an accompanying seizure of moral paralysis." The Irish rebel lives "in a world of unrealities almost inconceivable to a cool Saxon brain." Or again, in response to violence involving the radical Molly Maguires in 1877, the New York *Tribune* identified the Irish as "a race with more wholesome and probably unreasonable terror of law than any other." "Is there no other way [besides violence] to civilize them?" this editorialist wanted to know.[16]

Toward the century's end, Irish immigrants' innate "unfitness for self-government" would be familiar enough in the lexicon of America's public sphere to serve as the stuff of casual satiric allusion in works of fiction. Of the immigrant vote, one character in Marion Crawford's *An American Politician* (1884) remarks, "It is the bull in the china shop—the Irish bull amongst the American china—dangerous, you know." An *Atlantic Monthly* piece in 1896 similarly noted that "the unscrupulousness of the Irish in politics arises from the Celtic ardor and partisanship with which he pursues his objects . . . A Celt . . . lacks the solidity, the balance, the judgement, the moral staying power of the Anglo-Saxon." By their very peculiarities of "Celtic blood," in this estimation, the Irish posed a threat to the republic; but even more so in their eagerness to assimilate: the Celt "imbibes with avidity the theory of equality, and with true Celtic ardor pushes it to excess . . . there are many Irish-Americans, young men growing up in our cities, who are too vain or too lazy to work, self-indulgent, impudent, and dissipated."[17]

But because the animosity between Celts and Anglo-Saxons drew upon a long, racially accented European history of Saxon conquest, this racial divide was evoked and respected on the Celtic side as well. Many of the Irish in America, in other words, fundamentally agreed with American commentators like the editorialists of *Harper's* and *Atlantic Monthly* that a discernible racial chasm separated the Celt from the Anglo-Saxon; and though these Irish observers rejected the argument of Celtic inferiority in all its shades, they rejected the idea of Celtic racial difference not at all. For them no less than for their Anglo-Saxon contemporaries, physical differences marked an inner, natural "difference" separating the two races undeniably. This is a dimension of the overall racial picture of immigrant life that has gone largely unnoted.[18]

As Hugh Quigley wrote with considerable race pride, "The modern Irish are the most genuine, unmixed, and unchanged Celtic people that exist on the globe. Even the most prejudiced writers against the Irish . . . acknowledge that Ireland, today, is the land where the world-renowned

race is to be found in its purity and its ancient characteristics." John Brennan's passage on the "physiognomy" of Irish-American children underscores the extent to which the category *Celt* reflected not simply how "difference" was conceived, but how it was actually seen. As in the case of other racial categories, the social meanings and distinctions surrounding the Celt were so ideologically thick as to translate into an immediate perception of discernible physicality. The biological dimension of Celtic identity was expressed most clearly by the Irish editor James Jeffrey Roche, who answered the anxieties of "race suicide" articulated by Anglo-supremacists like Teddy Roosevelt and Edward A. Ross with a rather mirthful argument we might properly call "race *homicide.*" "Let the Anglo-Saxon call the roll of his relations," Roche wrote with some satisfaction, "and confess, with shame, that a grand race like that of the Puritan and pilgrim is vanishing . . . The fittest will always survive when they care to do so." Roche thus characterized the genetic contest between Saxon host and Celtic immigrant in the very same terms as the staunchest of American Anglo-Saxonists.[19]

Among self-ascribed Celts it was the discourse of nationalism above all that carried and enforced the racial meanings of Irish identity. Irish nationalism, of course, has a complex history of its own, but for the present purpose the specific ins and outs of Irish nationalism as a political program are less important than the more diffuse currents of myth and sensibility that were embedded in Irish immigrant culture. Elizabeth Gurley Flynn recalled the ubiquity of street-level nationalism in her autobiography, *The Rebel Girl:* "The awareness of being Irish came to us as small children through plaintive song and heroic story . . . As children we drew in a burning hatred of British rule with our mother's milk." This highly nationalist "awareness of being Irish" was carried not only in song and story but in the strains of Irish Catholicism and its hagiography; in the outlook of the Irish-American press; in holidays, festivals, and celebrations like St. Patrick's Day; in the martial tones of associational life (groups like the Clan na Gael and the Ancient Order of Hibernians were steeped in an ethos of national regeneration); and in popular entertainments such as vernacular theater and even parish dramas.[20] This "awareness of being Irish," in addition to being heavily nationalistic, was frequently accented by the racialism of a distinctly "Saxon" brand of historic oppression and a uniquely "Celtic" (or sometimes "Gaelic") brand of impoverishment and resilience. It was a worldview in which the Irish and

the English on both sides of the Atlantic were racially distinct and thus shared a mutual animosity rooted in nature.

