

“Repealing Unions: American Abolitionists, Irish Nationalists,
and the Coming of the Civil War”

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The Johns Hopkins University
AHA Annual Meeting, January 6, 2006

In 1842, Garrisonian abolitionists, who took their name from the fiery editor of the Boston Liberator, William Lloyd Garrison, began to call publicly for the dissolution of the United States. The Union, they had concluded, was a sword and a shield for slavery; the Constitution was a proslavery instrument; and as long as Northerners stayed in a Union that contained slaveholders, they would share guilt for America’s national sin. In a letter to the Liberator in April 1842, abolitionist Henry Clarke Wright summed up the new Garrisonian view: “we ought to have laid before the slaveholders, long ago, this alternative. You must abolish slavery, or we shall dissolve the Union.” In reality, that alternative had been laid before the South before, but it was not until the spring of 1842 that the Liberator began to describe disunionism as the “one standard” for distinguishing “genuine friends of liberty” from false ones. And it was not until two years later in 1844 that the American Anti-Slavery Society, led by Garrison, adopted as its official motto: “No Union with Slaveholders!”¹

Meanwhile, during the same years in which the Garrisonians began calling for disunion, Irish reformers on the other side of the Atlantic began calling for an end to a different union. In 1842 and 1843, early Irish nationalists known as Repealers were agitating for a repeal of the Act of Union of 1800, which disbanded Dublin’s independent Parliament and united Ireland with Scotland and England under one Parliament in London. Forty years after this Union, Daniel O’Connell, a prominent British abolitionist

and champion of the movement for Catholic emancipation in the 1820s, began mobilizing a movement for its repeal. Throughout 1843, which O'Connell called the "Repeal Year," Repealers held "monster meetings" demanding the restoration of the Irish Parliament, while across the ocean, many Irish immigrants began in 1840 to form Repeal societies of their own.²

It was not coincidental that the calls of O'Connell and Garrison for the repeal of political unions were so similar and simultaneous. In fact, today I want to suggest that Garrisonians saw Repeal as one model for their movement. In 1843, Edmund Quincy, a staunch Garrisonian, wrote in a guest editorial for the Liberator that abolition and Repeal were "precisely analogous in principle." Between 1842 and 1844 Garrisonians often described themselves as American analogues for Repealers, and Garrison even referred to the issue of disunion as the "great question of a repeal of the Union," a phrase that deliberately echoed Irish Repealers.³

Historical treatments of disunionism, however, tend to mute those echoes if they hear them at all. When noting the sources of Garrison's disunionism, most scholars point out its American antecedents, like the nullification crises of the 1830s or the separatist impulses of utopian reformers like John Humphrey Noyes. Or they look ahead to Fort Sumter, and see Garrison's disunionism as a precedent for Southern secessionism. In short, histories of disunionism usually place it within a peculiarly American tradition of secessionist thinking that culminated in civil war. But Garrisonian disunionists drew on intellectual and rhetorical sources that were Irish as well as American. Seeing the origins of disunionism rightly thus requires expanding our frame of reference beyond the borders of the United States. More generally, understanding the antebellum era requires placing

it in a transnational context. My remarks this morning are drawn from a larger project that seeks to gain new insights about the abolitionists by viewing them from transnational perspectives. While the Civil War era is generally seen as one of the most inward-looking periods of American history, due to all-consuming national debates about slavery and secession, abolitionists and their interlocutors looked outward as well. And in doing so they often found ideas and terms that helped give shape to their discourses about the problems faced by their own Union.⁴

American Garrisonians were well informed about the Repeal movement and about European reform more generally, because by 1843, the “Repeal Year,” they belonged to far-flung networks of correspondence and friendship with reformers in Britain. In 1840, the year in which O’Connell founded the Loyal National Repeal Association, a sizable delegation of Garrisonians traveled to a so-called “World’s Convention” on slavery in London. There, they personally met O’Connell and forged long-lasting friendships with a coterie of Irish abolitionists involved in reforms ranging from temperance to Repeal. These “Irish Garrisonians” included Richard D. Webb (a Quaker printer), Richard Allen (a middle-class draper), and James Haughton (a Unitarian who was a loyal supporter of O’Connell and Repeal).⁵

By early 1842, Webb, Allen, and Haughton were frequent contributors to Boston antislavery publications like the Liberator and the Liberty Bell. Their correspondence with Garrisonians became a transatlantic conduit for news and views on British politics, including interpretations of Repeal. In 1843, for example, Haughton gave the famous Boston abolitionist Wendell Phillips a sketch of the Repealers’ objectives, which he supported. “Touching the Repeal of the Union,” Haughton explained, “we do expect a

