



NUI MAYNOOTH

Ollscoil na hÉireann Má Nuad

**THE IRISH FICTION OF EMILY LAWLESS:
A NARRATIVE ANALYSIS**

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For my mother

Brigid Stewart Prunty.

Abstract

If the measure of a writer's relevance is the extent to which he or she registers the discursive range of the period in which they write and the extent to which subsequent generations can recover that discursive energy from his or her work, then Emily Lawless should require no justification for inclusion in a tradition of significant Irish literary voices. The fictional work, in particular, of this writer facilitates access to an expanse of issues which constituted a major part of late nineteenth-century political, social and cultural debate in both Ireland and Britain. Most notably, the dissident alternative aspiration which she voiced to an increasingly monologic Irish nationalism renders a study of her work indispensable to a thorough and meaningful appraisal of that period.

The methodology employed in this study is, through a close textual reading of the four major novels which have a direct bearing on the national project, *Hurriish*, *With Essex in Ireland*, *Grania* and *Maelcho*, to discover and examine the specific discursive elements operating in each and, widening the analysis, to both contextualize Lawless's use of such elements and evaluate their social and political function with reference to current critical interpretations. By such a method, the relevance which Lawless registered in her own period is reflected by a comparable relevance in the current critical attitude to her period's literature. Also, only through such a primarily textualist study can the threads which make up each novel's subtext be picked up and followed. One such subtext appears in *Hurriish* by which the natural environment is represented equivocally as both familiar homeland and as a landscape inscribed by an estranging antipathy. By revealing the correspondence of this textual thread to the overt narrative of a fractured community it is possible to explore the close interaction of an ideological position taken by the author to both agrarian violence and Irish national belonging and the personal disquiet regarding her position. Similarly in *Grania*, the uncovering of Lawless's inflection of a *Bildungsroman* concerning a West of Ireland peasant woman with metropolitan discourses of degeneration and Social Darwinism allows for an in-depth evaluation of the narrative as a critique of essentialist doctrines deployed by Gaelic and Cultural Revivalists in

1890s Ireland which centred on the regenerative ethnic purity of the western native peasant stock. That such a discursive element operates through a comparative and evaluative incompatibility signals the misgivings which Lawless appears to harbour concerning an integrative and accommodating national future.

As in the case of *Grania*, the method of close reading employed in this thesis will also allow for a positioning of Lawless within a broader British literary current in its capacity to reveal discursive, generic and technical aspects of her writing which correlate with the wider imperial and social literary tradition to which Lawless also addressed herself. This is particularly evident in *Maelcho* in which Scottish Enlightenment stadial theory and the historical novel form pioneered by Sir Walter Scott will be shown to play a significant role in Lawless's conceptualisation of Irish social and historical development. Likewise in *With Essex in Ireland* the use of the female element in the narrative as a mechanism for managing the social category of competitive male violence will be seen to reflect that employed by the English novel of the same period as outlined by Nancy Armstrong. It will be the intention of this dissertation, therefore, to demonstrate that Lawless's engagement with contemporary social issues, whether directly as in *Hurriah* and *Grania* or indirectly through her historical fiction in *With Essex in Ireland* and *Maelcho*, is motivated by a determination to tease out the co-ordinates of an Irish national consciousness and thus concentrate attention on the knots and wrangles which conceptions of national identity and social formation posed. In doing so she tended to shade much of her representations of Irish issues with traditional Ascendancy political values which inevitably rendered her evaluations and solutions tellingly partisan. Within her fiction, the authorial emphasis is invariably brought down to the level of the individual -- a level to which Lawless consistently reduces the issues with which she grapples. It will be the argument of this dissertation that Lawless's use of alienated subjects as protagonists of each of the novels discussed here demonstrates the attempt by her to focus attention on the displacement of a significant tradition in Irish historical and cultural inheritance, a tradition which she viewed as progressively excluded from and dispossessed of meaningful participation in contemporary political and social formations of a modern national identity.

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Introduction.

Emily Lawless.

Literary Context and Critical Background.

If the measure of a writer's relevance is the extent to which he or she registers the discursive range of the period in which they write and the extent to which subsequent generations can recover that discursive energy from his or her work, then Emily Lawless should require no justification for inclusion in a tradition of significant Irish literary voices. The fictional work, in particular, of this writer facilitates access to an expanse of issues which constituted a major part of late nineteenth-century political, social and cultural debate in both Ireland and Britain. Most notably, the dissident alternative aspiration which she voiced to an increasingly monologic Irish nationalism renders a study of her work indispensable to a thorough and meaningful appraisal of that period.

Distinct from these wider parameters yet reflective of them, the novels and periodical writing of Emily Lawless reveal a shifting, often fractured personal consciousness attempting to secure an apparently uncertain position in a world defined more by its transitional impetus than by any reliable stability. It is in this tension between the personal, private world and the public arena that Lawless's work most reveals its late Victorian relevance. The personal and the public converge in texts punctuated by ideological prejudice and preconception, a traditionalist seeking after comfortable stabilities and a liberalism which reveals a real sympathy with and an understanding of her country's challenges. By addressing many of the problems of her day within the structure of her novels Lawless inevitably applied her own valuations and responses to them, revealing, as she did so, personal idiosyncrasies of thought and emotion. The harsh realities with which her characters are made to grapple and the equally harsh outcomes which characterize her fictions reveal a mind challenged by its environment and uneasy about its position in it. As a result Lawless's novels can be read on two levels, that of the narrative's obvious addressing of contemporary debates and that of the author's intimate expression of her individual inhibitions, weaknesses and strengths. This ability or tendency to personalize her topic, therefore, allows for a real immediate engagement with Lawless as a writer as

well as a unique and immediate appreciation of those current contemporary issues as they impacted on a private and involved creative intellect. It will be the purpose of this thesis to re-assert the overall relevance of Lawless's work to her own time and demonstrate its continuing relevance. This will be done by drawing out those features of the public and the private in the novels which register conflicting loyalties and also by paying close attention to how ideological demands and intrinsic sympathies interact.

The biography of Emily Lawless (1845-1913) to a certain extent is symbolic of that country whose struggle for identity she engaged in and charted, as she perceived it, during the 1880s and 1890s when social and political disillusion with a traditional system had reached a pitch of dissent. Nationalist in sentiment and Unionist by heredity, shaped culturally and historically by an ineradicable association with Britain, Lawless shared with the physical geographic space of Ireland an almost corroborative identity. For both, the continuity of a tradition was posited on a reservoir of past incident which validated the present. With a Catholic great-grandfather who conformed to the established church to avoid the restrictions of the penal laws, and a grandfather imprisoned twice in the Tower of London for his involvement in the United Irishmen movement and later a correspondent and supporter of O'Connell, Emily Lawless's family lineage resembled and articulated the curious and often bewildering interweaving of Ascendancy and Nationalist experiences. Regionally particular and intoned, spending much of her childhood in her maternal grandparents' lands in Galway, Lawless, like the national consciousness, was also attuned to a wider world view through an incorporated British imperial perspective. Years spent travelling and residing in London and Paris brought Lawless into contact with that metropolitan discursive system which consistently defines the authorial vantage point from which her Irish novels are presented.

Representative in this way of a hybrid culture and population diverse in its constituents yet identifiable and identifying as Irish, Emily Lawless also incorporated the pressures which that amalgam of interests and ideologies precipitated, particularly during the period of her writing in the 1880s and 1890s. As economic, cultural, racial and political tensions gained momentum during the Land and Home Rule campaigns, it became increasingly difficult to sustain a conception of the nationally authentic by a concept of the diverse. For Emily Lawless, the devolving of national belonging down to an ethnic or cultural selectivity meant the disqualification of much by which she

herself was defined. Such demarcations also exposed a drive towards image creation as the impetus in a struggle for ownership of the emerging nation's future. Cultural Revivalist and Gaelic Nationalist investments in ancient Celtic mythology and the celebrating of a perceived untainted Gaelic or Celtic peasant stock involved for Lawless the commandeering of a shared past to which there was no exclusivist entitlement and the fabricating of an imposture which, as a pragmatic realist, she would have found unattractive. The sense of inevitability which the successive Home Rule Bills and Land Acts gave to the dismantling of a familiar and once secure social structure and the inevitability which extensions of the franchise contributed to the prospect of Catholic Nationalist majority rule meant that Lawless, as a writer articulating a predominantly Anglo-Irish unionist sentiment, found the asserting of her 'Irishness' to be a reactive and defensive task.

Reproducing an already tired and defunct social philosophy and invoking values which were conventional and cosmopolitan rather than nation specific, Lawless was easily dismissed by those deeply involved in the creation of a new and energised national consciousness. So W. B. Yeats could dismiss Lawless on the grounds of her being 'in imperfect sympathy with the Celtic nature' and fault her 'commonplace conception of Irish character', both criticisms directed by an absolute designation of Irishness according to Cultural Revivalist prescriptions.¹ Irish nationalist reviewers, likewise, could denounce what they judged to be her predictable Ascendancy condescension, the much quoted review of *Hurrish* in *The Nation* condemning her for looking down on the peasantry from 'the pinnacle of her three generation nobility'.² Voicing a viewpoint which was alternative and, therefore, seen as antagonistic to that of a nationalist interest, such critics sought to discount that viewpoint's relevance through a discounting of Lawless's creative or representational qualifications and, particularly, her credibility as a writer. Synge would belittle *Grania* on the charge that 'the real Aran spirit is not there', a criticism closely echoing that of Yeats.³ Lady Gregory, who was a close acquaintance of Lawless and whose 'Kiltartanese' plays were a staple of Irish Culturalist theatre could, nonetheless, reject *Hurrish* for its

¹ Yeats, W. B. 'Irish National Literature, II: Contemporary Prose Writers -- Mr O'Grady, Miss Lawless, Miss Barlow, Miss Hopper, and the Folklorists', *Uncollected Prose by W. B. Yeats* (ed.) John P. Frayne, (London: Macmillan, 1970), pp.369-70.

² Review, *Nation*, (February 28th. 1886). Lawless Papers, Marsh's Library, Dublin.

³ Synge, J. M. *Collected Works* vol. ii. (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1966), pp.102-103.

patronizing tone.

Yeats did include Lawless's *With Essex in Ireland* and *Maelcho* in his list of best Irish books, with reservations, yet significantly omitted *Hurrish* and *Grania*, two novels which dealt specifically with current topical issues which had a bearing on Yeats's own immediate national and cultural vision. Yeats claimed that Lawless had 'in her the makings of a great book full of an avid and half spectral intensity' although it is arguable if such a production would have dealt with an Irish subject in any way which might have satisfied his strictures.⁴ Lawless did produce just such a work in *Grania* yet received little attention from an Irish public and none from Yeats. The demeaning appraisal which Yeats himself afforded late nineteenth-century Irish fiction in general, its 'loss of manner' after Carleton particularly, no doubt contributed to the equally low estimation by those who followed after, such as Ernest Boyd.⁵ Referring to Irish prose fiction as exhibiting a 'prevailing flatness', Boyd concluded it to be 'the weak point of the Revival'.⁶

In the four significant novels written in this period, and forming the core of this thesis, a dual strategy is adopted. *With Essex in Ireland* (1890) and *Maelcho* (1894) are attempts to reaffirm a perception of Irish history as fluid and miscegenated, rather than one dimensional, and in which Old English, Anglo-Irish or Gaelic participants register an Irish tradition emanating from the collision with English cultural and systematic colonialism. In *Hurrish: A Study* (1886) and *Grania* (1892), Lawless challenges directly, on contemporary ground, the claims of essentialist nationalism and its exclusivist policy through figuring its liberating and totalizing doctrine as, in fact, a fundamental hampering of the nation's scope.

⁴ Yeats, 'Irish National Literature', *Uncollected Prose*, p.369-70.

⁵ Kelleher, Margaret, 'Prose Writing and Drama in English, 1830-1890: from Catholic emancipation to the fall of Parnell', in (eds.) Margaret Kelleher and Philip O'Leary, *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2000), p.449.

⁶ Boyd, Ernest, *Ireland's Literary Renaissance* (Dublin: Allen Figgis, 1968), pp.374-375.

Political Hinterland.

Nationalism in the last decades of the nineteenth century was acquiring a surface unity beneath which sharply contested differences existed. The need for an overall cultural identity and a unified nationalist front entailed a broad amalgamation of four main strands of nationalism which in themselves represented diverse social constituencies. Most notable of these were that of class, a confessional identity founded on the authority of the Catholic Church, democratic nationalism represented by the dominance of the Irish Parliamentary Party, revolutionary separatists incorporating both cultural and political nationalists, and the radical element which comprised agrarian and labour movements.⁷ All of these strands of nationalism contained their own internally contested areas of interest. While the Catholic church represented an anti-modernism and anti-materialism it also located its social base within the respectable middle-class, displaying a pronounced hostility towards liberalism and a suspicion of democracy. The Irish Parliamentary Party, centred around an educated Catholic middle- and lower-class, received its mandate predominantly from the newly prosperous rural and urban sections of the population. The Party's social identity and social programme, therefore, was focused on two key elements; the aim of the new nationalist elite, rural and urban, 'to localise political opportunity, power and influence', and the drive for ownership of the land by an emerging rural propertied elite.⁸

Cultural and political separatism grew out of the blocked aspirational needs of an educated Catholic lower middle-class and also provided a cultural reference point for the newly acquired political and socio-economic power of the Catholic middle-class. It also became a means of envisaging an alternative social order for literary and intellectual elements in the rural areas and of winning from Protestant holders many of the professional occupations in the urban areas by the Catholic lower-middle class. Nonetheless, this left a large section of the population excluded; landless labourers, small holders with insufficient capital, the urban working class and women. These groups formed the nucleus of a radicalism which nationalism sought to absorb through a cross-class populist ideology, containing thereby radical demands for

⁷O'Mahoney, Patrick, and Gerard Delanty, *Rethinking Irish History: Nationalism, Identity and Ideology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p.63.

⁸ O'Mahoney, *Rethinking Irish History*, p.69.

inclusive change. With the onset of the Land War in 1879 and the emergence of Charles Stuart Parnell as leader of the Parliamentary Party, these disparate interests within nationalism were fused into an overall national strategy. The Fenian movement was accommodated to the constitutional politics of the Home Rule movement, combining, as a consequence, the electoral power of the Parliamentary Party with revolutionary support from the United States. A unity of purpose forged between Parnell and the Land League through the 1880s also merged the constitutional movement with agrarian radicalism, while the concordat between Parnell and the Catholic Church by which the Irish bishops recognised the legitimacy of Land League aims consolidated an alternative national consensus to any proffered by Unionism or British Imperial discourse.⁹

Yet the conflictual nature of these nationalist positions and the apparent self-interests which often went with them was not exclusive to separatist nationalism. James Murphy defines the mentality characterising upper middle-class Catholic society -- doctors, lawyers, merchants and landlords -- who did not perceive the connection with Britain as necessarily negative during this period.

They were more-nationally minded than nationalists. They certainly subscribed to an Irish sense of national identity but were not separatists. For them participation in a distinctively Irish national and religious identity was compatible not only with metropolitan Victorian culture but also with an imperial British identity. They therefore viewed the continuing political and social tensions which existed between Ireland and Britain as damaging to their interests.¹⁰

In this regard Lawless's unionism need not be isolated within that Protestant Ascendancy frame with which she is immediately associated but actually comprises a wider social network of common interests which crossed ethnic and religious divides. The social and national vision, similarly, which she expresses in her writings need not be seen simply as reflecting a nationally unrepresentative view. To see Lawless and fellow unionists such as W. E. H. Lecky as maintaining social and political perspectives which were merely one dimensional, static and self-delusional would be simplistic. The convergence of attitudes between Lecky and O'Neill Daunt, former

⁹ O'Mahoney, *Rethinking Irish History*, p.99.

¹⁰ Murphy, James, H., 'Insouciant Rivals of Mrs Barton': Gender and Victorian Aspiration in George Moore and the Women Novelists of the *Irish Monthly*, in (eds.) Margaret Kelleher and James H. Murphy, *Gender Perspectives in 19th century Ireland: Public and Private Spheres* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 1997), pp. 221-228, p.222.

secretary to Daniel O'Connell and moderate nationalist, indicates the middle ground and the interchanging of positions which constitutional nationalism and unionism were compelled to occupy according to changing circumstances. O'Neill Daunt shared Lecky's apprehension about Parnell's suggestion of compulsory expropriation of landlords and shared Lecky's view that the current state of the country was in the main due to the land agitators.¹¹ O'Neill Daunt's lifelong pursuit of a domestic parliament for Ireland was as equally shaken by events of the 1880s as Lecky's attitude to the ability of the Irish majority to govern themselves, evident in a letter to Lecky on the subject.

I wish I had good grounds to differ from your belief that home rule, if now obtained, would impart noxious power to the brawlers of the land agitation. It is a choice of evils. The union is a deadly blight. A domestic parliament composed of Davitts, Redpaths and similar creatures would be a very equivocal blessing.¹²

The core period of Lawless's literary career was that of the last two decades of the nineteenth century, a period marked by market depression, violent atrocity, state coercive statute and land act reform, all of which indicated the systematic dismantling of an outmoded social order and the forging of a new identity politics. The constitutional campaign for Home Rule, prosecuted by the Irish Parliamentary Party under the leadership of Charles Stuart Parnell throughout the 1880s and subsequently, amplified and manipulated historically existent pressures between conservative and liberal, unionist and nationalist, propertied and landless classes, Catholic and Protestant. The tactics employed during the Land War and Home Rule campaigns, particularly the harnessing of lower class mass energies, unnerved many of the Anglo-Irish ruling class.¹³ Lawless's attitude to the prospect of Home Rule and her suspicion of nationalism's future intentions is apparent in the 1888 edition of her history *Ireland*.

Set before a stranger to the whole Irish problem a map of the British islands and ask him whether it seems to him inevitable that they should remain for ever united and we can scarcely doubt that his reply would be in the affirmative. This being so, we have at least it will be said one fact, one sea-rock high above the reach of waves or spray...Will Home Rule or would

¹¹ McCartney, *W. E. H. Lecky*, p.97.

¹² McCartney, *W. E. H. Lecky*, p.97.

¹³ Lecky, whose celebration of Grattan's Parliament seemed to support the concept of Irish self-rule, nonetheless denied any connection between Grattan's and a notional Irish parliament based on democratic representation. See McCartney, Donal, *W. E. H. Lecky*, pp.158-159.

Home Rule, it has been asked, recognise this fact as one of the immutable ones, or would it sooner or later incline to think that with a little determination, a little manipulation, the so-called fact would politely cease to be a fact at all.¹⁴

The threatening nature of nationalism's political impetus for unionists such as Lawless is caught in her metaphor of the sea-rock high above the reach of waves and spray in this out-of-place aside in her historical narrative, clearly evoked by the tensions operating on her at the time. This paragraph does not appear in the later edition of 1912, when the heat of Home Rule agitation had somewhat cooled. Reflective of her friend and mentor Lecky's admonitions regarding Irish self-rule and sharing such opinions with her cousin, Sir Horace Plunkett, founder of the Agricultural Co-operative Movement, Lawless could allay her misgivings by a sanguine conviction that the fractiousness of the Irish temperament would defeat its own political ambition.¹⁵ Following Parnell's fall from favour after the O'Shea divorce controversy in 1891, Lawless wrote to her cousin on the prospects for the Home Rule movement: 'As for Home Rule, one cannot help hoping that *that* bogey is dead and done with for ever. My chief stay and hope is in Parnell's 'cussedness' ! I do not believe that anything will induce him to shelve himself for a moment or even to pretend to shelve himself and as long as that is the case we are surely all safe'.¹⁶ The accuracy of Lawless's judgement in this matter is impressive. Murphy pinpoints this same 'cussedness' as the element in Parnell's character which most militated against his political recovery.

His refusal to resign as leader following his denunciation, firstly, by English nonconformism (an all-important element in the Gladstonian coalition) and then by the Irish Catholic Church, revealed the handicapping dimension to a quality which had previously helped him, his aristocratic disdain. Had he resigned, he might have been able to return.¹⁷

Cautiously conservative overall, Lawless like many of her Ascendancy fellow travellers drew on a retrenchment philosophy which had at its heart an antipathy or distrust of a modernization process. As Gerardine Meaney notes, 'Lawless was an arch Victorian: a belief in and anger at progress were tempered for her by the fear of

¹⁴ Lawless, Emily, *Ireland* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1888), p.415.

¹⁵ Marie O'Neill states that Lawless and Plunkett were related through the marriage of Edward Plunkett, the 14th. Lord Dunsany to Charlotte Louise daughter of Nicholas Lawless the first Baron Cloncurry. O'Neill, Marie, 'Emily Lawless', *Dublin Historical Record* vol. 48.2, Autumn, 1995, pp.125-41.

¹⁶ Ms. 639 in T.C.D. Library, cited by O'Neill, 'Emily Lawless', p.133.

¹⁷ Murphy, James, H., *Ireland: A Social, Cultural and Literary History, 1791-1891*

elimination by it'.¹⁸ Standish O'Grady's lamenting in *The Crisis in Ireland* (1882) of the loss of the social foundation, which he believed the landed aristocracy in Ireland to constitute -- 'The stone is the landed aristocracy of Ireland, once firm-rooted on the crest of the hill; the rain and lashing wind are the unrecognised, unadmitted growth of the Irish Democracy, and of ideas thence generated, gradually permeating millions of minds, stealthily sapping and wearing away all that which once held Irish landlordism firm in its high place' -- is matched only by a vituperative roll call of what he sees as its causes, all instances of a developing modernity, ranging from socialism, to government sanctioned tenant proprietorship, American emancipatory doctrines, and Irish democracy in general.¹⁹ Many of O'Grady's sentiments and targets are replicated in Lawless's novel, *Hurriah*, dealing with agrarian agitation, particularly the recriminations which are directed towards a well-intentioned landlordism ham-strung by central government and a perceived American ideological interference identified as responsible for the undermining of traditional rural relationships. O'Grady's assertion that 'the modern Irishman, in spite of all his political rodomontade, does very deeply respect rank and birth' is a clinging to a belief in the innate or hereditary loyalty of the Irish lower classes to their natural superiors, a belief which itself asserts a natural inferiority and dependency within the native Irish and the consolidating of class structures as in themselves natural.²⁰

Such an insistence on the natural coincidence of social structures with national character informs all of Lawless's narratives, mainly in a subtle formulation yet often quite explicitly declared. The deference shown by *Hurriah* to his erstwhile 'Captin', Pierce O'Brien, and Maurice Brady's stated ineluctable peasant condition illustrate Lawless's endorsement or opportune application of this philosophy, as does Maelcho's inability to survive once divested of his position within his feudal frame. Yet perhaps the most poignant and obvious illustration of the lower class's presumed inbred need for objects of allegiance and the completion which those objects make to

(Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2003), p.133.

¹⁸ Meaney, Gerardine, 'Decadence, Degeneration and Revolting Aesthetics: The Fiction of Emily Lawless and Katherine Cecil Thurston', *Colby Quarterly* vol.36.2, June 2000, pp. 157-75, p.168.

¹⁹ O'Grady, Standish James, *The Crisis in Ireland* (Dublin: E. Ponsonby, 1882), p.5.

²⁰ O'Grady, Standish James, *Toryism and the Tory Democracy* (London: Chapman and Hall, 1886), pp.271-272.

a natural social structure is presented in *Grania* by the ruined villa and former residence of the island landlord to which old Durane looks with nostalgic adoration and to which Grania herself creeps with a racially characteristic reverence. The dissolute Murdough Blake's fickle pursuits of chimeras to satisfy his lack of purpose is similarly balanced by his vagrant gravitation to this ruined symbol of authority and order.

Nonetheless, the critiquing of those elements which she identified as an ideological and political threat and the re-constructing of specific historical moments which might authenticate Anglo-Irish claims to a broader tradition of Irish nationalism were two strategies open to Lawless as a writer intent on representing the ethos of her class. That ethos is of the traditional landed Ascendancy, a tradition which Lawless repeatedly opposes to the radical redefining of social relationship. The espousal of this class's interests is evident in the fact that Lawless's novels restrict themselves exclusively to a rural setting in which a resource of social terrain is fought over, and consequently eschew noticeably the large urban population centres and the challenges which a professional, progressive, middle-class unionism confronted. While progressive in the sense that political and ideological readjustments were recognised by Lawless in her fictional work as inevitable and desirable it is to Horace Plunkett's co-operative 'improvement' tradition and the reconstruction of historical and cultural placement revolving around a regenerate landlordism such as O'Grady's to which Lawless's sense of class fundamentally aligns itself. The valued acquaintance of Lecky, evident from her correspondence with him, can also be detected as an influence in her texts, particularly *Hurrish*. Lecky's objections to Home Rule were founded on his estimation of the character of those leading its activities and likely to succeed to government. Similarly to Lawless's representation of the agrarian and separatist campaign in *Hurrish*, Lecky insisted coercion was rampant in Ireland but coercion of the agitators rather than any violence on the part of the legal system and that those directing the land agitation were communists and the disciples of the American socialist, Henry George.²¹ Hansson notes Lawless's reference to Yeats in a letter as one of the 'disloyals' but is uncertain as to what Lawless meant by the term.²² However, the term is most likely a reference to a notable letter written by Lecky to *The Times* on 13th. January 1886 as his first outright attack on Gladstone's support for

²¹ McCartney, *W. E. H. Lecky*, p.124.

Home Rule. Calculating that a third of the population supported the union, Lecky claimed that the remaining two thirds supported the *disloyal* side, much of the disloyalty being due to political and religious animosity and also to the belief that the disloyal side was winning.²³

From the appearance of her first Irish novel *Hurrish* in 1886 it is apparent that Lawless intended to contest the area of nationalism and its narrowing parameters. The position she adopts could be defined as the ‘Pierce O’Brien’ strain of nationalism: ‘Soldier, landlord, Protestant, very Tory of Tories...Pierce O’Brien was... in a literal sense of the word, a Nationalist -- as any frieze-coated Hurrish of them all’.²⁴ What identifies Pierce O’Brien as Nationalist is his commitment to community, an historical devotion to his locality and a familial inheritance of belonging. From the sense of social responsibility and political awareness which she imbues in the Anglo-Irish women of *With Essex in Ireland*, to the mutual definition and dependence of the ‘foreigner’ Grania and her island, to the stark cultural and racial struggles of *Maelcho*, it is clear that Lawless is at pains to conceive of Irishness as a relationship with place rather than strict and exclusive affiliation to an aboriginal identity.

Lawless’s keen interest in marine biology, botany and geology associates her theoretically with that middle ground which Eve Patten refers to as forming among the urban Protestant intelligentsia a ‘common interest in professional or cultural engagement’, interests which are diffused throughout Lawless’s major texts.²⁵ In *Hurrish* and *Grania* most obviously, Lawless presents an acute appreciation and scientific understanding of native Irish landscape and local colour which would not be out of place in the Ordnance Survey Memoir of Ireland compilations of the 1830s and 1840s. Lawless did pursue through her writing an interest in reconfiguring Anglo-Irish attitudes to national history and to a cultural re-alignment of the Protestant and Gaelic tradition which had occupied the minds of the mainly urban Protestant professionals such as George Petrie, Samuel Ferguson and ultimately Standish James O’Grady over the century. This is evident in her contributions of articles on landscape and historical episodes to the periodicals of the day and in her poetry and

²² Hansson, *Emily Lawless*, p.22.

²³ McCartney, *W. E. H. Lecky*, p.116.

²⁴ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.48.

²⁵ Patten, Eve, *Samuel Ferguson and the Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ireland*

also finds its fullest concentration in the narratives of *With Essex in Ireland* and *Maelcho*.

Lawless's political knowledge, however, would have been intimately informed by her social milieu which comprised to a considerable extent friends and acquaintances attached to imperial administration. Hansson lists some of Lawless's friendships and acquaintances as the Earl of Dufferin, later Marquis of Dufferin and Ava, Viceroy of India: Sir Alfred Lyell, civil servant in India, poet and biographer of Lord Dufferin: Sir Mountstuart Elphinstone Grant Duff, Under Secretary of State for India and for the Colonies and Governor of Madras: Sir Henry Blake, Governor of Bahamas, Jamaica, Hong Kong and Ceylon, who, along with his wife, accompanied Lawless on her fact finding visit for *Grania* to the Aran Islands.²⁶ Yet she was also personally associated with Lady Gregory, whom she knew from early womanhood, and W. B. Yeats, with whom she persistently quarrelled during a stay at Gregory's home. However, the cultural and Gaelic side of her social world she seems to have associated with a political dimension which apparently did not accrue to the imperial acquaintanceship. Lawless's excusing of herself in a letter to Lady Gregory from support of the Irish theatre seems to conceal, as Hansson suggests, a suspicion of its politics.

I enclose a cheque for £1, but confess it is more of a proof of my regard for you than of my belief in the Drama, for I cannot with the best wish in the world to do so, feel hopeful on that subject. My experience has been that any attempt at treating Irish history is a fatal handicap, not to say absolute bar, to anything in the shape of popularity, and I cannot see how any drama can flourish which is not to some degree supported by the public, as it is even more dependent on it than literature is.²⁷

Given the intensity of Irish interest in history and the politics of history during these years, it seems likely that Lawless is considering popularity in terms of personal acclaim in this instance. It would be interesting to determine why she should associate the Irish theatre specifically with history, since Gregory and Yeats's objective for the Irish theatre was one of a cultural voice generally. In a letter to Horace Plunkett, Lawless also refers to correspondence from the 'Gaelic theatre and circle' thanking her for assistance of which she was unaware. Again, she instinctively associates this

(Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), p.13.

²⁶ Hansson, *Emily Lawless*, pp.10-25.

²⁷ Hansson, *Emily Lawless*, p.22. From William Linn, 'The Life and Works of the Hon. Emily Lawless, First Novelist of the Irish Literary Revival', dissertation, New

with politics: 'I am not *anti-Gaelic* at all so long as it is only Gaelic *enthuse* and does not include politics'.²⁸

Literary Hinterland.

The literary environment in which Lawless worked was an extensive one. Because of British entanglement in Irish political and social affairs much was held in common between an Irish and British intelligentsia. The repercussions which strategies in Ireland might have on the wider imperial system and the concern that an understanding of the Irish problem was necessary to the imperial enterprise in general fuelled public interest. Land agitation and reform, national education schemes, historical debates and historiographical reviews, the role of religion, Liberalism, Unionism, Nationalism, coercion and appeasement, are all features of the interchanges centring on the position of Ireland within the British system which occupied the pages of Victorian periodicals during these years. These exchanges featured the leading political and intellectual figures of the day, Matthew Arnold, W. E. Gladstone, W. E. H. Lecky, J. A. Froude, G. D. Campbell (Duke of Argyll), T. Dunbar Ingram, Henry George, Michael Davitt, as well as an extensive imperial reportage and debate emanating from administrators and indigenes alike. Lawless would have drawn on this store of knowledge in writing *Hurrish, With Essex in Ireland* and *Maelcho* particularly. Eve Patten's exploration of the connection between British imperial debates and *With Essex in Ireland* demonstrates the complexity of Lawless's referential world and the depth which it supplies to her work.²⁹

Apart from the overtly political, however, Lawless was also subject to the wider ranging interests of her day. The controversies involving the social position of women, women's suffrage and domestic and working exploitation, gained momentum during the last two decades of the century. New Woman novelists such as Sarah Grand and Olive Schreiner championed a closer scrutiny of male presumptions on the role of women while more conservatively minded writers such as Margaret Oliphant, a close acquaintance of Lawless, could acknowledge the injustices while celebrating a

York University, 1971.

²⁸ Sichel, Edith, 'Emily Lawless', *Nineteenth Century and After* vol.76, July, 1914, pp.80-100, p.87.

²⁹ Patten, Eve, 'With Essex in India ? Emily Lawless's Colonial Consciousness',

woman's superior sacrifice. This dual position is worked out by Lawless in the complementary figures of the two sisters, Grania and Honor O'Malley in her novel *Grania*. Other literary women, apart from Oliphant, with whom Lawless was acquainted were Mrs Humphrey Ward, a close friend of Lawless, Maria Catherine Bishop and Ella Fuller Maitland whose *Pages from the Day-Book of Bethia Hardacre* was a favourite of Lawless's.³⁰

Debates issuing from the area of science would also have been a familiar literary subject for Lawless, given her lifelong interest in the natural sciences, and also by virtue of the fact that Darwinian theory was interacting with public, religious and social concerns from the mid century onwards. Lawless's presentation of race and cultural history, ethnic diversity and human progressivism in the four novels under consideration in this study reflect to differing degrees aspects of these concerns. In this regard, specifically in relation to *Grania*, Lawless shares many of the technical features and the thematic elements which identify the writings of George Gissing, Thomas Hardy and George Meredith. Like these writers Lawless appears to have a metaphysical bent to her thinking in so far as she apprehends meaning beyond the immediately perceptible, working an indeterminate yet almost fatalistic process into her subject. There is a seeming contradiction in aligning metaphysics with a biological agency, yet in *Grania* at any rate and to an extent in *Maelcho*, the principle envisaged operating behind the biological imperatives is itself not simply physical but teleological, ameliorative possibilities hinted at if not realised in the narrative. Potential is the connecting tissue between the two, that same potential from whose failure Hardy draws such tragedy in novels such as *Tess of the D'Urbervilles* and *Jude the Obscure* and the absence of which Gissing uses to permanently fix the fates of his working class subjects.

In the area of Irish fiction Lawless occupied the same discursive territory as George Moore, Rosa Mulholland, Elizabeth Owens Blackburne, Fannie Gallagher, and Letitia McClintock among others. These writers, including Lawless, in their individual ways attempted to extricate some kind of personal and social direction from the tangled knot which Irish politics presented during this period and the novels of each provide a revealing picture of those same class, creed and ideological sympathies which made up that complexity. Attempting to sift the dense politics of

Irish society through the filter of domestic fiction, as many of these writers tried to do, was never likely to prove successful and in this regard Lawless's *Hurriah* and *Grania*, in so far as they are political texts, suffer from the same sense of forced or melodramatic sentiment and narrative resolution as McClintock's *A Boycotted Household* (1881) or Moore's *A Drama in Muslin* (1886). The exploration of personal sexuality, suppressed or otherwise, the isolation of rural community, and the gradual shift, as Emer Nolan notes, to the representation of personal psychologies in a restricted or hostile environment particularly link the work of Lawless and Moore.³¹ The naturalism which both writers use to depict a harsh, unremitting reality also signals a break from the socialising tendency of conventional realism and has a lasting impact on subsequent twentieth century Irish writing. Yet both writers have distinct differences of response to the challenges Irish social problems posed to the late nineteenth-century novelist and the method of representation which each adopted indicates as much the reflection of those same problems within the persons of the writers themselves and of their positions within that society. For this reason a comparative study of the two novels of each which most directly deal with social unrest, *Hurriah* and *A Drama in Muslin*, will be carried out at the conclusion of chapter one.

The global dimensions of the British empire as well as the large Irish communities across the world, particularly Australia and the United States, ensured a ready readership for novels dealing with Irish/British issues. Reviews in these diverse markets could be quite different. Lawless's novels were received according to the preconceptions of the national reviewers themselves, particularly with regard to the conventional attitudes to Irish identity. Inevitably reception of her novels was mixed and like the novels themselves often contentious. Establishment reviewers of such journals as *The Times*, *The Scotsman*, *The Spectator* and *The Athenaeum* were likely to commend Lawless's fidelity to national character, truthful analysis of the political and social issues, literary merit and, on occasion, regret her lapses from the conventions of popular romantic fiction.³² Many Irish nationalist reviews such as those of *The Nation*, *The Catholic World*, *The Irish Monthly* were frequently

³⁰ Sichel, 'Emily Lawless', p.99. Hansson, *Emily Lawless*, p.20.

³¹ See below for a discussion of Emer Nolan's analysis of *Grania*.

³² Prothero, R. E. 'Noticeable Books (No.111): *Grania*, by Emily Lawless, *Nineteenth Century* vol.31, April, 1892, pp.693-695.

dismissive, citing Lawless's aristocratic pedigree, and class self-interest. Many of these bitterly hostile reviews, however, were contained to *Hurrish* which, as a first novel, proved to be highly divisive and to an extent determined Lawless's future career from the standpoint of nationalist journals and critics. Ernest Boyd's acrimonious appraisal of *Hurrish* in *Ireland's Literary Renaissance* of 1916 is an indication of the lasting effect of *Hurrish* and its ability to colour Lawless's career in general.

Lawless wrote her book entirely as an unsympathetic outsider. The agrarian movement is seen in the darkness of anti-national prejudice, not in the light of understanding, and the caricatural rendering of Irish dialect stamps the book as intended for foreign consumption.³³

The concentration of this study will fall on those four novels of Lawless which reflect most clearly the impact on an Anglo-Irish writer of Ireland's political and cultural concerns during the final two decades of the nineteenth century and which disclose the complexity of Lawless's responses to them. Lawless began her writing career at quite a remote distance from such concerns initially in the conventionally female genre of domestic fiction with *A Chelsea Householder* (1882) and *A Millionaire's Cousin* (1885), situating the subject matter of both, and her novelistic vocabulary, in the cosmopolitan settings of London and Paris. Although, to an extent, that vocabulary was to stay with her throughout her career, Lawless enacted a literary about face with the representation in her third novel *Hurrish* (1886) of an Irish peasant family and its complex relationship with an endemic communal violence which accompanied agitation for land reform in late nineteenth-century Ireland. With *Hurrish* Lawless's dialogue with the subject of Ireland is initiated as are many of the methodologies of representation itself which will become staples of how Lawless visualised, understood and expressed in subsequent novels her own complex relationship with both that subject's violent history and its natural and political landscape.

Following the publication of *Ireland* (1887), a popular history whose colloquial approach to the recounting of Irish history W. E. H. Lecky queried when reading the proofs for her, Lawless published *With Essex in Ireland* in which that supposed colloquialism is brought to the level of an intimacy.³⁴ The novel's convincing grasp of

³³ Boyd, *Ireland's Literary Renaissance* (Dublin: Allen Figgis, 1922), p.374.

³⁴ Lawless, Emily, Letter to W. E. H. Lecky, Lecky correspondence Trinity College Dublin, MS 1827-36/2476.

sixteenth-century language and its ingenuous, unguarded narrative voice brings an historical moment into the immediately present, and further represents, as in *Hurriah*, personalities and politics which are profiled and textured by a background of natural environment. Lecky's favourable impression of *With Essex in Ireland* leads him to anticipate an Irish equivalent to Walter Scott's assimilation through his fiction of Scottish historical conflict into an overall British identity.

It has often been lamented that no writer has arisen in Ireland who could do for Irish history what Scott did for the history of his own country. If Miss Lawless can produce only a few more books like *Essex in Ireland* this misfortune and reproach will be effectually removed.³⁵

Landscape increasingly becomes in her subsequent novels a means for tracing the contours of her social and political terrain and recourse to its detailed description performs a highly active and interpretive role throughout her periodical writings and short stories, a method which is ultimately most apparent in what is generally viewed as her most successful novel *Grania: The Story of an Island* (1892). After the direct negotiation of political issues in *Hurriah* and *With Essex in Ireland*, Lawless achieved, in the narrative of an island woman constituted wholly by her environment, a way of circumventing the controversy which attached to identity politics in Ireland of the 1890s, while expressing, probably most forcefully than in any other of her works, her Anglo-Irish claim to, and relationship with, place.

Two years after *Grania*, Lawless returned to the subject of history in *Maelcho: A Sixteenth-Century Narrative* (1894), an exploration of the cultural elements which lay at the centre of the Munster rebellion of the late sixteenth century and the echoes which it contained for an Anglo-Irish Ascendancy of the late nineteenth. These four novels form a continuum broken only by Lawless's tentative venturing into New Woman domestic fiction with *Major Lawrence, F. L. S.* (1887), a poor novel whose subject of a harassed womanhood is pre-eminently realised in *Grania* five years later. Following *Maelcho*, Lawless's physical ill health, a deteriorating arthritic condition, made sustained work difficult. The bleakness of some of her subject matter, particularly her final significant novel *Maelcho*, also persuaded her to seek less demanding issues.³⁶ *The Book of Gilly: Four Months Out of a Life* (1906), a novel

³⁵ Lecky, William Edward Hartpole, 'Noticeable Books (No.1): *With Essex in Ireland*', by Emily Lawless, *Nineteenth Century* vol. 28, August, 1890, pp.236-238.

³⁶ A letter to Gladstone in 1894 dealing with *Maelcho* states 'If I ever again write of Irish history I must try to discover some period that will not need quite so much undiluted lamp black'. Quoted in Hansson, Heidi, *Emily Lawless: 1845-1913: Writing*

which features Irish landscape in its conventional form as chronotopic refuge from an modern reality which oppresses the spirit, is Lawless's last complete work; *The Race of Castlebar* (1913) having been written in collaboration with Shan Bullock and published posthumously.

Lawless also wrote a biography of Maria Edgeworth (1904) which controversially, since previous English biographies had ignored the fact, focussed on Edgeworth's Irishness, and lamented that the influential writer had not spent enough of her early life in the country which most afforded her inspiration. Equally controversially, Lawless directed much of her criticism at what she judged to be the interference of Edgeworth's domineering father, Richard Lovell Edgeworth, whose detrimental effects on Maria's writing she regretted, a criticism which later generations of critics were to sustain. Two collections of short stories, *Plain Francis Mowbray and other Tales* (1889), and *Traits and Confidences* (1897), demonstrate the distance which Lawless travelled as a writer in the intervening years, the earlier collection an assemblage of very disparate individuals and locations involving predominantly an English or European focus. *Traits and Confidences*, however, sees its material solidly located in an Irish setting and an Irish rural memory, and with Lawless's own biographical memories embedded within it.

A Garden Diary (1901) contains private reflections on a world which Lawless appears to view as a detached observer, written from the retirement cottage in Surrey which she occupied from the mid 1890s until her death in 1913. From within that more reflective condition Lawless published three small volumes of poetry, *With the Wild Geese* (1902), *A Point of View* (1909) and a final posthumously published collection *The Inalienable Heritage* (1914). Lawless's poetry is essentially poor, failing to reach the same intensity of involvement with subject which her novels display and falling into the predictable late nineteenth-century conventionalism of language and feeling. As Brewer observes, Lawless 'was unable to produce in her poetry the concrete images and sensual details which accrue in her fiction to create vivid scenes, conjure binding moods, and excite readers' imaginations'.³⁷ However, the dual strategy which distinguishes her novels, a seeking for personal definition in natural detail and the registering of historical aftershocks in the present, recur in her poetry, most obviously in *With the Wild Geese*, a collection divided almost equally

the Interspace (Cork: Cork University Press, 2007), p.141.

between nature poems and historical ballad and elegy, and which records the attitudes and concerns of the previous two decades, presenting an echo to her historical and contemporary fictions.³⁸

Running concurrently throughout Lawless's career with her fictional works, biography and poetry, was a prolific production of articles for various periodicals. These essays and articles provided Lawless with an outlet for her reflections on nature, history and on literature. Those that are particularly relevant to the extent that they provide an insight into Lawless's fiction are 'A Note on the Ethics of Literary Forgery' (1897), 'North Clare - Leaves from a Diary' (1899), and 'Of the Personal Element in History' (1901), all appearing in *Nineteenth Century*. The fact that they were written late in Lawless's career and in such proximity to one another suggests a sense of taking stock and the formulating of a literary philosophy. 'A Note on the Ethics of Literary Forgery', of which Gerardine Meaney asserts 'a great deal is at stake for this Anglo-Irish novelist in this essay, for the claims of authenticity had already been used to disqualify her from commentary on Ireland and would be again', will supply supporting argument at certain stages in this thesis.³⁹ Similarly, 'Of the Personal Element in History' provides a fascinating view of the method which Lawless applied in her historical novels, and extending beyond them, provides an understanding of the attitude of Lawless to the assimilating of historical experience in general. In its presenting of the Clare landscape as both indecipherable and personally expressive 'North Clare -- Leaves from a Diary' prompts Heidi Hansson to conceive of Lawless's position as a writer as equivalent to that of an 'interspace', a term Lawless herself applies to the North Clare terrain.

³⁷ Brewer, ' "She was a part of it" ', p.128.

³⁸ One of the poems in this collection is titled 'Honor's Grave', a reference to the sick half-sister of Grania O'Malley in Lawless's novel *Grania*, while another is featured in *With Essex in Ireland* as written by the narrator Henry Harvey. Two others, 'Dirge of the Munster Forest 1581' and 'Dirge for all Ireland 1581' refer to events featured in *Maelcho*.

³⁹ Meaney, Gerardine, 'Decadence, Degeneration and Revolting Aesthetics: The Fiction of Emily Lawless and Katherine Cecil Thurston', *Colby Quarterly* vol.36.2, June 2000, pp. 157-75.

From the Historical to the Contemporary: Shifts in Perspective.

Fundamentally antipathetic to any form of idealism Lawless displays in her writing a matter-of-fact, empiricist view of life which put her at a certain disadvantage. A keen botanist and naturalist from her childhood, Lawless would have found it difficult to enter the realms of the esoteric or acquiesce in the fantasies of an Irish heroic programme. This incompatibility is made abundantly clear in a review by Lawless entitled 'A Note on the Ethics of Literary Forgery' for *The Nineteenth Century* periodical of two translations from ancient Gaelic literature by Whitley Stokes and Standish Hayes O'Grady. Referring to the fascination which many people appear to have in such subjects, Lawless herself cannot refrain from reducing their archaic otherness to that more mundane, scientific dimension in which she lived and thought. Comparing an exploration of 'these mysterious waters of antiquity' with her own pastime of surface towing in which she attempts to capture small marine animal life in a muslin bag, she brings to bear on these ancient sagas the same focus of interest which she employs in her fictions: 'Here, too, we have to rub our eyes from time to time and ask ourselves how such oddly behaved beings managed to eat, drink, sleep, marry and carry on the ordinary course of existence-during those brief intervals, that is to say, when they were not actually employed in killing one another'.⁴⁰

Yet that preoccupation with how the ordinary course of existence is carried on is the material of realist fiction. Lawless's choice of medium, besides being indicative of her bent of mind, prescribed that she remain within the perimeter of everyday life allowing social exchanges and pressures to surface and reveal themselves. This is evidenced in the echoing of controversy and opinion within the novels themselves which were current and pertinent to Lawless's everyday experience. Discussing Bakhtin's ideas on the epic as the representative monologic form of a unitary culture and the novel as a heteroglossic and subversive representation of cultural diversity, David Lloyd suggests that the creation of a unitary, nationalist entity in nineteenth-century Ireland required an epic-like mythmaking formula which mitigated against the discursive form of the novel and therefore hampered its development and reception.⁴¹

⁴⁰ Lawless, Emily, 'A Note on the Ethics of Literary Forgery', *The Nineteenth Century* Jan. 1897, pp.84-95.

