

Title Page

**Fenians on the Farm: Irish Nationalism, Rurality,  
and the Trans-Atlantic Revolutionary Moment in  
Rural Ontario, 1865-1871**

Kiran Chatterjee  
HIS 115, Section 001  
Instructor: Ronald Samson

University of Waterloo  
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1

The title is a single line and written as a phrase.

2

The writer includes her name and the name of the instructor.

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The date is included on the title/cover page.



## Fenians on the Farm

Literature Review

Literature Review<sup>1</sup>

While there has been a recent decline in studies related to the Fenians in Canada, much scholarship was conducted in the 1960s and 1970s as a result of the Fenian Raids' centennial anniversary. Two clear patterns emerge when examining the scholarly discussion surrounding Canadian Fenians. First, until the 1980s, the Fenians were discussed in very general terms and mostly from an American perspective. Second, after the 1980s, the Fenians in Canada began to be studied independently. This shift in focus was most likely the result of wider scholarly interest in conducting geographic-specific microstudies that led to a more comprehensive understanding of Canada's Irish-Catholic history, including the Fenians. Historical interpretations of the Fenians can thus be understood as changing in accordance with researchers' geographic scope.

The first scholarly trend in research surrounding Canadian Fenians began in the 1930s, when C.P. Stacey wrote his article "Fenianism and the Rise of National Feeling in Canada at the Time of Confederation." In this work, he placed Fenianism as the cause of an increasing sense of Canadian nationalism and argued that "Fenianism provided a most beneficial influence upon the immediate and ultimate fortunes of [Confederation]...by engendering an atmosphere of patriotic enthusiasm eminently favourable to the success of an experiment in nation-building."<sup>1</sup> The trend of examining Canadian Fenians escalated in 1975, when W.S. Neidhardt published *Fenianism in North America*. In it, he showed that mid-nineteenth century Canadians took the Fenians extremely seriously and that their Canadian invasion attempt should not be regarded as, "a revolutionary movement of little or no consequence,"<sup>2</sup> thereby prioritizing Canadians' reactions to the Fenians over the Brotherhood's failed invasion attempts.<sup>2</sup> By contrast, Hereward Senior published *The Fenians and Canada* in 1978, where

<sup>1</sup> C.P. Stacey, "Fenianism and the Rise of National Feeling in Canada at the Time of Confederation," *Canadian Historical Review* 12 (1931): 238; C.P. Stacey, "A Fenian Interlude: The Story of Michael Murphy," *Canadian Historical Review* 15, no. 2 (1934): 133-54.

<sup>2</sup> W.S. Neidhardt, *Fenianism in North America* (Pennsylvania: The Pennsylvania State University Press, 1975), x.

1

Subheadings set the literature review apart from the rest of the text.

2

A brief background section is provided in an embedded literature review, as most of the important context is established in the preceding introduction section of the paper.

3

The scope and major findings of the literature review demonstrate how the topic can be viewed differently. This also provides an overview of the literature review's structure.

4

The writer provides a clear thesis statement that accounts for a change in approach to the topic over time.

5

A numbering system keeps readers on track and organizes their findings. This organization method suits a literature review that is arranged chronologically.

6

In this case, a quote, not paraphrase, is used because the language the source used is essential to its value. The quotation grammatically fits within its surrounding sentence.

7

Transition words that also contain an evaluative tone help explain the relationships between sources.

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he was primarily concerned with how Canada was to be appropriated to suit the Fenians' plans and how Canadian Fenians and their sympathizers were more broadly connected to the pan-Atlantic movement. Senior helped direct attention to Canada's relationship with the movement, but ultimately failed to mention how active the Fenians actually were within the country. <sup>1</sup>

Indeed, Neidhardt and Senior did not investigate Canadian Fenianism as its own separate branch of the organization and instead studied it from an American perspective. Moreover, despite their respective titles, neither work gave much attention to Canadian Fenians, rather devoting much of their focus to the interaction between American and Canadian Fenians or the American branch's intentions within Canada. This model was followed for quite some time, with many historians treating Canadian Fenians as an inferior faction of the much more active American wing.<sup>3</sup> <sup>2</sup>

Peter Toner began to break the trend of examining Canadian Fenians from an American perspective. In the 1970s and 1980s, Toner looked beyond the traditional historical periodization of Canadian Fenian studies by examining the movement from 1874 to 1884, well after the failed raids of 1866, 1870, and 1871. In addition, Toner explored the Brotherhood's success within Canada, thereby removing the emphasis from the American division and presenting a more balanced Canadian-American relationship. Toner challenged the accepted interpretation of Irish Catholics as loyal if they refused to rise when the Fenians attempted their raid on Ridgeway and instead suggested that "the Fenians were beginning to become the main lay political force amongst the Canadian Irish, in spite of the efforts of the government, the church, and the moderates to prevent this."<sup>4</sup> Of more importance was Toner's approach to the Canadian Fenians. He recognized that "[i]n the British provinces there were few <sup>3</sup> <sup>4</sup> <sup>5</sup> <sup>6</sup>