‘separate Parliament,’ [and] we look to having the full management of our own affairs, merely united to England by the crown.”⁶ In addition to providing reports on politics in their own country, Irish Garrisonians were actively involved in promoting abolitionism in America. In 1841 they helped to coordinate the drafting of an enormous petition to the United States that became known as the Irish Address. At the 1840 Convention in London, O’Connell had promised that he would sign an appeal to the growing number of Irish Americans urging them to oppose slavery. He made good on that promise in 1841 with the “Address from the People of Ireland, to their Countrymen and Countrywomen in America,” which was transported to Boston in December. Along with O’Connell’s name, it bore 60,000 other signatures and enjoined emigrants to “UNITE WITH THE ABOLITIONISTS.”⁷

Abolitionists had high hopes for the Irish Address and their Irish connections. In particular, they hoped that the Address would drive a wedge between Irish voters and the Democratic Party, which Garrisonians condemned as a party of proslavery demagogues. To the dismay of abolitionists, Irish voters found Democrats attractive, not least because of their pro-immigrant policies and the vocal support many gave to O’Connell’s Repeal movement. Historians of “whiteness” have also argued that Irish immigrants joined Democrats in attacking abolitionists and defending slavery in order to prove their loyalty to a white man’s republic. Some Garrisonians at the time favored that explanation. In 1843, the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society said it was not surprised that the Irish, “who had been trodden beneath the feet of all in their own country, should feel elated at finding themselves suddenly elevated to the peerage of the skin” in America “and should enjoy the new pleasure of trampling upon others.”⁸

At the start of 1842, however, Garrisonians believed that this trend was reversible if Irish voters could be shown that their true friends were all abolitionists. The “leading democratic journals” all raised “the cry in favor of Irish Repeal,” explained Garrison in a letter to his brother-in-law, and this was why Irish voters flocked to their banner. But Garrison believed Democratic support for Repeal was “pretended,” and that the real aim of the Democratic Party was to silence the antislavery salvos of O’Connell by bribing him with promises of American support for Repeal. Garrison hoped, however, that the Irish Address would “put down” this plan and demonstrate that the true Repealers were abolitionists, and vice versa.⁹

But if Garrisonians hoped to attract large numbers of Irish Americans into their ranks, they were sorely disappointed.¹⁰ In February 1842, at a special meeting at Faneuil Hall in Boston, Garrisonians unrolled the Address before an audience of some 5,000, which included Irishmen who at first seemed receptive. But shortly after the meeting, prominent Irish leaders began to question the Address’s authenticity and to criticize its arrogation of the right to interfere in American affairs. Repeal societies sent addresses back to Ireland rebuking O’Connell and vindicating American institutions, including its “peculiar” one. In March 1842, one New York Garrisonian wrote to O’Connell directly, lamenting that “the foes of liberty, with shame be it said that some of them are Irishmen, [were] ... endeavouring to destroy” the Address. Garrisonians’ confidence in O’Connell also began to wax and wane, and for months recriminations were volleyed back and forth between Garrisonians and Irish leaders.¹¹

Some Irish Americans alleged that the Garrisonians were trying to divide Irish Repealers with the Address because they were hostile to Repeal.¹² Garrisonians retorted,

however, that some of their best friends were Repealers. When an Irish Repeal society in Philadelphia accused abolitionists of trying to weaken their cause, the Pennsylvania Anti-Slavery Society—whose leading members had gone to London in 1840 and remained in contact with Irish reformers—said they had never done anything “to injure or obstruct the cause of Repeal.” They desired the “success of the Irish people in their efforts to effect a peaceable repeal” of its “political Union.”¹³

Garrison himself always echoed that statement of support for Repeal. At the Faneuil Hall meeting where the Irish Address was first read publicly, he exclaimed, “I AM A REPEALER!”¹⁴ And he never changed his mind. England’s posture towards Ireland epitomized the “slaveholding style,” Garrison said, and he supported Ireland’s “effort to secure her emancipation.” In 1843, when a brief rift opened between Garrison and O’Connell, Garrison protested, with some justification, that he had always been “a decided friend of Repeal.”¹⁵ A few months later, when O’Connell repaired the rift by sending another antislavery address to Repealers in the United States, Garrisonians held another meeting at Faneuil Hall, where Garrison reiterated what he had said the year before: Ireland was “the victim of an absolute despotism,” and was “truly deserving” of abolitionists’ sympathy.¹⁶

Such statements of support for Repeal were, of course, part of the Garrisonians’ larger effort to thwart an alliance between Democrats and Irish immigrants. Philadelphia abolitionist James Miller McKim, who ran the city’s antislavery reading room, wrote to Richard Webb in Dublin requesting regular copies of Irish papers, because “evidence of “sympathy & correspondence between us & the Dublin Repealers” would be “calculated [to] increase the hold which we are of late beginning to have on the confidence of the