⁴¹ Lloyd, David, *Anomalous States: Irish Writing and the Post-Colonial Moment* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1993), p.90.

It is this aspect of the novel form which most articulates Lawless's oppositional attitude to nationalist monologism in that its heteroglossic functioning allows for the registering of multiple social languages or sociolects of class, sect, profession, gender and ethnicity.⁴² Such a disparate register represents what effectively already exists in Irish society during this period and which a unitary project of nationalism attempts to suppress.⁴³

The forthrightness with which Lawless concentrates on ordinary existence lends itself to a naturalism whose detail can be directed by Lawless against the romanticization process involved in certain historical perceptions of her time. In her historical fiction there is a degree to which the narrative serves as a mediating agency by this method. Historical experience is presented as an inevitable evolving and developmental process and its narrative detailing a confronting of what must be accepted. This extends as much to a nationalist acceptance of fragmentation and loss as much as it does to the acknowledgment of English colonial atrocity and expropriation. So the primary reason why *With Essex in Ireland* and *Maelcho* are naturalistically delivered is that, despite a lamenting of Irish cultural and national loss, the author is, nonetheless, presenting the reality of a culture which is rendered historically alien and remnant through its failure to survive a process of progression. In this way both novels attempt to subvert the concept of a continuity of mono-ethnic Irish historical identity which consistently posed an obstacle to Irish integration with the British imperial structure or, failing that, to an inclusive image of Irishness.

The fusing action of experience traced in the narratives of *With Essex in Ireland* and *Maelcho* is what constitutes the uniqueness of the Irish historical process. Through the fluctuating visual and mental experiences of Henry Harvey, Lawless attempts to portray in *With Essex in Ireland* the context of exchange by which Ireland's feminised image materialises into a moral and emotional interaction with the English imperial mind. In *Maelcho*, however, there is far less engagement with, indeed a cutting free from, the moral issues which govern the narrative of Harvey. In this later narrative the fiction concentrates on the harsh exigencies of cultural and political conflict, without mediation and where there is little or no cross fertilization, the exchange being solely the rationale of conquest. As a combination of both a novelist's mature confidence in her artistic ability to engage a wider canvas and also

⁴² Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, p.152.

presumably a greater degree of world weariness with the politics involved, Lawless shows signs in *Maelcho*, her final significant novel on the subject of Ireland, of becoming disentangled from the double-bind which a personal 'nationalist' indignation and a political 'unionist' allegiance demanded. While *With Essex in Ireland* revealed Lawless's conception of history as resident in its larger than life figures through which a symbolic individuality could be contrived, *Maelcho* devolves onto the collective issues of dispossession and conquest as a method of defining national evolution.

Writing in *A Garden Diary* five years after *Maelcho*, and resident in England, Lawless gives expression to this development in her thinking and also implies the disillusion which attends it. Referring to her past necessity to conceive of England as 'an incarnate Saxondom' by which her Irish indignation could be 'retained at the proper boiling point', Lawless identifies history as the source of her own individuating process.

To turn from the past to the present was to spoil the whole effect. In place of War, Famine, Massacre, one only got dull political controversies, or equally dull agrarian disturbances. For the Raleighs, the Sydneys, the Straffords, the Cromwells, -- vast impressive figures, large and lurid -- only a group of rather harassed gentlemen, 'well-meaning English officials,' painfully endeavouring to steer their way so as to offend everyone as little as possible.⁴⁴

Seismic historical catastrophes reduce to present political controversies and great personages to the anonymity of officials. It is the modern demotic which is ultimately disenchanting for Lawless's grand design of historical identity formation.

What an odd convention it is, when one thinks of it, that habit of embodying a country in an individual ! Considered seriously the whole contention is absurd. To talk of a nation as a person is to talk sheer nonsense. If one handles the idea a little it tumbles into pieces in one's fingers. The fiction of unity resolves itself into a mere vortex of atoms, all moving in different ways, and moreover with a different general drift in each successive generation.⁴⁵

The great imperial scheme as a bulwark against the quotidian now appears to be the focus for Lawless's nationalist sentiments. In *A Garden Diary* is found the same parallel discourse of landscape and colonial conflict as had pervaded her Irish fiction as Lawless switches attention between descriptions of her Surrey garden and concerns with British military challenges in South Africa. A similarly striking absorption of the

⁴³ Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, p.151.

⁴⁴ Lawless, Emily, *A Garden Diary: September 1899 -- September 1900* (London: Methuen & Co., 1901), p.69.

⁴⁵ Lawless, *A Garden Diary*, p.68.

political by the external setting occurs yet in her diary this interaction is productive of clarity as when she envisages the landscape of the Transvaal to be contiguous with that around her.

Dorking -- that scene of crushing British disaster -- is not far off; were I to clamber up the opposite ridge I should be looking down on it. Moreover, between one landscape and another the differences become much less when all detail is reduced to one vast blur. I have a friendly knoll upon which I sometimes take my stand towards sunset hour, and from which I have of late conjured up Biggarsbergs, inaccessible and kopje-covered as heart could desire.⁴⁶

An imperial clash with the 'other' in a newly exotic landscape, therefore, and its ability to express a regenerate personal and national consciousness for her absorbs the emotional life of Lawless.

Surely people live fast in these days, even the very slowest of them ! I find myself turning back of a morning to the thoughts of the Transvaal, and of the struggle still going on there, with the oddest sense of renewal; as of one trying to rekindle dead fires, or to reawaken some set of well-nigh obliterated emotions.⁴⁷

Imperialism, in this new context, appears to accommodate Lawless in its own self-evident rationale and its own pragmatic concerns freed from conflictual loyalties.

Lawless's immersion in her garden in this diary, its progress framing imperial challenges and the remaking of parts of it as Irish rural environment represent a final, detached empowerment. No longer subject to the presence of a residual wound which appeared to impede her identification with her Irish environment, Lawless is at liberty to project a new sense of belonging and of purpose onto a setting which calms rather than accuses. The difference is considerable between the personality evident in *A Garden Diary* and that which is revealed in the poetry of *With the Wild Geese* published in the following year yet predating it in composition.⁴⁸ Split almost equally into poems dealing with historical subjects and those dealing with contemporary experience, the sentiments pervading the whole are surprisingly constant. In 'After Aughrim', 'Fontenoy', and 'An Exile's Mother', Ireland is a lost and often forbidding, uncaring homeland. For the homesick exiles in 'Clare Coast', who have fled following the defeat of the Jacobite cause, the landscape is cold and unresponsive, indifferent to the self-sacrifice or the emotional distress they suffer; 'See us, cold isle

⁴⁶ Lawless, *A Garden Diary*, p.74.

⁴⁷ Lawless, *A Garden Diary*, p.232.

⁴⁸ *With the Wild Geese* was a re-issue of the earlier collection *Atlantic Rhymes and Rhythms* which appeared in 1899. Many of these poems were written over the previous two decades.

of our love ! / Coldest, saddest of isles - / Cold as the hopes of our youth, / Cold as your own wan smiles. / Coldly your streams outpour, / Each apart on the height, / Trickling, indifferent, slow, / Lost in the hush of the night.’⁴⁹ In ‘Dirge of the Munster Forest. 1581’ and ‘Dirge for all Ireland 1581’, the landscape is made to reflect the bleakness of its human history, the black and leaden greys blighting any apprehension of Spring and renewal and, in human terms, hope and regeneration.

While in *A Garden Diary* Lawless is able to translate the conflicts of another environment into that of peaceful Surrey and thereby appease her anxiety, in the poems of *With the Wild Geese* dealing with contemporary issues landscape is both solace and disquiet, home and elsewhere, receiving the impress of Lawless’s own divided self. This is nowhere more obviously stated than in ‘Looking Eastward: written in 1885’ which presents the observer as viewing Ireland from the vantage point of an island off the west coast. The land is figured as obscured and shrouded by nature’s mists; ‘Blurred in the arch of the sky, mistily grey in the zenith, / Lost and void in the distance’, and by history’s ill-fortune; ‘What antenatal guilt, hid in the womb of creation, / Robbed thee of honour and self, robbed thee of peace and of plenty’. The issue of a composite race, colonized and coloniser, brings the fracture of identities into an inevitable, conflictual presence; ‘Reared thee a race of thine own, varied in aims as in blood, / Fitted to thrive and combine, forced by implacable fate / Further and further apart, as the years and the decades unroll; / Leaping to greet at a distance; set in the death grips at home?’. The result is the elemental occlusion of a landscape and the symbolic occlusion of personal relationship with it; ‘Nay, I know not, I see not; nought see I but the vapours / Rolling eternally in; heavy, tenacious, unkind; / Thicker and thicker still, hiding the land in their clutches’.⁵⁰

Whether it be the clash of cultural belief expressed in ‘Above the Cliff’ or an invoking of the natural setting to reconcile discord in ‘An Appeal’, Lawless explicates herself by dividing the landscape into there and here. It is a positional dilemma which consistently fails, evidenced by its repetition, to involve setting and observer in one centralising coherent perspective. Unlike the ‘vast blur’ in the extract from her diary which accommodates Lawless’s wishes by facilitating contiguity, the obscuring of the Irish landscape symbolises a denial of any meaningful access to it. What Lawless

⁴⁹ Lawless, Emily, ‘Clare Coast circa 1710’, in *With the Wild Geese* (London: Isbister & Co, 1902), p.9.

⁵⁰ Lawless, ‘Looking Eastward: written in 1885’, in *With the Wild Geese*, p.48.

observes in the terrain of Surrey in a *Garden Diary* therefore, is the absence of any challenging inscription which attempts to gainsay her right of place. As such she needs only to respond to what is a stable, constant, undisputed backdrop against which imperial colonial activity and imperial identity can be projected with self-assurance. Such self-assurance is not only absent in her fiction and the poetry of *With the Wild Geese*, but also in the many articles, ‘A Note on the Ethics of Literary Forgery’, ‘Of the Personal Element in History’, and ‘North Clare -- Leaves from a Diary’ amongst them, through which she attempted to describe sharp outlines in the indistinct.

Modern Critical Receptions.

While the exclusion of Lawless, as a female unionist author, from an Irish literary canon dictated by nationalist and male critics is now a feminist commonplace, it is nonetheless a moot point whether Lawless deserves to be included in any revised ‘canon’ of significant Irish writers. As Emer Nolan points out, canon formation is a mainly historical process which is subject to its own developmental laws and, while always open to academic re-appraisal, is not necessarily amenable to retrospective academic adjustments.⁵¹ Nonetheless, the extent to which Lawless does represent her place and time and the insight which her work now offers to contemporary understandings of late nineteenth-century issues is evident in the range of critical method and subject matter which has been applied in recent appreciations of her work. Lawless now speaks to a national consciousness which has escaped the hidebound mentality of earlier decades, primarily in her capacity to articulate those other voices of late nineteenth-century ideological discourse. Yet beyond this literary historicism, Lawless’s work has a relevance now which, in ways, mimics that which she had for her own period, the extra-national dimension to her identity, the oblique and direct feminisms, the inclusive scope of national belonging, and the tendency to map the personal onto an external reality, all traced in modern critiques of her work.

Brewer and O’Neill’s mainly biographical appreciations, published in 1983 and 1995 respectively, concentrate on Lawless’s place in a literary tradition which

⁵¹ For a discussion which examines the various areas of this issue see Nolan, Emer, ‘Postcolonial Literary Studies, Nationalism, and Feminist Critique in Ireland’, *Eire-Ireland* 42:1&2, Spring/Summer, 2007, pp.336-361.

connects her with Edgeworth and Carleton. Brewer sets out many of the main arguments which have been strengthened by later critics of Lawless's work, which include a reappraisal of the novel form overall in the Literary Revival canon and also the complex subject of Irish identity in the late nineteenth century. Brewer notes Lawless's unwillingness, as a confirmed unionist, to replicate the impatriation strategy of Yeats and other Anglo-Irish figures, as a mean to involve themselves in the strengthening nationalism of the period. Titled 'She was a Part of It', the phrase taken from Lawless's *Grania*, Brewer's analysis sets out to challenge Lawless's exclusion from the Irish canon which Brewer judges must inevitably have its format reconfigured as a result, observing that any 'survey of Emily Lawless's career challenges the assumption that she was hopelessly out of step with the cadences of the Irish Renaissance'. Much of the antipathy which greeted Lawless during her lifetime and after was due, according to Brewer, to nationalists' tendency to judge Lawless's pedigree instead of her work, demonstrated particularly in the reception which her Land War novel *Hurrish* received.

That in her first Irish novel Lawless handled awkwardly and at times condescendingly her peasant characters is not surprising. What is surprising is the novel's remarkably unbiased representation of the entire gamut of opinion regarding the highly charged Irish issues of land ownership and law.⁵²

Also, insightfully, Brewer reconnects Lawless with that nineteenth-century Irish novelistic tradition which struggled to negotiate a representational quagmire in which the Irish writer was required, in Eagleton's view, to 'combine truth with partisanship' and 'either with the wooing of metropolitan sympathies'.⁵³ Like the Banims, Griffin, and Carleton, 'Lawless did not hesitate to depict the dark and violent side of peasant life, even as she undertook to plead the Irish cause before an English audience'.⁵⁴ Brewer believes that, following in the tradition of those earlier writers and utilising the same natural ore which the Revivalists converted into brilliant drama, Lawless recognised 'that she and Irishness were more than any one tradition and claimed for herself and her works that dual identity which was the truest heritage of those born into the Protestant Ascendancy'.⁵⁵

⁵² Brewer, 'She was a part of it', p.123.

⁵³ Eagleton, Terry, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger: Studies in Irish Culture* (London: Verso, 1995), p.202.

⁵⁴ Brewer, 'She Was a Part of It', p.122.

⁵⁵ Brewer, 'She Was Part of It', p.129.

Elizabeth Grubgeld's 1987 study of Lawless introduces a significantly fruitful area of interest in an exploration of the psychological dimension to Lawless's work, in particular the disturbed, divided attitude, evident in the novel *Grania*, which Lawless appears to exhibit towards the Irish landscape. The utopia of Lawless's childhood upbringing, spent mainly in the Galway estate of her maternal grandparents, clashes with the knowledge of discord and division and torments the later adult, according to Grubgeld's reading, as the landscape itself, now associated with social and national loss, 'becomes morally evil; yet in the mind of the remembered child -- the other self -- it remains exhilarating and adored'.⁵⁶ Like Brewer, Grubgeld asserts the alternate and complementary feature of Lawless's vision to that of her contemporary revivalists. However, Lawless's inability to find a regenerative quality in a forbidding environment relates her also to a pervasive Victorian pessimism. This, for Grubgeld, situates her in a direct line of Anglo-Irish novelistic tradition: 'The finality of Lawless's vision lies within the tradition of William Carleton's nightmare landscapes and Maria Edgeworth's doomed estates'.⁵⁷

The difficulties which Lawless faced as a female writer of fiction in late nineteenth-century Ireland and the contribution which she made to feminist writing in her own period and for later Irish women writers are taken up by James Cahalan four years later in a study which focuses on *Grania* as a pioneering instance of feminist writing. Cahalan notes: 'It is surprising that there has been no previous feminist study of Lawless's work, especially given that *Grania* was the most clearly feminist nineteenth-century Irish novel since those of Sydney Owenson at the beginning of the century'.⁵⁸ The condescension which Lawless had to endure from patriarchal figures such as Yeats, Synge and later Ernest Boyd was, in part, according to Cahalan, fuelled by her position within a male order of priority. In an innovative analysis which moves the study of Lawless's work forward to later Irish writing and its impact on subsequent Irish women writers, Cahalan identifies the determination necessary for women writers to succeed in a system weighed against them and Lawless's stature as a role model and pioneering voice in that history. Lawless's single-mindedness in the face of opposition and her writing, in Cahalan's opinion, ensured a voice for those

⁵⁶ Grubgeld, Elizabeth, 'Emily Lawless's *Grania: The Story of an Island* (1892)', *Eire-Ireland* vol. 22.3, 1987, pp. 115-129.

⁵⁷ Grubgeld, 'Emily Lawless's *Grania*', p.128.

⁵⁸ Cahalan, James, M. 'Forging a Tradition: Emily Lawless and the Irish Literary

female Irish writers who followed, noting that ‘it is hard to imagine Edna O’Brien or Julia O’Faolain with the freedom to speak their own fictional truths if a pioneer such as Emily Lawless had not gone before them’.⁵⁹

The idealization of the West which defined the quest for a ‘real’ and ‘authentic’ Ireland in the late nineteenth century and the associated desire to resuscitate an ideal Irish past are addressed by Jacqueline Belanger through the medium of Lawless’s *Grania*, a novel which Belanger rightly argues ‘can be read as pointing to and problematizing certain issues involved in the construction of the West by the Literary and Gaelic revivals’.⁶⁰ In *Grania* Belanger recognises a fracturing of the western regions by Lawless into distinct ‘spatial, temporal, social and linguistic areas’ as a means of resisting attempts by nationalism to formulate a national identity based on the concept of a coherent ‘true’ Ireland. Utilizing Lacanian psychoanalytic theory, Belanger moves through an intricate and subtle argument to a point where Lawless’s presentation of *Grania* herself provides an intriguing analysis of Anglo-Irish anxieties concerning place in a Catholic, Gaelic defined Ireland. As Cultural Revivalists used the west to construct a version of the ‘self’ based on the desire for its ‘otherness’, Lawless is viewed by Belanger as disregarding any such mechanism for achieving an integrated identity. Since *Grania* is identified both with the island and also represents its ‘other’ there can be no reconciliation of the two, precluding the possibility ‘that difference can be neatly erased to create a homogenous and idealized version of the West’.⁶¹

In an approach which views, like Cahalan, Lawless’s work from a feminist perspective, Gerardine Meaney’s 2000 analysis provides illuminating insights on the discursive contexts in which Lawless wrote. Focusing on *Grania* as an instance of New Woman literature, Meaney situates Lawless in the prevailing social mores of the time regarding theories on decadence and aesthetics and the curtailments imposed on women, through these theories, by nationalist and imperialist ideology.⁶² For Meaney, Lawless’s writing demonstrates the difficulty for women writers at the time in

Canon’, *Colby Quarterly* vol. 27.1, 1991, pp.27-39.

⁵⁹ Cahalan, ‘Forging a Tradition’, p.53.

⁶⁰ Belanger, Jacqueline, ‘The Desire of the West: The Aran Islands and Irish Identity in *Grania*’, in (eds.) Leon Litvack and Glenn Hooper, *Ireland in the Nineteenth Century: Regional Identity* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2000), pp.95-107, p.95.

⁶¹ Belanger, ‘The Desire of the West’, p.104.

⁶² Meaney, ‘Decadence, Degeneration and Revolting Aesthetics’, p.162.

negotiating between their own feminist progressiveness, nationalist demands on the feminine image and an imperialist conservatism which sought to control the feminine socially and sexually. The complex response which Lawless displays to such pressures is perceptively examined by Meaney through Lawless's *Grania*, particularly what Meaney sees as the 'complex relationship between gender and national identity'.

This is nowhere more apparent than in the contrast between her progressive views on gender and retrogressive ones on land reform. *Grania* (1892) indicates how the habit of figuring Ireland in feminine terms could complicate writing firmly opposed to nationalist politics and how the habits of imperialist perception could haunt progressive, feminist thinking.⁶³

Focusing on Lawless's representation of racial degeneracy in *Grania*, Meaney explores how the depiction of Grania's experience of the destitute family in a Galway cabin 'is a bracing antidote to the idealisation of Aran and the West'.

The distaste for maternity and its identification with a death of the self rather than the advent of life are evident in much nineteenth-century writing by women. Here the repugnance is intensified by the poverty, violence and despair of the family life portrayed.⁶⁴

The elements of class, feminism and discourses surrounding social issues reveal nonetheless 'an uneasy suspicion' according to Meaney that 'the peasant life Lawless can chart with extraordinary sympathy and insight is the locus of progress and possibility'.

In all her contradictions, Lawless was an arch Victorian; belief in and anger at progress were tempered for her by the fear of elimination by it. Class affiliation complicated and perplexed her desire for reform in social and sexual relations.⁶⁵

Despite these complications, however, Meaney judges *Grania* as a still relevant and provocative work.

Perhaps precisely because of these difficulties, *Grania* is a startling, powerful, and still relevant exploration of the conflict between communal identity and feminine individuality.⁶⁶

Kathleen Costello-Sullivan's analysis of *Hurrih* is part of her wider argument regarding Irish tradition and modernity. In conjunction with a study of Somerville and Ross's *The Real Charlotte*, Costello-Sullivan regards Lawless's novel *Hurrih* as illustrating 'the plural nature of specific aspects of Irish modernity and the ability of Irish realism to respond to that plurality'.

By insisting upon the maintenance of traditional social hierarchies, the novels directly engage competing nationalist paradigms and assert the need for traditional social arrangements for

⁶³ Meaney, 'Decadence, Degeneration and Revolting Aesthetics', p.162.

⁶⁴ Meaney, 'Decadence, Degeneration and Revolting Aesthetics', p.164.

⁶⁵ Meaney, 'Decadence, Degeneration and Revolting Aesthetics', p.168.

modern progress to ensue, thus presenting an alternative interpretation of tradition in Irish society. Similarly, by basing Irish society on the maintenance of individual communities loosely bound under a common, heterogeneous Irishness, the authors challenge contemporary nineteenth-century models of nationhood that promote a unitary Irish identity.⁶⁷

As regards Lawless's attitude to nationalism in *Hurrish*, Costello-Sullivan asserts the novel's reflection of the multiplicity of traditions and the coexistence of competing nationalisms in 'the fractured society' of late nineteenth-century Ireland.

The text self-consciously engages with earlier Irish realist conventions to critique competing interpretations of nationhood and progress. Particularly through its use of characterisation, *Hurrish* exemplifies both the effectivity of Irish realist novels in capturing and forging their social and political milieu, and the manner in which the plurality of modern Ireland shapes its realist narrative.⁶⁸

The means, according to Costello-Sullivan, by which Lawless represents this plurality is particularly expressed in the attitude to nation of both *Hurrish* and his landlord, Pierce O'Brien

Although their views of nationalism differ radically and each is devoted to his own community, *Hurrish* and Pierce O'Brien's mutual respect and devotion to the Irish nation surmount the obstacles of their communal and individual differences, proffering a model of the Irish nation based on mutual toleration, of not acceptance.

In each of these characters is reflected the Irish peasant's devotion to the land and the traditional feudal loyalty of landlord and tenant espoused by the Anglo-Irish and it is this relevance and vitality of tradition in *Hurrish* that Costello-Sullivan judges to be 'a characteristic response to progress in Irish modernity, identifying the necessity of tradition in a modern Irish nation'. Despite its being a 'defiant endorsement of Anglo-Irish models of tradition and nationalism, however, Costello-Sullivan detects an evident sense of apprehension in the outcomes Lawless constructs for her characters.

That *Hurrish* dies - and Pierce O'Brien's life continues with mixed success - reflects the author's awareness that the model of nationalism she espoused was rapidly becoming - or perhaps already had become - obsolete, and signals resistance to the loss of Ireland's plural traditions.⁶⁹

While such an interpretation of *Hurrish* clearly adopts a Burkean attitude to social change, the analysis of *Hurrish* in chapter one of this dissertation will argue an

⁶⁶ Meaney, 'Decadence, Degeneration and Revolting Aesthetics', p.168.

⁶⁷ Costello-Sullivan, Kathleen, 'Novel Traditions: Realism and Modernity in *Hurrish* and *The Real Charlotte*', in (ed.) Jacqueline Belanger, *The Irish Novel in the Nineteenth Century* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005), p.152.

⁶⁸ Costello-Sullivan, 'Novel Traditions', p.153.

interpretive approach to Lawless which presumes on a quite different significance to the concept of tradition than that espoused by Costello-Sullivan. It will be argued that for Lawless traditional hierarchy meant traditional privilege and dependency and a fixing of social identities by which individual communities and classes would be deprived of any worthwhile consolidation of national political power. As an integral element of the narrative's rationalised maintenance of social and political conditions, character portrayals relying on racial and class stereotype are widely deployed by Lawless. It unlikely that any scope remains for the ironic or extra-narrative import to such representations argued by Costello-Sullivan who sees the use of such techniques by Lawless as providing 'a critique of reductive or unitary definitions of Irishness'.⁷⁰ A clear understanding of the uses to which Lawless puts such conventionalisms and how they operate ideologically in *Hurricane* is essential to indicating where Lawless stands in relation to modernity and an evolving national ethic.

The relevance of Lawless for the immediate present and particularly for the academic systems of cultural and post colonial studies is apparent in both Emer Nolan and Eve Patten's explorations of feminism, Irish cultural studies and post colonialism. In her 2007 study, *Catholic Emancipations*, Emer Nolan places Lawless among that group of naturalistic novelists associated with George Moore, defined according to their abandonment of the 'realist faith in a general social progress' and a valorizing of the 'individual consciousness as the only important site of resistance to mass culture'.⁷¹ Judging Lawless as anticipating 'Moore's seizure of that transitional moment between predominantly communal protest at injustice and the claim of the individual to precedence over social and political solidarities', Nolan interprets Lawless's work to demonstrate 'both the end of the novel of agrarian violence and the

⁶⁹ Costello-Sullivan, 'Novel Traditions', p.159.

⁷⁰ As an example, one such interpretation by Costello-Sullivan views Pierce O'Brien as the landlord who 'varies considerably from the model historically presented in Anglo-Irish fiction', the stereotypical absentee, by returning to correct the errors of his literary predecessors. Yet Pierce O'Brien's type is an established literary figure in his own right. Discussing Davis's hatred of landlordism, Seamus Deane observes that Davis 'also dismisses one of the nostrums much favoured in Irish fiction-the return of the absentee landlord to his Irish estates to dispense economic wisdom and bring blessings on the head of a grateful tenantry by introducing various kinds of agricultural reform'. Deane, Seamus, *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790* (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p.73.

⁷¹ Nolan, Emer, *Catholic Emancipations: Irish Fiction from Thomas Moore to James Joyce* (New York: Syracuse University Press, 2007), Preface. xviii.

birth of the modern novel of individual protest, particularly on behalf of women'.⁷² Yet such an appraisal of Lawless's fiction tends to concentrate on the author's portrayal of individual character at the expense of an overall political and ideological motivation of which character portrayal represents one component. Both analyses of *Hurrish* and *Grania* by Nolan focus almost exclusively on the two protagonists and their judged deviation from a nineteenth-century novelistic norm with the result that the key defining roles which they and other characters play within Lawless's novels, and the narrative strategies which determine that deviation, run the risk of being undervalued. In *Hurrish* Lawless is said to present the reader 'with something extremely unusual in Anglo-Irish fiction: a positive portrayal of an Irish peasant', yet *Hurrish* actually embodies the traditional 'type' on which an Anglo-Irish Ascendancy founded its relational vision of community.⁷³

The individual's claim to precedence in Lawless's work is enabled by very specific social and political solidarities. The depiction of *Hurrish* as simple, amiable, and easily led underpins Lawless's argument that such traditional characteristics are at risk of being subverted by a pernicious and exploitative nationalist doctrine exemplified by Maurice Brady. *Grania* is likewise judged by Nolan to be of enormous significance in Irish fiction in being 'a story of an attempt at individual renaissance that is not tied to a national currency to establish its value', yet the rationale behind *Grania* makes sense only as it is contextualized by the national, or nationalist, currency dictating value, of difference as well as conformity.⁷⁴ The nationalist progress towards an essentialist definition of identity at this period informs both Lawless's depiction of *Grania* as of mixed breeding and also of the island community as so essentially native as to be inbred and degenerate. The thwarting of *Grania*'s individual development is an index, therefore, of the restrictive nature of a reductive national identity -- a dynamic of central relevance to this analysis of Lawless's fiction.

Eve Patten's analysis of what is referred to as the 'concentrated dissection of late Victorian colonial anxieties' by Lawless in *With Essex in Ireland* provides an excellent argument for the existence in Ireland during the latter half of the nineteenth century of an Irish colonial consciousness and of its passive engagement with, rather

⁷² Nolan, *Catholic Emancipations*, Preface. xviii.

⁷³ Nolan, *Catholic Emancipations*, p.142.

⁷⁴ Nolan, *Catholic Emancipations*, p.144.

than active participation in, the British imperial enterprise.⁷⁵ Lawless's deployment in that novel of a Victorian ambivalence to colonial administration and authority which presented itself as a crisis of conscience both in the colonies themselves and in metropolitan Britain is cogently argued by Patten through an 'intersection' between Victorian indecision in the administrative strategies in colonial India and Lawless's depiction of a vacillating and feminised Essex during Elizabeth's sixteenth-century campaign against the earl of Tyrone. For Patten, such a correlation between text and imperialist discourse reflects the presence of a complex relationship between Ireland and Empire which contradicts the conventional binary of colonialism and colonial identity, issues to which this examination of Lawless will later return.

The only full examination of Lawless's work to date is the publication by Heidi Hansson, *Emily Lawless 1845-1913: Writing the Interspace* which provides a detailed overview of Lawless's life and writings. In its scope and the accessibility which it affords to Lawless as both personality and creative artist, Hansson's book is an indispensable guide and has proved as much in the course of this dissertation. The exhaustive research which Hansson undertook in pursuit of her subject meant that many of the obstacles which might have occupied the time and efforts of this study in overcoming were thankfully obviated. Alternatively, areas of thought and focus which might have been missed were helpfully suggested by Hansson's insights into the influences operating on Lawless's work at any given time and the circumstances under which that work was written. It is naturally not the intention of this study to duplicate what Hansson has already consummately achieved. *Emily Lawless* has, however, determined to a significant extent the direction this study should take. Since the substance of Hansson's book does reside in the biographical and bibliographical areas, it is for this reason that the concentration of this analysis will restrict itself to an in-depth textual analysis of Lawless's four primary novels. In this way it is hoped that it will complement the research carried out by Hansson into a writer who, as Hansson herself says, is a source of knowledge without which 'the picture of Irish history and culture would be skewed and incomplete'.⁷⁶

A productive critical approach to the writings of Emily Lawless, Hansson believes, requires an 'interpretative model that acknowledges complexity and avoids

⁷⁵ Patten, Eve, 'With Essex in India ? Emily Lawless's Colonial Consciousness', *European Journal of English Studies* vol. 3.3. 1999, pp.285-297.

⁷⁶ Hansson, *Emily Lawless*, p.166.

the constrictions of traditional political interpretations'.⁷⁷ Such a model is provided for Hansson by Lawless's own concept of an interspace which Lawless used to summarise those qualities of the west of Ireland which are indefinable. Hansson connects this concept with a mode of perception which liberates through its ability to accommodate the contradiction and complexity involved in oppositional standpoints: 'Moving between male and female, English and Irish, national and fantastic positions, Lawless interrogates the nature of gender definitions, national identity, and the privileged role of logic and reason in Western thought by choosing the interspace and its metaphorical correspondences before a final answer'.⁷⁸ This perceived modal defusing of alternatives allows an almost neutral equilibrium to be established by both Lawless herself and the sympathetic reader.

Read closely, without a drive towards either/or aesthetic judgements or easy political pigeon-holing, Lawless's writing reveals a dialogue where contradictory positions are contained. This dialogue manages to encompass a society in flux, while confrontation and clear-cut positioning -- the corollaries of a hierarchical logic -- would have to suppress part of the truth.⁷⁹

This approach to Lawless's writing also involves, implicitly, a dissociating of her fictional arguments from those confrontational and clear cut positionings which characterize that hierarchical logic in order to support the purported determination on Lawless's part to represent all facets of a society in flux without any novelistic favour or mitigation.

The negotiations Lawless introduces into her texts must be read as the conscious choice of a writer who is aware of the complicated nature of the political and social relationships she treats, and so rejects reductive stereotyping. Lawless writes the interspace, where identities, social structures and even geographical contours are unstable, accepting that contradictions and uncertainties are not only unavoidable but necessary.⁸⁰

By emphasising the indistinctness of landscape, particularly that of the West, Lawless, in Hansson's reading, avoids those polarisations of identity which involved sectarian manipulation of territory. For Hansson this is a means by which Lawless manoeuvres imaginatively through difficult ideological terrain, deliberately obscuring the contours which might lend validity to radically opposed viewpoints.

As so many of her works illustrate, Emily Lawless viewed Ireland as an *interspace*, a place between and beyond recognisable paradigms. Her insistence on describing Ireland as

⁷⁷ Hansson, *Emily Lawless*, p.7.

⁷⁸ Hansson, *Emily Lawless*, p.8.

⁷⁹ Hansson, *Emily Lawless*, p.9.

⁸⁰ Hansson, *Emily Lawless*, p. 9.

indefinable can to a great extent be seen as a response to the categorical definitions of people and places that informed both nationalist and unionist thought at the time.⁸¹

Hansson's concept of an interspace which reflects a desire on Lawless's part for 'a dialogue where contradictory positions' are accommodated, however, is overly dependent on that one aspect of Lawless's writing which constitutes her personal emotional response to landscape.⁸² By drawing inferences from such a narrow focus it is possible to distort the all too clearly discernible features of late nineteenth-century cultural and class 'reductive stereotyping' which Lawless does frequently deploy. Such an idea of an interspace is only supportable by depopulating those textual landscapes of the forces which actually give them ideological definition in much of Lawless's work. Of the many instances of such ideological definition in the novels, characterisation is perhaps the most effective. Lawless exploits many of the contemporary literary and social techniques of categorisation in her character portrayals, applying an established hierarchy of value to each, thereby furthering a specific sectarian prejudice. In the novel *Grania*, as will be shown in chapter four, the indefinable landscape of Inishmaan may be the locus for a valorising of its heroine's eclectic identity; however, she is also profiled against the purely native community. Quite apart from the animal imagery which defaces many of that community's character portrayals, collectively and individually, the island population is shown to be deficient in most of the fundamental capabilities for sustaining an acceptably worthwhile existence, racked by superstition, ignorance, indigence and dissolution.

As a critique of cultural revivalist and Irish nationalist investments in the West *Grania* represents a section of the Irish population in ways which further Lawless's political concerns. The ridicule, condescension and grotesqueness which are features of the novel's presentation of the west of Ireland community does not suggest the perspective of a neutral position nor does it work as an argument for the inclusion of difference. The distancing which Lawless achieves through such measures has the consequence of removing those polarisations even further from a reconciling

⁸¹ Hansson, *Emily Lawless*, p.56.

⁸²It is difficult to square Hansson's claim that Lawless's fiction is dialogic. Those fictions are constructed from the outset in a way which ensures that any dialogue which seems to occur is between those standpoints which Lawless has fashioned for it. Terry Eagleton observes that 'Constrained by a history of conflict, the Irish novel is strikingly non-dialogical; whatever the social position adopted, its antagonist is typically what Mikhail Bakhtin would call an objectified consciousness.' Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p.151.

proximity which the concept of an interspace is meant to promote. Tellingly, the article on North Clare from which Hansson derived the concept of an interspace records Lawless's experiences and moods during a week spent walking the Burren yet makes no mention of human activity or presence other than her own. It is a communion with isolated landscape rather than an area in total. The Burren district which features in *Hurrish*, however, is given quite a different aspect and function, operating as a reflective indicator of Lawless's social persona. As chapter one will examine, in *Hurrish* the natural world becomes a background which is made to give precise definition to hierarchical and political ideologies as Lawless weaves a narrative argument around the issues of land reform, class, particularly peasant, immobility and a conservative nostalgia for tradition.

Returning to Hansson, there is a blurring of the edges of Lawless's obvious convictions in this critic's application of the interspace as a mechanism for interpreting Lawless's work. Representing Ireland as an interspace enabled Lawless, Hansson believes, 'to acknowledge the complexities, contradictions and ambiguities that characterised both her world and her own place in it'.⁸³ Yet Lawless was not a non-combatant in the debates surrounding national identity and social division. The varied spectrum of preconception, prejudice, sympathy and allowance evident in such texts as *Hurrish*, *With Essex in Ireland*, *Grania*, and *Maelcho* might be more realistically seen as indications of these complexities, contradictions and ambiguities rather than meaningful negotiations of them. As such they are neither interspatial nor indefinite but resolutely mapped onto the terrain as permanent landmarks of a formative period in Irish literary history.⁸⁴

All of the critics to date who have approached the writings of Emily Lawless have done so somewhat tentatively, dipping strategically into one novel or other in a referential way as a means to illuminate one particular subject. Heather Laird's analysis is such an instance, Lawless's *Hurrish* appearing in a presentation of

⁸³ Hansson, *Emily Lawless*, p.168.

⁸⁴ Oddly, Hansson takes the criticism by Yeats of Lawless's attempt to represent a complex, incalculable indecipherable nation according to a forensic method and seeks to reverse it in a perceived refusal of Lawless to confirm categories and a determination to locate her Irishness in the indecipherable. As with Yeats's own philosophy, such a blurring of the sharp outlines which provide clarity to a position allows for infinite interpretation.

alternative law as it was manifested in late nineteenth-century Ireland.⁸⁵ More often surveyed in associated support of other subjects or as one off sorties therefore, Lawless and her Irish novels are yet to be viewed in a fully comprehensive way, a way which might provide better insight into her contribution to and significance within Irish literature. Heidi Hansson's *Emily Lawless*, while detailed in its approach to Lawless's critical reception and in its placing of her within a literary context, nonetheless tends to glance superficially off the texts themselves, content to appraise them rather than fully engage. As the re-introduction of a writer who has been severely neglected such an approach was perhaps appropriate, the re-appraisal of her beliefs and of her contribution to Irish national literature in general more likely to re-awaken an interest which she has sadly been denied to date.

Many of these approaches, including that of Hansson, centre on Lawless's position as a woman, whether it be the difficulties involved in such a position during the late Victorian period or Lawless's individual contribution as a feminist or proto-feminist writer. Emer Nolan's article on Irish Studies and Feminism argues convincingly for the ambivalence which an appraisal of Lawless's work along feminist lines can produce. Nolan points to class and racial representations for political or ideological purposes in Lawless's work which complicate any adoption of Lawless by a feminism intent on a 'progressive political program'.⁸⁶ Margaret Kelleher sounds a similar warning with regard to the rediscovery and valorization of lost women writers. As Kelleher observes, the mere retrieval of women's writing as an oppositional act in itself, justified by the recovery of the subversive and transgressive perspectives which the texts contain, is questionable.

This search for 'contradictions', 'subversions', 'ruptures', 'resistances', 'oppositions' is fast becoming a new orthodoxy in critical writings. While these emphases arise in part from an understandable desire to defend the relevance of their pursuits, they also bring with them the more uncomfortable suggestion that hierarchies of worthy cases are being constructed, without sufficient inspection of the value systems currently valorised.⁸⁷

If Lawless is to receive the appreciation which she undoubtedly deserves, she must be viewed as a writer who represents a much wider constituency. While Lawless's

⁸⁵ The relevance of Heather Laird's *Subversive law in Ireland 1879-1920: from 'unwritten law' to the Dail courts* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005) to Lawless's *Hurricane* is examined in chapter one.

⁸⁶ Nolan, 'Postcolonial Literary Studies, Nationalism, and Feminist Critique in Contemporary Ireland', p.356.

creative method is significantly reliant on a feminine matrix through which a broad range of issues is conceived, the fact that she elicited stridently partisan responses from both sides of the political divide and met with a wide variety of responses from reviewers and readers in both Britain and America requires that component to be seen as a conduit rather than a definition and suggests the breadth of interpretation to which her work is open. The fact also that her work does provoke aspects of that debate as to how women writers, feminist interpretations and ideological stances might be aligned is an indication of Lawless's value as provocateur, and as an exemplar of the many contradictory elements which recovery procedures are constrained to reconcile.

The methodology employed in this study is, through a close textual reading of the four major novels which have a direct bearing on the national project, *Hurriish*, *With Essex in Ireland*, *Grania* and *Maelcho*, to discover and examine the specific discursive elements operating in each and, widening the analysis, to both contextualize Lawless's use of such elements and evaluate their social and political function with reference to current critical interpretations. By such a method, the relevance which Lawless registered in her own period is reflected by a comparable relevance in the current critical attitude to her period's literature. Also, only through such a primarily textualist study can the threads which make up each novel's subtext be picked up and followed, revealing the inherently personal and often idiosyncratic approach which Lawless followed in her representations of the political and social issues of her day. Yet, as Heidi Hansson notes, 'political ambiguity is not synonymous with political ignorance'.

The ambivalent attitudes expressed in nineteenth-century Irish women's works are frequently an effect of the hybrid identities and divided loyalties the writers had to grapple with. A common manifestation of this ambivalence is a marked tension between surface plot and subtext. Uncovering the subtext does not mean as a consequence that the work's true meaning has been revealed. Rather, the surface story and the submerged plot are in dialogue with each other, negotiating ultimately irreconcilable views.⁸⁸

Political ambiguity in Lawless's writing is anything but political ignorance but it can reflect personal uncertainty. The subtle ways in which that is revealed by her will

⁸⁷ Kelleher, 'Writing Irish Women's Literary History', p.10.

⁸⁸ Hansson, Heidi, 'Patriot's Daughter: Politician's Wife: Gender and Nation in M. E. Francis's *Miss Erin*', in (ed.) Heidi Hansson, *New Contexts: Re-Framing Nineteenth-Century Irish Women's Prose* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2008), p.109.

better be demonstrated through an approach to Lawless's texts as inscriptions of her political awareness. Given the extent to which such individual resonance dominates Lawless's writings it is judged for this thesis more rewarding to deal with these novels in a context which revolves primarily around Lawless's own life and concerns, focussing on the personal adjustments which she struggles to make through the fictions themselves in the face of ongoing social pressures. In so far as Lawless's career as a writer reveals a continual evolving of her own responses to such pressures such a focus will be pursued, therefore, with only cursory reference to those of her contemporary novelists, both Irish and British, where it is deemed necessary. Lawless's writings, however, will be interpreted as an ongoing dialogue with the literary and political contexts in which they were written and received. Taken into consideration with each novel therefore, will be the ways in which it reflects formal literary practices of the time and the political and social arguments impacting on it. Critical reviews of each novel, Lawless's own periodical contributions which might have a bearing on each narrative, and the wider context of periodical discussion which might be seen to provide a wider discursive environment will also be brought to bear on the textual readings.

Lawless, Fiction and Socialization.

This thesis will also engage with current critical thinking concerning nineteenth-century Irish fiction, particularly that relating to its apparent socializing inadequacies and its lack of resolution. Lawless evidently found it difficult, given the fraught polarities of her time, to represent the exemplary savage to civility project which identifies the Victorian realist novel, particularly since the totalization process which accompanied such a project was itself disputed. However, while Maria Edgeworth and Sydney Owenson's reservations regarding the ability of fiction to portray an Irish society in which reality figured too cruelly found a resonance in subsequent Irish fiction writers, and a louder resonance among cultural theorists, it will be suggested that Lawless perceives this impinging reality as an experiential necessity and the alienations it produces as potentially constructive.

Terry Eagleton asserts that the nineteenth-century Irish novel's formal failure relates to the constraints imposed by a history of conflict and social disruption which,

in turn, impacts on the text's formal ability to achieve the unity of subject and object. An integration of the psychological and the social, which the form requires is consequently absent: 'The realist novel is the form *par excellence* of settlement and stability, gathering individual lives into an integrated whole, and social conditions in Ireland hardly lent themselves to any such sanguine reconciliation'.⁸⁹ Satisfactory integration is effectively precluded by the Irish novel being essentially non-dialogical in that it contains a refusal, due to its inveterate lack of impartiality, to fully engage in the truly heteroglossic exchanges which ought to occur within the form's process of totalization.⁹⁰

What is proposed as an evident frustration of the realist novel's formal mandate by Eagleton can, however, equally be utilized as an opportunity to exorcise apparent irreconcilables through their representation. Disfigured by the partisan extremes identified by Eagleton which impede the Irish novel's aesthetic effect, Lawless's novels nonetheless intimate a shared lack which can only be envisaged through those very antipathies by which it has been created. Through a reading of each text's representational surface against the more personally based subtext of each novel it is possible to detect, if not a dialogical, at least a symbolic exchange which seeks to identify the felt oppositions and their range of resonances within the shared narrative. Like the Irish novel form itself, Lawless incorporates an unresolved dilemma in that her obvious need to construct an organized and stable pattern from her existence is thwarted by an ever-present and ever-intrusive social and historical disquiet. Through her writing, Lawless's own character projects itself in a range of contradictory impulses which either break to the surface of her work or operate in deep, formal cover working to frustrate an overall personal coherence. The dilemma is the friction generated between those intrinsic sympathies figured in the narratives as naturally spontaneous and responsive and those more considered ideological demands privileging traditional certainties, a dilemma which appears throughout Lawless's narratives as the irreconcilability of the psychological and the social. It is through the interaction between these dual sympathies that a dialectical exchange occurs. In the fictional exploration of characteristic conflicts with which her novels concern

⁸⁹ Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 147.

⁹⁰ Eagleton does make an exception of Lawless's *Hurricane* but greatly exaggerates the representative perspectives of landlord and peasant. Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p.151.

themselves -- revolving around class, culture, national identity and historical antipathies -- narrative irresolution is actually exploited, and, in the absence of definitive resolutions, an ethical position is forged.

The representations of social upheaval and political antagonism, therefore, in which Lawless engages, while characterized by apparent intractability, are productive of an ethic of moderation and allowance which the author appears to understand has been elicited by, and will have its effect beyond, the narrative itself.⁹¹ Rather, therefore, than a mimetic representation for its own sake, Lawless's narratives direct their energies towards the establishment of an exemplary principle which, whether through direct interrogation of the fictional material or through the open ended issues which reach out beyond the narrative boundary, seeks to intervene in the very circumstances and the positions which the novels fictionally incorporate.

Such an intervention is in keeping with David Lloyd's paradigm of the realist novel form, particularly its normative effect by which 'the production of ethical subjects, and not merely their figuration is the end of the novel's "narrative of representation", an end which it seeks to achieve through the process of reading'.⁹² While Eagleton's conception concentrates its emphasis mainly on the novel's passive mimetic function, Lloyd asserts the interventions in which the form actively engages in order to bring about the conditions favourable to its reception: 'As a literary form the novel is not simply the product and the reflection of certain social conditions, but actively contributes to producing them as the very condition of its own reception'.⁹³ A more meaningful approach, therefore, to the Irish novel according to Lloyd, is an interrogation of its active function in the transformations which it seeks in social and cultural forms 'not of its value as autonomous artefact but of the values which, as such, it represents and seeks to promote'.⁹⁴

⁹¹ Annis Pratt, in an assertion which complements this aspect of Lloyd's model, situates the capability of women writers to effect transformations within a dialectical exchange between reader and text. While the process of resolution which dialectics demands is frequently not realised in individual texts, Pratt suggests the woman's novel is 'a symbolic vehicle' for a meaning which is not contained textually within itself. Pratt, Annis, *Archetypal Patterns in Women's Fiction*, with Barbara White, Andrea Loewenstein and Mary Wyer (Harvester Press, 1982), p. 177.

