Character of the Organization* (Lippincott 1877).  

Back
2. Liberal Unionists were members of the Liberal Party opposed to Home Rule.

3. As one of empire's great defenders, Doyle had published propagandist work *The War in South Africa: Its Causes and Conduct* (1902), defending the British cause in the Boer War. He was later knighted for his patriotism.

4. For a contemporary observation of the effects of the executions on Dublin public opinion, see the 1868 work *Modern Ireland* [George Sigerson], 50-51.

5. For a full account of this event, see Tom Corfe's *The Phoenix Park Murders*.

6. *Sherlock Holmes: A Drama in Four Acts* was adapted by Doyle and the American actor William Gillette; it was first performed in 1899.

---

Works Cited


---. "That Little Square Box." *London Society* (Christmas Number 1881): 52-64.


*The Freeman's Journal.* 18 February 1867: 2.


*The Times*. 18 February 1867: 12.