<sup>1</sup>In addition to Senior and Neidhardt, see Oliver P. Rafferty, *The Church, the State and the Fenian Threat, 1861-75* (New York: St. Martin's Press, 1999), R.V. Comerford, "Patriotism as Pastime: The Appeal of the Fenians in the Mid-1860s," *Irish Historical Studies* (March 1981), or E.R.R. Green, "The Beginnings of Fenianism," in *The Fenian Movement*, ed. T.W. Moody (Dublin: Mercier Press, 1968).

<sup>2</sup>Peter Toner, "The Green Ghost: Canada's Fenians and the Raids," *fire-Ireland* 16, 1981, 45.

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The source's contributions to the overall conversation on the topic while also pointing to its limitations are explained.

2

The writer points to a limitation within the scholarly discourse on the topic and provided analysis on what the implications of this restriction could be.

3

Chicago Manual of Style citations are used to indicate paraphrased, summarized, or quoted material.

4

The writer uses topic sentences that contribute to the thesis statement and indicate the contents of the paragraph.

5

In this case, a quote, not paraphrase, is used because the language the source used is essential to its value. The quotation grammatically fits within its surrounding sentence.

6

The writer uses evidence to support their thesis by analyzing its significance.

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urban centres of any size, and none to match the leading cities in the United States. More importantly, whereas most of the American Irish were urban dwellers, their counterparts to the north were overwhelmingly rural” and suggested that the movement in Canada would necessarily differ from that in America and Ireland because of its demography<sup>5</sup>. While never exploring the movement in rural Ontario in any great detail, Toner helped define the Fenians as they existed within Canada.

The second scholarly trend, which began in the late 1980s, was the result of Donald Akenson’s works and led to more interest in Irish activity in specific areas. Akenson’s 1984 microstudy *The Irish in Ontario* focused on the Irish in Leeds and Lansdowne Township and provided later historians with a model of how to conduct research on a specific town. Moreover, Akenson disproved many commonly held stereotypes about the Irish, most notably their propensity to settle in cities<sup>6</sup>. By establishing a new way to look at Irish-Canadians, Akenson provided a different framework for examining Fenianism, as it no longer necessarily had to conform to preconceived notions of Canadian Irish Catholics. Scholars such as Bruce Elliot also aided in this shift of focus by concentrating on the immigration experience of nineteenth century Irish Catholics<sup>7</sup>.

Similarly, George Sheppard’s article “God Save the Green: Fenianism and Fellowship in Victorian Ontario” and David Wilson’s “Fenianism in Montreal, 1862-68” each examined Fenian circles in one Canadian location. Conducting such microstudies allowed for Sheppard and Wilson to connect the movement to Canadians in a much more direct way because they were better able to examine the social context in which Canadian Fenians operated. In his discussion on the importance of examining Canadian Fenians at all, Sheppard goes so far as to say that, “Fenianism in Canada West was not merely a product of Irish nationalism but

<sup>5</sup> D. C. Lyne and Peter Toner, “Fenianism in Canada 1874-84,” *Studia Hibernica* 12 (1972): 29.

<sup>6</sup> Donald Akenson, *The Irish in Ontario* (Montreal: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1999), 37; See also Donald Akenson, *Being Had: Historians, Evidence, and the Irish in North America* (Toronto: P.D. Meany Publishers, 1985).

<sup>7</sup> Bruce S. Elliott, *Irish Migrants in the Canadas: A New Approach* (Kingston: McGill-Queen’s University Press, 1988).

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A numbering system keeps readers on track and organizes their findings. This organization method suits a literature review that is arranged chronologically.

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Transition words that also contain an evaluative tone help explain the relationships between sources.

5

The writer addresses the relationship between multiple sources rather than treating them individually.

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also a response to the social conditions of Victorian Ontario's urban areas," linking the movement to specific and unique Canadian attributes<sup>8</sup>. Brian P. Clark also used this approach in his 1993 book *Piety and Nationalism: Lay Voluntary Associations and the Creation of an Irish-Catholic Community in Toronto 1850-1895*, which investigated the evolution of various Irish Catholic nationalist organizations and how they were related<sup>9</sup>.

While all three authors approached Fenianism from a different perspective, they predominantly investigated Fenianism as it existed within urban centres. This urban focus is typical of much scholarship on the Fenians, contributing to the belief that Fenianism was an inherently urban movement<sup>10</sup>. As addressed by Akenson, Irish Catholics were not prone to settling in cities after they immigrated. As a result, the Fenians, while more numerous in urban centres, lived and were active in rural areas too.