⁹² Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, p.134.

⁹³ Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, p.131.

⁹⁴ Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, p.150. Much of Lloyd's work in this area has a Foucauldian ring to it and rehearses the theory of the novel's development, specifically that of the domestic form, by Nancy Armstrong in *Desire and Domestic*

As the novel is a socializing mechanism charged by the project of the nation-state with educating a universal ethical identity from the disparate populations through an active propagating of its values, any alternate mode of socialization, such as existed through communal organisations, posed obstacles to its success. Identifying a reformative drive at the heart of the Irish nineteenth-century novel as it and other literary forms attempted to assimilate disparate factional interests into what he describes as a 'cultural economy', Lloyd characterizes the novels of Edgeworth, Morgan, Griffin and the Banim's as being involved in 'a labour which is directed towards reforming patterns of Irish socialization'.⁹⁵ The crisis of representation experienced by the nineteenth-century Irish novel, for Lloyd, lay in its inability to occupy any cultural space which was not already partisan, depriving it of the scope to realise its creation of a representative ethical subjectivity which transcends particular differences. The nineteenth-century Irish novel, therefore, is marked by its determined attempts to effect a process of socialization on already established and heavily contested communal territory.

While Lawless's ethical subjectivity is distinguished by an advocacy of allowance and common sympathy which reflects her own personal intricacies of identity and belonging, a very forceful regulative process characterizes her narratives, one that is dictated by the need to draw a national identity into the larger frame of a unionist state project. For Lawless, therefore, the nationalist project of assimilation is an area of contestation and represents another communally based socializing process which must be competed with for hegemony. The choice of regulative discourses which Lawless's novels make, therefore, is determined not only by the need to counteract those modes of identification which the emerging nation state employs but also the exclusions which its process of identification involves, primarily its 'dialogic subversion of the colonizing power'.⁹⁶

Emily Lawless's fiction can be seen, in this regard, as the reversal of a process initiated by Sydney Owenson at the beginning of the century with *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806). For Owenson, the marriage of cultures was the strategy of invigoration, an Anglo-Irish Ascendancy class resuscitated and legitimised by a renegotiation with its

Fiction.

⁹⁵ Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, p.148.

⁹⁶ Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, p.90.

dispossessed Gaelic counterpart.⁹⁷ Through such a strategy Owenson effects a totalization of sorts, be it only within the ruling elite of her novels, which is, nonetheless, symbolic of a national, and loosely social, civility. Politicizing culture in this way was a means of harmonising, through fictional representation, political conflict founded on cultural heritage and allegiance. In Owenson's conception, however, Gaelic heritage is viewed predominantly as a merely symbolic investment, its actual potential for intervention perceived as emasculated through its very appropriation.

There is no such impunity available to Lawless for such interaction. By the late nineteenth century Gaelic and Celtic heritage had become so imbued with ideological capital that any merging of the two placed an Anglo-Irish cultural perspective into the symbolic position. This is evident from the course of action adopted by Cultural Revivalists such as Yeats and O'Grady, who sought an endorsement of Anglo-Irish aristocratic status from a marriage with Gaelic and Celtic myth, attempting by such means to compensate for the loss of any meaningful political energy. No reconstruction through such vicarious means is offered or sought in Lawless's narratives. While for Owenson emotional allegiance is located in a Gaelic genealogy, Lawless, as evident in *Hurrish* particularly, places just such an emotional charge in the nostalgia of an Ascendancy tradition, which, ultimately, is intended to effect an indictment of its progressive and politically vibrant opposite. The class which features least in the distribution and exchanges of power which occupy Owenson's novels is that very class with which Lawless is constrained to deal directly, a Catholic mass nurtured by a dispossessed Gaelic past yet driven by real and pressing material need.⁹⁸ Terry Eagleton notes that 'what was not finally totalizable in Ireland were the divisions of social class' and, in a manner which encapsulates the cumulative changes in ideological and political power which had occurred over the intervening years, Lawless deploys a novelistic strategy which mimics that of Owenson, investing in a morally cogent yet politically impoverished social philosophy, voiced through the sensitivities of a specific class register.⁹⁹

So through the novels, *Hurrish* (1886), *With Essex in Ireland* (1890), *Grania*

⁹⁷ Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p. 180.

⁹⁸ The Catholic masses in Owenson are notional, represented by their aristocratic betters with a respectable if dispossessed lineage.

⁹⁹ Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p.153.

(1892), and *Maelcho* (1894), runs the vocabulary of a class civility. Formally situated beyond the borders of its fictional disturbance, this civility operates as a prismatic filter through which factional and ideological standpoints might be isolated and their deviance from its authorial norm measured. In *Hurrish*, particularly, civility operates as the encouragement of idealistically civilising human qualities which are perceived as present but undeveloped socially in the lower classes where much of the aggression is seen to reside. Chapter one of this thesis will examine the manipulation of character portrayal in *Hurrish* by Lawless through which a civility founded on individual personal responsibility is promulgated. The assumed superior intimacies which a disinterested voice imparts to the narrative allows for the reduction of socially generated violence to the personal level and therefore evades any penetrating scrutiny of its more telling material causes. I will argue that employing such a method allows Lawless to locate remedial measures, which would otherwise be systematic, in the characters themselves and there isolating the perceived barbarous influence of factional or ideological identity.

The informing language of civility produces, however, a sense of disjunction in Lawless's narratives by which the narratorial voice is somehow both involved yet distanced from its Irish context. Joep Leerssen observes how Anglo-Irish fiction of the nineteenth century adopted a technique of representing its subject matter, Ireland and the Irish, in the third person rather than the first, 'The destinatorial vector towards an English audience is so strong that the author no longer identifies with the country which is represented, but becomes an intermediary, an exteriorised, detached observer'.¹⁰⁰ Leerssen locates the reason for this post-union change in address by the Irish author as a means of representing Ireland in its otherness, a distancing mechanism which compensates for an absence of actual, discursive potency. One of the celebrated initiators of this national 'auto-exoticism' is Sydney Owenson, whose novels also demonstrate the undifferentiated convergence of the romance form and the realist, whereby Anglo-Irish social converse housed within the novelistic dictates of realism spilled into the field of romance when addressing its Gaelic other, suggesting by its vicariousness that an Irish catholic dispossessed mass required not only to be spoken for but also to be distanced, as a subject, to a safe remove from

¹⁰⁰Leerssen, Joep, *Remembrance and Imagination: Patterns in the Historical and Literary Representation of Ireland in the Nineteenth Century* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), p.34.

reality.

Such a posture became all the more prevalent from the 1830s onwards as writers became reluctant, in the context of the movement for the repeal of the union and the drive for modernization, to represent to a predominantly English readership, a subject perceived as being in a constant state of disturbance and division. The problem, as Eagleton points out, is two-fold, 'Truth and tendency, dignity and authenticity, are not easy to reconcile; and the literary art of a colonial nation must accordingly steer a precarious course between a realism which indicts the oppressor only by degrading the people, and an idealism which in nurturing national pride risks giving false comfort to the colonialist'.¹⁰¹ The inability of novelists to include Gaelic Ireland, site of dispossession and disaffection, within a contemporary narrative forced them, therefore, to distance it into 'anachronism and generic ambiguity'.¹⁰² Such a procedure had its inevitable disruptive effects on the formal coherence of realism to which most of these Irish authors aspired. As Kevin Whelan notes, 'The auto-exotic or auto-ethnographic imperative created an unstable tone -- at once moralizing, apologetic, defensive and didactic -- an external target audience, a buffered authorial voice (inserted between subjects and readership) and a strident emphasis on national character - on the absolute particularity of the Irish as a people'.¹⁰³ Whether through the deployment of an outside, usually, English focalizer or, later, through a linguistic and attitudinal posturing which safely insulated the writer from his Irish subject, a cosmopolitanism was made to cast its mediating gaze on the strange and the 'indefinable'.

Chapter two of this thesis will explore the extent to which Lawless, in the historical novel *With Essex in Ireland*, parodies this method through the cross-gendered perspective of Henry Harvey, secretary to the Earl of Essex, during the ill-fated Elizabethan campaign in Ireland. Written in the romance genre and situated in the context of a late medieval world view, Lawless brings to bear, through an idealist and realist opposition, all of the predictable linguistic and conceptual repertoire by which an estranging experience of the landscape and culture of an exotic Ireland is traditionally realised. Reversing the focus however, Lawless transfers the weight of

¹⁰¹ Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p.153.

¹⁰² Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p.51.

¹⁰³ Whelan, Kevin, 'Writing Ireland: Reading England', in (eds.) Leon Litvack and Glenn Hooper, *Ireland In the Nineteenth Century: Regional Identity* (Dublin: Four

such exoticism onto the narrator's interpretations and responses, the affectedness of Harvey's attitude, therefore, serving to emphasise the matter-of-fact realism of the inhabitants' lives and experiences. By such a method Lawless renders exoticism inadequate and self-defeating in the face of practical challenge, its idealism dissipated by the confronting of it with a disturbed and shocking reality.

Yet the purpose of such exoticism in nineteenth-century Irish fiction was also to foster the concept of an untainted and 'real' Ireland, beyond the materialistic, the modern and the everyday. As a related instance of Irish nationalism's increasing appropriation of space and form, this exoticist presentation of the Irish self as untainted and authentic was so exclusively managed by the late nineteenth century that its discursive potential was almost solely identified with nationalism's ideological ends, the romantic element an engine for its functioning realism. Emer Nolan comments on the disjunction between the idyllic rural setting depicted in *Knocknagow* and historical actuality: 'Kickham endeavours to preserve a notion of an Irish sacred space of endearing "home affections" that not even the worst of British imperialism could penetrate'.¹⁰⁴ No longer an exploitative method which fostered the disarming of the Irish national character within the context of a British state, Lawless is compelled to renegotiate exoticism's structural use. There is a sense, therefore, in which Lawless's application of a naturalistic format with which to identify and anatomize this 'other' indicates not only an abandonment of the romance of the exotic but also an attempt to counteract its effects.

Chapter four will examine the use by Lawless of late nineteenth-century theories on race and social structure in the novel *Maelcho*, an historical narrative centring around the second Desmond rebellion, and the associated naturalistic representation which focuses quite deliberately on those very aspects of violence and division within the Irish historical experience. The notion of a stadial process which underpinned much Enlightenment and Victorian thought on historical development is astutely managed by Lawless to point up the cultural and social fractures involved in a stadial progression and the racial dispositions which such a process was seen to either promote or render redundant. The implications of Lawless's narrative will be read also as reflecting how she conceived of an national identity as an evolutionary progressive movement and the necessity of the historical disruption by which it is

Courts Press, 2000), pp.185-198, p.189.

produced. Without the secured stabilities of a centralized authority, Fitzmaurice is shown to be a prey to the tribalistic loyalties and the Rome oriented clericalism of his disparate following. Here Lawless is intent on demonstrating the necessity for national development of maintaining the structural guarantees of the union with Britain; yet such a presentation also contains a corollary that in an evolving nineteenth-century context of modernity, an Ascendancy feudal perspective can inevitably be construed as anachronistic, requiring a refashioning of its Ascendancy persona. That refashioning is, in effect, a supporting pillar of the narrative itself, its reappraisal of historical consciousness operating on a reappraisal of an Anglo-Irish position within that history.

Beyond racial categories yet complicit with them in Lawless's work, are those categories governing class, particularly the classifying of lower social groups in ways which attempt to consolidate social dominance. Implicit in such conceptions of class type and class relationship lies an anxiety at the prospect of an increasingly mobile and vocal lower class which was seen as threatening to unsettle the delicate balances which many Victorians saw as fundamental to the maintenance of social order. Victorian application of the new scientific disciplines to crowd analysis, mob control, the propounding of class-specific determinants, were desperate attempts to fix such balances and maintain the status quos of political and commercial power. For the Anglo-Irish ruling elite, however, such problems were exacerbated by the conflictual ethnic and religious nature of Irish class difference. Chapter three of this study will identify the particular significance of *Grania* to be its transference of metropolitan categorisations of class onto an Irish ethnic format. In order to subvert the capital of an espoused native stock, Lawless figures the island community of Inishmaan in terms of English Social Darwinism, applying its reductive definitions by which the metropolitan impoverished masses were equated with the discarded effluents which the metropolis itself necessarily produced. So the dispossessed communities inhabiting the fringes of the west of Ireland, its islands and coastline, are similarly displaced by Lawless into a marginalized and discarded national residuum, their perceived degeneracy indicated, through a circular argument, by their evident destitution.¹⁰⁵

¹⁰⁴ Nolan, *Catholic Emancipations*, p.110.

¹⁰⁵ Curiously these British urban poor were also conceived as congregating around the margins of the city's functioning body, particularly by the river's estuary where the

Grania is also, however, an instance of New Woman fiction and as such provides an insight into Lawless's attitude towards a social order which relegated female identity to the passive and the subordinate and contrasts strikingly with many of her own conventional representations of femininity, particularly Honor O'Malley, Alley Sheen and Bridget O'Brien. The traditional communal repressions of female individuality against which *Grania O'Malley* is determined to assert herself and the repercussions which she suffers as a result represent a direct feminist critique of the hardship and silencing which many peasant women in late nineteenth-century Ireland were forced to endure. Many New Woman novelists broke the boundaries imposed on them as women writers, particularly the narrow scope within which such writers were expected to operate. The domestic setting, as the presentation of the socially acceptable and morally improving, was extended into areas which were deliberately provocative and challenging, most notably that of sexuality but also institutional and cultural orthodoxy, economics and the traditional male preserve of politics.

Yet, as Lyn Pykett notes, some of these writers also remained within or appropriated the conventional feminine construct, most notably the idea of the woman as subjective creature, and the characterising of them as 'observers and recorders of surface minutiae'.¹⁰⁶ In doing so, however, they refashioned this view of the self-obsessed feminine by subverting its negative associations, concentrating instead on detailing the depth and register of emotional life.¹⁰⁷ Lawless demonstrates this specifically in the way she adopts the woman writer's role as recorder of the minute by imbricating landscape detail into a correlated detailed exposition of *Grania's* personal consciousness; the fragility and tenacious nature of the island's plant-life, the impetuous fluctuations of weather and the intricate and layered strata of the rock formations all reflect a complex, turbulent and distinctly individualized personality. Like many New Woman writers, however, Lawless tended to restrict her critique to the constraints of a monogamous and heterosexual relationship and, therefore, its underpinning of the social conventionality which that entailed.¹⁰⁸ Chapter three will

actual urban discarded refuse gathered. See Greenslade, William, *Degeneration, Culture and the Novel: 1880-1940* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1994).

¹⁰⁶ Pykett, Lyn, *The 'Improper' Feminine; The Women's Sensation Novel and New Woman Writing* (London and New York: Routledge, 1992), p.196.

¹⁰⁷ Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine*, p.196.

¹⁰⁸ 'The inability to think beyond heterosexual marriage as the only available route to happiness and fulfilment for women also explains the pessimism of most New

pursue such an argument as it relates to *Grania* and specifically will trace within that novel an interpretive social element which functions on a femininity not identifiable strictly as feminist yet which surveys, weighs, and pronounces on, a world fictionalised through its ethic.

Woman novels'. Ledger, Sally, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the fin de siècle* (Manchester and New York: Manchester Press, 1997), p.23.

Chapter I.

Hurrish: Representations of Violence through Character and Landscape.

Political and Literary Context.

The organized land agitation of 1879-1882, historically referred to as the Land War, originated with the founding in Mayo by Michael Davitt of the Land League in 1879 and later the country wide establishment of the Irish National Land League in the same year. Its parliamentary, nationalist and home rule dimension was consolidated following the 1880 election in which sixty three home rule MPs, forming the Irish Parliamentary Party were elected with Parnell as chairman. Land League agitation marked an obvious movement forward from the earlier eighteenth and nineteenth-century Whiteboyism and Ribbonism in that its organized legal and parliamentary range demonstrated its national rather than regional composition and objectives. As *Rethinking Irish History* notes, due to the intense politicisation which was a feature of late nineteenth-century Ireland agrarian collective action became more proactive and less communal, giving it the capacity to engage with a wider national spectrum.

This capacity was enhanced by the formation of new links between rural and urban areas from the 1870s: there was an advancement in literacy, railways were extended, and there was increasing commercialisation of agriculture. As peasants became drawn into the cash economy links with urban areas increased and the lower middle-class became more and more dependent upon the farming sector with whom it had kinship bonds.¹⁰⁹

Within the precincts of the Land League, therefore, there was a wide variation of concerns and aspirations which themselves reflected the variety of contending shades of nationalism. From the nationalisation of the land favoured by leaders such as Michael Davitt and the consolidation of the rural bourgeoisie sought by T.M. Healy these concerns extended to the Land League ranks of midland and eastern large and middling farmers who sought as their main objective a reduction in rents. Smaller western landholders in Connaught aimed at a redistribution of the land itself while the landless labourers, particularly in the south of the country, sought action in pursuit of higher wages. Neither was the Land War, as Murphy observes, an exclusively rural

¹⁰⁹O'Mahoney, Patrick, and Gerard Delanty, *Rethinking Irish History: Nationalism, Identity, and Ideology* (Basingstoke: Palgrave, 2001), p.88.

campaign, however, with many urban activists being prominent in its decision making: ‘Of additional significance concerning the land war is the degree to which the local leadership of the Land League was provided by urban dwellers, journalists, publicans and, especially, shopkeepers’.¹¹⁰

That Parnell moved to side-line the League’s original founders, Davitt and John Dillon, in 1882 whose sympathies lay more with the small tenant farmers and landless labourers was proof for some of those elements inside and outside nationalism that an establishment interest of large farmers and the town shopkeepers and publicans, was the real objective of the Land War, leaving those who bore the brunt of its hardships disaffected and disillusioned. Murphy points to the contention that the Land War strategy of withholding rents suited large farmers of the midlands and east who could afford the legal costs involved in such action.¹¹¹ In *Rethinking Irish History* it is stated ‘Those who benefited from the Land Acts were mostly the bigger farmers who, once their own objectives were secured, showed little sympathy with smaller farmers excluded from the land settlement or with landless labourers’.¹¹²

The range of conflicting energies which was revolving around the land question during the closing decades of the nineteenth century and the struggle operating for the heart and mind of nationalism itself has been outlined in the introduction to this thesis. The ideological foment and the almost brainstorming rupture which these energies appeared to have on the national consciousness is signally realised by Lawless in the representation of Maurice Brady’s character, an incendiary mix of ambition, frustration and latent violence. Maurice is, moreover, landless and effectively indifferent to the appeal which the land contains for farmers such as Hurrish. Lawless’s presentation of Maurice Brady and the pernicious effects on the tenantry of nationalist demagoguery in *Hurrish* is not too dissimilar to the sentiments expressed by Lecky concerning the same issue.

That a set of political adventurers who go about the country openly advocating robbery and by implication murder (‘keep a firm grip on your land’ without paying rent, in Ireland, means nothing else) should enjoy an unbounded popularity and command a multitude of Irish votes; that a popular press should extol them as the true leaders and representatives of the Irish race; that great meetings should be held in which cries for murdering landlords elicit loud cheers and not a word of serious rebuke; that such a movement should have attained its present

¹¹⁰ Murphy, James. H., *Ireland: a social, cultural and literary history*, pp.124-135.

¹¹¹ Murphy, *Ireland: a social, cultural and literary history*, p. 129-131.

¹¹² O’Mahoney, *Rethinking Irish History*, p.88.

dimensions in Ireland appears to me a most conclusive proof that the very rudiments of political morality have still to be taught.¹¹³

In the characterisation of Maurice Lawless attempts to suggest the wider urban dimension to the land agitation and the wider nationalist ideological agenda which operated in its shadow, an agenda identified by Lawless in the narrative as the long term trajectory of the movement which pitted naïve peasant against paternalistic landlord. Although she spent much of her childhood holidays with her landowning grandparents in south Galway, the world of landlord and tenant to which Lawless would have been more accustomed was situated in the eastern counties where the large farming population and the Catholic bourgeoisie were the typical agitators for change. Hansson refers to the eviction of a number of tenants in the early 1880s from their holdings by Lawless's brother Lord Cloncurry on the family estate of Lyons near Dublin where Lawless herself was raised.¹¹⁴ It is in the western area, however, the setting for Lawless's novel, that a relationship between tenant smallholder and estate owner could be articulated without the confusion of the subtle gradations of social hierarchy which were involved in the greater constituency of political nationalism. This concentration by Lawless on a seemingly one dimensional social relationship of small holder and landlord and set in the remote harsh landscape of Clare also allows for the presentation of a self-enclosed locally dependent territory fractured by an insidious and undermining national movement. Lawless was not indifferent to the plight of the peasantry, as the scene in the Galway cabin depicted in *Grania* testifies or in the spare sad picture of the cabin in which Mat Brady's body is laid. However, the amelioration of peasant conditions did not appear to require any severe analysis of the existing social order, nor the disruption of the position of the landed gentry. This would seem to mirror also the judgement of Lecky on the land question.

He hoped that something would be done to multiply the number of peasant proprietors in Ireland without injuring the landlord's rights to property. For Lecky held that to increase the peasant proprietary would help to maintain a stable society; but he knew, the difficulties of achieving peasant proprietary had been enormously increased by the attitude of the 'patriots' in advising the withholding of the payment of debts, and by the strong anti-Irish feeling which the proceedings of 'Parnell and Co' had produced in England.¹¹⁵

To say, therefore, that Lawless was anti-nationalist based merely on her contrary

¹¹³ McCartney, Donal, *W. E. H. Lecky: Historian and Politician 1839-1903* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1994), p.95-96.

¹¹⁴ Hansson, *Emily Lawless*, p.70.

attitude to the Land League objectives and strategies or to Parnellite politics would be to define nationalism in a very narrow sense. As her comparative representations of Pierce O'Brien and Hurrish makes clear, Lawless had a wide latitude in her conception of what constituted an Irish nationalist, one which did not exclude in a narrow way, unionist, conservative or Ascendancy elite. As regards nationalism's multiple aspects, Costello-Sullivan observes that 'Irish nationalism historically accommodated not only disparate cultural traditions, but also multiple and competing claims to Irishness'.¹¹⁶ To reject Lawless's engagement with nationalism or to figure it as uniformly antithetical would be, in Costello-Sullivan's words, 'to substitute a singular narrative of nationalism for what was (and is) a multiple and contested discourse'.¹¹⁷ Rather, in the course of this chapter, that model of the future nation and of modernity presented as the face of political nationalism in *Hurrish*, is shown to be rejected by Lawless, judged by her to be indifferent to those traditions by which she recognised an integrated and multivocal nationhood.

A proper appraisal of Lawless's *Hurrish* must involve its assessment in light of other Land War novels written at the time and the extent to which Lawless differed from these in her approach. The interest shown by many novelists in this subject was probably due to its capacity to be incorporated into already existent literary practice. Kelleher remarks that as a theme agrarian conflict and social change lent themselves readily to the established plots of domestic and sensational fiction.¹¹⁸ The fact that Lawless reduces a complex social and political matter to the mainly personal can be seen therefore as being due as much to artistic convention and the requirements of a publishing industry and reading public. Taking advantage of what was evidently a popular subject at the time might explain Lawless's change from her earlier more conventional domestic fictions set in London and the Continent. Many of the novels produced on the subject were by women; Letitia McClintock's *A Boycotted Household* (1881), Elizabeth Owens Blackburne Casey's *Hearts of Erin* (1882), Fannie Gallagher's *Thy Name is Truth* (1884), Rosa Mulholland's *Marcella Grace* (1886), and Frances Mabel Robinson's *Plan of Campaign* (1888), and many show the strains and 'discontents' of attempting to resolve a specific and fractious political

¹¹⁵ McCartney, *W. E. H. Lecky*, p.97.

¹¹⁶ Costello-Sullivan, 'Novel Traditions', p.153.

¹¹⁷ Costello-Sullivan, 'Novel Traditions', p.153.

¹¹⁸ Kelleher, *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, vol. 1, p.479.

problem through the medium of sentimental and domestic fiction.¹¹⁹ These strains are most apparent in the recourse of many novelists to the mechanism of romance and marriage as a means of resolution. What sets Lawless's *Hurriah* apart from the majority of such novels is the refusal to settle the divisive issues through such simple formal means. Although the politics of the Land War and communal violence are reduced to the personal, Lawless's portrayal of the romantic component in Alley's frustrated love for Hurriah and her outright rejection of her betroth Maurice Brady adds a pointedness to the wider political context rather than minimises it.

Nonetheless, despite the clothing of romance and the popularity of many Land War narratives, authors of such novels were constrained to walk what could prove to be a very treacherous line between orthodoxy and what could be viewed as radical activity. Divisive as a topic to those Irish or Anglo-Irish sections of the community directly involved, representations of the land conflict of the early 1880s also could provoke repercussions from that wider constituency in Britain where a less informed, comparatively conservative publishing and book reviewing industry could view the sentiments employed by the novelist as in themselves either subversive or supportive of the rule of law. Margaret Kelleher recounts the unfortunate fate of the Irish novelist E. O. Blackburne whose successful career as journalist and writer in London came to an abrupt end as a result of her fictional representation of Land League agitation in her fifth novel *The Heart of Erin* (1882).

Subtitled 'An Irish Story of Today', her novel called for better understanding between England and Ireland, and offered a carefully negotiated analysis of the contemporary land agitation.

Soon after the novel's appearance, however, the Phoenix Park murders of 6 May took place, and in a review published on 20 May 1882 the London *Athenaeum* castigated Blackburne as a 'thoroughgoing partisan of the land league'; this proved to be the last novel published by Blackburne and she died in penury in Ireland twelve years later.¹²⁰

Violence as a means of resistance was that one aspect of the Land War which posed most problems for those writers wishing to fictionally address its issues. As James Murphy indicates, representation, particularly that of the Irish masses, became crucially decisive during this period.

Reflecting the move towards mass democracy, the 1880s had been the first decade in Irish political culture in which presentation had mattered so much. Propaganda images vied with each other of Irish tenants as destitute or violent, of the British government as cruel or fair,

¹¹⁹ Kelleher, *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, vol. 1, p.480.

¹²⁰ Kelleher, *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, vol. I, p.480.

and of the Irish party as determined or criminal.¹²¹

Kelleher states that, apart from obviously hostile novels such as Letitia McClintock's *A Boycotted Household* (1881) which charted the 'reign of terror' endured by a landlord's household and Anthony Trollope's *The Landleaguers* (1883), many of the novelists attempted a sympathetic representation of the tenant demands although the violent action of the League's members 'proved more difficult matter to handle'.¹²² In Blackburne's *The Heart of Erin*, the initial request for a calm and dispassionate review of peasant conditions proves, as Kelleher notes, 'impossible to sustain as the story unfolds and a direct authorial comment ultimately concedes the existence of "abominable practices" and "disagreeable accompaniments" to the campaign of reform'.¹²³

As a result, many of these novels inevitably appear non-dialogic, dictated by the necessity to be not so much circumspect as measured. While many express a sympathy for the grievances of the tenants, the patronising tone and the simplistic reconciliations often betray an easy condescension on the part of the novelist keen to apply a panacea rather than contemplate real structural upheaval. The ruling landed class, and the moral economy which accompanies it, is frequently maintained in such resolutions, although perhaps modified in some way. Fannie Gallaher's *Thy Name is Truth* involves the revealing of the upper class identity of the heroine and her inheritance of a large estate while Rosa Mulholland's *Marcella Grace* proposes the replacement of the Protestant aristocracy with a Catholic landed gentry as a remedy for the rural antagonisms. Kelleher notes, for instance, how 'Lower-class tenants' ambitions for land ownership are slyly derided by Gallaher and Mulholland: that the tenants of *Marcella Grace* should misname the contemporary campaign as one for "pisant propriety" is a particularly revealing example'.¹²⁴

Inevitably many of the novelists who engaged this subject also used it as a vehicle for a debate relevant to their own social issues so that the ideological struggle which centred on land, religion and political economy became subsumed into such

¹²¹ Murphy, *Ireland: a Social, Cultural and Literary History*, p.133.

¹²² Kelleher, 'Prose writing and drama in English, 1830-1890: from Catholic emancipation to the fall of Parnell' in *Cambridge History*, p.480.

¹²³ Kelleher, "'Factual Fictions": Representations of the Land Agitation in Nineteenth-Century Women's Fiction', in (ed) Heidi Hansson, *New Contexts: Re-Framing Nineteenth-Century Irish Women's Prose* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2008), pp.78-91, p.82.

issues as feminist or artistic protest or securing established class values, its solution defined according to other problems. Anthony Trollope's *The Landleaguers* (1883) and George Moore's *A Drama in Muslin* (1886) concern themselves, as Emer Nolan notes, 'with the travails of economically dependent middle- or upper-class women', Trollope's novel intent on demonstrating that 'women present a more radical challenge to the social order than the downtrodden tenants'.¹²⁵ In the writings of Mulholland and others, intent on having Irish culture validated and valued by its inclusion in a wider metropolitan British culture, there arose a dilemma in dealing with that brand of nationalism engaged in land agitation which centred on the interests of a lower middle-class. As Murphy observes, 'The pursuit of realism in fiction thus held no attraction for upper middle-class novelists. It could only remind them of the intractability of the dilemma they faced. Their only hope was to make themselves seem as acceptable as possible in British eyes'.¹²⁶

In the novels of Mulholland, including *Marcella Grace*, consequently, the depiction of peasant life becomes a means for moral fable, 'teaching the necessity of the Victorian social code'.¹²⁷ Murphy associates this group of Irish novelists with the *Irish Monthly*, founded and edited by Matthew Russell whose aspirations for the periodical were that it should be 'Irish, too, to the core - thrilling with our Celtic nature and coloured by our wonderful history'.¹²⁸ Russell was to castigate Lawless's *Hurrish*, rejecting Lecky's and Dr. G. F. Shaw's earlier endorsement of the novel for inclusion in *The Best Hundred Irish Books* by Historicus of *The Freeman's Journal*: 'Mr Lecky and Dr. Shaw, praise a very unamiable, not to say, atrocious, picture of an Irish peasant mother as true to life as the caricature of Irish dialect, which Dr. Shaw confessed, is not very accurate'.¹²⁹ That more nationalist-minded persons such as Russell could dismiss Lawless's novel as misrepresentative might also be due to her avoidance of those obvious social and political grievances which lay behind the rural agitation. The injustice and exploitation of the Irish tenantry which the Land League used as a rallying issue could be invalidated by a representation of that group as in

¹²⁴ Kelleher, "Factual Fictions", p.86.

¹²⁵ Nolan, *Catholic Emancipations*, p.134-35.

¹²⁶ Murphy, 'Insouciant Rivals of Mrs Barton', p.226.

¹²⁷ Murphy, 'Insouciant Rivals of Mrs Barton', p.224.

¹²⁸ Murphy, 'Insouciant Rivals of Mrs Barton', p.222.

¹²⁹ Historicus, [Richard Barry O'Brien] (ed.) *The Best Hundred Irish Books* (Dublin: *The Freeman's Journal*, 1886), p.21.

itself miscreant. The reviewer in the *Nation*, like Russell therefore, was equally resentful of Lawless's depiction claiming that the novel 'is a deliberately drawn picture of peasant life so hideous from its irredeemable, demoniacal criminality, not only un-Irish but inhuman, that the wide world could not show its realisation'.¹³⁰

The reaction accorded the novel by British establishment papers tended to prove this point. The *St. James's Gazette* review commends the novel's appropriately timed analysis and its lack of bias.

This book has been published at a singularly opportune moment. At a time when the eyes of all men are turned upon Ireland, a vivid and striking picture of the Irish peasant as he really is, a description coloured by no political or partisan motive, is doubly valuable.¹³¹

That the *Spectator* review could esteem *Hurrish* as a moralisation of the problem and use it as a proof of the absence of any genuine political or social basis for atrocities is, to a degree, an unintentional indictment of Lawless's novelistic objectivity.

Hurrish is a study evidently made in love, and not with any hostile feeling. It is full of appreciation of the higher qualities of the race, and of understanding of their ways of thinking, and the prejudices and ignorances which have clouded their bright perceptions, and made the world so narrow to them, and twisted their moral sense so fatally. It is not, the reader will perhaps be glad, an episode in the struggle between landlord and tenant, nor an exhibition of class hostilities. The action all takes place within themselves, so to speak; the wrongs done, the vengeance taken, are between peasant and peasant, and the wonderful moral atmosphere which envelops them, and which we are made to feel penetrating all the circumstances of their lives and all the fashions of their thoughts, has nothing to do with either politics or injured nationality.¹³²

Similarly *The Times* reviewer's complacent dismissal of any British culpability in the land question must in part be attributable to Lawless's personalising of the crime at the heart of her narrative while also contextualising it within the agrarian disturbances: 'If the Clare and Kerry peasantry would only display towards the Saxon who is trying to be just one-quarter *Hurrish*'s moderation there would be no Irish question'.¹³³

Nonetheless, in contrast to the general practice of novelists such as Mulholland, Lawless reverses the perspective in *Hurrish*, presenting the land agitation campaign

¹³⁰ Review, *Nation* (February 20th. 1886), Lawless Papers, Marsh's Library, Dublin.

¹³¹ Review, *St. James's Gazette* (February 8th. 1886), Lawless Papers, Marsh's Library, Dublin.

¹³² Review, *Spectator* (January 30th. 1886), Lawless Papers, Marsh's Library, Dublin.

¹³³ Review, *The Times* (March 13th. 1886), Lawless Papers, Marsh's Library, Dublin.

and the social milieu surrounding it from that of the peasantry. In so doing Lawless does lend a degree of verisimilitude to her subject. To the extent that she reverses the authorial focus, however, it is more complex. That Lawless produced ‘a remarkably unbiased representation of the entire gamut of opinion regarding the highly charged Irish issues of land ownership and law’ as Brewer claims, and that ‘sympathetically depicted in *Hurrish* are landlord and tenant, law officer and vigilante, older generation and younger, moderate and radical’ can hardly be maintained on close examination of the text.¹³⁴ The authorial voice, the overarching mechanism by which a narratorial perspective in *Hurrish* is provided rather than the representational method itself, can be said to rely on a moralism which perpetuates an orthodox establishment value system even as it questions the legal processes by which that system is meant to be figured. As Laird herself observes, ultimately Lawless does voice ‘a thoroughgoing condemnation’ of the agrarian code.¹³⁵ Nonetheless, Lawless’s more complex depiction of the social setting and the forces at variance within it makes *Hurrish* a more challenging work of Land War fiction. This is particularly evident in the interaction which Lawless’s narrative creates between the claims of two culturally disparate attitudes to land and law. The *Pall Mall* review of *Hurrish* recognises this as the central issue of the novel and praises Lawless’s apparent non-partisanship.

No one can doubt that settled hostility to law - at least to law as exercised by the Imperial power - showing itself in agrarian outrage, is the prevailing feeling in the greater part of Ireland at the present time. And this is made th central thought in *Hurrish* but it is done with a certain neutrality of treatment which is truly artistic.¹³⁶

Gladstone expressed his gratitude to Lawless for her novel which he believed conveyed ‘not as an abstract proposition, but as a living reality, the estrangement of the people of Ireland from the law’, going on to claim that ‘this estrangement exhibits itself under the many varieties of character and circumstance’¹³⁷.

The actual and artistic sense in which Lawless distances herself from the complexities of a divisive social problem in *Hurrish* is more accurately pinpointed by Hansson. Hansson’s criticism is that Lawless’s narrator creates such a remove from her characters as to prevent identification with them: ‘Instead of being immersed in

¹³⁴ Brewer, ‘She Was a Part of It’, p.123.

¹³⁵ Lairs, *Subversive law*, p.49.

¹³⁶ Review, *Pall Mall* (February 13th. 1886), Lawless Papers, Marsh’s Library, Dublin.

¹³⁷ Gladstone, William, E., *Special Aspects of the Irish Question: A Series of*

the story, the narrator and the reader embark on a project to study a peculiar life form'.¹³⁸ Such a view however, argues against Hansson's overall judgement on Lawless's writing as dialogic: 'Descriptions of individuals reveal the effects of both patriarchal and colonial oppression, but her openly dialogic narration collapses the opposition between categories without establishing new systems'.¹³⁹ Hansson's own appraisal of *Hurrish* reveals the fundamental discrepancy in such a view of Lawless's dialogism when she observes both that Hurrish becomes involved in nationalist campaigning because of its rhetoric rather than because he believes the system to be unjust and also that Lawless shows the alienation of the Irish peasant from what was perceived as a biased legal system. That Lawless does not voice through Hurrish any criticism of the system, a system of land tenure which represents a category by which the Ascendancy class sustained itself, is indicative of partisanship rather than dialogue. That she does articulate a disaffection from the professional and governmental arm of a territorially detached legal system, a system to which both landlord and tenant could share a mutual antagonism during the 1880s, is equally open to a charge of non-dialogic partiality. The two categories serve different foci for Lawless's representation of the agrarian conflict and equally represent her class's interests, the category of landlord/tenant sublimated through a rejection of an estranging legal apparatus. Within that arm of nationalism whose rhetoric was voiced by a predominantly Catholic rural populace there was no fundamental difference to be discerned between an inequitable land system and a colonial judicial one. Hurrish, as nationalist peasant, could not have credibly differentiated one from the other whereas a highly nuanced Ascendancy perspective certainly could.

The disjunction between an establishment legal system and popular law was concentrated on property law as it related to land ownership during this period. As Laird suggests, the limbo in which the legal standing of land ownership was suspended lay at the bottom of much frustration. Quoting George Campbell, who carried out an analysis of the actualities of land relations in Ireland at the time, Laird notes 'For Campbell, putting "out of sight the customary law of the country" and asserting that "the theoretical English law is the only law" had resulted in the following situation: "in theory the landlords are absolute owners; but in fact are they

Reflections in and since 1886 (London: *The Daily Chronicle*, 1912), p.1512.

¹³⁸ Hansson, *Emily Lawless*, p.66.

¹³⁹ Hansson, *Emily Lawless*, p.8.

so ? Most assuredly not”’ .¹⁴⁰

The tensions that Campbell claimed to be a direct result of ‘the clashing of these two systems’ were, he stated, particularly pronounced in times of eviction. Under English law, landlords were entitled to evict and could seek the help of the police in order to do so. Reminding his readers that ‘the law administered by the ordinary tribunals’ was not the only law in Ireland, Campbell asserted that ‘it is an abominable state of things when any wrong-headed man might throw a country into rebellion by ignoring rights which the law has strangely ignored’.¹⁴¹

In her 1888 edition of *Ireland*, Lawless devoted a greater attention to the issues behind the Land War and its consequences than appears in the later editions. Dealing specifically with the problem of who actually owns property under the Irish land system, tenant or landlord, Lawless criticises the dual ownership effect which resulted from tenants’ campaigning for the ‘three F’s’ - fair rent, free sale and fixity of tenure. Voicing a frustration on behalf of a landowning class which she apparently judges to be placed in an invidious position, Lawless justifies the recourse to eviction.

At the last extremity, it is, however, the only one open to any owner, qua owner, let his political sympathies or proclivities be what they may, so that it does not necessarily argue any double portion of original sin even on the part of that well-laden pack-horse of politics - the Irish landlord - to say that his wits have not so far been equal to the task of dispensing with it.¹⁴²

It is around an evicted farm and its occupation in contravention of alternate law that the violence involving *Hurrish* revolves. The only detail of eviction which occurs in *Hurrish* involves the Clancy family forced out on a winter’s night, not by a landlord but rather by the Land League itself. Significantly, it is not elaborated on that Pierce O’Brien, the novel’s representation of a lenient landlord, has evicted the Maloney family from their holding which Mat Brady subsequently occupies and from which the novel’s action proceeds. Lawless charts how the confusion associated with land tenure flows from one dimension of legal challenge into the other, and demonstrates the repercussions by which all legality in Ireland is undermined. The non-compliance of the rural native tenantry with land ownership law causes a collapse of legality regarding murder. In this regard the personalisation of the issue has its effect in so far as it monitors the reverberations of a systematic collapse across the spectrum of individual existence.

Hurrish is ostensibly an exploration of the effect which a specific social and

¹⁴⁰ Laird, *Subversive law*, p.65.

¹⁴¹ Laird, *Subversive law*, p.66.

physical environment has on the character of individuals, particularly an environment which is perceived to have, as a constituent feature, an endemic and self-perpetuating culture of violence. Yet, more illuminatingly than such a straight-forward narrative study, *Hurrih* might equally be analysed as an attempt on the part of its narrator to structure character and place as a means to formulate and represent a specific social, cultural and legal diagnostic. That argument has, as its focus, an intrinsically historical concept of violence and its origins which presents that violence as endemic within a particular section of society. Laird also acknowledges such an interpretation:

It could be argued that Lawless's narrative, by focusing on the violent actions of these particular men, is propagating the notion that the personal passions of an instinctively violent people are inevitably at the root of agrarian crimes in Ireland. The depiction of the Irish populace as irredeemably linked to violent activity and the particularisation of acts of violence were methods commonly employed to avoid acknowledging the alternative modes of organisation within which agrarian 'outrages' found their rationale.¹⁴³

However, Laird moves to qualify this perception of Lawless's narrative approach by distinguishing between what she views as its representation of two categories of rural violence: 'Penalties inflicted on those who break the "unwritten law" and the violent acts that take place outside the sanctions of both unofficial and official law'.¹⁴⁴ Contrary to Laird, the argument of this chapter will centre on the lack of distinction, in effect, which Lawless applies to these two categories in so far as that violence inherent in secret societies and their unwritten code is essentially a reflection of that same violence which inheres within the natures of the narrative's main characters. The extremes of characterization and of setting which are introduced at the novel's opening, entitled 'An Iron Land', are judged to reflect the inveteracy of the violent extremes within which Irish rural society operates and by which it is defined.

¹⁴² Lawless, *Ireland*, p.413.

¹⁴³ Laird, *Subversive law*, p.46.

¹⁴⁴ Laird, *Subversive law*, p.46.

An Iron Land.

One of those extremes is a presentation of the Burren landscape which involves an obvious vacillating between revulsion and spontaneous warmth, a dichotomy which persists throughout the text. The sense of fitfulness which this produces enables the land to operate alternately both as a function of political conflict and as a source of spiritual recuperation. With the opening of the novel that political function is decisively established as the Burren is invested with all the force of privation, much of the language invoking disturbing and formidable images of famine and desolation, a physical wretchedness frequently associated with people, yet here displaced onto the environment itself.

They are not hills, in fact, but skeletons -- rain-worn, time-worn, wind worn,--starvation made visible, and embodied in a landscape.¹⁴⁵

Everything that the eye rests on tells us that we are on one of the last standpoints of an old world, worn-out with its own profusion, and reduced here to the barest elements. Mother Earth, once young, buxom, frolicsome, is here a wrinkled woman, sitting alone in the evening of her days, and looking with melancholy eyes at the sunset.¹⁴⁶

The stillness outside was wonderful, such stillness as could only exist in so depopulated a region -- a region where there were no fields to plough, few seeds to be sown, no carriages to drive, and hardly any roads to drive them on; nothing but sea, sky, rocks, cloud, -- a stillness that was like death, broken only by the larks, which wheeled and circled overhead, pouring out their heavenly notes over those grey unfriendly rocks in a melodious and interminable cataract.¹⁴⁷

Stated obliquely through landscape, this language of eviction and famine is an emotional deployment calculated to produce a distressing effect and engineered to provide the maximum return from that picture of human prosperity which eventually materializes out of and contradicts it. The resonances which this language, with its associated familiars, evokes are all the more effective through the sense of permanence and the almost sculpted appropriateness of the setting in which that language is embedded. Familiars such as deprivation as it is manifested in the unbroken surface of rock 'nakedness personified -- not comparative but absolute'; or of emaciation 'a little thin grass has spread itself, through which trenches have been

¹⁴⁵ Lawless, Emily, *Hurrish: A Study* (1886; Belfast: The Appletree Press, 1992), p.3.

¹⁴⁶ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.4.

¹⁴⁷ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p. 8.

torn, showing the earth and stones below. Truly a grim scene !'; and ultimately of death 'where every stick and stone seems to be grimacing with unpleasant intention'; insinuate themselves upon the consciousness and shape an attitude by which the landscape and narratorial intent are conciliated.

The deep apprehension which such images are sure to arouse is played on by an equally provocative scene of security and plenty in the little 'oasis' which is Hurrish O'Brien's house, located at the heart of this encircling desolation. Not so much a corrective or regenerative aspiration, however, this counter image of plenty is rather a consolidating shift to the comforting end of the narrator's emotional spectrum, the drawing out of anxiety a reassurance which defies the obvious. Almost a homing, its point is the delivery of that cargo of social sentiment which the narrative carries.¹⁴⁸

Towards the bottom, where it approaches the sea, this valley, however, expands, and becomes an irregular lake-like circle, mapped out into small fields, separated from one another by tottering lace-work walls. After following the downward course of the upper valley, you would have been surprised at the sudden fertility of this little space, the greenness of the grass, the promising look of the small crops of bottle-green potatoes.¹⁴⁹

Through the open doorway they could see the little hollow below, looking like a green saucer upon a grey floor. The drills of potatoes were appearing in dark-green jagged rows between the boulders, and over the grey shoulder of the next ridge the long heave of the Atlantic could be heard rising and falling in a slow harmonious cadence.¹⁵⁰

This human presence, anchored by the little saucer of green, stands defiantly out against the surrounding physical embodiment of starvation, the ash-tree an emblem of prosperity in the face of such discouragement.

His cabin -- a rather large one, built of stone and thatched -- stood upon the summit of a little ridge, conspicuous, like a small fly upon a large window-pane, in the absence of any other building; rendered still more so by a good-sized ash-tree, which stood upon the ridge beside it -- a noticeable distinction in so leafless a district.¹⁵¹

In a deliberate, graduated movement from the starvation imagery of the surrounding barren landscape, through the small oasis of fertility, to the 'conspicuous' cabin, the narrative arrives at the ultimate contradictor of, and furthest point possible from, those images associated with human misery. The family of Hurrish O'Brien is figured as healthy and well-provided.