Irish population of this city.” But whatever their motives, the important point is that the Garrisonians were reading and thinking about Repeal, and were also casting it publicly in a positive light. In an August 1843 editorial in the Liberator, Maria Weston Chapman, a Garrisonian stalwart, wished “God speed” to Repealers in their “work of raising a noble people from wrongs and sufferings which yield in depth and intensity only to those of the American slaves.” While it is hard to know how many readers shared such views, one letter from a New York reader of the Liberator had agreed the month before that “Ireland must be delivered from the curse of this Union. Give her her home legislature, and it will do wonders for her.”¹⁷

In 1843, of course, Garrisonians had also concluded that their Union was a curse. The years in which Garrisonians were engaged in these dialogues and debates with Repealers on both sides of the Atlantic, were the same years in which Garrisonians first took up the call of disunion. In newspapers like the Liberator, articles on O’Connell’s movement for the “repeal of the union” sometimes appeared on the same pages as articles on Garrison’s new call for disunion, so it was not surprising that disunionists sometimes took sideways glances at Irish Repeal. Garrison even used “Repeal of the Union” as a headline for articles on disunion.

In fact, although historians most often refer to the Garrisonians’ new agenda as “disunion” or even “secession,” it is rarely noticed that Garrisonians frequently referred to their new strategy as a campaign for “repeal.”¹⁸ In May 1842, when Garrison first began emphasizing disunion, he placed a new motto at the top of his editorials, which called in capital letters for “A REPEAL OF THE UNION BETWEEN NORTHERN LIBERTY AND SOUTHERN SLAVERY.” In 1844, David Lee Child referred to

Garrison's call for the dissolution of the Union as "the doctrine of 'Repeal.'"¹⁹ And it is clear that abolitionists on both sides of the Atlantic were aware of the double connotation of that word. Richard D. Webb told Wendell Phillips in 1842 that he was "with Garrison for the Repeal of the Union" and "admired hugely his last two articles on the American Repale," or, as he called it later, "your repeal." This idea that abolitionists had their own "repeal" recurred in other letters. In a letter to Elizabeth Pease, Phillips echoed Webb by calling disunionism "our Repeal." Two years later, when the American Anti-Slavery Society took "No Union with Slaveholders" as its official motto, Edmund Quincy joked to Webb that "we have a repeal question as well as you, so you need not crow over us any more." Richard Allen wrote from Dublin that he enjoyed reading Garrison's "heart-burning articles on the repeal of the American Union," and it is telling that he had to specify which Union.²⁰

Sometimes these double-edged uses of the word "Repeal" were little more than jocular asides. But they also point, I believe, to a larger sense among Garrisonians that the two "repeals" were similar. One reader of the Liberator noted that it was odd for Democrats to accuse disunionists in America of treason, while simultaneously many of them supported "the dissolution of the union between England and Ireland." If that kind of analogy implicitly compared the two repeals, Garrison was even more explicit. In a personal letter, later published in the Liberator, he wrote that he was "for the repeal of the union between England and Ireland, because it is not founded in equity, because it is not a blessing, but a visible curse," and he went on to add, suggestively, that "on the same ground, and for the same reason, I am for the repeal of the union between the North and the South." A few days later, in a letter signed "yours for the repeal of the union between

freedom and despotism, the world over,” Garrison called himself “both an Irish Repealer and an American Repealer.”²¹

Such comparisons suggest that Garrisonians who called for the dissolution of the Union believed they were doing something like what O’Connell was doing in Ireland. This is not to say that disunionists were simply taking a page from Irish Repealers; there had been portents of disunion in the United States from the very beginning of the nation’s history, so Garrisonians had precedents aplenty on their side of the ocean for challenging the Union. Still, noticing that Garrisonian calls for disunion overlapped with Garrisonian conversations about Repeal may help us to be more specific about why the Garrisonians became disunionists when they did, as well as why their rhetoric about disunion took the shape that it did.

With regards to timing, it is worth recalling that Garrisonians had not always been disunionists. Shortly after the Liberator raised the banner of disunion in April 1842, the New York Herald pointed this out. “For several years past,” noted an anti-abolitionist editorial, “these [Garrisonian] fanatics have held their Annual Convention in this city ... but until the recent assemblage of the World’s Convention in London ... they have never dared to come out openly, and propose a REPEAL OF THE UNION.” Paranoid, the Herald might have been, but as far as chronology was concerned, it had a point: Garrisonians did not call for a “repeal of the union” until after 1840, when many went abroad and forged ties with reformers in Britain.²²