Confronting the proposition that his "mad" hatred for the British stemmed from his experience in British prisons, for example, the physical force nationalist Jeremiah O'Donovan Rossa remarked, "That kind of talk is all trash of talk. What I am now, I *was*, before I ever saw the inside of an English prison. *I am so from nature.*" Elsewhere, in describing his parents' reflexive hatred for the English, he suggested, "That kind of instinct is in the whole of the Irish race today." This language of racial unity was among the staples of Irish nationalist polemic, and nationalist leaders continually sounded the chords of racial obligation and a race-bound group destiny in their efforts to keep the overseas Irish oriented toward the homeland and toward the promise of its eventual liberation. As Robert Ellis Thompson wrote in the 1890s, "The greater Ireland [that is, the diaspora] which English misgovernment and deportation has created, sends its confirmation back to the old Ireland of its love and its hate. From every quarter of the inhabited world the Irish race watch and wait for the hour of deliverance." This sense of collective memory, injury, and desire was expressed in a variety of locutions, from the compact trope of "the sea-divided Gael," to the poet's refusal of an "Anglo-Saxon" America because "you are not of the self-same race / Nor blood of the self-same clan," to the Irish Race conventions of the 1910s.[21]

These Irish nationalist and American republicanist dimensions of Celtic racial identity fed off one another, even if they arose independently. On the one hand, the Anglo-Saxonist strains of American political culture replicated and thus reinvigorated the Irish sense of Celtic injury that had been cultivated across the Atlantic. As Rossa put it, "I cannot feel that America is my country . . . the English power, and the English influence and the English hate, and the English boycott against the Irishman is today as active in America as it is in Ireland."[22] On the other hand, the heated speech and the brash actions of Irish nationalists seemed to confirm Anglo-Saxon doubts about Celtic reason; and so nationalist manifestations fed back into the loop of dominant racial discourses on republican virtue.

In the matter of racial character, then, naturalization law allowed Irish immigrants entrance as "white persons," and the labor competition under capitalism may frequently have encouraged an aggressive embrace of that whiteness. And yet both U.S. and Irish nationalisms generated a racial

crosscurrent that placed a high premium indeed upon the differences between distinct white races, the Anglo-Saxon and the Celt. This racially inscribed experience of the Irish on New World shores marked a more general shift in the ideological and visual lexicons of whiteness that affected a number of other groups of "free white persons" between the mid-nineteenth and the mid-twentieth centuries.

The White Other

Because racial classifications so successfully masquerade as features of the natural landscape, they are seldom commented upon overtly. But there have been certain moments when commentary on racial boundaries does present itself for examination. Three moments of violence and civic unrest surrounding three different white races between the 1860s and the 1910s provide glimpses of the assumptions attending this period's regime of variegated whiteness: the largely Irish uprising known as the New York City draft riots (1863), the lynching of eleven Italian prisoners in New Orleans by a white mob (1891), and the lynching of the Jewish "outsider" Leo Frank by an avenging mob in Atlanta (1915) each afford an unusually clear view of the contests over power and meaning that attended the question of racial difference in the case of European immigrant groups.

In recreating the New York City draft riots for *Harper's Magazine* (1867), Eleanor Leonard recalled, "A great roaring suddenly burst upon our ears—a howling as of thousands of wild Indians let loose at once . . . the cry arose from every quarter, 'The mob!' The mob! The Irish have risen to resist the draft!' " Her reference to "wild Indians" was neither accidental nor entirely metaphorical. Indeed, the "savage" nature of the Irish became a point of much discussion. Those days of violence in the wake of the 1863 Conscription Act raised many questions about class and the burdens of war; about Republican leadership; about unity in the North; and about Northern whites' willingness to make sacrifices perceived to be for the benefit of Southern blacks. According to one contemporary account, for example, a particularly visible leader of the mob denounced "this damned abolition draft," whereas others "threatened to kill every Black Republican-nigger-worshipping s—— of a b——, and burn their houses." Among the most dramatic acts of violence during the rioting, too, was the burning of a Colored Orphans' Asylum.[23]

But as the *Times* announced on the fourth day of violence, "it is a fact, patent to anyone who has seen anything of the mob, that it is composed

almost exclusively of Irishmen and boys," and hence chief among the questions that lingered in civic discussion as the violence waned was, Just who *are* these Irish? Were they, as they had proclaimed by their actions, so many aggrieved "whites"? Or, on the contrary, were they, as some native New Yorkers openly wondered, a "savage" people, as Leonard had implied, like "wild Indians let loose" in the city streets? Thomas Nast had put the matter most compactly: a cartoon of the rioters later in the summer bore the caption, "A Gorilla on the Loose."[24] The riots thus became the occasion for a contest over the racial meaning of Irishness itself—an assertion of pan–white supremacism on the one hand, versus vigorous denials of Celtic equality with the Anglo-Saxon on the other.