Hurrish sat upon a low "creepy" stool, with a huge mug of stirabout (known to the ignorant as

¹⁴⁸ 'Homing' understood as the safe retrieval of a refuge temporarily left.

¹⁴⁹ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.4.

¹⁵⁰ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.8.

porridge) upon his knees, which he was shovelling down his throat by the aid of a large iron spoon.¹⁵²

He had a good stock of cows and calves; he held his farm on a moderate rental; his wife had brought him fifty gold sovereigns tied up in a pocket-handkerchief; his children were strong and healthy; and he was regarded by his neighbours generally as one of the 'warmest' men between Blackhead and the mouth of the Shannon.¹⁵³

Alley, with an iron spoon in her hand, was feeding the youngest child, a rosy creature of three, who sat plump upon the ground, its bare fat feet and legs outstretched, and its round red mouth agape, like a young hedge-sparrow, for the mouthful of stirabout.¹⁵⁴

That such an insistent denial of the dominant conditions is established and that such a weight of subconscious misery is alleviated by actual human prosperity indicates the narrator's need to shape a reality which might defy a traditionally fortified grievance. The fact that these human subjects are those with whom endemic destitution is most frequently identified serves to increase the emotional and moral force of the narrative. The argument is to be drawn from within the ranks of the victims themselves. Well considered and finely balanced, such a strategy involves the deliberate garnering of associated images with a conscious determination to place them in opposition to, and thereby cancel, those very misgivings to which they regularly and consistently give rise. Just as the strictures of poverty are removed from their proper subject and reconstituted in the aspect of the landscape, so the agencies of communal misery are redefined, the weight of responsibility being placed firmly on that portion of the population most associated with its resultant impact.

Within the household of the tenant farmer, Hurrish O'Brien, a microcosm of that group, inveterate political enmities are shown to operate which are themselves reflective of a wider social violence.

Bridget O'Brien was an ardent patriot ! The latest tide of revolutionary sentiment had begun to spread its waves even to the heart of remotest Burren, and she was the chief recipient of it in the O'Brien household. It was she who knew when, where, how and why the latest agrarian outrage had been committed, and was the first to raise the war-cry of triumph and exultation upon these joyful occasions. Not that the rest of the family were backward in their degree.¹⁵⁵

The domestic sanctity of the home also is shown to be invaded and polluted, the excessive content of the prints which decorate the walls emphasising the irrationality

¹⁵¹ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.5.

¹⁵² Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.5.

¹⁵³ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.5.

¹⁵⁴ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.8.

¹⁵⁵ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.6.

which debases it.

Hideous prints, of still more hideous significance, disfigured a considerable portion of the cabin walls. There was one cheerful design in particular, representing the roasting alive of men in swallow-tailed coats, tall hats, and white neck-cloths, presumably landlords and their myrmidons.¹⁵⁶

Thus figured as unreasoning and instinctive, the narrative is intent on uncoupling these enmities from any actual material foundation. Rather than arising from any systematic dysfunction, therefore, they are presented more as an historical dispensation which operates like an inherited disease upon the community.

That, I reply, with the shrug of the exponent, is an excellent, nay, an unanswerable, argument, dear sir, in logic, but no argument at all, unfortunately, to a deep-seated, to all appearances an ineradicable, sense of injury, which has its seat, not in the brains at all, but in the blood. Hate, once engendered there -- kept alive from generation to generation -- becomes ingrained, like gout or any other hereditary disease; and the physician who will undertake to cure it has yet, it is to be feared, to be born. When he is, the Irish problem will *begin* to be solved.¹⁵⁷

The arbitrary, bewildering nature of this inheritance is demonstrated in the way it conflicts with Hurrish's personal and material realities.

Despite the jollity which was its prevailing expression, he did not seem to be altogether a contented giant. There were lines of perplexity and disturbance here and there discernible. Yet Hurrish O'Brien was a well-to-do man.¹⁵⁸

By subjectivising, therefore, the motivations which underpin agrarian violence, by locating it within a specific social group and manifesting its presence through character, it is enabled to be conceived of, and judged as fundamentally an issue of individual morality. Those persons most attuned to the rhetoric of social grievance, such as Hurrish's mother Bridget, are coincidentally those who are also portrayed as being at odds with acceptable human norms. Bridget O'Brien exhibits a deviancy which is in keeping with the ardent patriotism she espouses. Significantly, her status as mother and female indicates the extent of her fall, the conventional, caring maternal role transformed into an aggressive nurturing of hatred. In fact her domestic function as nurturer is targeted from the outset, her preparation of the family meal disfigured by an atmosphere of malevolence and cruelty.

Opposite, upon another low creepy-stool, sat his mother, Bridget O'Brien, engaged in stirring a steaming black pot -- an employment which would have given a sensitive looker-on a delightful thrill, so appropriate was the operation to the operator. In Bridget O'Brien the

¹⁵⁶ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.7.

¹⁵⁷ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.131.

Southern type was also strongly visible. Women like her -- as gaunt, as wrinkled, as black-browed, as witch-like -- may be seen seated upon thousands of door-steps all over the Spanish peninsula. It is not a very comfortable type, one would think, for everyday domestic use; too suggestive of an elderly bird of prey -- a vulture, old, yet with claws ever upon the watch to tear, and a beak which yearns to plunge itself into the still palpitating flesh. Her eyes were black -- a wicked Black -- and bright still amid the multiplicity of wrinkles which surrounded them, as cracks a half-dried pool. Her hair, too, was dark, and hung in heavy hanks about her forehead, reaching nearly to the grizzled eyebrows, projecting like unclipped eaves over her eyes.¹⁵⁹

There is nothing within this portrait which indicates political fanaticism, yet the language, like that used of the landscape, is informed by a latent malice which attracts a political violence located elsewhere. The picture of a rebarbative, wizened hag, ostensibly an accurate presentation of Bridget's appearance, prepares the ground for a moral appraisal of her agrarian sympathies. All of the ingredients within her character are, in effect, shadows of agrarian atrocity and pronouncements on it, the suggestion of clandestine evil, absence of pity, opportunistic violence, and sinister, peasant secretiveness. The inhumanity which characterizes each agrarian outrage, therefore, is sounded and made sentient by Bridget. From the outset this elderly maternal figure becomes a conduit of social dysfunction through a reciprocity between her and agrarian activities which develops along a path of mutual representation. The unnaturalness of each atrocity is measured within the narrative according to the extent of its infraction of maternal, family or feminine values. The instance of Ned Clancy's eviction by the secret society contains the touchstone of his wife and four small children 'who were turned out of their cabin in the dead of a January night'. In an episode which amounts to a narratorial baiting of her basic instincts, Bridget is shown to react perversely to this vignette of suffering, and particularly at Hurrish's expression of sympathy for the 'more juvenile of the criminals'.

"What ailed he to be pityin' of thim ? wasn't it known they wouldn't have been sarved so if they hadn't been desarving' ?"¹⁶⁰

When Hurrish responds to Bridget's exultant report of the violent death of Buggle, the writ server, by observing that 'the crature was lame', Bridget incarnates the brutality of the act itself by re-enacting its irrational rage, making it all the more repellent by her identification with the conventional image of the hysterical

¹⁵⁸ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.5.

¹⁵⁹ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.6.

madwoman.

“Lame !” Bridget’s eyes blazed, and she set her teeth like a tigress. “An’ is’t *his* part ye’re takin’, now ? Faith it wanted but that ! *His* part ! -- the dirty spalpeen, -- the black Pratestant whilp ! Lame ?” she went on, raising her voice louder and louder, -- “I warrant ye, he’s lame enough now, anyhow ! Limpin’ down the road to hell, that’s what he is doin’ this minute, the little thievin’ Shingann ! Och, an’ I’d give me two eyes to see it, so I would ! I’d laugh, -- I’d laugh till the tears rin down me cheeks, only to see him goin’ !”¹⁶¹

Hurrish’s immediate appeal is to the affecting image of a grieving mother, an image by which the atrocity’s true abhorrence ought to be fathomed. Yet it is an appeal to instinctive feeling which is channelled through Bridget’s own unnatural transgression of maternal and womanly instincts.

“Whist, mither, whist ! My God ! Is it a woman ye are, at all, at all ? Ye make me ’shamed, ye do. D’ye think the crature hadn’t a mither, too -- one that’s cryin’ her heart out for him most like this minute, God hilp her !”¹⁶²

That character who compensates, morally and physically, for Bridget O’Brien is Hurrish’s niece by marriage, Alley Sheen. Taken in and cared for by Hurrish after the death of his wife, Alley provides that feminine and maternal presence which Bridget has abrogated. The purity of Alley’s physical beauty is the outward antithesis of Bridget’s personification of ugliness and malice, Bridget’s wrinkled eyes like half-dried pools being countered by the resemblance to clear flowing streams of Alley’s.¹⁶³

They were wonderful eyes, such as are only to be seen in their perfection west of the Shannon, -- a violet grey, with lashes which fell in a straight black drift upon the cheek below, -- eyes with a rippling light and shade in the irises, such as streams show when flowing clear over a pebbly bottom...There was a touch of ascetic dreaminess about her which suited her stony environment, and remotely suggested the cloister -- a sort of nun-like fragility and separateness.¹⁶⁴

This sentimentality has its place in the comparative value which it supplies to Bridget’s unrelenting acrimony yet this description of innocence and beauty symbolised by fragile flowers and clear streams has its own purpose and relevance in

¹⁶⁰ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.7.

¹⁶¹ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.25.

¹⁶² Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.25.

¹⁶³ Laird, Heather, *Subversive Law in Ireland, 1879-1910: from 'unwritten law' to the Dail courts* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2005). Laird points to the counterpoising role which Alley plays to that of Bridget, a commonplace of English realism by which a monstrous woman is balanced by a domestic one. In the context of Lawless’s novel, however, this function is much deeper. See Laird, p.56.

¹⁶⁴ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.6.

its allying of Alley to that quality of the landscape which the narrative depicts as mollifying and enduring. Here can be seen the comforting end of the narrator's range in which particular prospects of the Burren are used to counteract the savage hostility which is invested in its seemingly darker elements. As such, uncompounded of anything but simple goodness, Alley's character is, nonetheless, an articulation of violence. Representing an extreme similar to that of Bridget, she is the shadow of Bridget's brutality, its withdrawn, fearful expression. Unable to look at the wall holding the hideous prints, which make her feel cold and sick, she averts her eyes whenever she happens to approach them. A product of that space, domestically and socially, and dominated by it, Alley Sheen has an intimacy with violence which renders her fragile nature a medium for its close, intimidating presence.

Like every girl of her class and country, Alley was perfectly well used to hearing murder talked of, and talked of, too, without any special reprobation. She had heard such talk going on around her all her life, though the deeds described were naturally rarely called by so offensive a name. In all these cases, however, there had been a certain vagueness about the actual perpetrator. It was 'justice', the 'society', the 'brotherhood'; and the 'society' has in Ireland long since come to occupy in popular imagination the place of a despised and derided executive. Even so Alley had often shuddered at the ideas which the talk had called up. Sensitive natures, however accustomed to horrible images, rarely accept them in their entirety. They start aside and cry, 'Not that ! not that !'¹⁶⁵

Alley, as member of a particular class, is implicated by association in the violence which blights it and in the slurring of the moral reprobation which evades its criminal aspect. In this description of Alley's involvement with her community's violence, the narratorial voice, through its delicacy of expression and its disingenuous use of euphemism, mimics the sensitivity of Alley herself, engaging her mentality indirectly and by degrees steering it towards a realisation of its own subtle collusion with communal murder. The identification here between the narrative's moral intent and its expression in the naiveté of Alley's character is an alignment which is to be capitalised on later in the text, where the tendentious trust of the text's argument is delivered through the struggle between violence and compassion characterized in the confrontation between Alley and Maurice Brady. The inability to lose the actual perpetrator in the vagueness of communal anonymity is what will defeat Alley's self-delusion. With her absolute recognition of crime and its perpetrator, Alley will be obliged to confront the outrages on a personal level thereby being drawn into the

narratorial scheme whereby a communal culture of violence is conceived of in relation to its manifestation in specific representative characters. Alley, like the narrative itself, will shift from a perspective of violence as anonymous to a witnessing of it as an individually and personally based culpability.

The character on whom this narratorial strategy depends, however, is Hurrish O'Brien, an individual, like his own cabin, built from the materials of his ancestral environment.

Hurrish had called himself a Fenian almost ever since he could remember, and nothing but his distance from the seat of war had prevented him from striking a blow when that ill-starred apology rebellion came to its final and melancholy close. Animosity against England was a creed with him, a sort of shibboleth...His belief in its wickedness and atrocities was a belief that knew absolutely no misgivings.¹⁶⁶

Openly embracing 'every association which had even nominally the emancipation of Ireland for its aim', Hurrish's character, however, also contains the narrative's provision of a moral critique to be directed from within at the community's dominant ethos.

Murder as a recognised social institution had never somehow quite commended itself either to his intelligence or his humanity...he had never allied or desired to ally himself to any of those less avowed societies with which Clare, like every other part of Ireland, is honeycombed,

and which subsist upon murder, and upon murder only.¹⁶⁷

The oppositional placement of collective terms alongside individual attributes which distinguishes this narratorial criticism is not only a means to emphasise Hurrish's mismatch with the cultural background he is profiled against but also represents the narrative's attempt to create a space for individual responsibility within the precincts of communal writ. Seen as observing the surface elements of communal taboos, Hurrish is, nonetheless, guided primarily by personal sympathies rather than sectarian ones.

The position of the informer in Ireland, to begin with, is the position of an outcast, cursed and abhorred of all men, to be disposed of, so soon as safe opportunity presents itself. It was not fear, however, so much as other hindrances that hampered Hurrish. Claims of all sorts -- of honour, of good fellowship, of pity -- plucked at him, now on this side and now on that...His very good-nature and sociability were all against him. For what, it may be asked, is a good-natured and a naturally gregarious man to do, when all the sociability of his

¹⁶⁵ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.109.

¹⁶⁶ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.6.

neighbourhood is concentrated around a single focus, and that focus a criminal one ?¹⁶⁸

Being plucked at 'now on this side and now on that' represents the two worlds which Hurrish's character is required to satisfy, the personal, human one and that of the communal culture. Yet these two worlds have a strategic narratorial dimension. The communal world represents that fiction constructed by the narrator -- opaque, collective and violent -- and the human world that addressed by the narrator which is personalized, abstracted and idealistic. The fictional must be depicted as oppositional to those values which are to be injected into it from the morally superior perspective of the addressed if that felt supremacy is to be demonstrated. Hurrish, as the bridging character spanning both codes, therefore, provides the prime impetus to the action by which a shared recognition of priority and value might be achieved. By this method the action will necessarily be a personally based one since that is the priority of value.

However, this strategy is compromised by default. Like the unjoyful aspect of Hurrish despite his well-to-do existence, the world being addressed is not actually being troubled, as it ought to be, by any of the material issues which lie behind the dark sinister doings of the fictional world and, therefore, remains disengaged from it. The troubled fictional world has been given no obvious reason for Hurrish's personal inclusion in it. It is unavoidable therefore, that the crime which sits at the centre of the narrative, while contextualized by an habitual climate of violence and agrarian agitation, is not rationalized by that context, but is, in fact, a purely personal one with no relevance in the wider social conflict.¹⁶⁹ There is a conceptual privatizing of the issues, transposing a social matter onto a personal sense of responsibility and compassion with no actual resolution of the wider issues occurring. The moral programme of the narratorial voice therefore is purely one dimensional since it fails to penetrate and impact on the collective world of the fiction. Just as the privations of an historical community are invested in the inanimate landscape at the narrative's

¹⁶⁷ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.13.

¹⁶⁸ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.14.

¹⁶⁹ David Lloyd argues that the nineteenth-century Irish novel's difficulties in representing what was perceived as an endemically violent society were in fact due not to the unrepresentable nature of agrarian violence itself but the modes of organization which it expressed and 'which offer counter-possibilities to the social vision embedded in either constitutional or novelistic narratives'. While specifically referring to the early nineteenth-century period, this argument nonetheless has an explanatory relevance to Lawless's inability or reluctance to fully engage with such alternative modes of social formation. Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, p. 144.

opening and rendered mute, so the social distresses are displaced onto the personal plane divesting them of any real, challenging force.¹⁷⁰

Ideology and its characteristics.

As peasant, Hurrish's attitude necessarily betrays a simplicity and trust by which the text betokens his position in an overall, finely poised hierarchical system. Embedded within this traditional framework, his character is made to express the sense of belonging and continuance which such a stable structure is perceived by Lawless as fostering. For him life is all part of a general mystery 'into which he himself never dreamt of probing', the acquisition of a knowledge, for which he is deemed to have no functional use, being superfluous. The untangling of life's mysteries, therefore, he willingly delegates to more 'competent authorities', as seemingly befits his social status and purpose. Distanced somewhat by the recent agrarian campaign from the stabilising, hierarchical relationship which has defined him, Hurrish, nonetheless, is figured as still maintaining a respect and allegiance to his landlord and 'Captin', Pierce O'Brien.

Hurrish possessed an idiosyncrasy which was a very serious scandal to his more thorough-going friends and relatives. This was a sort of sneaking regard, an acknowledged kindness with which in his heart of hearts he regarded the "ould stock," -- the time-out-of-mind landlords, men as much part of the country they lived in as its rocks, rivers, magpies, or buttercups.¹⁷¹

This allegiance, presented as a sentiment of his forebears which has cut 'deep into their descendant's consciousness' is an observance which fastens Hurrish not just to his landlord but also to his own lineage. Textually linked to memories of a happier past when the "Captin" was the 'idol and ideal of his henchman's youthful admiration', Hurrish's own personal happiness and the maintenance of that landlord

¹⁷⁰ This can be seen as an exemplary instance of the disjunction between the mandate of the realist novel and its inability to fulfil that prescription in an Irish context. As David Lloyd notes the realist novel 'seeks to produce ethical identity as an intrinsic element of its aesthetic effect: the mechanisms of identification, or in nineteenth-century terms, "sympathy", are crucial to the pedagogical claims of the novel as a means to induce in the reader an ethical disposition'. Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, p.134. Lawless's attempt to produce a sympathetic effect in the reader, the addressed, through the person of Hurrish can only be achieved at the expense of the fictional world's representative value.

¹⁷¹ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.19.

tradition are made to appear as mutually dependent. Lawless gives voice to this organic structuring of the past in her history *Ireland* which betrays an obvious illogicality with regard to the realities of Irish social history. Discussing the consequences of O'Connell's campaign on Catholic Emancipation Lawless identifies what she views as its significant and regrettable failing; its destruction of an historical communal dependency.

He effectually, and as it has proved finally, snapped that tie of feudal feeling which, if weakened, still undoubtedly existed, and which was felt towards the landlord of English extraction little less than towards the few remaining Celtic ones. The failings of the upper classes of Ireland of his day, and long before his day; there is no need to extenuate, but it must not in fairness be forgotten that what seems to our soberer judgment the worst of those failings -- their insane extravagance, their exalted often ludicrous inflated notions of their own relative importance; their indifference to, sometimes open hostility to, the law -- all were bonds of union and sources of pride to their dependents rather than the other way.¹⁷²

Most fundamental to this relationship, however, and the source from which it is meant to derive most credibility within the narrative is the shared attachment to place. Hurrish and Pierce O'Brien both demonstrate a reverence for the landscape they inhabit.¹⁷³ Despite threats of assassination and the withholding of rents, Pierce O'Brien steadfastly refuses to abandon his ancestral home of Donore, his energies concentrated on the worthwhile endeavours of improvement and service.

Sixteen years had passed since he had returned to the home of his fathers, with a heart full and brains primed for its regeneration...Clare, with its wild neglected hillsides; its tales of the fighting O'Briens; its vast cliffs and matchless breadths of sea and sky-that home air which a man never breathes save at one spot in this whole wide world, -- all this had been very dear to him, and, in spite of all that had come and gone, it was dear to him in a sense still.¹⁷⁴

As with his landlord, Hurrish, as peasant, has a complementary like-minded attitude to the area to which he belongs. The foundation for this rootedness is an emotional one, presented as a spontaneous and natural bond and figured as strong and enduring by virtue of its naturalness.

¹⁷² Lawless, *Ireland*, p.384.

¹⁷³ There is an extent to which Hurrish and Pierce O'Brien are stereotypical, ethnic doubles of the same character. Leerssen refers to the British-Irish genderized opposition in which the Irish character is seen as generally feminine, to the English masculine, paternal type. One of the antonyms of the English or, in this case, Anglo-Irish male can also take the form of 'child' or 'boy'. Hurrish's character displays attributes of both the feminine and the child to Pierce O'Brien's paternalistic figuring. Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p.171.

¹⁷⁴ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.40.

If you had offered him twice the acreage of the best grass lands in Meath or Kildare, in exchange for his naked rock, I doubt if he would have been even tempted to close with it. He was a sentimentalist -- though he had never heard the word; and the ground which he had been born on- that hard, thankless, rock-bound ground -- was the object of his sentimental worship.¹⁷⁵

This emotional commitment is articulated as much through a practical responsiveness to community, Hurrish demonstrating a fellowship with his own local people which manifests itself in a concern for and a protectiveness towards the vulnerable and the weak. The anxiety he displays over the methods employed by the agrarian activists is directed mainly at the internecine damage and the suffering endured by its hapless victims.

What, killin' a man here and killin' a man there, and frightenin' a lot of poor foolish colleens, wid rushin' in to the houses in the dead of the night, cutting' off their hair, and makin' them sware -- the devil a bit they know what ! Dishtroyin' dumb bastes, too, that never did no one any harm.¹⁷⁶

This fellow-feeling, as with the attachment to place, draws on character traits which are identified by Lawless with traditional sympathies born of natural impulses. Hurrish's 'impulses were all of the old-fashioned, easy-going, jovial kind'.

The roar of the sea, the wet-surfaced rocks, the streaks of sunshine dashed with rain, the wild west wind which had travelled over so many miles of liquid ridge and furrow, -- all this was a sort of natural fuel to his imagination, stirring it unconsciously to sudden feats of activity.¹⁷⁷

Hurrish and Pierce O'Brien's relationship with place, answering as it does to a responsive sympathy which requires no ulterior motive for itself, contributes to an overall textual endorsement of that social structure involving traditional landlord and peasant -- an inflexible sense of place, social and physical, and of human relationship, hierarchical and dependent.

Opposition to this conservative philosophy within the text presents itself in that strain of modernist abstraction figured by Maurice Brady and which is conceived by Lawless as the direct antithesis of those values demonstrated by Hurrish and Pierce O'Brien. Fostered and raised by Hurrish, Maurice Brady epitomizes that brand of nationalist energy by which Hurrish is superficially mesmerized. Rational and calculating, however, Maurice's character displays those dark realities which the narrative suggests lie behind that nationalism's mob appeal, Lawless presenting him

¹⁷⁵ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.37.

¹⁷⁶ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.29.

¹⁷⁷ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.15.

as intent solely on his own ambitious political and social advancement.

His likes and dislikes were all rational ones, in fact, founded upon reason, not merely instinctive and animal-like. Even his hatred of England was a purely conventional hatred. It was the 'correct thing' to hate it, and therefore he did so. He had a considerable gift of words, and could at any moment have risen to any required height of foaming sound and fury had he been called upon to do so; but it would have been a purely oratorical and dramatic fury. There was not an atom of uncomfortable heat or bitterness about it. It was a profession, and, as times went, not a bad profession either, but that was all.¹⁷⁸

While Hurrish and Pierce O'Brien are recipients of what Lawless figures as a delicately poised communal inheritance motivating their loyalties, Maurice, through his lack of conviction for anything but his own self-interest, profits from such communal susceptibility by exploiting its conditions. The seeming embodiment of an abstract political doctrine, Maurice's character in its petty, possessive need to dominate and rule facilitates an exposé by Lawless of that doctrine as she conceives it. Appearing as an indifference to the plight of those it affects to represent, the force of this ideology is figured as a demagogic one, Maurice demonstrating the ego-centric impulse which Lawless identifies as motivating its radicalism.

It seemed to him as if whole fleets of good things were being floated in from the West -- the Land of Promise -- fleets of which "shmart young fellars" like himself would be the captains, as by nature and reason they ought to be...If he had had a crowd about him at that moment, he thought excitedly, begad, how he *could* have spoken ! How he could have thundered against the 'enemy'; what "argiments" he could have used-...It really seemed a wicked waste of a magnificent opportunity.¹⁷⁹

To a young man with not much to lose and a great deal to hope for, a state of social ferment, of 'veiled' rebellion, is undoubtedly a highly commendable state of affairs. To the old, the timid, the owners of the perishable goods of this world, it may be a source of bitter trouble, anxiety, consuming terror, but certainly not to him.¹⁸⁰

Modern, progressive and doctrinaire as it is presented, Maurice's perspective on country and people is conveyed predominantly through an expression of personal needs and indulgences. That system which he is seen to advocate, innovative and independently democratic, is seen to promote a like obsession with its own abstract theorizing, appearing deracinated and therefore unnatural and indifferent.¹⁸¹

¹⁷⁸ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.37.

¹⁷⁹ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.58.

¹⁸⁰ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.60.

¹⁸¹ This division between actual feeling and abstract theory represents an instance of that formulation initiated by Burke which, according to Deane, influenced much

Untrammelled by any ‘foolishly sentimental considerations’ associated with that close bond with place, Maurice’s contemptuous view puts him beyond the warmth and humanity which, through it, the narrator has evoked for Hurrish.

Hurrish’s primitive patriotism, for instance, was a source of immeasurable amusement to his more clear-sighted friend, -- it was so inconceivably old-fashioned and infantine. His besotted affection for that wretched stony soil upon which he happened to have been born, was another trait which naturally moved his pity. Far from wasting any affection upon it himself, he would have been only too delighted to have been assured that he was never to set eyes on it again.¹⁸²

The actual discrepancy in practical impact on human life between these two philosophies is made apparent as both Hurrish and Maurice survey the open landscape of the Burren. Responding to it in their respective ways, Hurrish draws ‘a long breath’ and his eyes grow ‘dim and misty’, while Maurice engages in a silent exultation of his own personal abilities and the future prospects which the scene suggests to him, ‘What a tide of eloquence, what illustrations, what denunciations, what gorgeously decorated hopes and anticipations flooded his brains and rose to his lips’. The telling irony of this situation is captured in the fact that, while Maurice’s thoughts are absorbed in visions of political achievement, Hurrish is observed to have ‘meanwhile got diverted to less heroic and more concrete objects’. A woman makes her way up a steep path from the shore bearing a heavy “kish” of seaweed on her back, ‘Her face, bathed in perspiration, was expressive of a perfect agony of exhaustion’. Such an exemplary incident provides the required measure by which credibility might be established. By instinctively hurrying down to meet her, taking the load from her back and carrying it to the top of the cliff, Hurrish meets that requirement; his interest, acquaintance and sympathy revealing a broad, communal concern and interaction.

‘That was Marty O’Kelly’s wife over from Tullalogue,’ he said, when the poor woman, with many thanks, had again taken up her load and trudged away. ‘You wudn’t think it to luk at her, but siven year since she was as purty an’ nate a gurl as ye’d wish to see -- not a spryer at a jig nor a riddier at a wake in Clare ! ’Tis a crool hard life on the women hereabouts, an’ no mistake, God help thim !’ he added, pityingly.

Maurice merely nodded. His thoughts were otherwise engaged, and he did not care to have them diverted to such uninteresting details as these.¹⁸³

nineteenth-century Irish fiction. ‘This leads naturally on to Burke’s famous characterization of the connection between the actuality of history and the authenticity of feeling, paired against the phantasmal nature of theory and the inauthenticity of feeling...’ Deane, *Strange Country*, p.12.

¹⁸² Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.37.

¹⁸³ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.59.

While distanced and self-absorbed individualism, therefore, is conceived to be the currency of Maurice's character, Hurrish is made to symbolize that old-fashioned practical intervention which effects a tangible improvement to lived conditions. Identified as traditional and reinforced in its authority by frequent reference to lineage and historical continuity, the social philosophy articulated by Hurrish and Pierce O'Brien, particularly in their reverence for place, signifies itself unmistakably as indigenous and authentic. There is a subtlety in this identification by Lawless in so far as native authenticity is the ground on which that ideology which Maurice represents is meant to sustain its rationale and impetus. To consolidate this ironic reversal of relevance all the more, Maurice's philosophy is figured by Lawless as a foreign, imported influence, which marks a destabilizing and estranging breach with the past.

All over Ireland this marked severance is growing up between the younger, educated or half-educated peasant or peasant's son, whose aspirations are all Americanised, progressive, modern, and the earlier, ruder type of peasant-farmer, whose union with the actual piece of soil he cultivates -- or does not cultivate -- amounts to a partnership; a vital union, like that of the grass and potatoes. Hurrish belonged to this elementary and elemental type.¹⁸⁴

Despite Maurice's grandiloquence in the field of political cant, however, the bedrock of his character, like Hurrish, is the peasant community in which he originated, his embeddedness emphasized in the way those origins are seen to be holding him fast, constantly betraying themselves in him.

No Irishman -- no Irishman born of peasant parents at any rate -- is ever genuinely and at heart a democrat. The whole theory is exotic -- never has been, and never will be, otherwise. Maurice Brady had done his utmost to assimilate it, but had failed, and the struggle told upon his manner. Instead of that mixture of easy courtesy and self-respect which becomes a polite citizen and an equal, it had alternations from suppressed servility to open surliness, and of this he was too intelligent not to be himself aware.¹⁸⁵

This outright assertion by Lawless of the perpetual and immutable nature of peasant subordinacy serves to neutralise both Maurice's aspirations and those of the political ideology he espouses. Despite the theoretical fervent of his propaganda he cannot act independently of the natural force envisaged by Lawless which persists in defining him. The rationale of the political project is demonstrated by this assertion to be a sham, hidden within it the anxiety of Lawless that democratic franchise extension to the peasantry will not produce and is not compatible with the concept of polite citizen

¹⁸⁴ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.37.

¹⁸⁵ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.124.

and equal.

The narrative's action arises out of a private dispute between Hurrish O'Brien and his neighbour, also a prosperous tenant farmer and brother of Maurice, Mat Brady. Having taken a farm adjoining his own and Hurrish's from which a previous tenant had been evicted, Mat Brady is condemned to death by the local agrarian society. However, this political circumstance provides no impetus to the action itself which is motivated purely by the deep-seated hatred which Mat bears for Hurrish. Lying in wait for Hurrish one morning he attempts to shoot him but receives instead a fatal blow from Hurrish's stick. Presented as a spontaneous act of self-defence and as such condoned, the narratorial appraisal of the deed prefers to focus on Hurrish's emotional response.

Yet the fact that he had just been guilty, no matter with what justification, of another's death did not -- nay *could* not -- present itself to his mind with any of that sharply-defined horror, that passion of self-dismay and self-reproach, that it would have awakened in the mind of many a far less kindly and, in his way, conscientious man, who had been unused to hearing violence and bloodshed spoken of as the natural panacea for all the disagreements which may happen to arise between man and man.¹⁸⁶

Hurrish's inner thoughts betray the brutalising of his humanity rather than the details of the act itself. The tradition of violence is shown to be manifested in his character and functions as inured indifference. The divorcing of the act from the emotional apprehension, locating each in different moral planes, is a clear instance of that division between the constructed fictional world and the idealized sphere being invoked by the narrator directly. Significantly, it is in a narratorial aside to a presumed detached readership that this separation of moral planes occurs. Its intention is to place the emphasis on the interior life of character, indicating the necessity for reform and redress there, as site of value for the narrator-reader, rather than in an external locus. To emphasize this interiorization of violence, repercussions ripple outward from Mat's murder which are seen to exploit character weaknesses and illuminate strengths, becoming the dynamic behind the narrative's development towards its intended moral. The tracing of that rippling effect begins almost immediately.

That horror and self-disgust which he was incapable of feeling for the act itself would probably have been strongly -- nay, passionately -- aroused, could Hurrish have foreseen the circumstances under which Mat Brady's body was destined to be discovered.¹⁸⁷

¹⁸⁶ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.76.

¹⁸⁷ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.77.

The character of Alley Sheen is the first to register its disturbance. Having stumbled across the body and, terrified, fetched Bridget O'Brien, Alley's vulnerability to the realities behind communal violence is realized with Bridget's discovery of Hurrish's stick concealed nearby. Appalled by this forced recognition, the 'Not that' of Hurrish's crime, Alley's characteristic impulse is one of evasion.

She simply ran and ran and ran, heedless of where she was going, till she found herself upon the shore, at the top of the rocks, which were here not of any great height. She did not even pause here, but clambering down, heedless of the sharp pointed peaks, studded at their lower part with acorn barnacles, hid herself in a sort of cleft or shallow cave just within reach of high-water mark. If she could only stay there for ever, she thought, wildly -- remain there till she died -- never see old Bridget again -- better still, never see Hurrish -- never see any one belonging to her old life.¹⁸⁸

The futility of Alley's attempt to escape her environment is made apparent even as she crouches in her hiding place. Suddenly disturbed by Mat Brady's brother, Maurice, to whom she is engaged, Alley blurts out the news of Mat's murder implicating herself further as possessing a knowledge of the crime and its perpetrator.

Alley had known of this ! That point was beyond a doubt. If she had known about it, who then could have committed the crime but Hurrish ?¹⁸⁹

The vindictiveness with which Maurice reacts to the murder of his brother is based on the affront to his personal esteem rather than to any filial affection. This illustrates the point behind Lawless's burdening of Maurice's character with a self-interest.

There was no affectation about this violence. Cool-headed as he was, there were certain things which moved him strongly. Mat as Mat he cared little about, but Mat as *his* brother was a sacred object, and any one who laid hands on it should assuredly feel the weight of his revenge.¹⁹⁰

The abstract sense of injustice and the personal sense of injury fuse in what is conceived by Lawless to be, in fact, an instinctive vengefulness, his enraged appeal for justice an echoing of that same nationally generated call for a redressing of past crimes. In effect, therefore, Maurice's character and actions are an individualized realization of the collective national drive which he has been accustomed to voice. Ostensibly alienated from his community by the open naming of Hurrish as Mat's murderer to the authorities, Maurice, in fact, turns the attention inward, like Hurrish,

¹⁸⁸ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.84.

¹⁸⁹ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.88.

¹⁹⁰ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.65.

absorbing the class turmoil and reconfiguring it as interior disaffection. Bitter and disorientated by the wrecking of his prospects, Maurice's consequent sense of victimization, injustice and defiance is seen to veer from one source to another without any anchoring in definable fact. Constant to his outrage, however, and foundational to it is the loss of personal authority and the frustrating of his prospective ambitions by which he had secured his own esteem. Unable to address the problem within himself, or extricate himself by an act of reasoning, Maurice rages with a vindictiveness which masks his own culpable fixation.

His imagination -- so vivid in everything that concerned himself -- ran perpetually forward to all the ignominy that he had still to endure, and backward to Hurrish as the direct cause of it all. He ground his teeth with a vindictive fury that was fast effacing all earlier reminiscences of gratitude and kindness. They should see, -- those fools who turned their backs upon him -- that insolent young spark who had just left him, -- they should see, he thought, whether their pet could get out of his scrape as easily as they imagined.¹⁹¹

In a desperate attempt to further his cause and to reassert the power and control which he craves, Maurice turns to that one source left open to him, the defenceless and innocent. In doing so the narrative is seen to arrive at that culminating point in which character, landscape and ideology consummately coalesce.

Character and Landscape.

As argued earlier, landscape throughout the narrative is used by Lawless as a narratorial device by which specific natural settings are made to conform to an interpretation of character or incident. That landscape can be so malleable to the requirements of the narrator and invested with both the viciousness of violent action and with the reassurance of familiar and sympathetic impulses, is only possible because it is viewed from an almost janus-like perspective. The physical world replicates the social and cultural one, being split by dual identities and mutual antagonisms. For the narrator, therefore, there is a responsive traction drawing towards, and an antipathy repelling away from, an emotional involvement in it. So the Burren can instinctively provoke reflexes associated with distrust and difference and alternately present the face of a stable, consoling familiarity.

As Hurrish travels through Gortnacoppin where he is about to encounter and kill

¹⁹¹ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.128.

Mat Brady, the landscape detail turns on the ethereal and the spiritual, blues and violets elevating the ensuing action to an almost epical celestial significance ‘it was all steeped in light, penetrated with light, pathetic, solitary, ethereal -- a spiritualised world, fitted, one would say, for anchorites and pious souls “enskyed and sainted,” whose traffic is less with this warm, substantial earth of ours than with the unfamiliar heavens’. The import of the moment is matched by the giant-like status of Hurrish himself, his shadow ‘flinging itself in exaggerated bigness upon the weather-worn surfaces, his iron-studded shoes awakening sharp echoes upon the level rocks’. As the inquest is held, subsequently, in this same location, its purpose and aspect changes: accommodating a travesty of the law it becomes a travesty of its own grandeur, its description now reflecting the ragged sensationalism of the common crowd. Elevated to a classical grandeur which accords with the majesty of a timeless traditionalism the landscape changes as it is identified with modern spectacle and occupied by a disorderly, threatening, lower-class mob.

After its long ages of idleness and vacancy, the amphitheatre had at last vindicated its existence. It was a theatre indeed to-day ! A theatre brimming over with eager spectators. Ledge above ledge, rock over rock, the rows of wild, excited faces rose one above the other -- the sun streaming in sleepy oblique bands over the whole, a few astonished sheep or goats showing their white, impassive faces here and there amongst the crowd.¹⁹²

The sentiment which accompanies the narrative’s presentation of character or incident is infused into the landscape, therefore, as a validating measure. This is particularly noticeable in the way the character of Pierce O’Brien is constructed. Initially introduced through his home landscape, Major Pierce’s soldierly background and current difficulties are conveyed indirectly. Resident on the boundary of two distinct districts which comprise his estate, the Burren limestone and the grass-covered sandstones of South Clare, his military associations are repeated in the natural description.

The two formations stand face to face, -- foes met in battle array, whose hostility may be read in every ridge, and knoll, and scarped hillside, the very wayside flower of the one disappearing often, as if by enchantment, when we pass to the other.¹⁹³

Just how this reflects the narrative’s intent is revealed as Major Pierce’s bordering between the local disaffected tenantry and the government forces replicates the geological divisions which his estate straddles. As he watches his resentful workmen

¹⁹² Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.97.

¹⁹³ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.39.

‘shouldering their spades and shovels, and marching off to their homes’ he simultaneously gazes at the detachment of soldiers, his own bodyguard, ‘breasting the brow of the hill, the reddish rays of the setting sun catching upon the barrels of their guns and the hilts of their side-arms’, two formations, one disappearing as the other approaches. As the landscape conveys his social situation, Major Pierce O’Brien’s character is also effectually projected onto it.

His beard -- two or three shades greyer than his hair -- had grown longer and rather dishevelled since his womenkind had departed and had taken the conventionalities of life with them. Yet, in spite of this, and of a slight stoop which he had lately acquired, he looked a soldier still every inch...The geniality and amiability, alas, were fast losing ground. Cares, worries, loneliness, were doing their work, the friendly blue eyes were fast becoming a mere nucleus of concentric wrinkles, and hospitable genial mouth acquiring a confirmed droop at the corners.¹⁹⁴

Still a soldier despite his stoop, with a beard ‘two or three shades greyer than his hair’, and geniality ‘fast losing ground’, he stands on the edge of change, registering both strengths and failings, a presentation suggesting both resignation and natural dignity. Such incipient change, revealing indications of what has been and what is imminent, is echoed also by the setting which borders on evening, the fading daylight and mellowing dusk replicating the slow transition of optimism into disappointment.

The grey terraced hills of the Burren shone with a pale spectral glow, which lingered upon their chiselled sides, as upon the bastions of half-dismantled fortresses. The same glow floated over the lake, which was golden in one part, and transparent black in another...Hardly a sound. Only a little lisp of water, only a distant leisurely rumbling, only a far-off cry of hurrying sea-birds. The ascetic dreamy beauty seemed endowed with a voice that was simply itself made audible.¹⁹⁵

This echoing is declared in the receding of colour, the three shades of grey in O’Brien’s beard reproduced in ‘the grey terraced hills of the Burren’, and in the descending stillness of the evening which is implied in the ‘cares, worries, loneliness’ doing their work about the ‘friendly blue eyes’. The military analogy informing both the Major’s social dilemma and the local geology is also carried, therefore, into the landscape’s evening appearance. This sympathizing of the landscape, in its dwindling daylight and its dignified ‘glow’, with Major Pierce O’Brien is calculated to inspire respect and admiration and equally to integrate him into the evocative sentimentality of the region’s austere beauty, a sentimentality which is endowed here with a

¹⁹⁴ Lawless, *Hurriish*, p.41.

tendentious function within the narrative. Isolated between contending forces, Pierce O'Brien, the 'utterly puzzled and half heart-broken man', is presented as an heroic and moving figure.

The small valley refuge, Teampull a Phoill, to which Alley Sheen escapes for some respite from her harsh conditions also mimics both her personal characteristics and her emotional anxieties. Like Alley's sensitive, tender nature, 'there is something singularly winning in the aspect of this little grassy retreat -- stolen, as it were, from the surrounding savagery'. The rivulet running through it displays all of the timidity and also the unblemished purity which the narrative has invested in Alley herself.

A small stream runs down the middle of this tiny valley -- a gay, dancing, rippling thread of water, clear as crystal -- glad too, apparently, of the sunshine and of the freedom, but, like all other Burren streams and rivers, rushing back again underground, as if startled, with a wild hurry-scurry of excited bubbles, a few hundred yards lower down.¹⁹⁶

The ruined monastic buildings which remain steadfast against rain and wind 'with the persistence of their wonderful masonry' indicate the religious fortitude which is suggested as enduring in Alley despite the buffeting of her social environment.

Alley loved this little glen with a sort of personal love. The sternness of those interminable platforms of rock above pained her eyes, the wide-reaching panorama chilled her spirit, but this little enclosed spot, speaking of peace, faith, long continuance, filled her mind with images of a tender and homely tranquillity.¹⁹⁷

This suggestion of a resilience founded on a compassionate humanity hints at the inner strength, despite her timidity, on which Alley is increasingly required to draw. Symbolized by the masses of honeysuckle and dog-roses, which abound among the ruins, this inner strength's most notable image is the ash-seed which has sprung into a tree in the doorway of the largest church waving 'its feathery festoons in youthful verdant triumph over its time-worn protector'. Yet allied as this secluded haven is to Alley's character, its metaphorical significance is wider. Seen as isolated in a world anathema to it, Teampull a Phoill sustains the text's dichotomous interpretation of landscape by its figuring, as an ineradicable principle of hope and perseverance, the reservoir of a perceived age-old peasant tradition still discoverable within the present. This concept is most clearly apprehended in the image of the well by which Alley sits 'one morning a few weeks after Hurrish had been committed to prison'.

¹⁹⁵ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.41.

¹⁹⁶ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.134.

¹⁹⁷ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.135.

A collection of queer-looking objects lay at the bottom, which, upon closer inspection, were seen to be fishing-hooks, buttons, bits of tape, needles and pins, and similar articles thrown in from time to time as votive offerings. Alley looked down at them meditatively, wondering who the different ones had belonged to, and what their owners had wished to get in return for them. The fish-hooks no doubt were for St. Mac Dara, the chief Connaught patron of fishermen, to whose chapel upon the Oilian Mac Dara opposite all passing sails were bound to lower twice, on pain of speedy shipwreck. The buttons and tapes had nearly melted away, and the needles and pins had become so rusty that they might easily have been mistaken for small twigs or straws. It looked, Alley thought, as if the saint upon whom they had been bestowed had not found any use for them.¹⁹⁸

Melted and rusted away though the offerings may be and seemingly unproductive of results, the simplicity of peasant tradition is figured in the humble, essentially worthless, needles, hooks and tapes which are presented as adequate to expectation. Ambition is absent from such frugal, homely necessity which argues rather an acceptance of limitation and a reliance on agency other than its own. Yet this haven of tranquillity and traditional deference is structured not simply as a serving image for Alley and peasant stability but also as much to provide a defining frame for its antithesis. Maurice Brady's abrupt intrusion shatters the delicately balanced tension between preserved past and present fragility. Appearing between 'a gap left between the rock and the wall of one of the chapels', his disruptive menace is silhouetted as strikingly as the physical pose which he assumes, 'his arms crossed in his favourite Emmet attitude upon his chest, looking down at her without speaking', the calculating, manipulative ego employed as a direct contrast to the ingenuous honesty already witnessed in the votive offerings.

Certainly a magnificent actor, no less than a magnificent demagogue, was lost in Maurice Brady ! He had all the dramatic instincts, the realisation of the value of 'pose,' the ready alternatives from appeal to denunciation, from denunciation to appeal, the cold, quick, dominating eye, necessary for the histrionic side of the latter part. His present intention was to overawe, and even, if necessary, a little alarm Alley, in order the better to impress upon her the absolute necessity of obeying his directions and abiding by his judgement in contradistinction to that of any of the O'Briens.¹⁹⁹

Throughout his exchanges with Alley, Maurice's resorting to pose and attitude is deemed by the narrative as betraying his attempt to achieve an authority to which he has no legitimate claim. As a character, the narrative indicts him for his assumption of

¹⁹⁸ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.135.

¹⁹⁹ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.136.

a level of importance and value which he does not personally embody while as an immutable peasant with aspirations beyond his class, Maurice is indicted for craving the power which might substitute for this class insufficiency. Expecting an unquestioning submission to his will from Alley, Maurice is startled instead by her defiant loyalty to 'a *murderer*'. The façade slips to reveal the frustrated and vicious reality beneath.

The air of calmness and authority fell off like a badly fitting dress, and the natural passion of an undisciplined and under-civilised man came to the front. She defied him, did she ? This girl, this puny creature, whom he had drifted into loving, he hardly knew how. She joined the rest of them -- the curs ! the cowards ! who had turned against him, -- she threw him off, she *dared* to do so ! He stood and glared at her as a wild beast glares before it springs.²⁰⁰

Maurice's attempted exercising of will over Alley represents the struggle to take ownership of and direct her moral sensitivity to his purposes. As Alley is a commodity of the text's moral cargo such a struggle is a narratorial inevitability in its occurrence and its outcome. Ironically, as a means to achieving his ends, Maurice employs violence in its two aspects, as a morally heinous act from which Alley should distance herself and as a threat to which he might resort should she refuse him. Its introduction into this setting, disruptive as it is, nonetheless forces Alley to confront her own unresolved ambivalence towards it. Pressed by Maurice to breaking point, it is the reservoir of solicitude and endurance inherent in the surrounding retreat which fortifies and informs her determination.