We can reject the Herald’s insinuation that disunion was merely a British import and still retain its insight that the Garrisonians’ rhetoric had changed as a result of their contact with British reformers in 1840. Garrisonians did not become disunionists in 1842

because British agents had planted the seed in their mind. The reasons for their turn to disunionism had more to do with the fact that 1842 was a grim year for abolitionists. Support for the annexation of Texas as a slave state was reaching a high tide; Northern Congressmen continued to be barred from reading antislavery petitions in the House of Representatives by a “gag rule”; and in February, at the same time that Garrisonians were publicizing the Irish Address, the Supreme Court affirmed in Prigg v. Pennsylvania that masters had a constitutional right to capture fugitive slaves in the North. It was omens like these that convinced Garrisonians to argue for the dissolution of the Union, not the whispered suggestions of British conspirators.²³ But if British political struggles in 1842 did not cause disunionism in the United States, as the Herald implied, the conjuncture of disunionism and Irish Repeal did provide the Garrisonians with ways of articulating and thinking about their cause.

The fact that Garrisonians reached for Irish analogies also invites us to reconsider how they thought about disunionism. The overlap between discourses about disunion and Repeal suggests, for instance, that disunionism was a dynamic ideology with diverse sources. Stereotypical portraits of disunionism, by contrast, often see it as a static and one-dimensional idea. Historians often trace Garrison’s disunionism back to his contact in the 1830s with perfectionist reformers like John Humphrey Noyes, founder of the utopian Oneida community, who urged his followers to “come out” from a sinful society in order to preserve their own moral perfectibility as individuals. This doctrine of “come-outerism” influenced Garrison’s thinking in the late 1830s, but some scholars also attribute his later radical views directly to his conversion to “come-outerism.” One

historian has recently suggested, for instance, that Garrison's views on come-outerism and disunion emerged "simultaneously."²⁴

Yet Garrison first began to call for disunion half a decade after his encounter with Noyes and "come-outerism"—a surprising delay if the ideas was simply synonymous.²⁵ To be sure, the language of come-outerism did shape Garrisonian ideas about disunion. In speeches and editorials on the dissolution of the Union, Garrison often said that abolitionists had a moral duty to "come out" of the Union, just as they had a moral duty to come out of proslavery churches and political parties. But as I have suggested, the vocabulary of come-outerism was not the only one that disunionists used. And the more immediate precursor to the emergence of disunionism in 1842 was not Garrison's encounter with Noyes, but the Garrisonians' ongoing encounters with Irish Repealers in the early 1840s.

The hybrid sources of disunionism deserve closer study, especially since critical portraits of Garrisonians tend to view come-outerism as the single parent of disunion. And that genealogy makes disunionism seem like nothing more than a quest for personal perfection. Disunionists are often depicted as priggish and self-centered prudes, more concerned with keeping their hands clean than with doing the hard work of antislavery politics, while political abolitionists in the Liberty Party and the Free Soil movement are praised, in contrast, for rolling up their sleeves and actually making strides to end slavery without ending the union. One recent study of antislavery politics, significantly titled Beyond Garrison, attributes to Garrison "a seemingly endless pursuit of self-purification that mistook the avoidance of politics for progress even as political abolitionism eclipsed his own movement."²⁶

But if Garrisonians compared their strategy to Repeal, perhaps we should qualify this idea that disunionism represented nothing more than the “avoidance of politics.” For whatever O’Connell’s movement for a repeal of the union was, it was not an attempt to withdraw from politics and achieve individual moral perfection. O’Connell intended his demands for Repeal to achieve specific political aims. Historians now argue that by threatening Repeal, O’Connell hoped to force Parliament to address a range of Irish grievances, and he was willing to abandon his demand for full Repeal if Parliament would make concessions on other points. “If we get the justice we require,” O’Connell once said, “then our Repeal association is at an end.” British abolitionist Elizabeth Pease emphasized the strategic nature of Repeal in a letter to a Boston Garrisonian in 1844: “I remember hearing [O’Connell] say in 1838, that it was not repeal but Justice he wanted, but found he could not obtain the one without agitating for the other.” His call was not for Repeal, but for reform or else Repeal.²⁷

Yet if Irish Repeal was clearly understood by O’Connell as a political expedient, and Garrisonians also understood it as such, then it is significant that they compared their calls for a “repeal of the Union” to Irish demands. Like Irish Repealers, Garrisonians often framed their calls for repeal as a kind of political ultimatum to Congress to abolish slavery or else dissolve the Union. As one Garrisonian paper in upstate New York declared in 1842, “we are no advocate for an unconditional repeal of the Union, but if slavery is to be perpetuated in this free republic ... we should go for repeal. But our hope is yet, that slavery will be overcome without so great a sacrifice as such a repeal would be.”²⁸