Although the class antagonisms that were played out during July 1863 are significant, as Iver Bernstein has shown, the riots themselves nonetheless enacted a deeply embedded race politics, a violent racial melodrama. As Bernstein points out, racial antagonisms ran high during the spring because of the decision of local shipping companies to break a longshoremen's strike by employing black labor.[25] The local pro-slavery paper, the *Weekly Caucasian,* announced at the head of every issue that it stood "firmly for WHITE SUPREMACY, a defense of the rights and welfare of the Producing and Working Classes, now imperiled by the doctrine of Negro Equality."[26]

And indeed the rioters' actions over the course of the week were in part a violent enactment of this brand of whiteness itself. Rioters targeted their perceived enemies among prominent Republican politicians, to be sure, but they vented much of their fury in such a way that the rioting itself seems a racial ritual of civic differentiation. "It would have been far from safe for a negro to have made his appearance in [the Eleventh Ward]," reported the *Herald,* "for the laboring classes there appear to be of the opinion that the negroes are the sole cause of all their trouble, and many even say that were it not for the negroes there would be no war and no necessity for a draft." Common enough were reports that "the rage of the mob was exclusively directed against colored people," or, again, that a certain black woman had been "badly beaten about the head by Irishwomen."[27]

But the rioters' assaults were not directed solely at blacks; nor was their insistence upon whiteness drawn only by a contrast with blackness. According to the *Herald,* one rioter had "endeavored to lead an attack on a house . . . where negroes visited white women. Ambitious to regulate the races and prevent amalgamation, his hostility was not confined to Afri-

cans." He had also destroyed the furniture of a white man who "had married a squaw." Here antiblack feeling verged on a more general expression of white supremacism aimed at any person or community defined as "nonwhite"—whose equality, in the logic of the *Weekly Caucasian,* imperiled the producing and working classes. Hence "having caused a general exodus of negroes," as one reporter observed, "[rioters] turned their attention to the Chinese who delight to reside in that precinct. The celestials had been found guilty of uniting with white wives, and their headquarters were sacked. The John Chinamen escaped, but in some instances their inconstant consorts have not followed them." The crowd descended on the Chinese neighborhood of the Fourth Ward after one speaker urged that the Chinese represented "a modification of the negro."[28] When the violence subsided, casualties were found to include one Ann Derrickson, "a white woman, the wife of a colored man," and Peter Heuston, a Mohawk Indian "with dark complexion and straight black hair." According to one witness, Heuston had been murdered because "a gang of ruffians . . . evidently thought him to be of the African race because of his dark complexion." But not necessarily: as the antidraft protest became an unleashing of white-supremacist violence, merely being "dark" was sin enough.[29]

If the actions of the rioters seem to have embodied a working-class entitlement based both on race (white entitlement) and on class (their privileged status as producers in a producers' republic), many non-Irish onlookers and commentators, in their turn, registered their own republican claims by questioning the rioters' full status as "white persons." In response to a New York *Herald* piece that referred to the rioters as "the people," a *Times* editorialist objected that those who could rightly lay claim to that title "regard with unqualified abhorrence the doings of the tribe of savages that have sought to bear rule in their midst." The *Times* went on to decry the "barbarism" of the riots and to characterize the rioters themselves as "brute," "brutish," and "animal."[30]

This quickly became the reigning paradigm within which the rioters' actions were interpreted and described in genteel quarters. A second *Times* article two days later asserted, "Few imagined that there was such a race of miscreants extant . . . In spite of our Christian institutions we have thousands of barbarians in our midst, every whit as ferocious in their instincts as the Minnesota savages, and never wanting anything but the opportunity to copy every Indian deed of horror." A Brooklyn minister averred that "the cruelties of the aboriginal savages can hardly rival those

of the brutal mob that has disgraced [New York]." The *Tribune* reported that "a white gentleman (the son of a missionary), born in the East Indies . . . said, when he saw the rioters yesterday, 'I am proud of the heathen.' " The *Tribune* routinely characterized the Irish as a "savage mob," a "pack of savages," "savage foes," "demons," and "incarnate devils." In his rousing account *The Bloody Week,* an anonymous "Eye Witness," too, chimed in that the mob consisted of "barbarians and inhuman ruffians." (The language here is strikingly similar not only to colonial rhetoric regarding Indians, but to contemporary accounts of the Indians in the West. That same month, July 1863, for instance, the *Oroville Union* [California] would refer to Indians as "devils of the forests.")[31]