A misty gleam was streaming through the narrow doorway of the little Teampull a Phoill, shining upon the golden lichen of its roofless walls -- upon the tall gable ends, upon the well with its wall, and the tiny rippling stream. There was an indescribable look of appeal about the whole scene -- that wistful yearning expression which such ascetic scenes sometimes assume -
- as it were a cry from man to God, from God to man, an appeal for peace, hope, mercy, for a tenderer and kindlier humanity. Alley kneeling there -- her white face upraised in pious entreaty -- seemed to echo and intensify this appeal; the appeal which, at all ages of the world, and from innumerable lips, has gone forth wherever man -- the erring, the feeble, the ignorant

-- affects to judge and to condemn his brother man.²⁰¹

From within this environment and, more particularly, from Alley as moral force, comes the narrative's first introduction of a resolving ethic, the invocation of a compassion which might offer an escape from the perceived endemic violence with its

²⁰⁰ Lawless, *Hurriah*, p.138.

²⁰¹ Lawless, *Hurriah*, p.140.

foundation in an equally endemic sense of grievance.

‘Sure, I know you’ve the good heart, if ye’d only let yerself hear it spake. Don’t we want to be gettin’ marcy all of us, an’ how ‘ul we iver hope to get it if we don’t show none fust?’

Capitalizing on the narrative’s depiction of such violence as character based, this ethic inevitably places priority on a personal accountability and a personal, transforming redemption. Maurice’s response is stock and reflective of his self-absorption. Caught within the strictures of his own ego’s craving for power he renders himself impervious to such an appeal. Mimicking the oath-taking which binds and characterizes those secret societies which are presented as having stifled any potential for human compassion, Maurice degrades the moral force of the setting into which he has intruded by swearing vengeance on its redemptive symbol, invoking instead an incongruous alliance of good and evil to witness his rejection of its redemptive message.

‘Sure as God made me, and sees me now, and seen him kill my brother Mat, so sure I swear, if he gets off at Ennis court-house,. I’ll do for him yet ! Night or day, early or late, sooner or later, by God’s help or the devil’s help, *some* way or other, I’ll do for him ! There, I’ve *shworn*

it !’ and he struck his hand down violently upon the broken top of the cross.²⁰²

The force of Alley’s and, by extension, the narrator’s sentiment in this episode is calculated to impact on both the diegetic and narrative’s non-diegetic level, the moral principle informing it bearing all of the weight of an absolute and objective truth. As such its currency is assumed to be universal, yet it conforms to and is elicited from that identifying symmetry between Alley and Teampull a Phoill which the narrative has laboured to produce, a symmetry bearing directly on Maurice’s reaction. In his distortion of Alley’s motives in appealing for his forgiveness -- ‘she had turned against him !’ -- Maurice likewise distorts the message which the symbol conveys, echoing instead those secret oaths which, in fact, sanctify social violence. The narrator here, as elsewhere, has shaped the scene to a required outcome, devising an appropriate structural tone in the interests of furthering the credibility of the text’s argument. The complicity of Alley with the anonymous aspect of communal violence is commensurate with the complicity of the narrator with that invisible agency which lies behind the text itself. Alley’s character is a product of that violence in a form which ironically resembles that of the narrator’s own response in reacting through an

²⁰² Lawless, *Hurriish*, p.141.

evasive reconfiguration of an unsettling reality. However, while Alley, in this scene, is observed to recognize the extent of her intimacy with social violence, giving a greater and informed credence to her moral position, the narrator fails to acknowledge the tendentious relationship between the fictional and addressed perspectives. There is a concealment behind sanctimony and sententious pronouncements which is calculated to distance the narrator through a pseudo-objectivity. The moral sentiment which Alley and Teampull a Phoill are made to articulate is exploitative therefore, its apparent objectivity discredited through its trafficking between the diegetic and non-diegetic worlds.

Common victims: Hurrish, Maurice and Alley.

In the aftermath of the murder, Hurrish is seen to be blinded to its morality by the established taboos and animosities through which an historical grievance motivates hatred and action. The greatest indignation at recent events is seen to be directed towards Maurice's denouncing him to the authorities, 'to the Government ! -- th' *Inglish* Government !'. To have been attacked, shot or assaulted by Maurice would have been perfectly understandable to one who houses within him the disease of violent tradition. Yet a discrepancy between such a conditioned perception of things and an understanding which recognizes raw human frailty alternates within the mind of Hurrish, his sense of aggrieved injustice tempered by a naturally sympathetic nature. Within the character of Hurrish, therefore, by which much of the narrative's argument is carried, that noxious influence which an environment of violence exerts on an otherwise responsive humanity is required to be purged.²⁰³

Acquitted at the Ennis trial and returned home, Hurrish is disturbed by the impact on Alley of what has ensued. Yet the conditioned indifference which allowed him to walk away from Mat Brady's body and throw the stick which he had used into

²⁰³ Emer Nolan sees *Hurrish* as 'something extremely unusual in Anglo-Irish fiction: a positive portrayal of an Irish peasant who achieves virtue by choosing at key moments to defy the law of the land and to act instead in accordance with the "well-known if unwritten local law" of his community. Nolan, *Catholic Emancipations*, p.142. Hurrish can also be seen, however, as an instance of an impressionable peasantry whose aberrant tendencies demand guidance and control rather than free rein.

a nearby hedge, is equally conceived of as a trait of his ethnic type which prompts him to put as far from him as possible the unpalatable aspects of the entire episode.

To himself the whole subject was full of quite unfamiliar pain, and with the indestructible light-heartedness of his race and type, he made haste therefore to throw it as far behind him as possible. The hardest thing thus to fling away and get rid of was the remembrance of Maurice Brady's share. Even this, however, after a while, he succeeded in doing.²⁰⁴

However, in doing so, Hurrish is seen to misjudge completely the true repercussive nature of that violence which defines himself and his community and in which he participates. The brief period of respite which follows his acquittal serves to profile all the more starkly the destructive atmosphere enveloping him. This deceptive peace is mirrored in the elemental calm which pervades the Burren, as the whole coast appeared 'to be wrapped in deep dreamless sleep'.

Now and then a catspaw would pass over the bay, beginning at the furthest point of Iar Connaught, turning the pale satiny greyness of the surface into a deeper tint, and then vanishing suddenly.²⁰⁵

Such a calm is also a cover for the equally pervasive tensions, the catspaw which disturbs and as quickly disappears indicative of the sporadic terrorizing which punctuates that calm. The whole country is figured as being in the grip of fear: 'An impalpable reign of terror-invisible, but none the less real-lay upon every one, and every man looked distrustfully at his neighbour'. In isolated cabins frightened women lie awake, tortured animals cry for vengeance to the skies and 'on the hills around horns were sounding at the dead hours'. As with the novel's opening chapter, the transition from this wider canvas to Hurrish's personal context is achieved through the mediation of landscape. The sinister, clandestine fear stalking the human world finds its shadow-text in the menace of an Infernoesque shoreline bordering the O'Brien farm, its barely immersed horrors capturing the subterranean menace of the communal threat.

Down at the rock-pools, however, which were protected against such incursions, the very stillness of death prevailed, the particles of water seeming to be literally glued together. Through this oily tenacious surface the inquiring claw of some predatory crab, prowling amongst the seaweed, might have been seen now and then to rise, gesticulating excitedly, like the hands of some one in the act of drowning, or those supplicating hands seen by Dante above the lake of pitch; then the broken surface would settle together again, and all would be

²⁰⁴ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.151.

²⁰⁵ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.157.

stillness.²⁰⁶

Once again, this reconstituting of the wider human setting in the physical landscape is an attempt to emphasize the narratorial relevance of the one as a defining context for its opposite. At this stage of the narrative the reciprocity becomes intense and exhaustive, force, menace, treachery, consistent with one world, reverberating through the other. Sudden and frightening interruptions of daily life which threaten the wider community are manifested in this way in the unexpected ferocity of the storm which breaks upon Hurrish and his family harvesting their ‘little crop of oats’.

They were all intent upon their work, when a sudden exclamation from one of the boys caused

them to look up. A solid-looking wall of lead-coloured cloud, with a thin, wicked-looking splinter of white light where the base touched the water, was stalking steadily in towards them over the face of the sea.²⁰⁷

Sweeping into the secluded retreat of Teampull a Phoill in which Alley attempts to find shelter, the storm hunts her from ruined building to ruined building eventually haunting her with the fleeting image of Maurice Brady revealed suddenly by a jagged flash of lightening as he skulks among the ruins with a gun. The textual connection between the larger political turmoil which opens the chapter and Hurrish’s personal story is complete.

It gleamed upon the little ruin, throwing its low cyclopean walls, black hollows, and tall gable-ends into full relief. It shone upon the wet grass, swept flat with the beating of the rain; upon the well with its low wall; upon the encompassing rocks; upon the stream flowing in a thick brown torrent down the middle of the little valley. It lit up the figure upon the point of retreating into the church, and as it did so, threw a momentary but unhesitating illumination right into Alley Sheen’s soul. The man skulking there before her was Maurice Brady, and the thing which he was sheltering under his arm was a gun!²⁰⁸

Hurrish’s shooting by Maurice Brady makes a martyr of him not just to his near community, ‘not a man, woman or child who did not feel as if a personal injury had been done them’, but also on the parallel representative level where the narrative has been determined to establish a relevance. The perceived inherited sense of injury and the habituated violence which it facilitates are ultimately the reasons for Hurrish’s lying bleeding on the slope of a lonely saleen, a symbol and product of Irish peasant alienation from law and government.

²⁰⁶ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.157.

²⁰⁷ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.157.

²⁰⁸ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.160.

Poor Hurrish ! He was a martyr, too, after a fashion, though he knew it not. A martyr to a not very glorious cause, one that was not very much worth dying for. A martyr to a long and an ugly past -- a past in which he, not having been born, had at least no share of the blame. He was dying because hate of the Law is the birthright and the dearest possession of every native son of Ireland. He was dying because, for many a weary year, that country had been as ill-governed a morsel of earth as was to be found under the wide-seeing eye of God. The old long-repented sin of the stronger country was the culprit, as surely as if it had pointed the gun at his breast.²⁰⁹

What the narrator seeks to achieve by this method of presentation is the thorough isolating of the protagonist from that social system within which, it is understood, he ought to be secured and regulated. There is no suggestion that such an isolation is desirable or sought; on the contrary, it is presented as a crime in itself, a grievance located in the signal disappointment of expectations by the subjects of that system's Law. Hurrish, as a non-committal and impressionable subject, in a seriously political sense is the ground of contention on which legitimacy of ideology might be won or lost. Depicted as having been caught almost in the cross-fire, an innocent martyred to a failure to socialize, he is presented as a reprimand to a system which is not itself to be questioned. Like Hurrish's murder of Mat, its sin is past and repented. By this method Lawless has also sedulously aligned the narrative's political position to that same middle ground by assuming the almost ingenuous attitude of its apparent 'martyr'. The purpose for doing so however is to disarm the legitimacy of an alternate position. The structuring of the narrative's argument is, more effectively and decisively, directed towards the maintenance of a status quo whose chastisement is meant to contribute to a valorizing of its right and an endorsing of its ultimately legitimate ideological objectives.

That interrelating of the national and the personal which Hurrish as victim accommodates for the narrator, is equally represented in Maurice as assailant. Maurice's rationalizing initially attempts to blur the dividing lines which demarcate crime and victim depriving him of the subtlety which allows for an expiatory identification with Hurrish.

Like many another before him, he had goaded, deafened, blinded himself into a belief in the necessity of the crime -- had told himself that it was not, in fact, a crime at all, but merely the acquitting of a necessary debt; -- that honour, revenge, justice -- nay, the very peace of his brother's soul -- demanded that he should do it, seeing that the law declined to take the matter

²⁰⁹ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.177.

into its own hands, as it ought to have done. He was not a murderer, therefore, but only an avenger.²¹⁰

The arbitrary abstractions which Maurice employs to depersonalize Hurrish have their counterpart in the heavy fog which obscured both his and Hurrish's features when the shooting occurred. Yet the privacy of their meeting in the cabin, as Hurrish lies dying, forces both to acknowledge the reality of what has taken place. Maurice, confronted by the spectacle of Hurrish's 'ghastly face' has his delusions shattered: 'He saw himself as he was -- a murderer ! -- a foul, brutal, cold-blooded murderer'. This is the identification which is required and which the narrator has already utilized for the narrative's benefit, judging it necessary for any reconciling compassion. In this moment of truth, both victim and assailant merge in a common victimhood, Maurice's face appearing 'as ghastly as the dying man's own', 'The misery, the whole fatality, seemed to him to press to the full as hardly upon himself as upon his victim'.

At length, in a choked voice, Maurice found words.

'Hurrish ! I was mad ! God knows I was mad ! I wish I'd been dead and buried a hundred thousand times over before ever I fired that cursed shot ! Speak to me, Hurrish ! say you'll forgive me,' he stammered.

Hurrish's great gaunt face lit up with a wonderful tenderness.

'Is it forgiv ye, me pore buoy,' he said passionately. 'An' sure wudn't I forgiv ye, an' wilcome, if 'twas twist as much ?'²¹¹

Hurrish, as the instigator of this process of forgiveness, is seen to demonstrate those innate virtues of his character which the narrative has represented as residual of another social order. By unreservedly absolving Maurice, he is seen to have interrupted the momentum of a chain of violence characterized by revenge and hatred. In the conclusion to the narrative, Lawless reaffirms the necessity of such personal virtue for the furthering of national reconciliation -- 'Kindliness, faith, purity, are good spirits which may steer a boat through even as rough waters as any that it has travelled through, and bring it into safe anchorage at last'. The remedying of inherited political antagonisms and social and economic inequalities ultimately will devolve, according to this argument, upon the personal humanity of individuals. The difference in the respective impacts on their community's consciousness made by both Hurrish and Maurice is meant to testify to the value of this. While Maurice is regarded as 'a traitor to the national cause', Hurrish's name becomes a byword for consideration and

²¹⁰ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.185.

²¹¹ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.188.

encouragement, a 'subtle aroma of kindness and goodwill' clinging about his homely memory. Throughout, this focus on individual contribution has been in opposition to the seemingly pernicious influence of political activity. Yet despite the narrator's disparagement of such activity in the formation of a better national future, 'Enough perhaps that there are elements in it which have nothing, fortunately, to say to politics', the narrative's weight of argument for such individual input is determined by the balance of its political motivation. For Lawless, antipathetic to popular politics, that motivation is signalled by the oppositional quantities she revealingly invests in the concepts of patriotism and nationalism.

Patriotism and Nationalism.

The narrative's differentiation of two forms of patriotism operates as a deliberate shoring up of an embattled established social ideology and its values against the subversive effects of another, more innovative and aggressive one. The principles and ideals which are espoused in the narrative and epitomized in Hurrish along with the negative alternates of these which are narratorially pronounced against and embodied in Maurice, represent a wider process of divergence which centred round the concept of the nation during the nineteenth century. Lawless, in her structuring of such principles, appears to be drawing on the tenets of a patriotic tradition which viewed the nation as 'primarily a political, economic, societal concept, the community of persons sharing the same government and the same capital, the citizenry of a state, society at large'.²¹² That tradition, emanating from Enlightenment thought, made no definitive relationship between race and state, nor did it limit nationality to a strict cultural interpretation. Tending towards the constitutional acceptance of local particularisms and of legal diversity between a state's disparate regions, traditional patriotism in its valorizing of notions of confederation, anti-absolutism and the defence of local privileges and prerogatives, was ideologically inimical to nationalist concepts of totalization.

In all these respects, Patriotism is essentially different from nationalism. What Grattan aimed to achieve for Ireland was heteronomy rather than autonomy. The Patriots' agenda invoked arguments of equity and just representation of interests rather than an essential, national

²¹² Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*. p. 25. There is a detailed analysis of this

difference between Ireland and England.²¹³

With the rise of nationalism in the nineteenth century, however, the concept of the nation increasingly found its justification in the coincidence of national borders and ethnic-cultural identity. Exclusivist and antagonistic to difference, nationalism in this essentialist form provoked a counter-revolutionary conservatism among the predominantly Anglo-Irish unionist class.²¹⁴

That conservatism is represented in the narrative by Hurrish and Pierce O'Brien, both Hurrish's modified national fervour and Pierce O'Brien's Irishness indicators of its philosophy of the co-existence of variation within a shared tradition. Hurrish is shown as acknowledging the indigenous claims of his landlord -- 'the aboriginal landlord so to speak', the 'ould stock' who were 'part of the country they lived in as its rocks, rivers, magpies, or buttercups'. As he works on his boat Hurrish sings the praises of those heroes of Fontenoy, content to know that their patriotism was evidenced by the fact that they had fought against England, while the narratorial voice points the moral: 'a genuinely respectable European victory, -- and a victory, too, due in great part to the prowess of his home-exiled compatriots'. One of those home-exiled compatriots is Pierce O'Brien, whose nationalism the narrator continually argues for and defends. The exception he takes at being lectured to by sub-inspector Higgins is based on the Englishness of Higgins in the Irish context as much as the content of his speech: 'a consequential and somewhat underbred young Englishman, the tone and accent with which the reproof was conveyed became part of the offence, and doubled its enormity'. The very conservatism by which he is identified in his position as landlord and Protestant is argued by the narrative to be as much a badge of his nationalism.

The sense of country is a very odd possession, and in no part of the world is it odder than in Ireland. Soldier, landlord, Protestant, very Tory of Tories as he was, Pierce O'Brien was at heart as out-and out an Irishman -- nay, in a literal sense of the word, a Nationalist -- as any frieze-coated Hurrish of them all.²¹⁵

In a manipulation of essentialist doctrine the narrator dismisses racial ethnicity as a measure of Irishness, by purposely tracing those stereotypical features, supposedly indicative of national character, which are apparent in Pierce O'Brien yet finding

subject in chapter one, 'Around the Union' in this publication.

²¹³ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p.20.

²¹⁴ Leerssen, *Hurrish*, p.20.

²¹⁵ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.48.

them insufficient to define his Irishness.

A close-cropped head, rather hollow above the temples, and rather high at the top, where the hair still grew thickly, good, well-opened blue eyes, not large but kindly; a face which spoke of geniality and obstinacy, of amiability and irascibility -- a very Irish face, too, though it was rather difficult to say wherein the distinctive Hibernianism consisted.²¹⁶

This concept of a heteronomical nationhood and its alignment with traditional social mores, both interdependent and mutually defining, represents the deployment by Lawless of a strategy which answered a widespread establishment concern during the later nineteenth century in Ireland at the increased politicization of the masses, and particularly of the peasantry. Seen as a power threat to the interests of the landed elite, it precipitated an attempt by that elite to offset its danger through a mechanism by which the disaffected rural poor were to be rehabilitated back into a reformed and more congenial social arrangement.

Lawless, in her manipulation of the characters of Hurrish and Pierce O'Brien, mirrors the ideological manoeuvres of Standish O'Grady expressed in *Toryism and the Tory Democracy* (1886) whose credo Michael McAteer summarizes as follows: 'The political *credo* of *Toryism and the Tory Democracy* essentially consisted of appealing to a traditional sense of loyalty O'Grady perceived existed among the peasant...classes in Ireland: such an appeal he believed, might prevent their acquiescence to radicalism and popular revolt'.²¹⁷ The threat to the landed aristocracy which increased democratization represented for Lawless is evident in the spectacle of Pierce O'Brien's estate being effectually disabled, along with his egalitarian intentions, by an indifferent and empowered labouring class.²¹⁸ The threat is equally evidenced in the rush to political appropriation which Maurice and his fellow ideologues demonstrate.

Why not ? Was there not young Egan Shaughnessy, who had been foreman only the other day in the same little haberdashery shop at Milltown-Malbay in which Maurice Brady himself served, and what was he now ? Member for Polladoo, and likely to rise to any dizzy height so soon as the nationalists began really to warm to their work.²¹⁹

Lecky, in *Democracy and Liberty*, states clearly some of the fundamental objections

²¹⁶ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.41.

²¹⁷ McAteer, Michael, *Standish O'Grady, AE and Yeats: History, Politics, Culture* (Dublin: Irish Academic Press, 2002), p.86.

²¹⁸ The similar disabling of Hurrish's generic loyalty and subordinacy is a further indicator of Lawless's ideological contention.

²¹⁹ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.34.

to full democratisation of the masses, positing those very insufficiencies which the absence of democracy had produced. Illiteracy, according to Lecky, was a potent enough argument against investing a man with political power; however, the ‘knowledge of reading and writing was no guarantee that he would exercise it wisely. The half-educated were peculiarly prone to political fanaticism, and those who had learned to read under the system of national education never read anything but a party newspaper, the intent of which was to inflame or mislead’.²²⁰ Lawless devolves this argument onto the character of Maurice and his nationalist colleagues, particularly through her presentation of the semi-literate Maurice and the comical aspiration which he entertains to achieve ‘larnin’.²²¹

For O’Grady, whose objective of protecting an established propertied class and the conservative values which it embodied was a derivative of the eighteenth-century patriot concept of the nation-state, the Irish political landscape had the added complication of ethnicity. O’Grady’s vision, as described by McAteer, is not unlike that of Lawless’s own as expressed in *Hurrish*, ‘From O’Grady’s perspective ethnic nationalism, particularly in Ireland, threatened the civic idea of nationality he believed to be grounded in the constitutional integrity of the British throne.’²²² Lawless’s description of Pierce O’Brien as a very Tory of Tories and as nationalist as any frieze coated *Hurrish* of them all neatly encapsulates this vision which sees ‘nationality primarily in terms of class’, and involves a co-opting of the disparate ingredients of national identity into the rationale of the Anglo-Irish Ascendancy. By this method O’Grady and Lawless contain within themselves the totality of qualifications which others such as ethnic nationalists only partially possess.

The narrative’s method of discrediting democratic, ethnic and lower-class mobilization is to present it as fundamentally anti-social, the text making frequent associations between it and those elements of ideological revolution which are likely

²²⁰ Quoted in McCartney, *Lecky*, p.159.

²²¹ Lecky recommends Lawless’s *Hurrish* in his contribution to the *Freeman’s Journal* compilation of the best hundred Irish books in 1886: ‘Among representative works of fiction may I put in a word for a very recent arrival, Miss Lawless’s charming story “Hurrish” !’. O’Brien, R. Barry, *The Best Hundred Irish Books* by ‘Historicus’, (Dublin: *Freeman’s Journal*, 1886), p.11.

²²² McAteer. ‘“Ireland and the Hour”’: Paternalism and Nationality in Standish O’Grady’s *Toryism and the Tory Democracy* in (eds.) Leon Litvack and Glenn Hooper, *Ireland in the Nineteenth Century: Regional Identity* (Dublin: The Lilliput Press, 1994), p.212. This earlier study provides a more pertinent statement than

to inspire images of societal disintegration and terror, from French republican zeal to proto-communist ruthlessness.

If every recruit of the Grand Army carried a marshal's baton in his knapsack, surely every Nationalist recruit, that can read, write, and spell, carries an appointment in the coming Irish Republic somewhere or other about his personal possessions.²²³

He was brimful, too, of all the socialism of the day, knew all the latest catch-words, and was a *doctrinaire* of quite the most advanced type....Maurice...had often reflected that the revolutionary elements afloat in the country made it -- despite some self-evident drawbacks -- a much more promising field for a "shmart fellar" who knew what was what, and had thoroughly realised his own good points, than a more settled and less fluctuating social condition would probably have been. In this sense, and to this extent, he was unquestionably and unreservedly patriotic.²²⁴

The rabid, unpredictable frenzy which the nineteenth century conventionally attached to such lower class collective movements as well as the sense of collapsing civilisation which they evoked is fully exploited, the atmosphere of menace which envelopes the country figured as the unbridling of a mass energy released from the constraints of the established social order.

The whole country was in one of its periodic fits of excitement, terror, revolt. Vague expectations were everywhere afloat, dreadful or hopeful according to the anticipations of the individual. In the more reckless and desperate spirits, a wild belief in the speedy oncoming of some glorious pandemonium, when the torch and carnage would stalk over the country; in the more passive, a vague unquenchable expectation of a millennium which would make them rich, happy, prosperous, as by a miracle. In more practical heads, an eager political ferment -- feeling that old things had passed away, and all things had become new. Brave men were nervous; sober men excited; every one uneasy, uncomfortable, restless. Nowhere stability; nowhere confidence; everywhere a feeling that ordinary routine was henceforth set aside.²²⁵

Yet this revolutionary scare mongering is symptomatic of the alternates of traditional and progressive which preoccupy Lawless's narrative. According to Seamus Deane the 'contrast and contest' between a sustained tradition and a progressive modernity which characterized nineteenth-century social thinking had its origins in the French revolution and particularly as it was expressed in Burke's *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (1790), and 'was to become routine in anti-

McAteer's later *Standish O'Grady, AE and Yeats*.

²²³ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.34.

²²⁴ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.60.

²²⁵ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.155.

revolutionary writing in Europe'.²²⁶ Arising out of this pivotal text were the twin discourses of culture and economics aligned respectively with tradition and modernity and identified by their respective languages of sensibility and calculation. Deane asserts that within Burke's *Reflections* this opposition infers a mutuality of definition whereby tradition is seen to combine the two discourses in a beneficial convergence while modernity is noted by its negation of such convergence in 'its lack of historical sense, its refusal of habitual practices, its disabling tendency to abstraction, its aesthetic of distance, and its global pretensions'.²²⁷ Tradition is local whereas modernity is cosmopolitan. This is significant for Lawless who, tending to formulate her perspective of a national ethic on the intimacy of locale, expresses its disruption in *Hurrish* by the dis severance of Maurice from locale and from shared history, thereby betraying his revolutionary threat to the embedded system and its traditional values.

Maurice's alignment with both the theoretical and the revolutionary places him solidly outside the organic and historical community yet also situates him firmly within the typical literary representational format. According to Deane the 'national literature' that emerged in Ireland after the spectre of the United Irishmen was 'remarkably free of the discourse of theory. More than that, like much English literature of the period, it is remarkably hostile to such a discourse, always featuring it as abstract, systematic, and deeply involved with atrocious violence.'²²⁸ Global in his perspective and abstract in his thinking, Maurice therefore exemplifies those aspects of revolutionary theory characterized as landless and unfixed, needing to travel in order to justify itself. Likewise, his attachment to such ideological movement and the savagery of his personality complement each other and provide the rationale for the narrative's transference of emphasis from the systematic to the personal.²²⁹

Peasant Squalor and Individual Human Value.

²²⁶ Deane, *Strange Country*, p.1.

²²⁷ Deane, *Strange Country*. p.4.

²²⁸ Deane, *Strange Country*, p.18.

²²⁹ Such national hostility to social theory is also mentioned by Pick. Contemporary English commentators considered the denial of social theory in general 'to be a safeguard against disruption: perhaps everything could carry on, it was hoped, discursively, socially, politically, as before'. Pick, Daniel, *Faces of Degeneration: A European Disorder, c.1848-c.1918*. (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 1989), p. 177.

Maurice's position as disruptive threat within the narrative is, as argued earlier, based on a seemingly insidious individualism, a deviation from that collective identity which ought to contain, in both senses of the word, the peasant population.²³⁰ As the rectifying of an historical endemic disaffection is to be located in the personal, so the personal differentiation which the narrative constructs in Maurice is figured as counter-productive in its contributing further to an unravelling of class and, therefore, social stabilities. Maurice's actual transgression from the socially and politically acceptable is his daring to assume an distinctive public persona equipped with personally motivated ambition and independent self-esteem. Much of the narrative's criticism of an incipient modernism functions through a perception of his presumptuous and arrogant attempts to escape the parameters assigned to him as ignorant peasant, his very aspiration to 'larnin' a continual source of ridicule throughout the narrative. Such ridicule is based on a standard of erudition appropriate to that of the narrator and targeted reader.

Maurice had taught himself shorthand in his leisure moments, and had already done a certain amount of newspaper work. It was only for the 'Killogenesawee Shillelagh and Flag of Ballyduff', it is true, at present, but then everything in life, we know, depends upon a beginning'.²³¹

'And I'd lay awake at night planning it all out-how I'd get all the larnin' -- learning, I mean

-- I could, and not mind the botheration of it, because it would all be wanted, and more too, and I'd make friends with all the shmart young fellars I met, and not be sticking to the old ways...'²³²

As much of this ridicule centres on his 'eloquence', the irony of the word is stressed by the suggestion of its inappropriateness to his status, his true linguistic, and, therefore, social level implied in his unconscious slipping back to a peasant idiom.

Maurice's expression showed that he was in fact perfectly serious. 'You don't understand me, that's all !' (He had perceived that in the enthusiasm of his last speech he had allowed his rhetoric to run into somewhat native variations, and was therefore additionally watchful now.)²³³

'Mustn't I know what the Laigue-the League-wants better nor they do ? -- ignorant beasts !...'

²³⁰ 'Rustic, ahistorical and apolitical community life, the idyllic view of Ireland as a mere province or backwater where timeless quaint characters go about their humble and picturesque ways, is obviously a conservative, unionist mode of idealizing Ireland...' Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p.170.

²³¹ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.34.

²³² Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.55.

(Maurice's eloquence, it will be observed, had for the moment entirely got the better of his newly acquired phraseology. But what eloquence, it may be asked, is worth a rush that does not do so ?)²³⁴

Secured by self-interest and at the expense of the greater good, Maurice's individualism is seen to be productive of estrangement from people and place. Dismissive of the population about him as simple, ignorant and savage, Maurice's differentiating of himself is perceived as being only possible in this way, established against the infraction of social affiliation and sensibility. In this regard it carries more than a passing similarity to the attitude of the narrator who conducts a similarly dismissive appraisal, and for the same reasons, of the peasant population, the insistence on its indistinguishable mass, its repetitive and dependable typology a way of maintaining a class differentiation. Therefore, despite the more positive treatment of Hurrish's 'conspicuous' cabin, as discussed earlier, the squalor of Irish peasant life is a recurring theme of the narrative, a politic dissociation of cause from effect whereby the peasant's indifference to dirt is viewed as an innate and defining characteristic rather than a product of endemic poverty. Categorized as a national idiosyncrasy by which 'the floor seems a far handier receptacle for rubbish than a dust-bin' by those who have 'no squeamish prejudices against the indoor society of ducks, or a cheerful, if vociferous, nursery of young pigs', squalor for the narrator becomes a representational necessity if the narrative's true-to-life requirement is to be observed.

This indifference to squalor -- rather the admission of it -- is certainly not the pleasantest bit of duty which falls to the lot of the modest chronicler of peasant Ireland. Since it now and then has to be faced, however, it is as well perhaps to do so steadily and unshrinkingly, as we confront any of the other hundred thousand not particularly pleasant facts of life.²³⁵

The peasant racial temperament (peasant and Celtic ethnicity being synonymous) is conceived of in its stereotypical context as being emotional and animalistic, 'poetic, excitable, emotionable, unreasoning' with 'brutal and cruel elements, which too often, alas ! streak and disfigure that strain'. The word 'strain' transfers the biological heredity of the class into the area of animal breeding. The strain's human value is likewise relativized as peasant offspring are categorized with livestock.²³⁶ Such

²³³ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.54.

²³⁴ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.66.

²³⁵ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.52.

²³⁶ Stereotypes characterizing Irish national idiosyncrasies seem invariably to centre

representations are present from early in the narrative:

It is rather rare to see any strong symptoms of mutual regard between an Irish peasant and his dog -- such as, for instance, links the Scotch shepherd to his collie. The dogs have to take their chance with the pigs, children and poultry. They have not the financial value, and therefore dignity, of the first-named, nor the natural claims of the second, neither, again, has kindly nature endowed them with the same convenient capacity for escaping sticks, heels, and other weapons of offence that it has bestowed upon the last.²³⁷

The disqualification from normative human value is achieved most fully through a limiting of the capacity to be human, and that limiting is most fully realized by the narrative in its suggestion of the Irish peasant's inability to experience so fundamentally human an emotion as love. In the narrator's judgment such a deficiency is not only definitive but providential.

Despite his susceptibleness in other directions, it really did seem as if Hurrish, like so many of his type, hardly knew whether a woman was handsome or the reverse. To be strong and active, to have a 'clane skin,' -- these he recognised as important points, but beyond these his perceptions rarely strayed. He had never dreamt of being 'in love' with his own poor Molly Sheehan, though they had been the happiest of couples, and he had mourned her loss with a passion which would have left many a susceptible gentleman far behind. Perhaps it is as well. If that delusive Will-of-the-wisp, which makes wise men foolish and sober ones mad, were to exercise an equal ascendancy over such pieces of touch-paper as our friend Hurrish, -- if he and such as he were to be as excitable in this direction as they are in some others -- politics, to wit, -- surely not all the rain that ever fell upon Ireland would keep that unlucky island from being in a state of perpetual conflagration !²³⁸

The contradiction within this passage stresses the obvious narratorial denial of any human complexity to Hurrish as social inferior. While it is conceded that he had felt the loss of his wife with a profound passion, this emotionalism is not compatible with that deep, conscious affection which, it is implied, would be accessible to 'many a susceptible gentleman' in similar circumstances. An excessive display without the meaningful apprehension which renders it identifiable as love places Hurrish's emotional life more in the context of those farm animals by which the typical Irish peasant's 'regard' has already been established. Hurrish's appreciation of his wife takes the form of an animal appraisal, strong, active and a with good coat.

on the lower classes. These stereotypes, particularly the ignorant peasant retainer or drunken, belligerent cattleman, appear to represent aboriginal traits which do not indict Anglo-Irish or professional groups. Ethnicity, from a British or Anglo-Irish perspective, at this period, is a demeaning formulation.

²³⁷ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.8.

Such a purposed degrading of a social group can not accommodate any meaningful evaluation of its distresses whether caused by squalor and ignorance or when political violence blights it and thus fundamentally undermines Lawless's credibility in presuming to represent its motivations for action. It also significantly exposes the subversive subtext which lies beneath Lawless's approach to her subject, undermining the narrative's intent. Unlike the confrontation between Hurrish and Maurice which compelled particularly Maurice to recognize the value of his victim and thereby acknowledge his own transgression of that value, Lawless refuses a similar recognition, persisting instead in an interpretative fog of class and racial prejudice which itself perpetuates the dynamics of social antagonism. By adhering to a narrative strategy of reactive identification, Lawless, in other words, fails the test which she has devised for her own characters as a means to reconcile conflict.

The concern canvassed by the text's charting of social violence is directed more towards the readers' and Lawless's own political apprehensions regarding it rather than on behalf of the subject participants and sufferers. The capricious and problematical psychology of a social group, categorized according to its stigmas of squalor, ignorance and propensity for violence, permits a limiting of the potential for complex assessment, absolving the narrator of any insight into motivation other than historical and stereotypical modes of behaviour. Those characters who belong to this group behave as they do because that is how they are. Figured as naturally instinctive with little reflective contribution to their situation they appear as the ploy of their own weaknesses. The moral lesson of affective forgiveness which comprises the narrator's simplistic formula for social reconciliation is only possible through this fiction. The natural vein of humanity which distinguishes Hurrish is judged to be a foundational redeeming strength which facilitates a defusing of the vengefulness overtaking him and his immediate family, including his adoptive Maurice. However, this jovial, generous attitude to everyday experience is insufficient as a response to the extraordinary events with which Hurrish and his family are confronted. Such a casual acceptance of his own murder deprives the incident, the significant one for the narrative, of any impact leaving the act of forgiveness a token gesture for its own sake.

Hurrish's great gaunt face lit up with a wonderful tenderness.

'Is it forgiv ye, me pore buoy,' he said passionately. 'An' sure wudn't I forgiv ye, an'

²³⁸ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.153.

welcome, if 'twas twist as much ?'

How much more it could have been he did not stop to think; neither, in truth, did Maurice.²³⁹

That moment of forgiveness is seen to liberate Maurice from the perpetual enmity by which he had motivated himself. Freed from this he is presented as pursuing a fruitful and worthwhile life in that America from where he had envisioned those ships of plenty coming towards him. Yet Maurice's swings from rationality to irrationality to despairing contrition present his character as a mere monitor of transient, spasmodic emotions, the moment of revelation for him being as casual as Hurrish's forgiveness of the crime.

It had all been a fatality from beginning to end -- a black hideous sorrow and crime-laden fatality. Further than this he could not think. A weight lay upon his head, so that he could not even look up.²⁴⁰

Ironically, the character who undergoes most significant and credible change is Alley, generally perceived to be a superficial creation. Alley's character is made to register the momentous, transforming effect which her involvement in the events ought to produce. As a medium for that violence which surrounds her, her sensitivity has had to inure itself to realities she would clearly have preferred to evade. Caught between the domineering aggression of Maurice and the impetuous violent act of Hurrish, and being compelled to shield 'a murderer', she is disillusioned by those she had relied on and admired. As a witness to the destructive effect which violence has wreaked on her home and family, Alley emerges as a damaged character. Although attributed with a voice of compassion and virtue which the narrator exploits for emotional and moral affect, there is a sinister side to Alley's experience of violence which tends to undermine the narrator's investment. Initially fragile and wisp-like, Alley is presented as becoming hardened by the recurring setbacks which her sensitive nature has had to endure. To all extents, therefore, it is the credible suffering which Alley experiences and registers which most explores the consequences of communal and individual violence. Having been the voice of forgiveness advocated by the narrative through her urging of Maurice to 'be merciful !' she herself refuses to forgive him when, leaving the O'Brien cabin, he appeals to her.

The little humble insignificant girl he had condescended to, had become a terrible power. She condemned him and she scorned him. Whether she knew for certain what he had done or not, he could not of course know, but her look was enough. *Hurrish* might forgive him, but there

²³⁹ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.188.

²⁴⁰ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.187.

was no forgiveness *here*.²⁴¹

Alley reveals a reversal in her humanity at a time when the reformation of the other characters is occurring. Returning to Hurrish when Maurice had left, her nature has been resolutely altered.

A sort of spasm crossed the girl's pale face. Her usually gentle, resigned expression left it utterly. An odd, wild, savage look, quite unlike any of her own -- a survival, perhaps, from some fierce ancestor or ancestress -- took its place.

'I hate him !' she said, in a low choked voice. 'I wish he war dead ! I cud kill him mysel !'²⁴²

Corruptive of any innocence which is intimate with it, Alley is shown to be, in fact, as much a victim of violence as Maurice or Hurrish. Alley's reversal of role, therefore, exposes the failure of the narrative to go beyond the constructed format which has been devised for its argument, the formulaic rapprochement between Hurrish and his assailant. Aligned in many ways narratorially, the interchanging of identities between Hurrish and Maurice, victim and murderer, represents the recognition of a shared agency, both being participating elements of the same process. On that basis alone the interchanging of national and personal relevance operates for the narrator. For Alley however, there is no such identification open, just as there is none for the narrator who, external to the issues, can only hope to impose an artificially contrived moral credo. The knot of the narrator's complicity with the ideological force behind the narrative remains unresolved just as that of Alley with the pervasive violence and hatred. Thus the expression through Alley of an abiding and unsoothed resentment is also a tentative stating of the narrator's own abiding, unsubdued antagonism. Ironically, therefore, the concluding development in the character of Alley indicates the fundamental voice of the narrative which operates below and beyond the didactic. Hurrish, Bridget, Mat Brady or those clandestine agents who appear fleetingly through the narrative are conceived of as tools in an ideologically driven disturbance. Only Maurice is authorially equipped, by virtue of the narrator's paradigm of violence and ideology, with a resolute and individually motivated will and the choices made and implemented by that will determine the direction of the narrative's action. Alley, like the narrator, may be perceived as reacting to the recalcitrant autonomy of a negative will as it is developed in the character of Maurice, and the result is as disempowering for them as it is empowering for Maurice. Ultimately the refusal of

²⁴¹ Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.189.

²⁴² Lawless, *Hurrish*, p.190.

Alley to comply with the fictional mechanism expresses a disaffection with and an attempt to negate Maurice's surface domination of the narrative. This is the alternative voice of the narrative's token morality, the unrelenting hostility of Alley Sheen.

Hurrish as Social Critique.

Heather Laird sees Lawless's *Hurrish* as demonstrating the discrepancies between the nineteenth-century metropolitan realist novel and a nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish fiction in which standard realist resolutions remain elusive. The socialisation processes of realism by which the anomalous individual is reconciled with society's civilising project, the passage from savagery to civility, as argued by Franco Moretti and David Lloyd, are not realised in so far as *Hurrish* does not, according to Laird, 'provide the reader with one set of values that would allow for an unambiguous mapping of this passage'.²⁴³ For Laird 'The conflicting systems of control held up for the reader's inspection are also competing value systems that define the social norms of the novel's Burren community in very different ways'.²⁴⁴ Since the socialization process needs fixed starting and finishing points, a novel which at the outset 'provides the reader with multiple interpretations of where these points might be and then proceeds to reject all of these interpretations', fails, in Laird's estimation, to achieve its socializing objective.²⁴⁵ However, it is precisely that dilemma of competing value systems as this study argues by which the novel's socialization process actually operates.

The exploration of this formal discrepancy in the novel is concentrated by Laird on the two primary women of the narrative, Bridget O'Brien and Alley Sheen, and is based on Nancy Armstrong's 'feminist-Foucauldian analysis of domestic fiction' found in Armstrong's *Desire and Domestic Fiction*. In that critical approach to the development of the novel Armstrong argues the socialisation process is intrinsically linked to the production of gender, particularly the way in which the ideal domestic woman of the aspiring middle class came to function as 'the bearer of moral norms

²⁴³ Laird, *Subversive law*, p.54.

²⁴⁴ Laird, *Subversive law*, p.54.

²⁴⁵ Laird, *Subversive law*, p.54.

and socializer of men'.²⁴⁶

In the typical scenario, the reader will witness the central female character - Pamela, Elizabeth Bennet, Jane Eyre - coax the central male character - Mr B., Darcy, Rochester - into accepting the superiority of the value system she represents. The socialization process narrated in the realist novel is, consequently, also a process of domestication that can only be fully completed through the arena of the household.²⁴⁷

Laird's analysis of the social role of Lawless's novel works on its deviation from or failure to comply with this formative generic development as conceived by Armstrong.

The role assigned to women like Alley in the English fiction discussed by Armstrong is to domesticate recalcitrant social forces. In a narrative that is equally condemning of official law and its unofficial counterpart, Alley's role is less clear. She can still exert a 'feminising' influence, but the reader is unsure as to the ideal end result of this influence.²⁴⁸

The opposite of the ideal female is the monstrous woman, a figure common to domestic fiction through which, according to Armstrong, these fictions express anxieties over conflicting and competing social formations: 'In Lawless's narrative, explicit links are formed between Bridget and the alternative mode of organization that is the agrarian code'.²⁴⁹ The monstrous woman is a *displacement* mechanism by which social conflict is redirected into a female figure who lacks femininity and in whose body 'all threats of social disruption suddenly lose their political meaning and are just as suddenly quelled'.²⁵⁰ Approached through such a model, however, Laird judges that 'no such process of displacement occurs in Lawless's *Hurrish*; a narrative that tells of social disruption *and* a monstrous female'. In other words, the two are not synthesised into a conceptually resolving figure.²⁵¹

The object of Laird's analysis of *Hurrish* is to demonstrate 'the dangers of an uncritical application of theoretical models and premises developed in the study of the metropolitan novel to Irish literature'.²⁵² Quoting Joe Cleary who suggests that the metropolitan novel in its structural form and its social functions was reflective of its

²⁴⁶ Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p.89, quoted in Laird, *Subversive law*, p.54.

²⁴⁷ Laird, *Subversive law*, p.54.

²⁴⁸ Laird, *Subversive law*, p.56-57.

²⁴⁹ Laird, *Subversive law*, p.55.

²⁵⁰ Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, p.183, quoted in Laird, *Subversive law*, p.56.

²⁵¹ Laird, *Subversive law*, p.56.

²⁵² Laird, *Subversive law*, p.57.

own metropolitan conditions and, so, different to those which governed the Irish novel of the same period, Laird, nonetheless, provides no suggestion as to how the Irish novel, and *Hurriish* in particular, reflected its context other than in its misapplication of those metropolitan functions to nineteenth-century Ireland. Laird states as much when she observes that Lawless's novel deserves critical attention because it is representative of a phenomenon that shaped the nineteenth-century Irish novel.

It is not only for the representational qualities that so intrigued its earliest commentators, however, that Emily Lawless's Land War fiction deserves once again to be the focus of critical attention, but because the novel as a whole is representative of a phenomenon that shaped the nineteenth-century Irish novel: a disjunction between a literary form that was the abstract of metropolitan social relations and local materials that emerged from quite a different set of social relations. *Hurriish* narrates the absence of the very conditions upon which the socialising ends of its literary form was reliant.²⁵³

As in Lawless's other Irish novels examined here, the encompassing chaos or social dysfunction is a contributing component in the fiction's achievement of a moral focus. Lawless is not attempting to resolve competing social formations so much as attempting to reconcile individual action to a norm of humane behaviour. There is a harmonising of basic values between narrator, reader and character in *Hurriish* which sublimates the political conditions. It is precisely the irreconcilable differences between the two formations as outlined by Laird that compels Lawless to seek resolution in individual human responsibility, the construction of an ethical subjectivity independent of its social circumstances or, indeed, as a consequence of them. In that respect, therefore, it is social category rather than social formation that interests Lawless and is in keeping with Lawless's redirecting of the political onto the personalised conflict between *Hurriish* and Maurice, both of whom are affiliated in varying degrees to the campaign of Land League agitation. The resolution takes place on this personal individual level of the disruptive energies of male violent activity within the wider collective. Deflection onto the women of this violent energy, its disfiguring of the maternal element in Bridget and its obstructive effect on the feminine aspirations and affections of the younger Alley is a registering of its social repercussions but does not represent its attempted fictional defusing. That will come later in Lawless's deeper study of male violence and its repercussive effects in her historical novel *With Essex in Ireland*.

²⁵³ Laird, *Subversive law*, p.59.

Yet Alley does represent a site in which male violence is registered and its destructive outcomes calibrated. It is significant that the reconciliation between both males occurs within the domestic space while Alley's rejection of Maurice occurs outside it. The public repercussions of individual male violence is evident in Alley's action yet its disarming must be rerouted through the area occupied by women, within the world of the private and the personal. By such a fictional rerouting masculinity can be depicted as recognising and coming to terms with its own disruptive energy. This analysis coincides with a critical model again advocated by Armstrong of later Victorian fiction which explores the shift in that fiction's emphasis from the reconciling of social formations to the anxieties concerning the modern subject and residual savageries revealed by Darwinian theory.²⁵⁴ What is relevant to late nineteenth-century Irish fiction is Lawless's use of this model to circumscribe the individual subject with a personal ethic which allowed for a discrete interrogation of Irish social conflict and violence. Through such a method Lawless allows that violence to register its impact at a particular central point, the private life and conscience of the individual, and from that pivotal point to extend its implications beyond to a wider relational reference. Invariably it returns to its central subject where its savagery is, in essence, socialized.