Such locutions, riddled with extenuating “buts,” were typical of Garrisonian calls for “repeal,” and they were mixed in with rhetoric stressing the moral duty of Northerners to “come out” of a sinful Union. As late as 1845, the Liberator pledged itself to disunion both as a way to “clear our skirts from innocent blood,” and as the “most consistent, feasible means of abolishing slavery.” If American come-outerism—traditionally seen as the primary intellectual source for “No Union with Slaveholders”—explains the side of disunionism that was moralistic and hostile to partisan politics, perhaps Irish Repeal can explain the origins of the other side of disunionism, which called for repeal or abolition as a conditional political demand. Viewing disunionism in a broad transatlantic context thus helps us see it partly as a political demand, rather than merely as a perfectionist fantasy. Perhaps, in conclusion, that also suggests the dividends of placing the era of the American Civil War in transnational perspective. By opening up our narratives of the antebellum period to include conversations not just between American reformers like Noyes and Garrison, but also transatlantic exchanges between reformers like Garrison and O’Connell, we can begin to see debates over the approaching crisis of the Union in a different light.²⁹

NOTES

¹ Henry Clarke Wright, “The Only Alternative—Dissolution of the Union, or the Abolition of Slavery,” Liberator, 29 April 1842; “The Annual Meeting at New-York,” Liberator, 22 April 1842. For protests from other abolitionists about Garrison’s apparent call for a disunion litmus test, see James S. Gibbons, “The Dissolution of the Union,” Liberator, 13 May 1842.

² On the Union of 1800 and its aftermath, see the various essays collected in Dáire Keogh and Kevin Whelan, eds., Acts of Union: The Causes, Contexts and Consequences of the Act of Union (Dublin: Four Courts, 2001). On O’Connell’s early career before the Repeal movement, see On O’Connell’s early career, see Oliver MacDonagh, The Hereditary Bondsman: Daniel O’Connell, 1775-1829 (London: Weidenfeld and Nicolson, 1988); Wendy Hinde, Catholic Emancipation: A Shake to Men’s Minds (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992). See also T. Desmond Williams, “O’Connell’s Impact on Europe,” in Kevin B. Nowlan and Maurice R. O’Connell, eds., Daniel O’Connell: Portrait of a Radical (New York: Fordham University Press, 1985), 100-106; K. Theodore Hoppen, “Riding a Tiger: Daniel O’Connell, Reform, and Popular Politics in Ireland, 1800-1847,” Proceedings of the British Academy 100 (1999), 121-143.

³ “The Irish Repeal Movement,” Liberator, 8 September 1843; WLG to George W. Benson, 13 May 1842, Walter M. Merrill and Louis Ruchames, eds., The Letters of William Lloyd Garrison [LWLG] (6 vols.; Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 1971-1981), 3:74.

⁴ My project has been broadly inspired by recent calls for transnational histories of the United States. See, e.g., Thomas Bender, ed., Rethinking American History in a Global Age (Berkeley: University of California Press, 2002). But manifestoes for transnational history have often passed over the antebellum period as less fruitful ground for transnational lines of inquiry. My work seeks, in part, to correct this lacuna.

⁵ On Garrisonian networks with Irish and British abolitionists after the “World’s Convention,” see Douglas C. Riach, “Richard Davis Webb and Antislavery in Ireland,” in Lewis Perry and Michael Fellman, eds., Antislavery Reconsidered: New Perspectives on the Abolitionists (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1979), 151-161; C. Duncan Rice, The Scots Abolitionists, 1833-1861 (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1981), 105-107; Howard Temperley, British Antislavery, 1833-1870 (London: Longman, 1972), 208-220; Lee Virginia Chambers-Schiller, “The Cab: A Trans-Atlantic Community, Aspects of Nineteenth Century Reform (Ph.D. diss., University of Michigan, 1977); Clare Midgley, Women Against Slavery: The British Campaigns, 1780-1870 (London: Routledge, 1992), 121-153.

⁶ James Haughton to Wendell Phillips, 10 September 1843, Harvard University [HU], Houghton Library [HL], bMS, Am 1953 (710).

⁷ Quotes from the Address are taken from a reprint in Daniel O’Connell upon American Slavery: with Other Irish Testimonies (New York: American Anti-Slavery Society, 1860), 38-40. For letters discussing the Address, see Richard Allen to Wendell

Phillips, 2 December 1841, HU, HL, bMS, Am 1953 (201); “The Irish Spirit,” Liberator, 8 October 1841; “Richard Allen,” Liberator, 17 December 1841; “The Disgrace of America,” Liberator, 14 January 1842.

⁸ Eleventh Annual Report, Presented to the Massachusetts Anti-Slavery Society, by its Board of Managers, January 25, 1843, rept. (Westport, Conn.: Negro Universities Press, 1970), 27. See Noel Ignatiev, How the Irish Became White (New York: Routledge, 1995), 6-31; David R. Roediger, The Wages of Whiteness: Race and the Making of the American Working Class, rev. ed. (London: Verso, 1999), 133-37.