Many publications examine Fenianism from a trans-Atlantic and cultural perspective; even though they focus on one aspect or area of Fenianism, they still mention related activities that were occurring around the world. Oliver P. Rafferty's *The Church, the State and the Fenian Threat, 1861-75*, published in 1999, is perhaps the best example of this change in focus because, despite centering his investigation on the Fenians' relationship with the Catholic Church in Ireland, Rafferty frequently mentioned the Fenians in Canada and the United States, using the pan-Atlantic nature of the organization to prove his argument. Similarly, many historians connect the Fenians to other nineteenth century issues. For example, works such as Donald Power's 1988 article "The Paddy Image: The Stereotype of the Irishman in Cartoon and Comic" examined the negative portrayal of the Irish in predominantly nineteenth century cartoons and even deconstructed how the Fenians were used to further this

<sup>8</sup>George Sheppard, "God Save the Green: Fenianism and Fellowship in Victorian Ontario," *Histoire-Social - Social History* 20 (May 1987): 130.

<sup>9</sup>Brian P. Clarke, *Piety and Nationalism: Lay Voluntary Associations and the Creation of an Irish-Catholic Community in Toronto, 1850-1895* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 1993).

<sup>10</sup>P.G. Smith, "Fenian Invasions of Canada," *Military History* 16, no. 6 (2000): 50; Peter Berresford Ellis, "Ridgeway, the Fenian Raids and the Making of Canada," in *The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada*, ed. Robert O'Driscoll Reynolds and Lorna (Toronto: Celtic Arts of Canada, 1988), 537-54; Brian Jenkins, *The Fenian Problem: Insurgency and Terrorism in a Liberal State, 1858-1874* (Montreal: McGill-Queen's University Press, 2008).

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1

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negative image<sup>11</sup>. Both works show the wide social concerns surrounding the Fenians and Irish Catholics more broadly.

Some modern scholars use the Fenians to explain elements of Canada's Confederation. For example, the important evolution of Canada's secret service, as mentioned by either Gregory Kealey in his 1999 "The Empire Strikes Back: The Nineteenth-Century Origins of the Canadian Secret Service" or Jeff Keshen's "Cloak and Dagger: Canada West's Secret Police, 1864-1867" published in 1987, also contribute to a wider discussion on Canada's nation-forming efforts, as both see the secret service as an important step towards Canada's national security<sup>12</sup>. As the catalysts for the secret service's creation, the Fenians were necessarily at the centre of Kealey's and Keshen's discussions. The Fenians have thus been a peripheral, but important, topic of some historical research.

Although approaches to the Fenian's Canadian movement have changed over time as the result of researchers' growing interest in microstudies, a comprehensive study on the movement within rural Ontario is nevertheless absent. Neidhardt's 1967 thesis "The Fenian Brotherhood in Southwestern Ontario" comes close, but like so many other works on the topic, ultimately looks at the American issues surrounding the Canadian Fenians. Indeed, it neglects to discuss the Fenian Brotherhood as it operated within Southwestern Ontario. Considering the Brotherhood's rural operations is essential to analyze their wider strategies because Ontario was predominantly rural at the time. As such, the gap in current literature in addition to Ontario's land usage during the nineteenth century necessitate an examination of Canada's Fenian Brotherhood through a rural lens.

<sup>11</sup> Donald Power, "The Paddy Image: The Stereotype of the Irishman in Cartoon and Comic," in *The Untold Story: The Irish in Canada*, ed. Robert O'Driscoll and Lorna Reynolds (Toronto: Celtic Arts of Canada, 1988), 40-44.

<sup>12</sup> Jeff Keshen, "Cloak and Dagger: Canada West's Secret Police, 1864-1867," *Ontario History*, 1987, 353-81; George Kealey, "The Empire Strikes Back: The Nineteenth Century Origins of the Canadian Secret Service," *Journal of the Canadian Historical Association* 10 (1999): 3-18.

1

The writer addresses the relationship between multiple sources rather than treating them individually.

2

The writer provides a summary of the findings and main patterns.

3

The writer identifies the gap in the literature their research will fill.

4

The writer explains the importance of future research and how it will address the gap in the current knowledge on the topic. Because an embedded literature review is placed within a research paper, the identified gap should be the topic of the wider paper.



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1

The bibliography is on a separate page and includes references from the literature review and writer's research paper.

2

The Chicago Manual of Style is used to format the bibliographic entries.

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### Bibliography

1978.

Sheppard, George. "‘God Save the Green’: Fenianism and Fellowship in Victorian Ontario." *Histoire-Sociale/Social History* 20, no. May (1987): 129–44.

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*Please Note: References intentionally shortened for the purposes of this sample. A literature review must include all citations.*