In Lawless's *With Essex in Ireland*, published four years later, the same subject of male violence and its political background, which she tentatively explores in *Hurriish*, achieves its full representation as Lawless examines the personal consciousness of William Devereaux, second Earl of Essex, in a narrative focusing on his late sixteenth-century Irish campaign and the political imperatives which governed it. In that novel also, Lawless more fully develops the mechanism of displacement in which a gender construct is devised as a means for registering and defusing that violence, presenting it with a formula by which its aggression is redirected back onto its masculine source.

²⁵⁴ See Armstrong's *How Novels Think*.

Narratives of the self: A Comparative reading of *Hurrish* and *A Drama in Muslin*.

Published in the same year as *Hurrish* and dealing, generally, with the same subject, George Moore's *A Drama in Muslin* demonstrates the extent of the engagement available to the novelist approaching this subject and, therefore, the extent of Lawless's omission. More panoramic in its alternating between the provincial world of Mayo and cosmopolitan Dublin, *A Drama in Muslin* creates the scope for a comprehensive interplay of the class and economic stresses which characterized the national crisis of the early 1880s. Unlike the somewhat naïve personal focus of *Hurrish*, Moore's novel locates the nexus of tension where it predominantly resided, in the economic polarizations between an enervated landowning elite and an increasingly militant tenantry.

As an absentee Catholic landlord from Mayo Moore felt, in a more immediate way than did Lawless, the effects of the Land League campaign. The reduction of rental income resulted in Moore being compelled to severely curtail his life abroad as Bohemian artist and to reinvent himself as commentator on the human condition in order to sustain himself. The way in which Moore viewed Irish social conflict was essentially different therefore to that of Lawless. As a voluntary émigré newly confirmed in his sense of exclusion Moore can reify the Irish social problem as exteriorised material. Lawless, materially neutral is yet ideologically enmeshed, retaining an interest which she is aware is being eroded by the exclusion of that class to which, unlike Moore, she acknowledged an allegiance. Lawless engages, therefore, as an active participant who is anxious to reach at least a projected synthesis through her writing.

Lawless's depiction of the tenant-landlord system, as a consequence, emerges as highly sanitized in its evasion of obvious social miseries, and in its deflecting of responsibilities from the social onto the personal domain. Absent from her narrative is a direct, faithful representation of the human suffering which underpinned social aggression during this period, the desperation which blighted the lives of the destitute and homeless being reduced to a mere conceptualization of abstract principles. Clearly sympathetic towards a system which is failing and reluctant to condone the activity of its opponents, Lawless engages instead in a Fabian manoeuvre of indicting everything surrounding the issue rather than confront the issue itself. Although aware

of their wider implications, Lawless, nonetheless, seems incapable of appreciating the fundamental causes of agrarian or Land League activity, the refuge taken in nostalgic yearnings and the resorting to ethnic and class stereotyping depriving her 'study' of any real insight into the how and why of social and political conflict. Where there is evident poverty it invariably appears as destitution rather than deprivation, a consequence of personal failings and, therefore, particularized rather than systematised. Neither is there the fastidiousness of wealth which might conflict with such want. With Lawless, possession is usually equated with diligence and responsible intention and never indulged in for its own sake thus exposing no association whatsoever with the exploitation of others.

The five coming-of-age girls at the heart of *A Drama in Muslin* are used as foils to a social system which lacks purpose, the indolence and futility of their pursuits emblematic of that system's stagnation. Moore's economic argument is textually pervasive, concentrating its gaze on contemporary poverty and wealth and eliminating the element of historical colonial grievance which Lawless identified as spuncilling the forward movement of any national development. Carefully manipulated juxtapositionings throughout Moore's novel emphasize the binary of affluence and poverty which he locates at the centre of national life. The faces of the poor gazing through the windows of the school-hall as the gentry dance, the incongruity of both classes assembled together for worship in the local church, and the utter degradation of the urban poor who congregate along the route as the carriages of the wealthy and influential converge on Cork Hill for the season's levee, create images which allow Moore the scope to portray, in minute detail and for maximum affect, extremes of squalor and opulence. Corollary to this is the mercenary principle of exchange on which human interaction appears to operate, whether that be the collusive exploitation of both sexes among the ruling elite or the rent-ownership struggle which determines power relations between tenant and landlord. The most salient demonstration of this is the coincidence of Arthur Barton negotiating a reduction of rents with his peasant holders while his wife bargains a financial settlement with Captain Hibbert for the hand of their daughter Olive.

These tactical manipulations facilitate a sustained critique of that society's perceived moral bankruptcy, a critique buttressed by the force of direct narratorial pronouncement. Yet, perversely, those pronouncements are scathing in equal measure of both the rich and the poor alike. The degeneracy of Irish society is conceived of as

endemic, the characteristic failings of a social elite matched, as a consequence, by a stereotypical squalid mass. The metropolis, in particular, where the concentration of class disparity is greatest, provides the starkest examples of the narrator's all-inclusive indignation. The detailed description of the sumptuous gathering at Dublin castle is counter- pointed by the degradation of the urban poor, the city evidence of a moral as much as a material decay, its poor a product of neglect as much as its decaying structures.

Notwithstanding the terrible weather the streets were lined with vagrants, patriots, waifs, idlers of all sorts and kinds. Plenty of girls of sixteen and eighteen come out to see the 'finery'. Poor little things in battered bonnets and dragged skirts, who would dream upon ten shillings a week; a drunken mother striving to hush a child that dies beneath a dripping shawl; a harlot embittered feelings of commercial resentment; troops of labourers battered and bruised with toil; you see their hang-dog faces, their thin coats, their shirts torn and revealing the beast-like hair on their chests...Never were poverty and wealth brought into plainer proximity.²⁵⁵

While Lawless finds solace in the displacing of historically resonant images onto the natural landscape, Moore's urban landscape is made to confirm decisively the contemporary social disintegration.

The Dublin streets stare the vacant and helpless stare of a beggar selling matches on a doorstep, and the feeble cries for amusement are like those of the child beneath the ragged shawl for the red gleam of a passing soldier's coat. On either side of you, there is a bawling ignorance or plaintive decay. Look at the houses ! Like crones in borrowed bonnets some are fashionable with flowers in the rotting window frames -- others languish in silly cheerfulness like women living on the proceeds of the pawnshop; others -- those with brass-plates on the doors -- are evil smelling as the prescriptions of the threadbare doctor, bald as the bill of costs of the servile attorney. And the souls of the Dubliners blend and harmonise with their connatural surroundings.²⁵⁶

From such an all-pervasive decrepitude there seems little prospect of conjuring any remedial change and Moore makes no signals towards a better future comparative with that which forms the concluding frame of Lawless's novel. On the contrary, the scene of Alice and Reed's departure from Ireland simply closes off any such prospect, their futile gesture of paying an evicted tenant's rent suggestive of a personal sense of gratification rather than any meaningful act in itself. In fact, the selfishness which is implied in their action deters all the more thoroughly any hope of human reform. Like the narrator's own interjected contemplations on poverty and its deplorable miseries,

²⁵⁵ Moore, George, *A Drama in Muslin* (1886; Belfast: Appletree Press, 1992), p.134.

²⁵⁶ Moore, *A Drama in Muslin*, p.125.

those of Alice, in particular, and of Reed amount to little more than complacent self-indulgences, their escape indicative of Moore's own as he deplores yet fails to solicit or visualize.²⁵⁷

The social system which Lawless envisages is not a stagnant one but one conceived of as in transition awaiting the intercession of qualities already present in the human condition. The whole tenor of Lawless's narrative is an avowed search for common understanding based on a shared human decency. Dressed though it might be in inappropriate and at times disparaging ideological, racial and class cant, its aspirational intent is unmistakable. The mutual forgiveness of Maurice and Hurrish, whatever its motivation might be, is at the heart of Lawless's redemptive vision while Pierce O'Brien's ameliorative philosophy coupled with his personal stubbornness is suggested to bode equally well for the nation's future.

Implicated in Moore's vision, however, is an insidious inevitability which expresses itself in the 'true to nature' determinism of his characters and social groupings. The five young women, full of potential and resolve, are inevitably absorbed into the ego-centric malaise of their culture. Graduating from the convent which has effectively groomed them, already their fate is fore-written in their staging of the play 'Cophetua and the beggar-maid'; their competition for favour accruing from the performance betrays character traits which will determine their respective sacrifices to personal and familial status later. Likewise, the social groupings of peasant and landowner are set in and conveyed through fixed defining formats which preclude any development of them or, through them, of any alternate vision. Idle and self-absorbed landowners individually display characteristics which are culled from the staples of a class repertoire. Straitened in this way, none is capable of discovering an understanding of or a sympathy with the difficulties of the wider social issue.

Even within the echelons of the group itself there is a characterization through interests rather than diverse and random human qualities. The intellectual Mr. Adair being the stereotypical pedant, Ryan and Lynch character extensions of their livestock business, Arthur Barton the superficial bohemian figure in keeping with his artistic preoccupations, Mrs Scully and her daughter Violet ciphers of a shrewd shop-keeping

²⁵⁷ Emer Nolan usefully observes, regarding the naturalism of Moore and his followers, that 'they tend to dismiss any creative idea of collective or political agency, focusing instead on minutely detailed recreations of the sordid environments in which the demoralized victims of social and historical circumstances are forced to live'.

background, all are effectively marionettes moved only by their respective attachments. With the peasantry and urban impoverished, the narrator's reliance on an equivalent repertoire of class staples deprives them of anything other than a collective presence. Like those who line the streets as the carriages pass to Dublin Castle, the poor occupy the position of bystanders in the narrative, the narrator content to construct vignettes which invoke age-old representative figures: the drunken mother-dying child, the indignant harlot, the overworked tailor, the evicted peasant family. Nonetheless, these vignettes are evocative and memorable, salient for the fact that they are embedded in a preponderance of opulent detail which goes to individualize the ruling elite. In the assembly at church, the almost tangible detail of smell, body odour and perfume, is made to operate convincingly as a register of human value, the presence of the undefined and anonymous peasant poor described against the personalized sensations of May Gould and Olive Barton.

The peasants came, coughing and grunting with monotonous, animal-like voices; and the sour odour of cabin-smoked frieze arose, and was almost visible in the great beams of light that poured through the eastern windows; and the whiffs of unclean leather, mingled with a smell of a sick child, flaccid as the prayer of the mother who grovelled, beating her breast, before the third Station of the Cross; and Olive and May, exchanging looks of disgust, drew forth cambric pocket-handkerchiefs, and in unison the perfumes of white rose and eau d'opoponax evaporated softly.²⁵⁸

Nowhere in *Hurrish* is there anything to match this vividness of contrasts or of the sheer, raw obscenity of cohabiting wealth and poverty. Instead there seems to be an inability in Lawless to face up to the existence of such extremes, particularly those extremes of deprivation, which must have been real contemporary presences. A preference for fictional repression distinguishes Lawless's representation of Irish peasant society in *Hurrish*, a repression which consequently weakens the novel's overall social argument. The idea that Hurrish refuses the offer of another section of land from his landlord because he already has enough, that his house is solid and homely, his children plump and happy and that his mentally unstable, alcoholic neighbour, Mat Brady, also is prosperous, is the comforting inverse of *A Drama in Muslin's* depiction of peasant conditions. Stripped of material misery and exploitation, Lawless's peasant characters are identified by their stereotypical quaintnesses; idiomatic speech, disorganized cabins, intellectual and emotional

Nolan, *Catholic Emancipations*, Preface, xviii.

simplicities, an animal sensitivity often construed as endearing, and a passionate but hopelessly misguided embrace of politics. The stark appearance in the narrative of such spectres as 'Further away a circle of dried and yellowing faces bespoke centuries of damp cabins, brutalising toil, occasional starvation',²⁵⁹ would be so anomalous as to fracture the assumed consensus of narrator and reader. *Hurriah* is a novel which reasserts an already confirmed position, a fiction contrived to give credence to a social philosophy already beleaguered by such spectral realities.

This is not to say that Moore's novel does not confirm a fiction in its own right. But it is a fiction which is not reliant on the misrepresentation of peasant conditions, and does not sacrifice the appalling facts of a suffering social group to the interests of another.²⁶⁰ What Moore does do, however, in *A Drama in Muslin* is to sacrifice the potential of the entire social structure, landlord and peasant, to a naturalism which condemns it and them to that irredeemable inertia which Alice and Read witness and in which they participate. However, that true-to-life aspect of Moore's novel is what makes it far more tangible as a felt experience conveyed through fictional narrative.²⁶¹ Because of this naturalistic approach, Moore's presentation is sensuously rich, and also repellent, yet always immediate, allowing it to carry far more conviction simply by virtue of its more thorough rendering of its object or situation. Lawless's register tends to be predominantly visual, and a visual that is too intricately involved in its cognate aspects of appearance and perception, and, therefore, suggestive of a surface impression rather than a substantial knowledge.

And yet there is also a subtle dialogue which operates through the text of *A Drama in Muslin* between the complacency of the narratorial voice displaced on to the ruling elite and its own reflexive response which masks as a concern for the mass of the excluded. The sumptuous, in-depth study in which the narrator indulges with regard to the representation of the ruling class suggests an excessive and self-absorbed, introspective gaze -- critical, deprecating, yet irresistibly compelling. A

²⁵⁸ Moore, *A Drama in Muslin*, p.56.

²⁵⁹ Moore, *A Drama in Muslin*, p.56.

²⁶⁰ Other than the author, that is. There is an extent to which Moore appears to exploit the desperation of the mass poor simply to indict that class of the gentry by which he felt rejected. See Eagleton for a insightful analysis of Moore's novel. Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, pp.218-19.

²⁶¹ While there are issues of form which contribute to the difference of approach to subject between naturalism and realism, Moore's involved research into his subject does not appear to have any equivalent in Lawless.

cultivated awareness and the gratified sense of self-identification are the means by which the narrator and the elite of *A Drama in Muslin* bear witness to each other. The obsessive poring over detail, whether apparel composition, emotional nuance, sexual subtlety, psychological posture, constitutes a sensitization of the narrator through that of the narrative. Through this process the authority of the narrator is enabled to denominate the sham and the genuine; through the ruling elite's scale of standards the narrator's sphere of subject and object relationship is established, attested to and privileged. The preciousness of the elite is also that of the narrator; the critical and generalized judgments which emanate from Mrs Barton, Mr Lynch or Milord are tunings in the same key as those sweeping dismissals which are used to maintain the narrator's superior tone. The description of Alice Barton's London suburban house is a class-generated sneer as appropriate to Alice's mother as it is to the narrator.

Each house has a pair of trim stone pillars, the crude green of the Venetian blinds jars the cultured eye, and even the tender green of the foliage in the crescent seems as cheap and as common as if it had been bought -- as everything else is in Ashbourne Crescent -- at the Stores. But how much does this crescent of shrubs mean to the neighbourhood ? Is it not there that the old ladies take their pugs for their constitutional walks, and is it not there that the young ladies play tennis with their gentleman acquaintances when they come home from the City on a Saturday afternoon ?²⁶²

The novel also stages an obvious recoil from such sensitization in its recognition of the base need which underlies it and the sordid earthiness from which it has been distilled. This recognition provides the alternative voice within the narrative, that of self-reproach constructed around the subject of the poor. The poor of *A Drama in Muslin* are an expression of the narrator's disquiet with his own complacency, yet it is a disquiet which seems resented. While the narrative's moral consideration centres on the plight of the destitute and the exploited it has a propriety which appears as though answering to occasion. The frequent positioning of the impoverished within a context which frames the wealthy is the deployment of them as a method of chastisement rather than the possessing of any relevance on their own terms and there is an unmistakable drawing forth by the narrator, since the contextual frame is his also, of that same white rose and eau d'oponax which characterized Olive and May's reactions.

The year was drawing to its close -- a year of plenty, but bitter with the memory of years of famine. With hunger still in their eyes the peasants had risen out of their wet hovels; they

seemed to be as innumerable as ants; they filled the roadways at night...²⁶³

In the mist and mud of the slums plots and counter-plots were hatched, and, breaking their shells, they emerged like reptiles into a terrible and multi-form existence; out of the slime they crawled in strange and formless confusion, and in the twilight of nationhood they fought the obscure and blind battle of birth.²⁶⁴

It is telling that the bodily functions of the elite are rarely attested to while descriptions of the peasantry rarely concentrate or operate on anything other than repellent bodily manifestations, particularly body odour, facial discolouration, coughing, sputum, and vomit, the nakedly physical rather than its embellishment which characterizes the elite. This is both the alterity and the product of a sensitized consciousness.

While *Hurrish* is an equally complacent work, it is too naïve to engage in self-reproach. Rather, Lawless is overly immersed in a tactical adjusting of personal insecurity to attempt anything like the polarizations in which Moore revels. Whether in the alternating functions with which she invests landscape or the dependence on stereotypes which seem ambiguously unfixed despite the narrator's efforts to affirm them, or even her conviction of an innate human goodness which struggles for expression through the burden imposed on it by modern life, Lawless appears to be grappling with a personally uncertain focus. Through the host of contending factors in *Hurrish* there is a constant recourse to evasive strategies which, ultimately, prove insufficient or deceptive. To repeat an example, earlier discussed, the ambiguity of Lawless's attitude to the Burren demonstrates one such instance. When conceived as a resuscitative and tranquil resource to which Lawless, like Alley and Teampull a Phoill, attempts to retreat and regroup, it replicates the state of consciousness which Lawless's narrative would hope to construct. Yet the Burren is also a narratorial device used by Lawless for a concretising of social violence. Just as Alley is forced to recognize the presence of Maurice stalking through her cluster of chapels, so this division in the aspect of the same geographical locale serves to reinforce the gap which exists between desire and actuality in the equivalent social landscape. Likewise the tracking of past races and cultures in the historical ruins of the area is meant to reinforce Lawless's concept of continuous racial flux and settlement yet it also unnervingly renders everything part of an historical process which establishes

²⁶² Moore, *A Drama in Muslin*, p.253.

²⁶³ Moore, *A Drama in Muslin*, p.114.

nobody. This process translates into the characters themselves who are frequently beset by indecision or doubt as to personal place and purpose, the insecurity of changed circumstances and times positioning them on boundaries which leave them exposed. Hurrish, Maurice, Alley, Pierce O'Brien, and ultimately the narrator, struggle with forces which threaten to undermine their efforts to define themselves and the world they occupy, predominantly external forces which impinge on an inner conviction.

The clear lack of a satisfactory resolution in either novel is, to an extent, related to the evidence of each author's integration with the narrative itself. The loveless marriage of convenience which Alice Barton settles for as a means of escape and the mediocrity which she settles into in suburban Kensington actually consolidates the ferment of opposites which comprises most of the narrative and which she found so dispiriting. Sustained rhetorical engagement and token gesture are characteristic of Moore's prose in *A Drama in Muslin* and seem to reflect a catalytic approach to creativity and personal apprehension. There is no resolution possible in such a narrative for Moore which is not tantamount to self-effacement and that is what Alice Barton's escape signifies. For Moore himself the fractiousness of the conditions which he portrays is also the fractiousness of his response. The prospect of a permanent peace seems to elicit from him almost as much contempt as the presence of the Irish poor. What such a prospect epitomizes for him is the negation of an individuality which requires, as a necessity, stark, well-defined profiles. Alice, therefore, is figured as having been subsumed into a collective anonymity with which the narrative had already stigmatized the rural and urban masses in Ireland. The middle class suburban scene is dismissively categorized by reducing it to its material base, a levelling materialism which expunges difference. For the Irish social landscape, therefore, there is no resolution only escape, leaving its perpetual turbulence a continuing source of creative energy.

Moore's embracing of Zolaesque naturalism conveniently facilitated a remove from the moral quagmire of Irish social history. The prescriptive socialization to which realism gave voice and which proved frustratingly difficult for novelists to achieve or justify in an Irish context is implicitly disarmed by a method which purports to merely report rather than judge. Freed, to an extent, from such obligation,

²⁶⁴ Moore, *A Drama in Muslin*, p.170.

A Drama in Muslin does not contain the same leading format which is apparent in Lawless's novel. Although Alice Barton does find herself assimilated into a middle-class identity, her socialization occurs, like Moore's artistic detachment, through her abandonment of the moral position which she had been compelled to adopt as a result of the Irish experience.

Conventional in the literary sense, Lawless's *Hurrish* carries the burden of a traditional didactic method of representation, addressing itself to an establishment which claims a proprietary ownership of moral and social sensibility. The purpose of Lawless's novel is to make an intervention on behalf of this dominant value system. Nonetheless, there is no socialization of either protagonist, Maurice or Hurrish, in Lawless's narrative for the reason that they belong to a social group which absents itself from the only available system which can make such a process, in Lawless's conception, legitimate. This failure of legitimacy, however, is as much Lawless's own, who fundamentally and quite deliberately absents herself from that social ethos which motivates the agrarian agitation. Of the characters embroiled in the storyline of *Hurrish*, only Maurice actually moves forward, pursuing a free and productive life in that America whose influence Lawless has vilified in the narrative. Under the intense pressure of experience Maurice's preconceived convictions collapse, replaced by a responsibility and clarity which leaves him in a relative state of personal independence. Had Lawless looked deeper into this aspect of her novel she might have found the clarity just as liberating.

The resolution Lawless does conceive for her novel's protagonists further instances the wavering of attitude which she reveals throughout the narrative's structure. With the expatriation of Maurice to a social system which accords with his social ambition and Hurrish incorporated into the myth system of his peers, Lawless employs the two counter philosophies which have engaged much of her argument. In the Irish historical and literary convention the recourse to myth is indicative of a traditional refusal to grasp fully the realism of a life which, in its Irish manifestation, presents little in the way of sustaining light. Hurrish, as nationalist agent, is assimilated into a mode, therefore, which is sanctified by tradition while also conveniently defused of its immediacy. The modern, progressive world of which he is a harbinger embraces Maurice, heralding a process of change which is yet to break fully on an Irish setting. To an extent, therefore, Lawless resolves her narrative through hiatus, refusing to or incapable of moving forward decisively and ultimately

able to do little more than indulge a backward look.

Chapter II.

Historical Fiction.

Part I.

With Essex in Ireland.

The Personal in History.

The most significant of Lawless's writings appearing between *Hurriah* and *With Essex in Ireland* is probably her history, *Ireland*, written for the *Story of the Nations* series. In this text Lawless tends to interpret the process of Irish history through the actions and aspirations of significant historical personages, a method which privileges the exploration of individual character as it shapes and is shaped by historical events. In that regard it provides a textual continuity of subject between the analysis of personal liability in *Hurriah* and the exploration of conscience in *With Essex in Ireland*.

Emily Lawless trusted in the superiority of history dramatised over historical fact as a method by which the psychology of its moment can be re-constituted and brought into direct contact with that of a contemporary awareness. In 'Of the Personal Element in History', Lawless states how she conceives of the historical novelist's meaningful engagement with the past; 'To induce history to live and move, to induce its men and women to walk and talk, to live, breathe, sigh, weep, and laugh for us, in their habit as they existed, is the aim of every good writer'.²⁶⁵ Given the right materials the 'whole forgotten panorama' will begin 'suddenly to heave and move':

It is as if the thick clouds of centuries had shifted for a moment, and allowed some fresh rays

²⁶⁵ Lawless, Emily, 'Of the Personal Element in History', *Nineteenth Century* vol. 50,

of sunlight to fall upon the picture. More than a mere picture, it becomes a play to us, and we hold our breath as we follow its developments.²⁶⁶

The past, therefore, is available to the sympathetic writer, a living presence informing the consciousness of the present and awaiting discovery to be engaged with and recreated; 'Between the lines we may, however, I think discern a more or less vivid picture of the times, and in any case must be thankful in these matters for what we get'.²⁶⁷ In 'A Note on the Ethics of Literary Forgery', Lawless declares the method of the historical novelist to be 'a more or less putting of himself into the same mental attitude and above all into the same environment as his original'.

There are days, and there are assuredly scenes, when this old and vanished world -- call it early Christian or late Pagan as you like -- is not half so completely vanished as most people imagine; scenes where it does not need to be very deeply versed in the lore of the primitive monk or of Ossianic bard in order to feel that some dim belated survival of their spirit is hovering mystically around you still.²⁶⁸

Such a conviction appears as a personal affirmation as much as a creative one. In 'North Clare -- Leaves from a Diary', Lawless muses on the unrecoverable nature of historical experience only to reject the idea instinctively, firm in her reliance on the possibility of its continued and real apprehension.

Where are they, and what have they done with themselves, those eleven hundred years? After what fashion have they rolled by, and where in this visible world around me have they written the record of their interminable procession? So far as I can see, absolutely nowhere... And yet it is absurd; the thing is inherently impossible. A scene so old in the history of the race *must* possess some stamp, some quality of its won, if one could only put one's finger upon it.²⁶⁹

The intrusion of the forensic eye on such an reciprocity with the past is suggested by Lawless as something to be consciously avoided, 'Incorporeal presences - which can be perfectly well seen so long as you do not look directly at them'.²⁷⁰ Sufficient residual ambience remains, for Lawless, to foster a sense of the indefinable continuity necessary to produce the desired affect: 'The changelessness of everything above, about, and around you, comes to the aid of the illusion'.²⁷¹ Such a sensitising of

1901, pp.790-8.

²⁶⁶ Lawless, 'Of the Personal Element in History', p.797.

²⁶⁷ Lawless, Emily, 'Irish History as a Pastime', in *Traits and Confidences* (London: Methuen & Co., 1897), p.241.

²⁶⁸ Lawless, 'A Note on the Ethics of Literary Forgery', p.91.

²⁶⁹ Lawless, Emily, 'North Clare - Leaves from a Diary', *Nineteenth Century* vol.46, 1899, pp.603-12.

²⁷⁰ Lawless, 'North Clare - Leaves from a Diary', p.611.

²⁷¹ Lawless, 'A Note on the Ethics of Literary Forgery', p.92.

oneself to the past's influence and perpetual presence is equally applicable to the historically documented, such as is to be found in official State papers.

Open these where you will, they are extraordinarily living, far more so, I think, than the same materials after they have been worked over by even the best of historians. Peep into no matter what volume, and you find yourself at the very heart of things...The actors wake up, and walk; the scenes shift; the procession passes by under our very noses.²⁷²

This might seem like a contradiction of Lawless's declared antipathy to historical fact finding; however, it is the aspect of the personal resident in such documents that provides the interest: 'You read the actual letter that A wrote to B, especially charging him not to make the contents of it known to C and you read C's letter after the faithless B had sent on A's letter to him'.²⁷³ History experienced rather than reviewed is the means by which Lawless, as writer, frees herself for an interaction with a past which is not limited by academic constraints. That freedom from the constraints and validations of historical 'certitude' is also extended to an apparent independence of those ideological concerns with which, in nineteenth-century debates on the past, history was frequently associated.

Personally I think that we enjoy this *role* of the historic looker-on best when we have no particular purpose of our own to forward at the time; no special little task in hand; no pet theory, which must be supported at any cost, and after which we go burrowing through the choicest seed-beds.²⁷⁴

Assertions of this nature, combined with Lawless's description of an almost mystical connectedness with the past, can suggest an impartial negotiation with history through a resultant historical narrative. Brewer indicates such a belief in Lawless's objectivity:

Calling for the writer to assume the 'impersonal attitude' of a historic 'looker-on', Lawless asserts that, when we view history from an unbiased perspective, 'The prospect opens, and we get a wide sweep of the horizon'. In both *With Essex in Ireland* and *Maelcho*, Lawless avoids taking sides, presenting instead sympathetic characters representing all facets of the conflict. What emerges is a decided view of Irish history which suggests that no one answer is adequate, that no side is the sole possessor of the right.²⁷⁵

'Sympathetic characters representing all facets of the conflict' does not necessarily equate with 'an unbiased perspective' given the context and the history in which Lawless is involved. Nor does it suggest an actual independence of ideological concerns. Nonetheless, it can resonate with the idea of the untrammelled immanence

²⁷² Lawless, 'Of the Personal Element in History', p.797.

²⁷³ Lawless, 'Of the Personal Element in History', p.797.

²⁷⁴ Lawless, 'Of the Personal Element in History', p.798.

of historical experiencing. Hansson observes, in reference to Lawless's method in her history *Ireland* of allowing contrary positions to stand unresolved that the 'The text becomes dialogic, since it refuses "to synthesise and thus erase oppositions" and so Lawless is able to acknowledge the fundamental uncertainty and plurality of Ireland's past'.²⁷⁶ To an extent such an attitude to the historical moment allows Lawless the scope with which to interpret while seeming detached, informed by the historical exchange as starting point.

In 'The Builder of the Round Towers' Lawless uses the persona of an eighth-century monk, expressed through the linguistic register of the translated ancient text, to promote divergence as the signifying, and experience as the cementing components of Irish history. This article tells the story of St. Fechin, a travelling missionary eventually returning to Ireland with the secrets of round tower construction, who prophesies on Ireland's destiny. Ireland's sons and daughters would love and cherish her by reason of those tribulations and 'evil things that would befall her, and of the many tears that she would have to shed, and of all the blood with which her fields would be bedewed'.

And that they would gather out of all lands, north and south, and east and west, men and women of diverse race, and of diverse creeds, and of diverse ways of thought. And this one thing alone, he said, would unite them all -- namely, the love of that poor country of theirs, who was the nurse, and the mother, and the dear heart's Beloved of them all.²⁷⁷

In this article there is no indication given to the reader of the fictional nature of the monk's account. The reader is made to experience the immediacy of it without mediator and without historical placement. The incidents in the life of an imaginary saint and his pronouncements, recounted by a fictional narrator in a contrived linguistic format are used to translate an inheritance of dispute and conflict into the reality of a comprehensible, unifying declaration. What is recognisably familiar is the contemporary assertion which Lawless elicits from that historical voice. For Lawless, therefore, the personal element in history resides in the extent to which that history is enabled and enabling. The personal is latent, requiring the responsiveness of the writer/observer to vitalise it. What dominates the encounter is an intuitive relatedness, 'a certain sense of intimacy, of real acquaintanceship with these dead men and dead

²⁷⁵ Brewer, 'She was a part of It', p.126.

²⁷⁶ Hansson, *Emily Lawless*, p.99.

²⁷⁷ Lawless, Emily, 'The Builder of the Round Towers: A Chronicle of the Eighth Century', *Nineteenth Century* vol. 37, 1895, pp.421-34.

women begins to grow up in us. Genuine likings, still more swift and genuine dislikes, spring into existence like mushrooms after rain'.²⁷⁸ Such acquaintanceship is precipitated, possibly unconsciously, by the apprehension of a shared interest. Lawless, through this means, a means which is fully realised in *With Essex in Ireland*, is intent on a collateralism of impressions, the spontaneous influence of the individual subject circumscribed by historical events on the studied attitude of the novelist by whom that individuality is defined and utilized.

The conception of what comprises individuality in fiction is inevitably tied into its social purpose. However, the entanglement of individualism and social mores possesses a double relevance in historical fiction in its inevitable reflection of the author's concerns with the historical moment and the drama which it is employed to enact in the contemporary. Lawless identifies Essex's individualism in her novel as a dissatisfaction with the demands of a prevailing political expediency and with an inability to adopt the dissociative morality of colonial conquest. The singular allegiance which Essex owes to his conscience and the personal morality by which he is constrained to operate presents his conflicted character as an indictment on the imperialism of a late sixteenth England and a late nineteenth-century Britain. Yet it also represents an attempted negotiation and adjustment, through the proxy subjectivity of Essex, of a conflicted Anglo-Irish historical consciousness. The self-questioning in which Essex engages substitutes for a rationalising by Lawless on the subject of an Irish past which presents its own moral dilemmas. As will be shown later, the predominance of a female presence pervading Harvey's narrative and constituting a check on its ideological preconceptions leads back to Lawless herself and the filtering of history through her affective personal engagement with it.

Following the publication of her one work of historiography, *Ireland* (1887), Lawless wrote the first and most successful of her many historical fictions *With Essex in Ireland* (1890). Chronicling the 1599 campaign in Ireland of Robert Devereux, second Earl of Essex, in 1599 commissioned by Elizabeth to defeat Hugh O'Neill, Earl of Tyrone, and re-impose an English authority on his rebellious allies, the novel presents that campaign through the first person narrative of Essex's fictional secretary Henry Harvey. Essex, newly appointed Lord-Lieutenant, landed in Dublin in April 1599 with an army of approximately 20,000 infantry and 1,300 horse and proceeded

²⁷⁸ Lawless, 'Of the Personal Element in History', p.798.

almost immediately to confound the expectations of his monarch and her council in both London and Dublin by marching south rather than north to engage Tyrone. Much of the ensuing spring and summer was wasted in ineffectual skirmishing and tactical manoeuvres, two weeks spent reducing a relatively insignificant castle at Cahir and longer in the surrounding areas of Limerick in pursuit of various small confederates of O'Neill during which time his army was assailed by disease, inadequate provisions and desertions, morale steadily draining from what had been a highly motivated force. Military setbacks followed: Sir Henry Harrington's defeat by the O'Byrnes of Wicklow and the disastrous annihilation of Sir Conyers Clifford's forces by the O'Donnells in the Curlew mountains, including the death of the governor of Connaught himself and his lieutenant Sir Alexander Ratcliffe. Expressly ordered by a furious Elizabeth to abandon his prevarication and confront O'Neill directly, Essex finally turned northward with a replenished army. Rather than encountering Tyrone militarily, however, Essex allowed himself to be drawn into a series of negotiations culminating with a private meeting between himself and the rebellious Earl in the middle of the river Lagan. Obviously amicable and crucially unwitnessed, this personal conference became a source of rumour, exploited readily by enemies of Essex who coloured its proceedings as treasonable. The fact that the outcome of this negotiation was an armistice agreed by a royal commander with such a strong and newly recruited force behind him added to the suspicions. Following a further outburst

of fury from Elizabeth and an expressed instruction to remain in Ireland until his original commission had been discharged, Essex defied his orders and hurried to Dublin where he effectively abrogated his command and returned to England in outright contravention of his monarch's wishes. Placed under house arrest on his return, Essex attempted a *coup d'état* which resulted in his execution in 1601. The narrative of Henry Harvey, fictional secretary to Essex in Lawless's novel, begins with the campaign's setting out from London and ends with Essex's departing from the port of Dublin on his return to disgrace and ultimately execution. The focus of the novel, therefore, confines itself to the experiences in Ireland, and while the incidents which followed Essex's return are subtly inferred in the sense of an imminent tragedy which adheres to him and in the ironic use of an historical framing reference which pervades the narrative, Lawless avoids any direct addressing of them.

In her *History*, Lawless's description of the character of Essex already prefigures

the role which she devises for him in her later novel and the contention between political expediency and human sensitivity with which that novel concerns itself.

Essex's very virtues and better qualities, in fact, were all against him in this fatal service. His natural chivalrousness, his keen perception of injustice, a certain elevation of mind which debarred him from taking the stereotyped English official view of the intricate Irish problem; an independence of vulgar motives which made him prone to see two sides of a question -- even where his own interests required that he should see but one -- all these were against him, all tended to make him seem vacillating and ineffective; all helped to bring about that failure which has made his six months of command in Ireland the opprobrium ever since of historians.²⁷⁹

Lawless's dissatisfaction with the ability of historiography to weigh, commensurably, the human element against the mere historical result is evident in this passage. This essentially humanised outline of Essex is effectively blurred and the human complexity behind Essex's failure overshadowed by the concentration of historiography on historical outcomes. Essex's failure, according to Lawless, is due to Essex's humanity. However, the tendency of historians is to define the character of Essex by those events associated with his campaign's failure, a tendency which Lawless demonstrates by the comparison she makes of the contrasted responses to Essex and his immediate successor, Charles Blount, Lord Mountjoy, and of their subsequent historical legacies.

Mountjoy was himself a man of cold, clear-sighted self-seeking temperament. In almost all English histories dealing with this period his steadiness and solid unshowy qualities are contrasted with Essex's flightiness and failure, to the natural disadvantage of the latter. This, however, is not perhaps quite the last word upon the matter, and it is only fair to Essex that this should be realised.²⁸⁰

What is at issue here is not so much whether Lawless's perception of the character of Essex is true to history or not, but rather that Lawless focuses on qualities of character which she believed ultimately would be vindicated as indispensable to successful State policy in Ireland. By implication, the disposition which distinguishes Essex as a conscientious figure out of step with his time yet morally necessary to it is equally applicable to the contemporary context. Lawless is, in effect, questioning the conventional wisdom which affords an historical sanction to the pursuance of political policy to the exclusion of all other priority. The recognition of Essex's moral

²⁷⁹ Lawless, Emily, *Ireland* (London: T. Fisher Unwin, 1887, revised edition, 1912), p.209.

²⁸⁰ Lawless, *Ireland*, p.211.

discontent is a recognition of its meaning for the present. With the special attention of an impartial mind applied to this period in Irish history, Lawless believes it will eventually be learned ‘that the admitted failure of Essex, so disastrous to himself, was more honourable than the admitted and well-rewarded success of Mountjoy’.

The situation, as every English leader soon found, was one that admitted of no possible fellowship between two alternatives, success and pity; between the commonest and most elementary dictates of humanity, and the approval of the queen and her council. There was but one method by which a success could be assured, and this was the method which Mountjoy now pushed relentlessly, and from which Essex’s more sensitively attuned nature evidently shrank. The enemies it was necessary to annihilate were not so much Tyrone’s soldiers, as the poor, the feeble, the helpless, the old, the women, and the little children.²⁸¹

The contemporary reception of *With Essex in Ireland* included, according to some reports, the belief that the text was a genuine sixteenth-century journal, so effective was Lawless’s reproduction of both the speech and the world view of the fictional Elizabethan narrator. Gladstone wrote to the publishers commending the addition which he judges the text will make to historical knowledge of the time.

Dear Sirs, I have read with great interest the ‘With Essex in Ireland’, which you were so good to send me. Both as regards Essex himself, and in the respect of Ireland, it seems to me to constitute a valuable addition to the store of our historical information.²⁸²

The capturing of the historical moment in a way which brings it alive to the contemporary reader is what many critics of *With Essex in Ireland* at the time identified as its most appealing feature. A review in the *Boston Literary World* lauds Lawless’s recreation of sixteenth-century language and her application of a nineteenth-century decorum in her use of it.

We read the very dialect of Shakespeare’s time, and we have no sense that this is the work of a modern writer, save from the fine art which has removed the worst blemishes in the expression of sixteenth-century English thought, and preserved clearness and simplicity against which Elizabethan authors too often sinned.²⁸³

The reviewer in the *Spectator* praises the policy which Lawless herself advocated of dealing with history through a sympathetic apprehension.

Miss Lawless, with more art and in idylls of extraordinary force and beauty, not only records the facts of history, but shows somewhat of the warp and woof of human emotion by which

²⁸¹ Lawless, *Ireland*, p.213.

²⁸² Note inserted in copy of *With Essex in Ireland* in Marsh’s Library, Dublin. This and other copies of Lawless novels owned by her were donated to the library by her brother on her death in 1913.

²⁸³ Review, *Boston Literary World*, (Oct., 1890), Lawless Papers, Marsh’s Library,

alone facts can often be understood.²⁸⁴

Likewise *The Times* review singles out this aspect of Lawless's novel as its most striking achievement.

Miss Lawless appears to have done historian's work more attractively and no less faithfully than an historian.²⁸⁵

The review by Lecky, however, as a qualified historian, is more admiring of the novel's actual fidelity to the facts of the campaign's prosecution, facts more pertinent to an Irish readership perhaps, than to English medium reviewers.

Hardly less admirable are the pictures of the savage Irish war -- a war in which starvation played a much greater part than the sword -- in which race hatred rose to such a point that women and children were massacred with as little compunction as wild beasts; in which victory rarely or never led to lasting peace, and in which so many of the best reputations in England were wrecked.²⁸⁶

Yet Lecky also, like Lawless, sees the significance of the characteristics which Essex is made to embody in the narrative, the mix of masculine and feminine qualities which Lawless represents as essential to a compassionate understanding of violent conflict and its victims.

The figure of Essex stands out in bold relief. His rash courage, his generous instincts, his strong, clear insight, his complete frankness, his petulance and impatience, an almost feminine sensitiveness, are all most graphically portrayed, and if some coarser elements in his character are wanting or but faintly intimated, their absence is not unnatural in a narrative which is supposed to come from an admiring follower.²⁸⁷

At least one critic recognised the potential for a contemporary application of the novel, although possibly not in the manner in which Lawless herself might have conceived it. The reviewer in the *Athenaeum* turns the novel to a comparison between sixteenth-century Irish rebels and their nineteenth-century equivalents as a means to denounce an apparently unjustified, abstract nationalism.

Morally the rebel leaders of Elizabethan Ireland may have been inferior to the leaders of our own day, but a man who fights for a time honoured supremacy is more interesting than one struggling to revive a half forgotten past; in the eyes of the outsider the one is fighting for a substance, the other for a shadow, and therefore Tyrone, who was full, not merely of human frailties, but of very ugly faults, is a more picturesque figure than the most immaculate

Dublin.

²⁸⁴ Review, *Spectator* (June, 1890), Lawless Papers, Marsh's Library, Dublin.

²⁸⁵ Review, *The Times* (July, 1890), Lawless Papers, Marsh's Library, Dublin.

²⁸⁶ Lecky, W. E. H. 'Noticeable Books (No.1): *With Essex in Ireland*, by Emily Lawless', *Nineteenth Century* vol. 28, August, 1890, pp. 236-238.

²⁸⁷ Lecky, 'Noticeable Books (No.1)', p.237.

This chapter will concentrate on the ways in which Lawless explores, through the character of Essex, the struggle to balance individual conscience with the obligations and demands placed on it by political duty. The moral conflict which consistently frustrates Essex's attempts to fulfil his commission and ultimately provokes his own personal revolt against it involves a conflict not just with the means by which imperial policy is enforced, but also with those cultural categories which facilitate its enforcement. What redeems Essex from the collective cultural consciousness of an imperial system is his ability to identify on a subjective level with his cultural other, an ability which Lawless implies is fatal to the objectification on which colonial power operates, and, as agent of that power, catastrophic for Essex himself. For Lawless, as a woman writing in the context of a nineteenth-century imperial society, those cultural categories also involve gender definitions and difference. The following textual reading will also examine how gender is recruited by Lawless to establish the polarisations by which the male narrative proper functions and how, through a textual strategy, she undermines and redistributes its weights of emphasis. *With Essex in Ireland* might not be immediately recognisable as a feminist text, yet its conceptualising of the political as gendered language and the discrepancy between this and the physical reality on which it impacts represents Lawless's method of analysing conflict in an Irish context from a more identifiably feminist perspective. The focus of this study will centre, therefore, on Lawless's use of the female body as a symbol of resistance as well as the source of an alternate moral authority which cuts against the grain of the conventionally masculine. The concluding section will then concentrate on an appraisal of those textual elements and how they relate to current critical theories on late nineteenth-century fiction.

Romance and Anti-Romance.

Lawless constructs *With Essex in Ireland* essentially on the convention of a medieval romance, the chivalrous knight and his faithful squire undertaking a mission at the behest of a court mistress, specially chosen by her for his particular or appropriate virtues.

Yea our royal Mistress did herself hold it to be not impossible, else had she never granted to

²⁸⁸ Review, *Athenaeum* (June, 1890), Lawless Papers, Marsh's Library, Dublin.

my Lord such powers and authority, as were never given to any other Viceroy only to him alone. 'Having' -- as she herself said -- 'cast eyes on all her servants, and chosen him before all others, out of former experience of his faith, valour, wisdom, and extraordinary merit'.²⁸⁹

As in conventional romance tales the protagonists undergo trials in the pursuance of a quest which will ultimately result in their spiritual transformation, a journey, effectively, towards a personal redemption. While in the case of *Essex* the quest involves, ostensibly, a political mission to subdue an Irish rebellion, it soon recasts itself into the traditional struggle towards that self-knowledge normally associated with the romance genre. Rather than a mission of political triumph, Essex and Harvey find themselves embarked on a journey through the strange and challenging Irish setting for a standard of value by which a truer understanding of human relationship may be attained. The standard to be discovered is that of a fundamental humanity, with the recognition and acknowledgment of that value in another. However, by creating a tension between it and the exigencies involved in the ideological and political pressures of the expedition's outward objective, Lawless manages to counterpoint the male perspective of the narrative's romance form with that of a feminine inflected anti-romance. In effect, therefore, Lawless constructs a dialectic between the romance form and that of the novel, the dissembling of verisimilitude or 'reality' contained in the romance shown to be countered by the realism of the novel's fidelity to life. Lawless uses the grounding of the novel form in a quotidian empiricism to interrogate the idealized constructs of cultural supremacy and the codified moral prerogatives on which they depend. This is articulated in *With Essex in Ireland* primarily through the refutation of those representational self-validations contained in both Spenser's romance sequence, *The Faerie Queene*, and his dialogic treatise, *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, Harvey's experiences an uncovering of the realities behind the allegorical and ideological screen of both works.

The connection which Lia Mills establishes between Lawless's *With Essex in Ireland* and Edmund Spenser's *A View of the Present State of Ireland* in 'Forging History: Emily Lawless's *With Essex in Ireland*', reveals a critique at the centre of Lawless's novel of the politics of representation by which Spenser promotes an ideological perspective of the Irish people and culture which is entirely in keeping

²⁸⁹ Lawless, Emily, *With Essex in Ireland* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1890), p.10.

with the political ideology of his time.²⁹⁰ For Mills, Lawless is intent on an exposition of Spenser's method by re-enacting the dialogue form of his *View* in which Eudoxus, the rational interlocutor of Ireneus, the veteran campaigner, is 'persuaded to accept the necessity for the evils of war, famine, and repression in Ireland'. Through the interplay of various perspectives from hardened veterans such as Sethcock and Warren to civilians such as Mr. Delahide, to which Lawless's narrator Harvey, as Eudoxus, is subjected as the narrative unfolds, Lawless seeks to both 'mimic and undermine Spenser's *View*'.