⁹ William Lloyd Garrison [WLG] to George W. Benson, 22 March 1842, LWLG, 3:62.

¹⁰ For previous discussions of the reception of the Irish Address and the ill-fated alliance between American abolitionists and Irish immigrants, see, most recently, Maurice J. Bric, “Daniel O’Connell and the Debate on Anti-Slavery, 1820-1850,” in Tom Dunne and Laurence M. Geary, eds., History and the Public Sphere: Essays in Honour of John A. Murphy (Cork: Cork University Press, 2005), 69-82. Also see Gilbert Osofsky, “Abolitionists, Irish Immigrants, and the Dilemmas of Romantic Nationalism,” AHR 80, no. 4 (October 1975), 897-900; Riach, “Daniel O’Connell and American Anti-Slavery,” Irish Historical Studies 20, no. 77 (March 1976), 10-12; Neil J. O’Connell, “Irish Emancipation—Black Abolition: A Broken Partnership,” in The Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, 1750-1850: Proceedings 1978 (Athens, GA: Consortium on Revolutionary Europe, 1980), 58-76; John Wertheimer, “The Green and the Black: Irish Nationalism and the Dilemma of Abolitionism,” New York Irish History 5 (1990-91), 5-15; James Brewer Stewart, Wendell Phillips: Liberty’s Hero (Baton Rouge: Louisiana State University Press, 1986), 109-112; Madeleine Hooke Rice, American Catholic Opinion in the Slavery Controversy (New York: Columbia University Press, 1944), 62-85; George Potter, To the Golden Door: The Story of the Irish in Ireland and America (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1960), 371-99.

¹¹ James C. Fuller to Daniel O’Connell, 28 March 1842, The Correspondence of Daniel O’Connell, ed. Maurice R. O’Connell (Dublin: The Blackwater Press, 1972), 7:144-146. On the Faneuil Hall meeting, “Great Anti-Slavery Meeting in Faneuil Hall,” Liberator, 4 February 1842; “Irish Sympathy with the Abolition Movement,” in Wendell Phillips, Speeches, Lectures, and Letters: Second Series (Boston: Lee and Shepard, 1891), 19-23. For the hostile reaction of Repeal societies to the Address, particularly in the South, see David T. Gleeson, The Irish in the South, 1815-1877 (Chapel Hill: University of North Carolina Press, 2001), 120-131.

¹² For an example of the charge that Garrisonians were hostile to Repeal, see the reprint from the Boston Pilot in “O’Connell’s Abolitionism,” Liberator, 6 October 1843.

¹³ “Abolitionists Vindicated,” Liberator, 14 July 1843.

¹⁴ “Great Anti-Slavery Meeting in Faneuil Hall.”

¹⁵ WLG to Daniel O’Connell, 8 December 1843, LWLG, 3:231. For O’Connell’s falling out with Garrison, which was caused when he impugned Garrison’s religious beliefs, see the scholarship listed in note 9; James Haughton to Daniel O’Connell, 5

August 1843, Correspondence of O'Connell, 7:217-18; James Haughton to Edward M. Davis, 16 August 1843, HU, HL, bMS, Am 1054 (89); Richard D. Webb to Edmund Quincy, 16 August 1843, Boston Public Library [BPL], Mss. 960, vol. 2; "O'Connell and the American Pro-Slavery Repealers," Liberator, 8 September 1843; WLG to Maria Weston Chapman, 9 September 1843, BPL, Ms.A.9.2.19.33; Nathaniel P. Rogers to Francis Jackson, 13 September 1843, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.13.55; "Mr. O'Connell and Mr. Garrison," Liberator, 6 October 1843. Even political abolitionist Gerrit Smith, hardly a staunch Garrisonian, rebuked O'Connell for casting aspersions on Garrison's faith, for the sake of what appeared to be only narrow political gain. Garrisonians believed, probably rightly, that O'Connell was trying to distance himself from Garrison without fully repudiating his antislavery beliefs. See "Daniel O'Connell," Liberator, 14 April 1843; "Letter to Daniel O'Connell," Liberator, 28 April 1843; "Letter of Gerrit Smith to Daniel O'Connell," Liberator, 28 April 1843; Gerrit Smith to Daniel O'Connell, 2 July 1842, Correspondence of O'Connell, 7:166-67.