Even *Harper's Weekly,* which early on had tried to dispel the notion that the riot derived from "the perversity of the Irish race," and which had argued that "there was nothing peculiar . . . to the Irish race in this riot," later suggested that "the impulsiveness of the Celt . . . prompts him to be foremost in every outburst, whether for a good or an evil purpose." By summer's end writers at *Harper's* were noting the "riotous propensities" of the Irish and comparing them unfavorably to African-Americans: "Where, either in our colonial or our national history, have the Irish, as a race, won so clear a title to the gratitude of the people of the United States as the negroes have won within the past three months?"[32]

Given that the uprising took place during a time of war—and a war for the liberation of slaves, no less—it was perhaps inevitable that discussion would turn to the imperatives of citizenship and the Celt's "fitness for self-government." As one commentator put it in a book review of *The Wrong of Slavery* for the *Atlantic Monthly* in 1864, "The emancipated Negro is at least as industrious and thrifty as the Celt, takes more pride in self-support, is far more eager for education, and has fewer vices. It is impossible to name any standard of requisites for the full rights of citizenship which will give the vote to the Celt and exclude the Negro."[33] The comment is double-edged: like the cartoon years later (1876) that would place the Celt and the Negro on the scales of civic virtue and find them weighing in identically, here an argument on the Negro's behalf seems to make as strong a case for actually *stripping* the rights and privileges that have already been conferred upon the Celt as a "free white person." The war, which was going to entail some revisions in the notions of American citizenship, was a most fitting occasion for some reflection upon the civic virtues of the Celtic immigrants and their contribution to the republic.

This image of Celtic savagery was revived and pressed into service as a cautionary metaphor years later, in the wake of the Haymarket affair, when an anonymous "Volunteer Special" outlined the perils to "Americanism" posed by unchecked immigration. In his suggestively titled *Volcano under the City* (1887), "Volunteer" resurrected the Irish mob of 1863 as "whooping, yelling, blaspheming, howling, demonic, such as no man imagined the city to contain . . . none of them seem to be Americans." And conditions had only worsened since 1863. Among the most pressing problems faced by the republic were the ever-expanding "race-colonies" of unmetabolized, un-Americanized Europeans now in every major city.[34]

Whereas in New York in 1863 an Irish mob action seemed to ratify a common conception of Celtic "savagery," in New Orleans in 1891 a perception of immigrant Italians as "savage" led to an anti-Italian mob action. The racial discourse within which the events were comprehended and narrated, however, was similar. Is an Italian a white man? a journalist asked a West Coast construction boss in the 1890s. "No sir," he answered, "an Italian is a Dago." Similarly, a *Harper's Magazine* piece offered a guided tour of "Italian Life in New York," in which the exoticized accounts of the human landscape echoed then-current travel accounts from Africa or the Levant: "It is no uncommon thing to see at noon some swarthy Italian . . . resting and dining from his tin kettle, while his brown-skinned wife is by his side." (The exotic body's swarthy surfaces, of course, contain "the quick intuition of Italian blood.")[35]

In New Orleans in 1891 such perceptions of Italians' racial distinctness became deadly. In the wake of a spectacular murder trial whose verdict was widely believed to have been "fixed" by local Mafiosi, a popular understanding of Italians' *innate* criminality not only allowed, but indeed prompted, the brutal lynching of eleven immigrants accused of conspiring to murder the police chief of New Orleans. So blithely was the guilt of the immigrants presumed, that, utterly without irony, even a Northern journal like the New York *Times* could refer to the lynch mob as consisting of the city's "best element." So fused in popular perception were the issues of Mafia conduct and Italian racial character that, in editorials about the affair, the *Times* would cast Italian immigrants' behavior as racially determined and question their fitness for citizenship. "These sneaking and cowardly Sicilians," pronounced one editorial, "who have transplanted to this country the lawless passions, the cutthroat practices, and the oathbound societies of their native country, are to us a pest without mitigation. Our own rattlesnakes are as good citizens as they."[36]

The social location of Italian immigrants in Louisiana in this period

points up just how complex the vicissitudes of race can be. It was not the case that the various probationary white races of the nineteenth century were invariably "whitened" by the presence of nonwhite Others in the cultural and political crucible of a given locale. Although it is true that whiteness *could* emerge by its contrast to nonwhiteness (as seems to have been the case with Celts in California during the anti-Chinese campaign of the 1870s, for instance), immigrants who were white enough to enter the country as "free white persons" could also lose that status by their association with nonwhite groups. This was precisely the case with Italians in New Orleans.