However, in the formulating of Harvey's narrative as romance tale, Lawless is also directly countering Spenser's allegorical vindication of Tudor imperial expansion and cultural domination in his romance sequence, *The Faerie Queene*, and particularly Book V in which Spenser celebrates Artegall's, Lord Grey's, earlier campaign against the Desmonds, a Lord Deputy who employed a ruthlessness of policy enforcement against the native population similar to that of Mountjoy and from which Essex, in Lawless's narrative, is seen to shrink. In that allegorical sequence, Artegall, knight of justice, is despatched by Gloriana to aid the distracted Irena 'Whom a strong tyrant did unjustly thrall', and chosen by her because of his appropriate qualities 'For that to her he seem'd best skild in righteous lore'.²⁹¹ Assisting him in his enterprise is Talus, 'made of yron mould', an inflexible manifestation of justice and of judgement delivered who epitomises the rigid pursuance of objective, by whatever means required, which Grey, and Spenser himself, endorsed. There is an equivalence in certain respects between this figure and Lawless's representation of Essex's secretary, Henry Harvey, whose advocacy of right procedure and particularly his adherence to the summary justice afforded to arrant rebels and papists, both bemuses and appals Essex. Yet Harvey is open to the impress of human misery and suffering with which the campaign and the Irish situation confronts him, and, more straightforwardly, Lawless is attempting through the conscientious wrangling of both Essex and Harvey to offset the unflinching, self-justifying conviction which characterises Spenser's romance, a fictional form whose disengagement from the recognition of realities simplifies and undermines the

²⁹⁰ Mills, Lia, 'Forging History: Emily Lawless's *With Essex in Ireland*', *Colby Quarterly* vol. 36.2, 2000, pp.132-44.

²⁹¹ Spenser, Edmund, *The Faerie Queene* in *The Works of Edmund Spenser* (1596: London: Washbourne, 1850), p.241.

complexity of its subject matter.

The romance element governing the surface narrative in *With Essex in Ireland* complies in a number of respects with the classic definition of romance in William Congreve's preface to *Incognita* (1692) as indicated by John Skinner.

Romances are generally composed of the Constant Loves and invincible Courages of Heroes, Heroins, Kings and Queens, Mortals of the first Rank, and so forth; where lofty Language, miraculous Contingencies and impossible Performances, elevate and surprize the reader into a giddy Delight, which leaves him flat upon the Ground wherever he gives of, and vexes him to think how he has suffer'd himself to be pleased and transported, concern'd and afflicted at the several Passages which he has Read, viz. these Knights Success to their Damosels Misfortunes, and such like, when he is forced to be very well convinced that 'tis all a lye.²⁹²

The miraculous and the impossible which are typical of romance are expressly referred to in the preface to *With Essex in Ireland* by the fictitious Maddox whose scepticism is, by virtue of his own fiction, double-edged.

For his work now first printed, though it sufficiently testifieth to the great Love he bore to his Unhappy Patron, we might wish that it had been tempered throughout with a nicer Discretion, more especially in those Portions which relate to what took place in the Castle of Askeaton in Munster, and at the passage of the Lagan in Ulster, which Portions be, I must plainly own, contrary in my Opinion both to Religion and Firm Reason.²⁹³

However, the impressionistic effect which the textual manipulations within Lawless's novel create and exercise on the reader and which are to be discussed later in this chapter, mimics those vexes identified by Congreve as the almost subliminal workings of the form's technique and represents the intrusion of a realism at the limits of romance. Quoting Congreve's comparative estimation of the novel form as being 'of a more familiar nature' and representing what occurs in practice rather than what is unusual and unprecedented, John Skinner identifies the categorical division which this view presents between romance and novel as being that of 'the fantastic versus the natural, or the ideal versus the real'. Such a tension between form and text is exploited to the full by Lawless as a means to emphasise the injurious fracture which can operate between ideological focus and the needs of an empirical reality.²⁹⁴ Skinner also quotes a later and popular definition of both the romance and novel from Clara Reeve's *Progress of Romance* (1785) which he suggests is more objective and

²⁹² Skinner, John, *An Introduction to Eighteenth-Century Fiction: Raising the Novel* (Hampshire: Palgrave, 2001), p.132.

²⁹³ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, Preface, vi.

²⁹⁴ Skinner, *An Introduction to Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, p.132.

balanced.

The Romance is an heroic fable, which treats of fabulous persons and things -- The Novel is a picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it is written. The Romance, in lofty and elevated language, describes what never happens nor is likely to happen. -- The Novel gives a familiar relation of things, as pass every day before our eyes, such as may happen to our friend, or to ourselves...²⁹⁵

Lawless's merging of the two literary forms in one text permits *With Essex in Ireland* to answer to Reeve's definition without problematizing her strictures on the distinct generic differences between the romance and the novel. The narrative of Harvey contains within its own parameters the credulous and the fanciful, allowing the romance to figure as personal disposition, thereby reinforcing its susceptibility to the exaggeration associated with it. The realism associated with the novel, its 'picture of real life and manners, and of the times in which it was written' operates through the historical awareness by which Lawless as nineteenth-century author has revitalised the sixteenth-century context, and is demonstrated in the moral and political acumen which Lawless deploys through the text in order to establish its argument. As arbiter overseeing Harvey's own pronouncements and as a means by which the character of Essex himself and his behaviour is rationalised and made significant to a nineteenth-century readership, the textual realism, however obliquely adverted to through Harvey's consciousness, gives a familiar relation of things as they relate to a colonial and colonized Irish historical legacy.

Initially privileged, the masculine functioning of the romance format dominates the thinking and purposes of both Harvey and Essex. Yet woven into many episodes in the ensuing text is an alternative consciousness whose presence subverts the conditioned, unthinking nature of their attitudes, the narrative surface of ideological assumptions and of ideological violence being continually disrupted by it. This is achieved, mainly, through the image of a feminine, shadow world which provides a balancing corrective to that of political duty. A repository of manifest suffering, endurance and consolation, it is embodied primarily in the women of the narrative who constantly encroach in a discomfiting and questioning way on the predominant masculine code. As Essex and his entourage catch sight for the first time of the Irish coastline, the image which is conjured up is the patriarchal one of the wayward woman. Harvey interprets his Lord Essex's mission with a subtle interchange of

²⁹⁵ Skinner, *An Introduction to Eighteenth-Century Fiction*, p.133.

conventional romance and political duty.

He, turning presently away, set to walking again, leaving the lad and myself standing where we were beside the traffail. And as he walked I noted that he cast eyes of eagerness towards that land we were approaching, so that one who had seen him so walking and so looking, and wist not who it was, would have said -- 'Surely this is some great Lord who goes to meet that Lady whom he loveth ?' Neither would they have greatly erred in so saying, for his Excellency, who is more of a poet both by nature and execution than many who profess themselves of that rhyming craft, oft spake in my hearing of this Land of Ireland as if she were in truth a woman, one who was froward, and had done many things contrary to order and reasonableness, being led away by those that would betray her to her own undoing, and yet withal not without much faithfulness of nature, who, were her affections once secured, might follow him whom she loved to the world's end.²⁹⁶

This traditional view of Ireland taken by the new arrivals ultimately rebounds on them and challenges their masculine prerogatives of power and representation as the idealization assumes actual and disturbing presences. Women, real or imaginary, at crucial moments interpose to realign the emotional balance of the text and redirect its force. The highly stylised, vapid presentation of Ireland as 'froward' woman in need of control is rendered hollow as the conventional responses falter and fall back through their own inadequacy. Harvey collides with this other world and is jostled from his complacent preconceptions almost from the moment he sets foot in Dublin. Shown to the Castle of Dublin by Mistress Agatha and Mistress Bridget, two Anglo-Irish women, Harvey voices the predictable self-righteous justification for the misery and death which its prisoners must endure, presuming on sentiments of the women according with his authoritative pronouncements. Misjudging the sensitivities of his female companions, he makes the unsettling discovery that the stock convictions which comprise much of his imported cultural baggage are not adequate to the strange environment in which he finds himself.

Having uttered these words, which I protest I did in all simplicity, and without thought that 't were possible they could offend any hearer, I chanced to turn my head in the direction of Mistress Bridget, who stood a little to the left of me. But when I did so I beheld her face reddened with anger up to the very edge of her coif, and her eyes like two fiery coals, darting Death at me, I all unknowing what harm I had done.²⁹⁷

On discovering Mistress Bridget's betrothed, Felim Oge Burke, to be one of those prisoners, Harvey is disturbed by the realisation that positions taken along apparently

²⁹⁶ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.9.

²⁹⁷ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.24.

self-evident lines are too simplistic and reflexive in an environment as unpredictable as that of Ireland. When Harvey and Agatha later encounter Bridget on the Castle's terrace seemingly gesturing to herself, perception and actuality are further divided until Agatha explains.

Nevertheless her cousin would from time to time, she said, walk there, the weather being fine and the sun shining behind her, her shadow would be thrown upon the wall opposite, in such manner that young Burke, looking from his dungeon window, could see and feast his eyes upon this her image and distant presentiment.²⁹⁸

Through this initiating encounter, a suppressed feminine perspective first intrudes on the certainties of the male surface order, becoming a site of moral opposition in the text, its unexpected revelations used as a means to unsettle masculine imperatives in face of its more compelling and more complex values. Motherhood is the primary source used to demonstrate the greater compass of this feminine reality and its placement beyond the starkly contrasting masculine parameters tacitly ensures its moral superiority. This element of femininity and motherhood, however, is not limited to the novel's characters but is conveyed as a symbolic and active identity of the country itself. Running throughout the narrative is the recurring image of the earth bringing forth, giving solace and refuge to, providing, compensating and regenerating in the face of setback. The landscape is depicted as alive to the suffering which defaces it and as participating in the attendant grieving, a responsive witness from which nothing can be hidden or by which nothing is forgotten. As the novel progresses, this reservoir of testimony becomes more and more insistent, drawing the agents of the crown deeper into its context.

The opening of the campaign takes the English forces south towards Athy and during this journey Harvey falls into conversation with a Colonel Sethcock and Captain Warren, two veterans of the Irish wars. Sethcock's talk is a glorification of the unrepentant slaughter which he has been involved in against Irish 'rebels', mainly women and children. Revolted by the brutality of his account Harvey is somewhat mollified by Captain Warren's justification of such measures by the necessity of circumstances, emphasising the advisability of a distancing of sympathy and human compassion which the exceptional conditions of an Irish setting demands.

Little by little however it came clear to me that there was but one way of dealing with this country, and that was to slay without ruth or remorse, so that, if for no other reason, the very

²⁹⁸ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.28.

terror and expectation of the like treatment might keep the rest from rebelling. And this I may tell you, Master Secretary, and it is...namely that when a man's duty bids him do a thing, were he the tenderest soul that ever wept at sight of another's wounds, he must learn to stomach it, and say nought; so that by degrees, the habit coming with practice, he will learn to see unmoved things which at first sight made his very soul to heave and sicken, and his hand to fly to the sword for the avenging thereof.²⁹⁹

Duty, therefore, needs to be the sole motivating guide behind such a campaign, its reaffirmation by Warren a distributing of the weight back to the original design of the romance form. This reaffirmation includes a rebuff to those alternative values which had begun to trouble Harvey, Warren addressing directly the feminine principle which poses a challenge to his masculine ethic.

I remember not long since I was coming past the place of execution at Devizes, very early in the morning, and they were executing an old woman...when I saw her struggling to escape, and two men holding her down, and her grey hair all disordered, and her face contorted with the pangs and terrors of death, it was as much as I could do to hinder myself from going to her aid; for after all she was a woman and an old one, and there was something about her, too, which minded me, I know not why, of my mother...³⁰⁰

That Warren restrains from assisting due mainly to an unquestioning respect for the rule of law indicates the calculating and disabling philosophy which defines his world. Closing off any access to a humanity which might compromise him, he remains contained and crippled by the strict formulations of his code.

The personal and emotional inadequacies of this philosophy are highlighted by the narrative's foregrounding of Frank Gardner, a youth whose mother Harvey has promised will come to no harm. As the English forces move south they encounter the enemy at the edge of the great forest, the ensuing skirmish allowing Gardner to distinguish himself in conflict, all his martial vainglory given vent as a result.

For after the combat was over, Frank and I were riding along the edge of the forest; and the boy was filled with pride and gladness, because of the good fight, and because he had acquitted himself well under the very eye of his Excellency. 'Tis the only life!' cried he 'The only life! And all other but a mere phantom image thereof! And for my part I would gladly give up every acre of land, till I had left myself no more than would fit into a lark's cage, rather than be kept mewed on the same, as my mother would have me to be! Marry, that would I, though I had to trail a pike for it with the meanest soldier in the army!'³⁰¹

Suddenly struck by an arrow, while engaged in this exultation, young Gardner

²⁹⁹ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.70.

³⁰⁰ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.71.

³⁰¹ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.87.

endures days of hallucination during which the clear cut separation of worlds weakens and the 'mere phantom image' becomes the valued reality. The narrative at this point shifts its centre of gravity as the focalizer, Harvey, becomes subsidiary to a more pressing presence. Leaning over his charge Harvey bears witness to an exchange which the surrounding elements supply for the distressed and dying young man.

While I stood there, leaning over him, it happened that there came a rushing noise of wind without, so that the leaves in the forest were ruffled, and brushed one against another, making a soft noise like the sound of a woman's dress creeping cautiously along the ground and coming nearer. At that sound Frank Gardner suddenly opened his eyes, and a smile broke over his face, such a smile as one sees upon the face of a little child which has cried itself to sleep, when it wakes suddenly in the night and sees one whom it loves bending over it. And, half lifting his head, he turned his cheek round, as though expecting some one would lay a kiss upon it, (which indeed was fair and smooth still as a maiden's) and with a great sigh full of comfort and satisfaction -- 'Mother !' said he very tenderly, and with that word still upon his lips his spirit departed to God who made it.³⁰²

This introduction of a mother image upon a scene of fatal anxiety nullifies the boastful exaltation of violence which had characterised the preceding narrative, emphasising what the narrative suggests is the fundamental value at the centre of Gardner's personal world. Ultimately a play of the mind, this figure is presented as supplied by the natural setting, the simple details noted by Harvey materialising into a powerful image of consolation and redress. Rather than hostile and forbidding, therefore, as Harvey has been ready to assume, the strangeness of the Irish landscape appears as a source of human comfort, its registering of suffering endured accompanied by a corresponding and sympathetic reassurance.

And in my grief and sore distraction of spirit I must, as it has since seemed to me, have grown somewhat light-headed, for assuredly from time to time I thought that I heard a voice calling to me, and a sound as of steps approaching lightly and blithely across the forest. Yet was there no one there, and no voice whatsoever, only the foolish blubbling of that little stream, which kept leaping, and running, and babbling over its stones.³⁰³

Later, as Harvey attends an entertainment at the Earl of Ormond's Castle in Kilkenny he confides in Mistress Alicia Butler his dismay over the loss of Frank Gardner and his apprehension of the effect such news will have on Gardner's mother. She advises him to trust the task of its telling to a woman who has already suffered a like loss: 'For the heart of one mother that hath been in trouble cleaveth unto another

³⁰² Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.95.

³⁰³ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.98.

that is in the like plight, even as you may see two drops of water in a fountain cleave and cling one unto the other'.³⁰⁴ His talk with Mistress Butler leads Harvey tentatively towards a finer and more complex appreciation of human dependence. The concern she shows for his distress is reciprocated by him as he explores the probable cause of a deep personal injury which he detects in her.

‘For you must know Sir, that it is in the endurance of such woes as these that the strength and courage of we women is mainly shewn. For both by nature, and circumstances we are oft forced to bear, aye and seemingly to bear willingly, the presence of those who have wrought us some deadly injury’...With these words she looked, as if constrained to do so, across the hall to where at the head of the table sat my Lord of Ormonde, with his Excellency on his right -- hand, and other knights and gallant noblemen around...I, seeing her so look, fell in my turn to pitying her, inwardly suspecting that this bread of which she then eat must at times be but a bitter crust between her teeth.³⁰⁵

Harvey has connected Mistress Butler’s distress with a tale he heard recounted in Dublin concerning a nephew of the Earl who, for some offence against the State, had been decapitated by his own uncle and the head dispatched in a common hempen bag to Dublin castle without identifying mark or insignia of honour. The possibility disturbs him that the victim might well have been a brother, husband, or son to this lady who was then constrained not only ‘to see him done to death without ruth or hesitation, but afterwards to eat of the bread and drink of the cup of him that did the same, that were a woe compared to which the worst that could befall a man like myself were light and easy to bear’.

The alternative life-view, embedded in such characters as Mistress Butler and probed indirectly only as the narrative’s surface texture is disturbed by its presence, eventually breaks fully into the open, exerting a pivotal change on the subsequent perspective of Harvey and, therefore, on the narrative itself. The morning following his conversation with Mistress Butler, Essex and Harvey are invited on a wolf hunt during which, separated from his companions and accompanied only by a Butler kern, Harvey wanders through a forest of thicket and briers. In the midst of this dense woodland a strange singing is heard which leads him to a large natural hollow at the far end of which is a pent-roof of bushes resembling a bird’s nest.

Presently there came a stirring about of the boughs, and a woman stepped out from under the roof, bearing a young child in her arms, which she, sitting down upon the bank, began to

³⁰⁴ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.104.

³⁰⁵ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.105.

dance

and dandle on her knee, as mothers do, singing to it the while that strange and savage song which we had heard. Whereat the creature laughed, and crowed, and kicked lustily with its legs, which were bare, as was its whole body, save for some sorry rags wound around its middle.³⁰⁶

Puzzled by his uncharacteristic response to this sight, Harvey immediately associates it with those other experiences which seemed to qualify what had been the certainties of his mission.

For what cause I know not, save that my heart was perhaps softened and made foolish by sorrow, but the song of that savage woman as she sat with her babe upon her knee, little wotting that any eyes beheld her, went to my heart as few strains have ever done, and I could not but think, as I had done the night before, of the hard lot of those who, without fault of their own, are set in the midst of cruel warfare, and beset with many pangs and perils, which they, being weak and helpless, can by no means hinder or avert.³⁰⁷

Raising his bow to kill what he sees as the enemy's kinsfolk, the kern is prevented by Harvey, an action which causes the kern to abandon him, leaving Harvey hopelessly lost. However, Harvey has entered what is suggested by his narrative to be a parallel other-world typical of romance tales. On first hearing the woman's song, he describes the sound as 'magical', 'fairy or elfin music' and the impression the hollow clearing had made on him was that 'it might have been dug by Enchantment'. An enchanted world, therefore, hemmed in by and existing behind the briers and thickets of political ideology, the forest clearing represents a site of refuge in which tenderness and nurturing are the sustaining principle. Following his demonstration of compassion, this magical landscape is seen to respond to Harvey's need.

Presently I came to a place which was more open, the grass and moist weeds shining like jewels new set by some lapidary, and a small stream of water running swiftly by in the sunlight. There was a bank here, overgrown with whins and prickly gorse, and the ground below it blue as Heaven with a small belled flower -- the name of which I could not recall, though methought the face of it seemed familiar and kindly.³⁰⁸

As he rests for a moment in this forest haven Harvey appears to be rewarded by a vision of a free-spirited youth, a compensation for the loss of Frank Gardner and a recreation of him.

Upon this bank I sat down to rest, wondering within myself what I should do. And, as I so sat, there presently came to my ear the sound of whistling, like the whistling of a bird, which

³⁰⁶ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.112.

³⁰⁷ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.113.

³⁰⁸ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.115.

nevertheless was not a bird's voice, though clear and shrill as one...And as I waited, lo !
There came through the trees a boy some 10 or 11 years of age, having scarce a rag to cover his
nakedness, only a sort of short red kirtle like a woman's round his waist, and a wisp of straw
or hay about his shoulders, and the rest of him naked as the day on which he was born.³⁰⁹

The regenerative significance of this incident is emphasised by the boy being 'naked as the day on which he was born', yet even more so the entire episode is a parable of the maternal process. The enchanted forest hollow built like a bird's nest represents the landscape's womb from which the mother and child emerge, archetypes of human tenderness and care, and the boy the carefree, independent offspring of this natural bond. Despite the effects evident on him of the current conflict, the boy retains the joy and energy of this natural relationship. Harvey is dumbfounded by his instinctual happiness.

Then, still making no sound, I was filled with amazement at the good content of one that was in such evil plight, for his face was thin and starved as if with hunger, yet he laughed and leaped in the middle of the space, all for pure glee, whistling like a mavis the while.³¹⁰

The cumulative effect of these experiences serves to break through Harvey's narrow preconceptions and his imaginative sympathy is expanded. When eventually he is reunited with his companions a distance has been established between their pre-occupations and his, a distance as of between two worlds. While his companions discuss the sport to be had in hunting wolves and the merits of hawks, Harvey is engaged with deeper human issues.

To all this I for my part gave but little heed, my mind and ears seeming to myself to be still full of the song of that savage woman I had listened to awhile before. And all that evening many strange thoughts bore me company, nay even at night-time and in my sleep they beset me, I being much burdened by the thought of Mistress Gardner; with whose image I in dreams confounded that of Mistress Butler, by whose side I again sat that evening, while with the images of both these gentlewomen there mingled, [as even in my sleep I was aware somewhat improperly !] the image of that savage woman, sitting with her baby upon her knee, and singing so solitarily in the woodland.³¹¹

Although Harvey fails to reconcile this impropriety fully, and fails, therefore, to fully appreciate the universal humanity shared by all, from this point on the narrative becomes more troubled by considerations of cruelty and suffering and the distancing which it requires for its justification. From here on also, Harvey, personally and

³⁰⁹ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.115.

³¹⁰ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.116.

³¹¹ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.117.

through Essex, will struggle to define what the purpose is of their mission and what determines and fixes its values.

Ideology and Revelation.

The English forces move south to Askeaton, an old stronghold of the late Earl of Desmond and set in countryside which had witnessed some of the worst atrocities of the Desmond rebellion. Taking up residence for the night in an old oratory belonging to the Desmond, Essex's own conviction begins to doubt itself, as he muses on his task, the methods demanded by it, and the suffering which the region had already experienced. This is a reappraisal of the quest's mission, the suspicion that its obvious objective has been misleading and that a greater yet concealed revelation waits to be discovered.

Yet ever his talk recurred to this woeful country of Ireland, of which in an evil moment he had,

so he declared, accepted the charge; saying that it passed the wit of man to devise means which

would bring it to subjection, unless it were wholly conquered and destroyed by the sword, and its people rooted out by famine; as had been done in former times by the Lord Grey, Sir John Perrot, and others, in this very province of Munster.³¹²

Having settled down to sleep they are suddenly disturbed by an apparition of the late Earl and proceeding to the tower above they look out on broad plain and forest below, shrouded in fog. Cleaving in two, the fog exposes a multitude of ghostly figures, a vision of famine victims in a land made waste and void by the campaigns similar in function to their own.

And in each group the children went first in a little band, and after them a man and woman side by side, or sometimes two or three women, and in the rear followed the aged people, both men and women, some of these so old and feeble that I was amazed at the sight of their skinny faces, which seemed to be those of skeletons rather than of living men or women.³¹³

It is a vision, however, which is brought forth by the land itself, as a testimony and an accusation, and it is received as such. When Essex demands to know who these people are, Colonel Sethcock's anxiety and repressed guilt surfaces.

Your Excellency asks me who are they, when there were an hundred and thirty thousand -- men, women, and children of all degrees--slain or died of famine during that time, and if their

³¹² Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p. 137.

spirits wander to this day is that my fault, or shall their deaths be accounted to me as a sin more than to others, who did even as I did, or is their blood more upon *my* head than upon the heads of other men ? Is it my fault I ask ? Is it *mine* ? Is it *mine* ? Is it *mine* ?³¹⁴

The vision at Askeaton is the shock of an increasingly uneasy awareness. While earlier in the narrative the reports of Colonel Sethcock's savagery could be allayed by the rationalising of Captain Warren, now there is no such appeasement possible by an appeal to duty, and all present are compelled to witness the crime, including Sethcock whose retribution is insanity. Moreover, its extension beyond the past into the present indicts that same purpose with which Essex's own task had been invested. Such is the traducing of their mission by the land into which they have ventured, its past memories remaining extant and visible as a constant, ineffaceable denial of what Essex and Harvey believe they represent. The honour and glory which motivates and secures their determination is contradicted by the misery and suffering which the landscape repeatedly opposes to it.

Such awakening of a sensitivity which is at odds with their project becomes even more acute and difficult to assimilate as Essex and Harvey are absorbed deeper into the Irish experience. Having pitched camp on the fringe of the great forest Harvey and Essex find themselves beguiled by the beauty of the early morning landscape, Essex betraying an increasing identification with the setting which borders on a reversal of his loyalties. Initially figured as wayward and in need of subduing, Essex now considers Ireland in a different light, his language drawing closer to that of a subject voicing a dedication of service, not in the tradition of the romance, to his mistress, but directed by a conscientious concern and responsibility for actual common good.

'I know not why, but there are moments when my heart seems to yearn to it, for all the plagues it brings me; moments when I say to myself that I would gladly serve it, were it for any time or in any office, if I could thereby hope to bring it to peace and prosperity at last'.³¹⁵

Out of this same landscape, however, and forcing an imperative confronting of the realities which such responsibility incurs, breaks a troop of soldiers returning from a raid on a nearby village, whose captain empties a sack of severed heads, men and women killed while sleeping, at their feet. The sudden savagery, fracturing the morning's beauty and the sympathy which it had evoked, proves too much for Essex and signs of a strained conscience become apparent.

³¹³ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.143.

³¹⁴ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.146.

³¹⁵ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.173.

‘Then why is it Hal -- expound me this, Oh excellent Oracle, if you can -- why is it that what disturbs not other men -- soldiers, God-fearing gentlemen -- disturbs me. Disturbs ? Aye sickens me ! Fills my soul with loathing, so that my senses seem to cry out with one accord, and my very stomach heaves as ‘twere like to vomit’.

‘You speak, my Lord’, said I hesitatingly, ‘of yon ugly sight we just left behind us in the wood?’

‘Aye Hal, of that and many another ugly sight that hath met me since I set foot in this thrice-cursed, this infested, sin-beridden land of Ireland !’³¹⁶

In this moment of self-evaluation, as Essex questions his own fitness for the task assigned to him, the narrative constructs a diegetic examination and rejection of its own romance form, and the code which informs and directs it. The dispute focuses on that idealised integrity situated by the narrative in the frequent literary allusion by which Harvey and Essex have consolidated and sanctioned the superiority of their code and which has been countered by the feminine element functioning in the narrative predominantly as visual and emotional checks. This conflict is demonstrated forcefully in the apparition of those ghostly victims of past massacre who emerge from a landscape shrouded in fog provoking Harvey into a reactive evasion: ‘it seemed certain that what we had seen had been no other than a phantom of the night, created doubtless by the craft of evil spirits, such as Scripture saith walk about seeking whom they may devour; of which sort this distracted Land has, I dare affirm, a larger number than most’.³¹⁷ These allusions have comprised the buffer of culture for Essex and Harvey; the panoply of poetry, classical reference, axiomatic pronouncements of Francis Bacon, Walter Raleigh, Edmund Spenser, and scriptural or biblical quotation, thus distracting from the physical and predominantly anonymous cruelty which the subduing of the Queen’s enemies has entailed. This defensive mechanism, by its excluding of the natives from its humanising effect, projects them into the area of the base savage and the bestial.

At this point in the novel there is a real sense of that nature-culture opposition which Eagleton notes as characterising a nineteenth-century perception of an England-Ireland relationship and particularly as it is isolated within this fraught debate between Essex and Harvey over the encroachment of a disorderly land on their god-given prerogatives of determining the formalities of existence. The aestheticizing and idealizing discourse with which British society attempted to naturalize culture

³¹⁶ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.177.

³¹⁷ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.147.

involved a struggle to conceal its own grotesque materialism and cruelty. Ireland, according to Eagleton, figures ‘as the monstrous unconscious of the metropolitan society, the secret materialist history of endemically idealist England. It incarnates, for Carlyle, Froude and others, the Tennysonian nightmare of a nature red in tooth and claw, obdurately resistant to refinement’.³¹⁸ *With Essex in Ireland* represents the battle fought out on this disputed ground as Lawless attempts to ‘demystify’, in Eagleton’s language, the stylisations from which English ideology addressed an alienating Irish social and political landscape and Irish historical realities.

Initially repelled, therefore, by the sight of ‘so many fellow creatures, who...had lain down last night’ tumbled from the sack, Harvey quickly seeks solace in its tried formula.

For as rats and similar vermin must be slain when and how we can find them, so also traitors, and those who rebel against God and their sovereign. For see how David, who was the man after God’s own heart, scrupled not to surprise the Philistines in their sleep...³¹⁹

Yet Essex’s revulsion is too strong to be assuaged any longer in this manner and he begins a questioning indictment of his predecessors’ and, therefore, the convention’s, interpretation given to the pursuance of duty and service.

My father -- God rest his soul -- put a score to the sword where I have put one. Did he sleep the worse for it ? Or was his soul when he came to die perturbed on that account ? not so, he parted calmly as a Christian man should, at peace with God and all the world. My lord Grey -- who would fain, as ‘twas said, have made a Mahometan conquest of this whole island, and have dyed its very seas red with the blood of its people -- was his soul burdened on that account ? Not so again !³²⁰

The revulsion which discomfits him at the sight of cruelty is ascribed to the feminine world and its influence: ‘Then why, I ask you Hal, should I -- saving for some womanish weakness or folly I carry from my mother -- feel thus perturbed and sickened by what other men heed not ?’, the distaff and wrong side of the chivalric relationship. With Harvey’s further refuge, by way of excuse for Essex, into a courtier’s delicacy, ‘Your nature, my Lord’ said I, ‘is of a more poetic texture than was that of my Lord Grey’, Essex loses patience, attacking that exemplar of literary and courtly achievement Sir Walter Raleigh.

And for this daintiness with which your politeness endows me, ’t would never sure for a moment compare with that of the illustrious poet, incomparable knight, and flower of all

³¹⁸ Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, pp.8-9.

³¹⁹ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.177.

chivalry, Sir Walter Raleigh, who, an he be not greatly maligned, did such deeds in this very forest in which we be standing, that 't is a marvel the trees carry not his sign-manual written in blood upon their trunks as a memorial forever !³²¹

With his denouncing as a bloodthirsty savage the 'incomparable knight and flower of all chivalry', Essex effectively debunks the conventional and literary rationale behind the façade of service, honour and glory, those motivating abstractions which serve to elevate and mask the violence perpetrated in their names. This recognition of a disparity between ideology and reality deprives them of the status and of that security of purpose which had justified their mission. The conflict between duty and human compassion has taken hold despite the belated attempt by Essex at a contrived, belligerent defiance: 'Essex is himself again, and will let no more such whimsical follies-born perchance like goblins or pookas out of the quagmires and pestilential swamps of this unhealthy land-come between him and ought that he has to do'. Attributing his momentary conscientiousness to the influence of the Irish landscape just as he had to womanish weakness, Harvey sees its possible consequences.

Yet, though his Lordship so spake, and though throughout the rest of that day he was cheerful above his common, I, who know the thoughts of his heart, perceived that a secret distaste still clung to him, and that much, that to another would be but customary, was to him irksome almost above the bearing. Moreover it seemed to me, as I watched him closely, that he set his thoughts ever more and more from that day towards getting rid of this uneasy governance, and returning with all speed to England, to which resolution I, alas ! in no small degree ascribe much that afterwards befel, nay much which -- save God in his Good Providence do avert it -- may yet be to befall.³²²

The weight of conscience which bears on Essex's mission is matched by the burden of military disasters which also bedevils it and, with the defeats of Sir Henry Harrington and Sir Clifford Conyers, a desperation to quit such a troublesome enterprise and return to England overcomes him. During the tense waiting in a castle by the Lagan river for a reaction to the treaty with Tyrone which has been sent to London, the dishonourable reality behind political service becomes more stated as Essex's disillusion and cynicism increases.

For the man who undertakes to hold it (Lord Lieutenant of Ireland) must be pitiless as Nero...
He must know every wound and bleeding sore with which this wretched country bleeds to

³²⁰ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.178.

³²¹ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.180.

³²² Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.182.

death, yet must be content to staunch none of them, for that were costly, and money is of all things that which her majesty least loves to see shed in Ireland. ³²³

The narrative has now left behind much of the allusive and preceptual register which has characterised the romance form, with Essex and Harvey now seen to engage a world which is realistically charged and disturbing. While Harvey continues to shield himself with that superior and distancing mechanism by which Ireland is perceived as a recalcitrant subject, Essex balances his perceptions with a forthright stating of the position of things as they are, an openness and frankness which sharpens his profile against the weaker and predictable Harvey. Isolating famine as the only weapon likely to succeed in quelling the rebels, Essex declares himself unwilling to countenance it: 'Famine with the gristly face, the clattering bones, the hollow eye sockets ! Famine which eats up, not the fighting men alone, but the women and children too, till there be not one of them left'. ³²⁴

The narrative's moral focus, crystallised in such an image, recalls the vision at Askeaton and its overwhelming impact on the those who witnessed it. Its revisiting ensures the moral recoil which it is made to incite at this critical juncture and Harvey's attempts at justification by political imperative merely magnify the testament to ideological indifference which it symbolises. That Essex places himself in the position of witness to atrocity identifies him with the landscape's own functioning as repository of ineradicable suffering. Moreover, in an Irish context, such an image invests the text with a resonant shock which is purposed to reverberate diachronically, historically recharging the sense of outrage and revulsion to which Essex is made give voice. Essex's rejection of it as unconscionable redeems his honour yet an honour which has its relevance beyond rather than within the confines of his world, the barbarity underpinning a nineteenth-century political economy reflected through the late sixteenth-century imperial envoy.

That 'twill have to be done I doubt not, only -- being but a plain man and rough soldier, not a soft-spoken Poet like thyself and the gentle Raleigh -- I had as lief another undertook the office, and so spared me the execution of it. ³²⁵

At this crucial moment in the text, Essex is balked by his unsuitability to carry out his quest to its final obvious objective, ironically disqualified by his humanity from achieving it. There is an inherent deception within the narrative's structure, however,

³²³ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.236.

³²⁴ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.241.

in this regard, since the knight errand's realisation of the romance quest usually turns on just such a revelation, the realisation that the quest's initial and obvious objective is a misleading one. The more valuable self-knowledge which Essex has attained and his renouncing of the romance persona ultimately represents the formal completion which the romance demands, a completion which, the narrative suggests, involves its own abrogation in favour of a more responsible anti-romance.

The Feminine: Mistress, Mother and Crone.

With this acknowledgment Essex effectively withdraws from his romance role and from his obligations as Lord Lieutenant and the consequences are made visible almost immediately. A silent visual declaration, in keeping with the narrative's working of the feminine element, occurs as they approach a ford in the river Lagan late one evening. As their horses falter at the river's bank, Harvey witnesses a strange apparition, again a female figure brought forth from the landscape but this time not the beautiful archetype of regeneration which he had witnessed in the forest: 'And lo ! A woman of great age, clad seemingly in stone grey from head to foot, was sitting upon the brink, close to the head of the ford, and staring silently down into the water'.³²⁶

Harvey recognises her as 'The Grey Washer by the Ford' from a tale related to him earlier, a figure believed traditionally to portend the death of a chief, by plunging her hand into the water on his approach and displaying an image of a dead man bearing the wounds from which he is to die. Harvey is terrified by what he sees but relieved to find that Essex has not noticed her. Crossing a little further downstream, the sight that meets Harvey as he looks back convinces him that the image is that of Essex.

And lo ! that Accursed Crone was still there, only erect now, and standing upon the further brink of the river. And it seemed to me that her stature had grown to be greater than is the stature of any mere mortal woman, so that despite the murkiness of the air I could plainly discern her lineaments, and could see the foul and livid colour of her cheeks, and mark her thin and wrinkled chaps, which seemed to be moving up and down with a deadly and a mocking smile as she looked after us. And in one hand she held something covered with a cloth, the shape of which, so far as I could discern it, appeared to be that of a human head, newly severed from the trunk, and dripping at the neck with blood, which as she held it aloft, fell

³²⁵ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.242.

³²⁶ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.244.

down drop by drop into the river running below.³²⁷

The transformation from the life-giving mother to the life-taking crone indicates the climax in Harvey's and Essex's journey of development. Like the fidelity of the loving Mistress Bridget, the young mother in the forest, the comforting of Mistress Alicia Butler, the old crone is another aspect in the defining of human fragility. The transformation in the feminine image is not restricted to that of young woman to old hag however, but also occurs in the more immediate political domain. While the convention of the forward woman from the opening of the narrative gradually becomes incarnated and actualised in real human women so, politically, the image of Ireland as errant lady is transposed onto its English alternate and actualised in Queen Elizabeth, the fanciful conceit ascribed to Essex's campaign becoming personalised and relevant to himself. Receiving dispatches from London forbidding his return to England until his mission is completed, Essex flies into a fury for what he sees as court intrigue against him. Determined to disobey and return at once, he rails against the change in his commission, seeing it as a betrayal, the Queen now placed by him in the role of wayward woman.

Hell and furies, that she should refuse my return ! That she should withdraw the license freely of herself given, and forbid my availing myself of it. Forbid it ! Nay 'tis not she ! 'tis those lying, intriguing knaves that have stolen into her ear, and would use her now for their own purposes. Look Hal ! look at this ! and see if betwixt every line of her Majesty's you read not at least ten lines of these plotters, that would fain twist and turn her to their own ends.³²⁸

The romance quest is only complete in its return to source, the locus of its original challenge. Essex's outburst is due to the frustrating of this. As knight errant involved in a process of discovery he is the bearer of an insight which must be shared with those who await his successful return, an insight which is effectively designed to inform them of the romance's fraud. With his return obstructed by court intrigue, however, the realisation of the quest's true objective cannot be capitalised on and the knowledge acquired through its exertions cannot be delivered.

Harvey is distressed by what he sees as a calamitous mistake on Essex's part. The defeat of the enterprise and its code of beliefs which Essex's return signifies is effectively eulogised by Harvey in a generic valediction of the romance's own formal substance. The beguiling effect of service, glory, honour and status is dissolved and the imperatives by which Essex and himself lived and justified themselves are

³²⁷ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.249.

reduced to empty pageantry, life itself being recognised as frail and insubstantial.

For everything that men most strive, pant, and struggle to obtain; everything, whether of fair repute, or of foul repute, of good or evil hap, all had in that one instant become to me as it were alike and indifferent; Sorrow itself remaining but an idle word, something that is understood of in a dream, but fades and has become mere Nothingness by the morning. And in this mood of mine the ship and all that were upon it passed away from my sight, dissolving as a dream dissolves, or some pageant, which though it may seem to be firm for a moment, yet having once passed on, never returns again.³²⁹

An inability to fix the Irish setting within the boundaries of the familiar bedevils Harvey's narrative. The constant recourse to figurative reassurances from literary and scriptural authority is a narrative indicator of Harvey's need to buttress himself culturally against the unfolding of its estranging affects. This involves a determination on his part to subject the Irish experience to delimiting patterns whose containing effect might stabilise and render his received perspective more tenable. Harvey's representation of the Irish themselves, therefore, is based on his application of patterns which enable him to define them according to a strategically deployed formulation of language and knowledge. Designated outcasts on the human and political level, the Irish are categorised by the narrative as rebels, savages and vermin, encasing the presence of the 'other' in language fortified through stereotype. Harvey's cocooning of himself from the appalling sight of heads rolled from a sack initiates the process by associating the victims with rats and vermin, then proceeds to envelop his revulsion further in an amalgam of cultural and religious webbing.

For see how David, who was the man after God's own heart, scrupled not to surprise the Philistines in their sleep, or Jael, who slew Sisera in her own tent, and was upon that account regarded as a glory to her people, although but a woman. Which things are clearly written for our example, showing that in dealing with a froward savage people we must be guided, less by those precepts which prevail betwixt civilised men, than by those fortunate gifts of cunning and strategy whereby we are enabled to triumph over the strength of savage beasts, seeking them in their holes and dwelling places, and there smiting them, lest, being left untroubled, they, from very ferocity and bestial rage, turn and rend us.³³⁰

Yet it is the clash between linguistic distancing and the phatic persistence of the 'other' which engages much of Harvey's narrative, chronicling a war in which the world of the object presses its insistence against a desperate linguistic attempt to stave

³²⁸ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.256.

³²⁹ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.296.

³³⁰ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.177.

it off. Such a strategy is most evident, midway through the narrative, in the episode of the Irish harper, senachie to the rebel Rory Oge O'More, commanded to entertain Essex and his company at banquet. The estranging music, reminding him of that which he had heard the mother sing to her child in the forest clearing, impacts on Harvey's consciousness as a confusion of mesmerised wonder and as an inability to make it submit to familiar matrices of knowledge. Its affect, therefore, eludes his control and expresses itself solely within the terms of its own environment, that same which itself has bewitched and confounded Harvey's ability to rationalise it.

Then, having played awhile, he suddenly broke out into a sort of singing, which yet was hardly singing, but rather a chant or crooning noise, which swelled and swelled so that at times it seemed to rise to the very rafters, rolling and beating about like thunder within our ears, and again to sink till it was no louder than the whisper of a summer stream over grass and small stones; his harp the while seeming to follow and take part, more like a thing of separate life joining in at its own pleasure, than an instrument played by the hands. Stranger singing and playing I never heard before, nor expect ever to hear again'.³³¹

The affecting music devolves to the visually disturbing when Harvey, standing by a window, notices 'For when that strange song or chant first began all the kernes, galloglasses, and other wild Irish mustered without started and stared, seeming to prick their ears, as a horse does at the sound of the trumpet' and 'creatures seemingly scarce human', began to 'grip at one another with their hands, and to move to and fro with their feet, as if they would have fain broken into wild dancing and leaping'. The realisation is of a spectral parallelism, other and yet threatening in its encroachment on the liminally familiar, a realisation which leads on to a disturbed commingling in which Harvey temporarily loses control of any punctuating overview.

And [by way perhaps of accompaniment to that dolorous music, or to those other wild strains we had late listened to] he related to me, I remember, on that occasion sundry tales which be current in this country; as of Wraiths and Goblins; of Presentiment, and Tragical Prophecies; also of foul Witch-women who wait on men to announce to them their coming Doom; and many other boyish and old-wife tales, which, though devoid of all reasonable probability, are yet apt to make a man feel goose-skinned and timorous if he chance to waken towards two or three of a morning, and to see the moon peeping whitely at him from behind some corpse -- coloured cloud.³³²

Despite Harvey's attempt at a dismissive categorisation through his reductive 'other boyish and old-wife tales', these irrational images continue to trouble the

³³¹ Lawless. *With Essex in Ireland*, p.158.

³³² Lawless. *With Essex in Ireland*, p.160.

narrative proper and to represent actual interventions in the narrative events, culminating ultimately in the portentous apparition by the banks of the river Lagan. In this way they become, within the text, a doubling of the narrative's apparent continuum, by which Harvey's narrative itself is suspected as not being the sole organising principle. Significantly, Essex desires an English language translation of the harper's complaint, an indication that its occurrence is, in actuality, beginning to instigate a confluence of the subject and its opposite other.

'Did the thought ever come to you Hal' said he suddenly 'that 'twere well these Irish -- especially such as are given to the composing of similar songs and dirges -- should not be acquainted with the English tongue, or indeed with any civilised and current language ?'³³³

The translation into their own language is more than just a rendering into an identifying medium, it is the transition of the phatic -- the wildness, the entranced kernes, and the tragical prophecies -- into the area of the linguistic and precipitates a shift in power accordingly. Harvey's confusion is shown in a tacit interrogation of his own method, a reapplication of the linguistic buffer asserting a hierarchical system of regulated form and value which is nonetheless only rendered credible by its re-investment with an ethical stricture and a providential wisdom which might yet vouchsafe a degree of superiority and cultural retrenchment.

For as Porphyry shows that there is a scale of creatures rising through the lower animals to ourselves, and through us to the Heavenly Essences, or Angels, so it had always seemed to me natural to regard these native Irish as intermediate betwixt us and the lower animals, having the outward form of man, but in all higher matters no share of his heritage. A mode of regarding the matter which I now perceive may be carried too far, and might even lead to a foolish and heady arrogance, seeing that they are in truth humans like ourselves, as are also the Red Americans, and other lowly races; a reflection which 'twere well to keep before the mind, so as to avoid the sin of arrogance, and to preserve our souls in a state of due humility, as becometh Christian men.³³⁴

Yet the translation of the Irish harper's dirge also represents a foreshadowing of Essex's own impending transition from English cultural envoy to Ireland's tragic figure. This personal translation is implied by Essex himself.

For all that it seemed to me as I listened, and especially as I recalled the looks and gestures of yonder harper in the hall, that 'twere as well for our credit that we alone had the exposition of our quarrel with this people, and not they theirs also. And of this I am sure, that were I born an Irishman, and given to the poetic craft, I could tell such a tale as would send every maid that

³³³ Lawless. *With Essex in Ireland*, p.161.

³³⁴ Lawless. *With Essex in Ireland*, p.165.

heard it weeping to her bed; aye and might chance to leave behind it not a few of those Tragedies by which our London stage has of late been held.³³⁵

Harvey's strategy has suffered a disturbing reversal in this cultural encounter which, through Essex, effectively deprives it of its function, suggesting that the carapace of difference might be merely contingent and, therefore, vulnerable, and language itself, the sole means of securing it, might actually be a deception. This necessary baulking before the influence of the phatic represents a growing fracture to the integrity of the narrator's intellectual conviction and personal self-belief, weakening that ability to regulate and record. While resolutely adhering to his narrative mechanism of conveying the experience of the alien and the strange, Harvey is also constrained to validate the normative sentiments of his Lord Lieutenant. Such a proceeding contributes to a maintaining of the narrative's coherence only so long as both charges coincide. A crisis of confidence and of language develops as the narrative increasingly is compelled to record attitudes and sentiments which undermine already clearly established distancing classifications and the means of their articulation, as Essex appears to fall increasingly under the influence of what has been designated the foul and the poisonous and the resultant alienation of Essex from his own cultural frame ensues.

Meeting Tyrone alone for an impromptu negotiation, Essex is recognised as defying the fine line which has determined the narrative's staple categorisations. The dwelling of Harvey on the confusion possible between the perception and the report is an indication of where the narrative's own disturbance lies.

When I saw that, and perceived that his Lordship had in very deed gone down alone and unguarded to meet Tyrone, I was filled with dismay, perceiving plainly that this -- though but done in a sudden heat of courage and nobility -- might with ease be turned to dangerous uses, and made to bear a very evil sound in the hearing of her Majesty and of the Council.³³⁶

Outraged by the state hypocrisy which he sees as weighing against the successful execution of a Lord Lieutenant's duties in Ireland and by which 'he must expect to return to England to be impeached there for a common rogue and traitor!' Essex rails against the authority which he represents. Yet the credibility of this authority underlies those demarcations by which the narrative sustains its categories of value. Native rebels, including Tyrone, have been identified by Harvey according to such differentiating features as their delighting in contention, their vaunting pride and their

³³⁵ Lawless. *With Essex in Ireland*, p.162.

arrogant defiance of and disregard for her Majesty's governance. Representing his determination to defy the Queen's order not to return to England and his raging against those of the privy council he believes to have discredited him, the narrative maps Essex's irreversible transition from one category to another.