¹⁶ "Grand Meeting in Faneuil Hall," Liberator, 24 November 1843. This second meeting was held after O'Connell sent a blistering rebuke to a group of Repealers in Cincinnati who had written an apologia for slavery to the LNRA. That reaffirmation of O'Connell's support for abolition largely redeemed him in the eyes of Garrisonians, even after he had given the cold shoulder to Garrison earlier in the year. See "Loyal National Repeal Association" (1843), No. 5 in The Influence of the Slave Power, with Other Anti-Slavery Pamphlets (Westport, Conn.: Negro Universities Press, 1970); "Speeches of Daniel O'Connell and Thomas Steele on the subject of American slavery," broadside (Philadelphia: [PASS], 1843), BPL, Res.4264.51, no. 32. For delighted reactions from abolitionists to the Cincinnati Address, see George W. Armstrong to Samuel May, Jr., 30 October 1843, Boston Public Library [BPL], Ms.B.1.6.1.37; "Irish Repeal and American Slavery," Liberator, 17 November 1843; Edmund Quincy to Richard D. Webb, 27 November 1843, BPL, Mss. 960, vol. 1, no. 4; WLG to O'Connell, 8 December 1843, LWLG, 3:229.

¹⁷ "O'Connell," Liberator, 18 August 1843; "Wesleyan Convention—Irish Repeal—Odd Fellowship," Liberator, 23 June 1843. For other statements of support for Repeal, so long as it was carried out peacefully, see Thomas Davis to Richard D. Webb, 12 June 1843, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.13.33; Elizabeth Reid to Wendell Phillips, 26 September 1843, in Clare Taylor, ed., British and American Abolitionists: An Episode in Transatlantic Understanding [BAA] (Edinburgh: Edinburgh University Press, 1974), 196; Amasa Walker to Webb, 8 January 1844, BPL, Ms.A.1.2.14.1.

¹⁸ The simultaneity of Garrisonians' calls for "disunion" and their interest in Irish Repeal has been noted before, but only in passing. See Clare Taylor, "Introduction" to BAA, 7; Noel Ignatiev, How the Irish Became White (New York: Routledge, 1995), 17; Henry Mayer, All on Fire: William Lloyd Garrison and the Abolition of Slavery (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1998), 314.

¹⁹ For the disunion slogan, see Liberator, 20 May 1842. For Child's reference to "Repeal," see Wendell Phillips Garrison and Francis Jackson Garrison, William Lloyd Garrison: The Story of His Life Told by His Children (4 vols., Boston: Houghton, Mifflin and Company, 1889), 3:98.

²⁰ Richard D. Webb to Wendell Phillips, 2 June? 1842, HU, HL, bMS, Am 1953 (1277/1); Phillips to Elizabeth Pease, 29 June 1842, BPL, Ms. A.1.2.12.2.62; Edmund Quincy to Webb, 14 June 1844, BPL, Quincy-Webb Correspondence, Mss.960, no. 6; “Letter from Richard Allen,” Liberator, 1 July 1842. While Garrisonians did use the terms “disunion” and “dissolution” alongside “repeal,” and while these two terms increasingly eclipsed the word “repeal” as the 1840s went on, Garrisonians rarely, if ever, described their doctrine of disunion as a “secessionist” position. For other examples of disunionism being described as “repeal,” see “Repeal of the Union,” Liberator, 6 May 1842; “Repeal of the Union,” Liberator, 13 May 1842; “The Union,” Tocsin of Liberty, reprinted in Liberator, 20 May 1842; “The Union,” Vermont Telegraph, reprinted in Liberator, 24 June 1842; “This Slaveholding Union,” Liberator, 5 August 1842.

²¹ WLG to Abel Brown, 18 March 1842, LWLG, 3:56-7; WLG to George W. Benson, 22 March 1842, LWLG, 3:62. The letter to Brown was published under “The Irish Address on American Slavery,” Liberator, 8 April 1842.

²² “Daring Abolition Movement—Repeal of the Union Proposed—Treason Organized at Last,” Liberator, 20 May 1842, reprinted from the New York Herald.

²³ On the boost to Texas annexationists given by the ascension of John Tyler to the presidency, see Don E. Fehrenbacher, The Slaveholding Republic: An Account of the United States Government’s Relations to Slavery, ed. Ward M. McAfee (New York: Oxford University Press, 2001), 120-126. On mounting discontent with the “gag rule,” see Lynn H. Parsons, “Censuring Old Man Eloquent: Foreign Policy and Disunion, 1842,” Capitol Studies 3 (1975), 89-106; James M. McPherson, “The Fight Against the Gag Rule: Joshua Leavitt and Antislavery Insurgency in the Whig Party, 1839-1842,” Journal of Negro History 48, no. 3 (July 1963), 177-195. On Prigg v. Pennsylvania, see Paul Finkelman, “Prigg v. Pennsylvania and Northern State Courts: Anti-Slavery Use of a Pro-Slavery Decision,” Civil War History 25, no. 1 (1979), 5-35; Eric W. Plaag, “‘Let the Constitution Perish’: Prigg v. Pennsylvania, Joseph Story, and the Flawed Doctrine of Historical Necessity,” Slavery and Abolition 25, no. 3 (2004), 76-101; Fehrenbacher, The Slaveholding Republic, 219-225.