In certain regions of the Jim Crow South Italians occupied a racial middle ground within the otherwise unforgiving, binary caste system of white-over-black. Politically Italians were indeed white enough for naturalization and for the ballot, but socially they represented a problem population at best. Their distance from a more abiding brand of social whiteness (what Benjamin Franklin might have meant by "lovely white") was marked by the common epithet "dago"—a word whose decidedly racial meaning was widely recognized at the time and was underscored by the more obviously racial "white nigger."[37]

It was not just that Italians did not look white to certain social arbiters, but that they did not *act* white. In New Orleans Italian immigrants were stigmatized in the post–Civil War period because they accepted economic niches (farm labor and small tenancy, for instance) marked as "black" by local custom, and because they lived and worked comfortably among blacks. According to one social historian, by their economic pursuits alone, which often set them side by side with black laborers, "Italian immigrants assumed the status of Negroes . . . [and] Southern thinking made no effort to distinguish between them." Italian immigrants ran further afoul of white supremacists in the region when they "fraternized with local blacks and even intermarried," and when—like blacks—they supported Republican and Populist candidates instead of the party of white supremacy. From being "like Negroes" to being "as bad as Negroes" was but a trifling step in dominant Southern thinking; and hence in states like Louisiana, Mississippi, and West Virginia, Italians were known to have been lynched for alleged crimes, or even for violating local racial codes by "fraternizing" with blacks. (It is worth noting that the execution of the eleven Italian prisoners in New Orleans was carried out by the White League, a Reconstruction-era terror organization much like the better-known Ku Klux Klan.)[38]

After the sensational trial of the eleven immigrants for the murder of

Police Chief Hennessy, and after the even more sensational vigilante raid on the jailhouse and the retaliatory murder of the prisoners themselves, one of the first questions to arise in the press and elsewhere was the relationship of these events to the Italian character. Did Italian racial character have anything to do with the original crime? Did the mob murder the prisoners because they were Italian? When Italians across the country (and, indeed, across the Atlantic) denounced the lynching as a brutal act of persecution and racial violence, the New York *Times* responded that, no, these Italians had *not* been persecuted "as Italians." In an editorial striking for its success in combining a tone of cool, irreproachable rationality with an argument that *lauded* the lynch mob, the *Times* went on to warn that, if Italians failed to fall in behind other "decent" American citizens and to applaud the mob's success in doing away with the "criminals" (even while deploring the lawlessness of the lynchings), then Americans would draw the conclusion that all Italians were lawless ruffians with Mafia ties. Then, indeed, all Italians would be persecuted "as Italians," "and this would not be a prejudice, but a sentiment founded upon facts and sustained by reason." The men who were murdered were guilty, the *Times* flatly asserted; "there is no doubt whatever." "This is a fact that the Italians in Italy are not supposed to know, but that the Italians in this country have no excuse for not knowing."[39]

Others were even more blunt in their condemnations of the Italian immigrants and more forthcoming in their commendation of the New Orleans mob. As one merchant characteristically put it, "The Italian colony in New Orleans . . . is a menace to American citizenship and good government. Why, I had rather have a thousand Chinamen than one Italian. They are treacherous, revengeful, and seek their revenge in most foul and cowardly manners. They have no regard for the truth . . . The lynching, terrible as it was, is a blessing for New Orleans." One local judge, R. H. Marr, Jr., pointed to the racial clannishness of the Italian colony to explain the community's fierce outpouring of anti-Italian sentiment in the wake of the Hennessy murder. Convictions in crimes involving Italians had been notoriously scarce, he charged, because, when questioned, "any number of Dagoes . . . swear to the most positive and circumstantial alibi" on behalf of the accused. "Until the killing of Hennessy," moreover, "these people had so far as the public knew, confined their operation to their own race." Even journals as far from the crime scene as the Portland *Oregonian* were inclined to depict the behavior of the New Orleans Italians in racial terms—"an explosion of cheap Latin fury and braggadocio."[40]