²⁴ John Stauffer, The Black Hearts of Men: Radical Abolitionists and the Transformation of Race (Cambridge, Mass.: Harvard University Press, 2002), 19-20, 132-133, quoted on p. 115. In connecting disunionism to come-outerism, Stauffer explicitly follows John L. Thomas, who makes the same connection in John L. Thomas, “Romantic Reform in America, 1815-1865,” American Quarterly 17, no. 4 (Winter 1965), 656-681; and Thomas, , The Liberator, William Lloyd Garrison: A Biography (Boston: Little, Brown and Company, 1963), 319-328. On John Humphrey Noyes and his influence on Garrison, see Lewis Perry, Radical Abolitionism: Anarchy and the Government of God in Antislavery Thought (Ithaca, N.Y.: Cornell University Press, 1973), 63-69; Ronald G. Walters, American Reformers, 1815-1860, rev. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997), 55-60; Robert David Thomas, The Man Who Would Be Perfect: John Humphrey Noyes and the Utopian Impulse (Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 1977), 146-66. Thomas notes that “the influence of Noyes upon Garrison’s thinking has been vastly overrated by historians” (149n9). James Brewer

Stewart draws the same conclusion in “Peaceful Hopes and Violent Experiences: The Evolution of Reforming and Radical Abolitionism, 1831-1837,” Civil War History 17, no. 4 (1971), 293-309. Yet the perception that Garrisonian disunionism was “come-outerism” writ large persists in recent literature.

²⁵ Some historians have also argued that disunionism and nonresistance were not two sides of the same coin, and have stressed that disunionism can be seen partly as a political demand. In the 1840s, Noyes began to denounce the Garrisonians because he believed that disunionism was a political preoccupation and, ironically, not separatist enough. See Perry, Radical Abolitionism, 159-166; and Lewis Perry, “Versions of Anarchism in the Antislavery Movement,” American Quarterly 20, no. 4 (Winter 1968), 773-74; James Brewer Stewart, Holy Warriors: The Abolitionists and American Slavery, rev. ed. (New York: Hill and Wang, 1997), 106, 113-114; Ronald G. Walters, The Antislavery Appeal: American Abolitionism after 1830 (Baltimore: Johns Hopkins University Press, 1978), 129-145; James Brewer Stewart, “The Aims and Impact of Garrisonian Abolitionism, 1840-1860,” Civil War History 15, no. 3 (1969), 197-209; Aileen Kraditor, Means and Ends in American Abolitionism: Garrison and His Critics on Strategy and Tactics, 1834-1850 (1967; Chicago: Ivan R. Dee, 1989), 196-217.

²⁶ Bruce Laurie, Beyond Garrison: Antislavery and Social Reform (New York: Cambridge University Press, 2005), 5.

²⁷ Elizabeth Pease to Anne Warren Weston, 27 January 1844, BAA, 211. On Irish Repeal, and particularly its pragmatic dimensions, see Kevin B. Nowlan, “The Meaning of Repeal in Irish History,” in Historical Studies IV: Papers Read before the Fifth Irish Conference of Historians, ed. G. A. Hayes-McCoy (London: Bowes & Bowes, 1963), 1-17; Ignatiev, How the Irish Became White, 25; Nowlan, The Politics of Repeal: A Study in the Relations between Great Britain and Ireland, 1841-1850 (London: Routledge, 1965); Oliver MacDonagh, “O’Connell and Repeal, 1840-1845,” in High and Low Politics in Modern Britain: Ten Studies, ed. Michael Bentley and John Stevenson (Oxford: Clarendon, 1983), 4-27; Kevin B. Nowlan, “O’Connell and Irish Nationalism,” in Nowlan and O’Connell, eds., Daniel O’Connell, 13; Alvin Jackson, Home Rule: An Irish History, 1800-2000 (New York: Oxford University Press, 2003), 2-14. For general studies of Repeal, see Lawrence J. McCaffrey, Daniel O’Connell and the Repeal Year (Lexington: The University of Kentucky Press, 1966); K. Theodore Hoppen, “Riding a Tiger: Daniel O’Connell, Reform, and Popular Politics in Ireland, 1800-1847,” Proceedings of the British Academy 100 (1999), 121-143; D. George Boyce, Ireland 1828-1923: From Ascendancy to Democracy (Oxford: Blackwell, 1992), 1-29;

²⁸ “The Union,” Tocsin of Liberty, reprinted in Liberator, 20 May 1842. For other instances of Garrisonian rhetoric that described repeal as a conditional demand, see Chapter 5 of my forthcoming dissertation, “Our Country is the World: Radical American Abolitionists Abroad.”

²⁹ “Disunion Pledge,” Liberator, 27 June 1845.