'An I be so wronged that I can by no means right myself, nor yet see justice upon those that injure me, I have it in me to take a vengeance-such a vengeance that our babes' grandchildren will be talking of it still ! Aye have I, a vengeance such as no subject hath taken yet; one that will cause London itself to run red in blood up to the very doorsteps !'³³⁷

In an ironic twist, therefore, the principle of Harvey's narrative and its standard of absolute subjectivity, the character of Essex, is made to neutralise that distancing mechanism instituted from the narrative's outset and incorporated in the narrative's precise and culturally laden language. This inverting of perspective, effectively undermining that same reservoir of cultural reference which supported it, reverses not only the conceptual authority which has been so precariously maintained but releases and magnifies the disorientating effect which it has been deployed to deflect. The consequent impairment, through Essex's character, of the narrative's competence to maintain the taxonomies of loyal subject and rebel, savage and civilised, culminates in the complete collapse of Harvey's defensive vocabulary, overcome by the phatic, in which Harvey's narrative becomes saturated by its opposite, the immediately present and intrusive replacing the distancing mechanism of the referential.

In crossing the threshold of treasonable action, Essex's provocative behaviour is closely intertwined in Harvey's mind with the disorientating power of that strange Irish setting which his linguistic focus has been at such pains to counteract. That night Harvey experiences the apparent overthrow of the natural order of things as the malevolence which he associates with the country and its inhabitants overwhelms him.

Nay, so perturbed was I, that even natural things came to seem unnatural to me, so that often I felt as if the room suddenly filled with antic creatures, mopping and mowing, and moving hurriedly to and fro with crazy leaps.

And, this perturbation increasing ever more and more, at last everything; even the wind which roared over the roof, and the trees which swayed and bent without; nay the mere crackling of the torches, and movements within doors, caused me to start and shiver like a frightened coney, and my sweat to stand out in big drops, as you may see the drops of dew stand upon the twigs of a morning. And getting worse and worse as the night advanced, it

³³⁶ Lawless. *With Essex in Ireland*, p.228.

came at length to this that I durst hardly so much as lift up my eyes from the table at which I sat, lest I should suddenly behold some Red-headed Demon of this country peering in at us with fiery eyes, or, worse still, some foul Witch Creature wit yellow and withered lips, the smile of one who smiles and beckons on another unto his Doom !³³⁸

The images of menace and decay which assault him, after this troubled, sleepless night, remain indelibly. Harvey awakes in the Castle of Dublin and to his own incorporation into its phatic presence.

And when I rose up very early the next morning lo ! The stones of which its walls are built were streaked and stained with livid spots, as if a black sweat had broken out upon them. And all those trunkless heads set upon stakes over the arches and before the windows, being heavy with the night's rain, dripped continually, so that by moments they seemed to start and move, as the great drops fell from off their thick and thatch-like glibbes. And being already so sick and distraught, I seemed to myself as I gazed at them to be as it were a ghost among ghosts, or a dead man amongst dead men, so that scarce I knew what was real, and what but the mere phantom of my own disordered spirit.³³⁹

The great drops dripping from these rebel heads into the moat below recalls the severed head held by 'The Grey Washer of the River' dripping blood into the Lagan while Harvey's seeming to be a 'ghost among ghosts, or a dead man among dead men' reverberates back to Essex's own tentative grasping at an inverse state which shadows their own, 'Know you that often as I ride over this sad Earth of Ireland that all these that follow behind me are but a train of the dead that ride thus, and I their Ghostly King'.³⁴⁰ This is essentially what transpires during the campaign of Essex: the phantasm, the unreal, becomes actual and previously held certainties are displaced by it into the insignificant. This shadow existence, communicating through the oblique, the seemingly incomprehensible, is what defines much of Harvey's experience in Ireland, an indistinctness which resolves into the only dependable certainty indicated by Essex: 'there are moods when a man's life seems to himself but a phantom, as it were a picture sun shining upon picture men ? Moods in which the grave with its writhing company seems to be the one reality, and all else falsity; nay when one were almost glad that the rest were over, and that reality come ?'³⁴¹

Looking into the black waters at the wharf as his lord's ship departs, Harvey is made witness his own inevitable fate, not clearly outlined but nonetheless

³³⁷ Lawless. *With Essex in Ireland*, p.262.

³³⁸ Lawless. *With Essex in Ireland*, p.266.

³³⁹ Lawless. *With Essex in Ireland*, p.271.

³⁴⁰ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.131.

recognisable.

And as I did so, suddenly it seemed to me that I saw something like a hand clutching vacantly, and then as it were an arm, which appeared rising up out of the water, and as suddenly falling back to it again. And, still gazing down like one bewildered, who knows not what he does or why he does it, little by little there grew upon me the semblance of a face, which yet was not like any human face, but so deformed and shapeless that it resembled something half created; or rather something that had once had life, but that Death has overtaken, and has passed therefore into that foul and unsightly condition to which all, even the fairest of us, must some day come.

So, staring down perplexed and stupefied -- wondering in the blankness of my mind how it could be that this thing which had scarce any form at all, and at which the mind revolted utterly, should yet seem so familiar -- all at once there returned to my mind the remembrance of that foul Witch or She-fiend whom I had seen in Ulster, the day that I rode out with my Lord early in the morning, and that coming back late in the afternoon we crossed the ford of the Lagan.³⁴²

The focus of this concluding episode being on the witnessing of his own physical dissolution has its necessary force in the fact that Harvey has been the conduit not just of the narrative form's code of ethics but also of that experiential exchange through which that code has been engaged by the strangeness of the Irish landscape. That strangeness has been based on an apparent ability to confront and disorganize the ideological preconceptions by which that code sustains itself. As those delusions of self-justification and certainty have been eroded, all that is left is the vulnerability to suffering continually borne witness to by the land and its people. Now, that land, virtually on its perimeter, extends its ultimate reality to Harvey.

For one who has fortified his narrative with frequent appeals to the scriptural and literary, this retreat into the visual and the inarticulate represents a disavowal of that stable assurance of things. Staring into the black waters of the wharf trying to distinguish the shape and meaning of something that is essentially unfixed and amorphous yet fundamentally relevant to him, Harvey is forced to take refuge in an apparitional concept of reality, a pressure which has pursued him throughout the narrative's sequence of revelations.

³⁴¹ Lawless, *With Essex in Ireland*, p.131.

³⁴² Lawless. *With Essex in Ireland*, p.295.

Narrative form and Textual experience.

This resignation from a codified to an experiential concept of reality, however, has been achieved as a result of a carefully orchestrated, almost subliminal influence which has informed the text from its beginning. The individual revelatory apparitions which systematically and insidiously undermine Harvey's masculine romantic order in favour of a feminine informed reality, are part of a sequence of signifying images which assails Harvey's narrative throughout, impressing itself onto the seemingly logical structure of the text yet subconsciously overwhelming its logic through its insistent recurrence. The effect which Lawless's novel ultimately produces relies on this textual undercurrent accompanying the surface narrative, effecting a switch whereby the subliminal becomes dominant and the apparent logical connectedness secondary. Such images appear to encode a meaning just beyond the discernible as the pale reddish glow first seen above Ireland which 'seemed to be reflected in the sky as though a candle or indifferent lantern had been placed near it', at which Essex gazed earnestly for some six minutes 'like one that discerned more than could be seen by mortal eyes', Mistress Bridget projecting shadows onto the wall opposite her lover's cell window, the rueful look with which Mistress Butler gazes across the hall at her kinsman, Lord Ormonde, 'as if constrained to do so', and Harvey himself 'staring down, I know not why, into this dark and troubled water', at what appears to have 'scarce any form at all' yet seems so familiar.

The image of the severed head which casts its shadow across the paths of the living, recurs at significant moments in the text, interrupting its rational design and punctuating it with a qualifying and pressing meaning of its own, not realised until the narrative's conclusion. The anonymity of that rebel chief's head set above 'all the living and dead' of the city on whose indistinctness 'though at this distance seeming the head of a pin than of a man' Harvey muses on his first visit into Dublin, the decapitated Pierce Butler, kinsman to the sympathetic Mistress Alicia, whose head was sent 'not with any special insignia or marks of honour, such as in the circumstances might have seemed fitting -- but as I was told in a common hempen bag as a present to the Lord Deputy' and those heads of the sleeping villagers disbursed from Sergeant Johnson's bag which rolled 'as though they had been balls sent in some game of bowls or rounders', each resolves into that recognisable image of Essex's head displayed by the old crone on the bank of the Lagan.

So, as with the bewildering effect of the Irish setting on Harvey's cultural convictions, the textual structure holds within itself a level which disorients and suborns the apparently coherent narrative structure. What the narrative is made to unfold is more than what the narrator immediately apprehends or of which the reader is conscious. Lawless's manipulation works to destabilise the reader's structured conceptualisation of events, the reader made to occupy the same semi-aware and perceptually distracted position as the narrator of the narrative. Only through an increasing impressionism, therefore, does the total affect emerge; Harvey's realisation of a world of the revelatory underlying his experiences equating with that which is realised by the reader as the text delivers the culminating effect of its sequence of images.

In 'A Note on the Ethics of Literary Forgery' Emily Lawless examines the ability to recapture the spirit of the past through a surrogate experiencing of it: 'The dead past of any given region is seldom absolutely dead, and in some moods and under certain skies it is often surprisingly, even startlingly alive'.³⁴³ What this assertion implies is that it is possible to produce a reality, however apparently suppositious, by consciously putting oneself into the appropriate conducive mental attitude and above all into the equally conducive environment. Authenticity, in other words, is a state of mind which faithfully responds to its leading influences. To emphasise her argument's point, Lawless refers to the so called authentic Celtic spirit which is considered by her to be, in fact, a product of its environment, anyone being capable of growing positively Celtic in spirit who surrenders to those influences which characterise, for Lawless, the Celtic environment. It is not necessary to be Celtic. Oddly enough, to achieve this, in Lawless's opinion, that person must be prepared to 'fling away his miserable reason' and refuse to disbelieve anything, particularly 'anything which strikes him as absolutely impossible'.³⁴⁴ In other words, an experiential rather than a codified reality is far more true to life. A literary experience, for Lawless, is also capable of producing such an effect, the engagement of the reader being nurtured to the same impression.

The presentation of Ireland as feminine and phatic which functions subliminally through Harvey's narrative represents such a disorientating 'flinging away' of reason and the prioritising of the impossible to achieve a veracity which remains as an effect

³⁴³ Lawless, 'A Note on the Ethics of Literary Forgery', p.91.

of the novel's fiction. While the narrative is the codified form, the subliminal textual impression which it masks, yet conveys, produces an experience which is revelatory and instinctively meaningful for the reader, a relationship signified by the rational mind of Harvey, dominated by the influences which engulf it, peering into the black waters of the wharf at the semblance of its own face.

By adopting this stereoscopic presentation Lawless is able to extend it into the area of authorship and narrative voice, achieving a provocative affect which operates through a similar disjunction between appearance and reality. The narrative of *With Essex in Ireland* involves a gender transfer from the female author onto a male narrator. However, the text, structured in this oblique way, is that of Lawless's feminine perspective on a predominantly male structured world. At a time when narratorial authority, and particularly historiographical authority, was invested in the male voice, the author of *With Essex in Ireland*, in order to circumvent this authoritative obstacle, chooses to assume its conventions. Therefore, on the narrative level, the author engages in an appropriation of the masculine voice, Harvey's narrative being presented in a typically masculine format: strong, assertive, forceful. Yet the text, in its use of metaphor, incident, and subliminal sympathy, maintains the feminine presence. Ironically, such a manoeuvre reflects faithfully the convention regarding masculine and feminine voice in that the masculine is fore-grounded while the feminine is restricted to inference.

Within the context of 'A Note on the Ethics of Literary Forgery' essence is a variable which can be assumed, the successful mimicking of an original text an example of its unfixed nature. In that article, Lawless, to demonstrate her point, speculates on the literary recreation by a novelist of an historical situation which fits precisely the format of *With Essex in Ireland*, a speculation which, coincidentally, she constructs also as male.

He has constructed, we will suppose, some harmless little figment, based upon the past, and, having done so, naturally proceeds to provide it with its appropriate puppet. He places his legend in the mouth of some imaginary narrator; he further thinks it necessary, possibly, to provide it with a preface, purporting to be by some equally imaginary editor.³⁴⁵

The consequences of such a deception cast doubts on the reliabilities inherent in authority, authentic, unauthorised or inauthentic. Lawless quotes from a

³⁴⁴ Lawless, 'A Note on the Ethics of Literary Forgery', p.92..

³⁴⁵ Lawless, 'A Note on the Ethics of Literary Forgery'.

correspondent whom she implies is referring to *With Essex in Ireland*: “‘If your book” (naming the poor defunct puppet) “is really by the person it purports to be, I find it very interesting. If on the other hand it is a fictitious narrative *invented by yourself*, I cannot say that I consider such deceptions as justifiable””.³⁴⁶ *With Essex in Ireland* instead demonstrates the ability as a female author to successfully assume an authority which has been identified as male, thereby indicating the non-essential nature of the authoritative voice, its gender-specific qualities merely a presumption. Yet the persuasiveness of the feminine is being effected through indirectness. The author, through the method she employs in the novel, thus implements a process of negotiation in which the male discourse of the narrator is destabilised by his own self-proclaimed ambiguity.³⁴⁷ The authoritative tone through which the narrator presents a masculine ideology gradually grows less decisive, becoming increasingly uncertain until eventually faltering altogether by the novel’s end. By such an obvious undermining of the monologic discourse, therefore, Lawless is not so much intent on an appropriation of masculine language for its social and literary credibility but rather appropriates it for the purpose of demonstrating the fabricated and fragile nature of its status.

Lawless seems to have grasped what Susan Sniader Lanser states concerning narrative structure and women’s writing, that both ‘are determined not by essential properties or isolated aesthetic imperatives but by complex and changing conventions that are themselves produced in and by relations of power that implicate writer, reader, and text.’³⁴⁸ Enumerating race, gender, class, and nationality, among others as constituents of that power, Lanser also remarks ‘Discursive authority -- by which I mean here the intellectual credibility, ideological validity, and aesthetic value claimed by or conferred upon a work, author, narrator, character, or textual practice -- is produced interactively; it must therefore be characterized with respect to specific

³⁴⁶ Lawless, ‘A Note on the Ethics of Literary Forgery’. This letter itself is available in Marsh’s Library, Lawless papers.

³⁴⁷ ‘Since most of Lawless’s cross-gendered works are concerned with history, it would seem as if an important consideration is that the male voice provides the authority necessary to speak about matters located in the male cultural domain. This is contradicted to some extent, however, by the circumstance that the narrator in her most celebrated cross-gendered novel *With Essex in Ireland* is clearly unreliable’. Hansson, *Emily Lawless*, p.116.

³⁴⁸ Lanser, Susan Sniader, *Fictions of Authority: Women Writers and Narrative Voice* (London: Cornell University Press, 1992), p.5.

receiving communities'.³⁴⁹ With respect to *With Essex in Ireland* this interaction becomes highly significant and complex since Lawless is evidently playing on the very power constituents which are sure to complicate even further her claim to discursive authority. Those elements identified by Lanser as constituents of power are, in fact, the significant issue of Lawless's novel, as, within her reading and receiving arena, these represent fractures of identity and, more importantly, tensions of power which Lawless attempts to exploit. The unfixed perspective evident in *With Essex in Ireland* and originating in the masking of gender involves the narrative in a confusion of roles and meanings which not only reflects the shifting of focus within the communities to which it directs itself, but also demonstrates the interactive nature of a discursive authority which is, itself, multiform and ambiguous. The identification of particular angles of perception is indispensable to a determining of whether or to what purpose a specific discourse can be attributed authority, and for whom, within an Irish context. By a blurring of those angles Lawless weakens such identifications sufficiently to open up an interactive dialogue with both communities, an achievement ironically more likely to be available to one who was compelled to dissemble for reasons of race, gender, class and nationality, attributions which could designate disqualification by either and both ideologies.

Lanser, commenting on the elements of authorial status, further differentiates between narrators who engage in acts of representation which 'simply predicate the words and actions of fictional characters', and those narratives involving extra representational acts which 'expand the sphere of fictional authority to "non-fictional" referents and allow the writer to engage, from "within" the fiction, in a culture's literary, social, and intellectual debates'.³⁵⁰ Extra representational acts are particularly applicable where the text's values do not necessarily accord with cultural preconceptions and so must be inferred in order that the reader might receive the narrative as plausible and 'embed it in a "worldview"'. According to Lanser, ideologically oppositional writers are likely, therefore, to invoke such measures 'either to posit alternative textual ideologies or to establish the writer, through her authorial narrator-equivalent, as a significant participant in contemporary debates'. Lanser's concept of extra representational acts involves such specifically non-fictional functions as 'reflections, judgements, generalizations about the world beyond the

³⁴⁹ Lanser, *Fictions of Authority*, p.6.

fiction, direct addresses to the narratee, comments on the narrative process, allusions to other writers and texts'. She refers to such narrative function as 'overt authoriality' and adds: 'It should not be difficult to understand why, with differences in kind and intensity according to time, place, and circumstances, women writers' adoption of overt authoriality has usually meant transgressing gendered rhetorical codes'.³⁵¹ In order to avoid the consequent transgressing of gendered codes and yet to achieve the enabling of the female voice, Lawless reverses the priority within this concept, locating the extra representational function within the boundary of Harvey's fictional narrative while withholding authoriality for the text itself. Harvey's persistent building up and sustaining of a worldview through reflections, judgements, generalizations and particularly allusions to other writers and texts, while it does expand the fictional authority to non fictional referents, results in the structuring of a discursive authority. Yet this fortifying of the narrative through maxims, an essential mechanism by which a foundation of verisimilitude is meant to be established by the narrator, actually undermines its conventional literary function and purpose, facilitating instead a comparative, contradictory world view constituted in the textual tropes and events which encroach on that narrative and within which authoriality and, therefore, verisimilitude, resides. The narrative repertoire to which Harvey continually alludes and by which he constructs a world view is countered by the textual recourse to a reality which is activated by a modern sensibility and relevance and informed by a feminised perspective.

Such a textual subverting of the ostensibly masculine narrative technique allows Lawless an implicit ideological intervention in masculine authority without incurring the risk of disqualification which a direct female voiced critique would entail. Yet it also demonstrates the inadequacy of that technique and its ideological motivation as a means to interpret and represent the world of actual experience. What Lawless is drawing on here, quite explicitly, is a consensus among a presumed sympathetic readership, delineated as separate and antipathetic through the narrative's stark deployment of an alienating jingoistic and patriarchal cant which resonates with a late nineteenth-century imperialist philosophy. A problem arises for Lawless, however, in the overall enactment between text and narrative by which such a strategy is meant to be implemented.

³⁵⁰ Lanser, *Fictions of Authority*, p.17.

The specific contemporary context to which that world view relates, defined by Patten as a contemporary political debate regarding the ‘character and rationale of British imperialism during the final decades of the nineteenth century, as the question of Irish Home Rule merged with concerns surrounding the consolidation of administrative and military control in India and doubts about the legitimacy of expansion in Africa.’ was articulated through media and social interests as ‘a relationship between “soft” colonial policy and the disintegration of national integrity, the ascendancy of feminine emotionalism over the traditional force of masculine pragmatism’.³⁵² To the extent that such a debate is engaged with in *With Essex in Ireland*, its conceptualisation and representation in terms of gender is adopted wholly by Lawless. Representation itself is articulated predominantly by a gendering of the political through the emotional, generating and shaping character and character action. This is most obvious, as Patten states, in the figure of Essex himself, whose shifting gender is used to express the respective poles of difference.

The gendering in this way of the novel’s method of representation, however, involves Lawless in the conflicting realms of authority within the novel form, between the moral and the political. The identifying of a feminine moral authority within the private arena of the novel and, consequently, outside the public sphere, simulates the novel’s apolitical nature yet disguises its true political origin and function. As a literary form implicitly defined according to a paradigm of female knowledge, the novel is conceived by Nancy Armstrong as the source of a moral authority which encapsulates within its masked functions the workings of a discursive gendering.³⁵³ The social division of the two domains of the private and the public is a means by which the discourse of sexuality is articulated and materialised, and a means by which gender identity is both fixed by and decoupled from its political purpose. Yet by pursuing such a textual strategy as that implemented in *With Essex in Ireland* Lawless is, in effect, complying with the Victorian novel’s ideological project and, ironically therefore, replicating and endorsing that cultural repertoire which enables Harvey to conceptualise his political/sexual paradigm.

The discourse of sexuality evident in the narrative of Harvey is enacted by the

³⁵¹ Lanser, *Fictions of Authority*, p.18.

³⁵² Patten, ‘With Essex in India’, p.288.

³⁵³ Armstrong, Nancy, *Desire and Domestic Fiction; A Political History of the Novel* (Oxford: Oxford University Press, 1987), p.44.

text, the educated, disciplined and ideologically motivated Harvey ultimately shown to need the emotional informing of the female element represented as moral source in the novel. Although Harvey is competent to chronicle the events of Essex's campaign and the ideological impetus which drives it, he cannot make sense of the personal experiences which result from either. Only those women who intrude on his narrative can provide the emotional insight which draws his varied experiences into some kind of sympathetic relation.³⁵⁴ The female characters in Lawless's novel and, therefore, the subliminal voice which operates through them as textual tone, are all located within the private sphere, whether that be of mother, mistress, betroth, old crone or familial dependent and exercise a muted influence from within the limitations of that space. These categories are implicitly involved also in the feminised aspects of Essex's own character. All of these figures are additionally directed towards a negating of that ostensibly public and political manifestation of the feminine in the figure of Queen Elizabeth and the courtly Lady as representative of Ireland. The tenor of Lawless's text is to neutralise such use of the figurative as it applies to the female and replace it instead with that personal, domestic form on which realist fiction has traditionally relied to inculcate its values. One aspect of that conventional form is the locating of the feminine outside of language and into the area of the object. As Margaret Homans states, the female is traditionally identified with nature and matter and aligned with actual physicality as opposed to the figurative language by which the male encodes meaning.³⁵⁵ A buffer effectively exists between the male and an external reality of which women are an instance, to be bridged through linguistic representation which substitutes for that objectified reality. The restricting of the female element in *With Essex in Ireland* to the apparitional, and the positioning of the women as a continuous symbol of the non-linguistic, evidenced by Mistress Bridget's communicating by shadow gestures to her lover and the sidelong glance by which Mistress Butler conveys so much to Harvey, in summary the whole of the phatic dimension, constitutes Lawless's underpinning of the novel with this concept of the feminine.

³⁵⁴ Armstrong makes a similar interpretation of Lockwood's role and its relationship to Nelly Dean in Emily Bronte's *Wuthering Heights*. Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*.

³⁵⁵ Homans, Margaret, *Bearing the Word: Language and Female Experience in Nineteenth-Century Women's Writing* (Chicago and London: The University of Chicago Press, 1986.), p.30.

While the text of *With Essex in Ireland* can be conceived therefore as an intervention in the patriarchal world of dominance and control, presenting the female as a disruptive and reformative influence, Lawless, nonetheless, rather than dismantling the male oriented construct of gender authority and spheres of operation, appears to perpetuate it and its method through gender perspectives which maintain its ordering of relationship and of representation. However, this ordering does accommodate the novel's address of specific issues centring on masculine and feminine categories of socialization. Specifically that represented in *With Essex in Ireland* coincides, in certain respects, with Armstrong's conception of late Victorian fiction's wider concerns with violence, particularly male aggression, as it struggles to synthesise the role of the male in a competitive public environment with that of his simultaneous domestic role of nurturer and protector. In its drive to construct what Armstrong terms a modern 'ruling-class masculinity', Victorian fiction was required to 'produce a modern individual who incorporated within him all the qualities of the savage'.

What modern man had that savage man lacked was a distinctive capacity to keep his natural aggression in check and channel that energy toward socially acceptable goals: how one succeeded or failed to contain and direct his desire -- not the mere fact that he possessed and dared to act on it -- determined that individual's identity.³⁵⁶

By adopting the Freudian concept of displacement by which emotional energy associated with the residual archaic desires and fears of a more primitive form of consciousness is defused by relocating them from the domain of ideas into the domain of the body, Armstrong identifies the counterpart strategy behind Victorian fiction's symbolic defusing of conflicts that inevitably arise among evolving cultural categories in such a way that the social experiencing of them will not prove 'incoherent were a mass readership to confront those conflicts head on'.³⁵⁷ One instance of such a resolving of conflict which relates to Lawless's *With Essex in Ireland* is the need to defend masculinity against its own violence. The establishing of masculine identity by the subordinating and controlling of women which initiates *With Essex in Ireland* reiterates a conventional feature of the novel process, as outlined by Armstrong, by which the male is compelled to erase any competitive individuality in the female in order to achieve masculine identity, a process which in turn leads to the self-defeating

³⁵⁶ Armstrong, Nancy, *How Novels Think: The Limits of British Individualism from 1719-1900* (New York: Columbia University Press, 2005), p.81.

recognition that such identity is reliant, therefore, on its own dependents. Here, as Armstrong notes, displacement occurs.

Thus the violence that seeks to maintain masculine identity by subordinating femininity inevitably travels back along a chain of displacements to shake the foundations of masculinity and make it vulnerable to new forms of social rivalry.³⁵⁸

Where Armstrong, however, confines the appearance of this rivalry to the English domestic arena, Lawless's novel provides an important extension to her argument since Lawless manages to correlate the historical manifestation of social rivalry with the conventional domestic symbolism, a parallel structuring which gives definitive relevance to the concept in an Irish historically and socially fractured context.

The opening of Lawless's novel in which the persons of Essex and his male associates seek identity and individuality by the objectification of the feminine, initiates a strategy which proceeds through the narrative by which the violence perpetrated as a means of establishing masculine identity successively relocates its emotional energy in the female body, where that violence assumes a new and displaced meaning. From a campaign instigated by a woman, to be inflicted on a woman, culminating in the old crone who displays publicly its consequences, and as identifying agents who register its operations, the women in the novel, along with a landscape feminised, become the resource of both male violence and the male individuality with which it is linked. Therefore, the contention between anonymity and identity, which operates throughout the novel and functions in association with male aggression and cruelty, temporarily frustrates any determination to establish a reformed subjectivity. Essex, as the conventional conflicted subject, is constantly at odds with himself, both with his social and political responsibilities and with his own gender. Nonetheless, that determination constantly relies on the female element fitfully to define specific personal profiles, whether that be of a beloved Phelim Oge or the submerged, repressed humanity of Captain Warren. Essex ultimately becomes transformed as victim, receiving identity through the incorporation within himself of violence dispersed as registered suffering. With his identity firmly established by the Washer of the Lagan, Essex merges with and gives identity to the previously anonymous image of the severed head, Essex himself becoming an image of a transformed and socially sympathetic masculinity, and also an historically significant

³⁵⁷ Armstrong, *How Novels Think*, p.83.

³⁵⁸ Armstrong, *How Novels Think*, p.87.

symbol. By rerouting aggression through the female body, the narrative renders the character of Essex open to the woman's capacity to suffer and, in doing so, enables him to achieve independence through a synthesis of a male and female nature.

Armstrong focuses on the British novel's operations within a homogeneous culture as a means 'to sustain the ideal of modern Britain as an inclusive community' and the establishing of 'homogeneous normativity and realism'.³⁵⁹ However, Lawless is engaged in the application of those same principles within the significantly more complex political arena of Irish society involving the categories of cultural and ethnic difference as well as communal identity and division. The conditions which pertain to the English novel's adoption of a strictly disciplining influence on masculine energy, as figured by Armstrong, involve a social system whose priority is cultural conformity.

Something entirely new, a cultural ideal that existed outside the individual until that individual could incorporate and dwell within its parameters, assumed the position of self and soul maker formerly occupied by the bad subject.³⁶⁰

These conditions do not pertain to the Irish novel of the same period, however, which required the reformatory agency of the individual on the social system itself. David Lloyd's assertion that the realist novel's failure in nineteenth-century Ireland to socialize its subjects due to the fractured nature of the social structure explains the compensatory recourse which Lawless adopts in *With Essex in Ireland* of a subjectivity containing within itself those features which ought to pertain externally as socializing disciplines.³⁶¹ The figure of the 'bad subject', identified by Armstrong as a feature of an earlier pre-Victorian form of the novel's intervention in a social system, is a figure who generated 'expressions of excessive individualism that simultaneously detached the individual from a restrictive social category and made it possible for him or her to become more fully a citizen-subject, thus the judge and governor of others'.³⁶² As it fails to meet the subject's full potential for self-fulfilment, that system is caused to re-adjust its structure in order to accommodate the individual's new horizons. Through the reconfiguring of masculine aggression to comply with the requirements of a social responsibility, Lawless attempts to feature those characteristics of the subject conceived as lacking in the prevailing historical, political

³⁵⁹ Armstrong, *How Novels Think*, p.97.

³⁶⁰ Armstrong, *How Novels Think*, p.81.

³⁶¹ Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, p.148..

and ideological conditions of the Irish social system, a social structure which essentially mimics that of an earlier English hierarchical model. Essex's breaking ranks with his ideological kinships and his breaching of the barriers which maintain difference founded along ethnic and cultural lines frees him from those impediments to the resolving of Irish conflict and suffering. Such individual excess also presents the means by which those impediments can be morally addressed and surmounted. The historical figure of Essex, personalised through the sympathetic awareness of Lawless, is made to broaden the horizons of the contemporary social and political vista and demonstrates the ability of Lawless, as declared in 'Of the Personal Element in History' to enable the historical to enact its drama in the present. In *With Essex in Ireland*, Lawless attempts, therefore, the reformation of the Irish historical consciousness by the symbolic freeing of Essex, as representative of a core individuality, from the archaicism which the romance narrative has imposed on him.

That *Hurrish* masks real human suffering in the interests of a political system while *With Essex in Ireland* appears to reverse that polarity is not as contradictory as it might first appear. *With Essex in Ireland* foregrounds human commonality and bondship in opposition to centralised state politics in just that way in which Lawless celebrates in *Hurrish* the supremacy of the communal bond which an intrusive totalizing nationalism and progressive centralised government was represented as undermining. In both novels the issue comes down to a reliance on personal expansive sympathy, a sympathy expressed through individual human action which is seen to disarm aggressive political and systemic pressures. Both novels conceal their real political implications in a concern for human connectedness and priority, the historical context of *With Essex in Ireland* allowing Lawless, however, to be more explicit since the historical outcome already demonstrates the cost of such intervention.

The locating of a reformed subjectivity in such an historical context and realised in the expression and transformation of violence is testament to the insistence of social conflict and competing forms of national definition in the last decades of the nineteenth century in Ireland. While Lawless's subject is himself not Irish but an individual involved in a close eliciting of a responsive Irish setting and its inhabitants, that subject is to be seen as, in essence, the symptomatic manifestation of the fraught

³⁶² Armstrong, *How Novels Think*, p.48.

relationship which attaches to the coloniser and the colonised. Individuality and social identity in Lawless's writing are inextricably linked to ethnic and class integrity in so much as they define an Anglo-Irish self-hood. The dissociation from political violence and conquest which Essex is made to achieve in Lawless's novel and by which his historical persona is redeemed and reconstituted represents Lawless's efforts to reconfigure an Anglo-Irish identification with historical oppression and dispossession. In assimilating that violent history and accepting its reality of suffering as a feature of its own persona, Lawless is attempting to redefine and, therefore, reform the image of Anglo-Irish subjectivity. In *With Essex in Ireland* this self-imaging is explored and established through an individual consciousness as it is impacted on by cultural disaffection. The extension of this self-imaging to the wider racial consciousness and its integration into a shared national identity, is to be explored by Lawless in a more ambitiously expansive way in her later novel *Maelcho*. However, the chronological successor in terms of Lawless's writing career is Lawless's *Grania*, published two years later. Set on an isolated island in which tensions arise between the developing independent young woman Grania O' Malley and island conventions, Lawless places greater weight than she did in *With Essex in Ireland* on the figure of the woman as source of moral opposition. Yet *Grania* also embodies a degree of disillusion which is absent from both *Hurrih* and *With Essex in Ireland*, the protagonist failing to initiate any new direction in the consciousness of those around her. It is in this novel that the negative force, subdued in the earlier novels, comes to the fore as a means by which the narrative's ideological point might better be realised.

Chapter III.

Grania and Darwinism.

Biological Variation and New Woman.

As the *Bildungsroman* of a young woman written in the last decade of the nineteenth century, Lawless's *Grania* is replete with the highly charged issues of female sexuality and gender constructs which fuelled debates revolving around late Victorian conceptions of what constituted woman's true nature and social function. Fundamentally a renegotiating of the traditional gender roles by which nineteenth-century patriarchal society delimited female participation, New Woman controversy and New Woman fiction fore-grounded aspects of 'womanhood' which disrupted conventional norms. Set in opposition to stereotypical 'proper' femininity, defined according to the domestic space, the emancipated, free-thinking and assertive female became the source of difference and challenge, operating on a wide social plane and arrogating for herself many of the privileges usually reserved for the male. Female appropriation of generally perceived masculine attributes demonstrated the permeability of gender boundaries and contributed further to an undermining of prescriptive codes founded on strict sexual categories.³⁶³ The common ground on which the conflicting attitudes to womanhood based themselves was that of social convention and the prescribed role allotted by it to a woman's range of activity and expression. A concomitant of this and a principle which underpinned it was the pre-eminent status of marriage as the space within which that role would be exercised. Any renegotiating of a woman's social status or any reformulating of feminine individuality could be viewed as posing a challenge to this stabilising social institution. As Sally Ledger states in *The New Woman*:

Eliza Lyn Linton...characterized the 'Wild Woman' (an unmistakable prototype for the New Woman) as a creature who opposed marriage, who vociferously demanded political rights, and who sought 'absolute personal independence coupled with supreme power over men'.³⁶⁴

³⁶³ Ledger, *The New Woman: Fiction and Feminism at the fin de siècle* (Manchester: Manchester Press, 1997), p.13, and Pykett, Lyn, *The 'Improper' Feminine: The Women's Sensation Novel and New Woman Writing* (London: Routledge, 1992), p.169.

³⁶⁴ Ledger, Sally, *The New Woman*, p. 12.

However, perhaps most characteristic of New Woman fiction in particular was the exploration of what constituted a woman's experience. The realities comprising a woman's actual existence became the means by which the psychological and emotional repressions demanded of women could be probed. The inconsistencies in a social system which facilitated behavioural latitude to the male while imposing a submissive and passive role on the female formed the core of a moral critique directed at sexual convention. The perceived victimization of women, therefore, within rigid social structures gained for them a superiority which reversed the dominant concept of female weakness which had underpinned male control. Instead the exploitative tendencies of men became the significant component in gender relations.

In the periodical and press disputes which characterized this combat over the body of 'woman' Mona Caird's and Eliza Lynn Linton's exchanges probably define most what the polarities were and along what axes they met. While Linton had waged a relentless war against the changing role of women from the 1860's onward, coining such phrases as 'The Girl of the Period' and 'The Shrieking Sisterhood', Mona Caird gave cogent definition to the issues surrounding the subject of woman in modern society in one forthright article submitted to the *Westminster Review* in 1888 entitled 'Marriage'. The subsequent public debate resulted in some 27,000 letters throughout the following months from correspondents of the *Daily Telegraph*.³⁶⁵ Many of the exchanges on the subject of the changing social role of women, particularly that of female suffrage, took place in the pages of the *Nineteenth Century* and became noticeably intense during 1889. The publication in June of a large number of women signatories against the idea of women's suffrage, 'An Appeal Against Women's Suffrage', submitted by James Knowles, founder of the periodical, was followed in July by three further articles: Millicent Garret Fawcett's counter argument; Margaret Dilke's similar counter; and an extended list containing 'a large number of women signatories' to be added to that of June. August's issue contained a further long list, called "Appendix" of women signatories, by Louise Creighton against the vote for women.³⁶⁶ Linton's almost vitriolic campaign against the unfeminine appeared in articles entitled 'The wild women (Part 1): as politicians' in the July 1891 edition of the *Nineteenth Century*, followed by Part 11 in October. Linton followed these up

³⁶⁵ Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine*, p.144.

³⁶⁶ These articles appeared in *Nineteenth Century* vol.25, June, 1889; vol.26, July, 1889; vol.26, August, 1889.

with 'The partisans of the wild women' in March 1892 which was rebutted by Mona Caird's 'A Defence of the so-called "wild women"' in May.³⁶⁷ During these years Beatrice Potter carried on an almost lone exposition in the same periodical of the exploitation of the working-class poor, including working women, which contributed a different perspective on the plight of women in a society blinded by its own conventions to the realities by which it actually functioned.³⁶⁸

This concentration on just one source demonstrates the wealth of public opinion and social discourse regarding what would be seen today as feminist issues to which the Victorian periodical gave voice. The spectrum was wide and accommodated a variety of views even among those sharing a common concern over women's rights. Pushing the boundaries beyond the limits of acceptable behaviour in pursuit of change could alienate more traditional outlooks. Margaret Oliphant, romantic novelist and a mentor to Lawless, could sympathise with women forced to endure cultural tyrannies yet could advocate an embracing of personal sacrifice as a means to refine the moral spirit.³⁶⁹ Votes for women could also be viewed by others as a distraction which in itself detracted from the more pressing subject of alleviating women's wrongs outside of the political. Lawless's attitudes to the disadvantaging of women in nineteenth-century society and to the pursuit of female suffrage occupy two distinctly separate positions. Lawless is one of those signatories to the 'Appeal Against Women's Suffrage' collected by Knowles in June 1889 and the obvious lack of importance which she attributes to votes for women is evident in a letter to Edith Sichel: 'I have no sympathy with Suffragette methods, I need hardly say, and have personally no wish for a vote'.³⁷⁰ Yet Lawless does express her concern in the same letter for the 'wrongs' which women, particularly 'women-workers', are forced to bear. There is a point to be made, however, for the argument that Lawless is representative of an upper-class womanhood whose attitude to the extension of the franchise to the lower classes in general would have been apprehensive. The list published by Knowles in June 1889 and those subsequent additions are reflective of women belonging to the

³⁶⁷ These articles appeared in *Nineteenth Century* vol.30, July, 1891; vol.30, October, 1891; vol.31, March, 1892; vol.31, May, 1892.

³⁶⁸ Beatrice Potter's articles on the lives of the poor, particularly working class women, appeared in *Nineteenth Century* vol.22, October, 1887; vol.24, August, 1888; vol.24, September, 1888; vol.27, June, 1890.

³⁶⁹ Hansson, *Emily Lawless*, p.30.

³⁷⁰ Sichel, Edith, 'Emily Lawless', *Nineteenth Century and After*, vol.76, July, 1914,

ruling elite predominantly.

Emily Lawless's novel *Grania* engages, therefore, with an already discursively generated momentum and clearly outlined postures and perspectives which were associated with the topical issue of the 'woman question' in the final two decades of the nineteenth century. Marriage, femininity (proper and improper), social pressure towards conformity to traditional norms, the deliberate probing of gender definitions and the desire to describe a reality clearly at odds with a construct were staples for New Woman writers and indeed form a significant component of Lawless's *Grania*. Lawless shared an Irish background with many of the most prominent New Woman writers of the period. Sarah Grand (Frances Elizabeth Clarke), whose *The Heavenly Twins* (1893) and *The Beth Book* (1897) were considered definitive works of the genre, was born in Donaghadee and the use she makes of her early Irish experience illustrates, as O'Toole notes, 'the effect of Irish social and cultural mores on her later political perspectives'.³⁷¹ George Egerton (Mary Chavelite Dunne), whose short story collections *Keynotes* (1893) and *Discords* (1894), were considered among the most outspoken expressions of New Woman sentiments, was born in Australia of Irish parentage and lived much of her early life in Dublin and Cork, beginning her writing career there. Katherine Cecil Thurston whose novel *The Fly on the Wheel* (1908) is set in the closed environment of late nineteenth-century Waterford and voices a social realism and pessimism, is judged by Gerardine Meaney to be 'close to *Grania* in its exploration of the social and psychological restrictions on a young woman of independent mind in turn-of-the century Irish society'.³⁷²

From the outset *Grania* is set within a world of men, her father Con O'Malley, Shan Daly, the typical irresponsible husband figure, and her childhood companion Murdough Blake and it is against the background of these prototypical male figures as well as that of the landscape that *Grania* is profiled. Con O'Malley is a man who has married for love rather than material convenience, Shan Daly is neglectful of his emaciated wife and large semi-starved family. Both these figures will present textual references for *Grania*'s progress through her developing womanhood and her relationship with the third figure, Murdough Blake, through which *Grania* attempts to

p.98.

³⁷¹ O'Toole, Tina, 'Ireland: The Terra Incognita of the New Woman Project', in (ed.) Heidi Hansson, *New Contexts: Re-Framing Nineteenth-Century Irish Women's Prose* (Cork: Cork University Press, 2008), p.126.

grapple, as Pykett puts it in relation to Egerton's heroines, 'with the riddle of her femininity and the mystery of "what it is we (women) need to complete us"'.³⁷³ The extent to which Grania responds to her own conception of herself and the expectations and restrictions placed on her by the community, including Murdough and Grania's half-sister Honor, is the subject of Lawless's New Woman novel.

The majority of New Woman writers located their subjects in urban landscapes. O'Toole observes that 'Just as women began to occupy the public sphere, the late nineteenth-century urban landscape became the location of much New Woman fiction, where the action takes place in railway stations, hospitals, city streets, department stores and colleges'.³⁷⁴ Following Olive Schreiner's work, particularly the popular *The Story of an African Farm*, set in a provincial South Africa, exotic locations did become a component for this fiction. Sarah Grand and George Egerton situate parts of their work in the west of Ireland and Norway respectively. Lawless takes the unusual step, however, of completely absenting her subject from what was predominantly its primary environment -- urban, cosmopolitan European society, to the extent that the hinterland of Ireland is itself viewed as a foreign country, its sophistication and modern trappings rendered seemingly strange and irrelevant. This enables Lawless to restrict the focus to those issues which she deemed it strategically necessary to demystify. So, unlike the contemporary description of the New Woman in the wider cosmopolitan world as 'a woman with a bicycle, a divided skirt, a packet of cigarettes, and a teaching licence', Lawless fashions her concept of transgressive, modern womanhood out of the rural western Irish community with its image of peasant simplicity, domestication and piety.³⁷⁵ In such an almost perversely remote setting on an island off the west coast of Ireland where modern preoccupations seem to have little or no impact, *Grania* would at first sight appear to be distanced from any of the many fraught contests which constitute *fin de siècle* existence. However, in stripping away the familiar yet often distorting contexts of fashionable life, sophisticated social mores, cultural avant-gardism by limiting the narrative to a fundamentally stark drama, Lawless provides a startling clarity to the issues revolving

³⁷² Meaney, 'Decadence, Degeneration and Revolting Aesthetics', p.169.

³⁷³ Pykett, *The Improper Feminine*, p.165.

³⁷⁴ O'Toole, 'Ireland: The Terra Incognita of the New Woman Project', p.129.

³⁷⁵ Walters, Jennifer, Waelti, and Stephen C. Hause, *Feminisms of the Belle Époque* (Lincoln: University of Nebraska Press, 1994). Quoted by Tina O'Toole, 'Ireland: The Terra Incognita', p.;128.

around female exploitation and conventions dictating sexual behaviour. Conversely, Lawless also imports the prevailing arguments which energized a cultured, sophisticated society into a remote, seemingly cosseted one in order to bring to bear on it a modern sensitivity which undermines the presumed remove from taint of an essentialist primitivism gaining currency among nationalists at this time.

Yet there is a double edge to Lawless's strategy in so doing. What Lawless is also opposing to this essentialism is a Darwinism which subjects human society to the basic requisites of natural selection. Such requisites as competitiveness and adaptability to environment which function according to a principle of inheritable variation are shown to provide the impetus for Grania's individuality and material well-being while the corollary of Darwinian theory -- that stasis risks progressive degeneration -- oversees the physical and material decrepitude of the homogenous island community.

Darwinism and literature.

Following Darwin's publication in 1859 of the *Origin of Species by Means of Natural Selection*, the final four decades of the nineteenth century witnessed complex and widely divergent modifications of evolutionary theory founded for the most part on an unwillingness to countenance the determinism and lack of purpose which it accorded to human development. The foremost exponent of strict Darwinism was T. H. Huxley who maintained an adherence throughout the succeeding decades to the precepts of evolution through natural selection set out in the *Origin* and Darwin's later *The Descent of Man and Selection in Relation to Sex* (1871). Huxley carried on an indefatigable defence, mainly in the pages of the leading periodicals and against diverse antagonists, religious and scientific. Huxley's contributions are particularly numerous involving not just exchanges and disputes but setting out his own interpretations of natural, social and religious applications of biological theory and instigating discussion in a general and very informative sense. In all his incursions into print and the lecture circuit Huxley displayed a skill at rhetoric which won him a widespread audience and, for his opinions, a deep respect even among antagonists. Other Darwinists, however, were less receptive to or supportive of natural selection as an explanation for all organic life. Alfred Russel Wallace, co-founder of the theory of natural selection, Herbert Spencer, George Romanes, St George Mivart, each

postulated forms of teleological evolutionism which provided a directing agency to human progress. As Wallace expressed it in his *Darwinism* (1889): ‘Beings thus trained and strengthened by their surroundings, and possessing latent faculties capable of such noble development, are surely destined for a higher and more permanent existence.’³⁷⁶ Associated with much of this evolutionism is the theory of acquired characteristics outlined by the French naturalist Lamarck, dismissed by classical Darwinism, which stated that the inheritance of automatic, involuntary habits which some past individuals had to their benefit acquired, are transmissible to posterity. Lamarckism was seen as essential to the concept of progressivism in Victorian social development. While classical Darwinism was seen by many as a reactionary force reversing the optimism for a more enlightened future, Lamarckism, through its concept of use inheritance, provided the prospect of a brighter cumulative destiny through the ensuring of the moral and educational advantages won by previous generations.

As the Victorian life sciences, particularly biology, had not hardened into the professionalism of science proper, such crucial issues as ‘heredity’, ‘fitness’, ‘species variation’, ‘progression’, ‘retrogression’ and ‘perfection’, were ill-defined and open concepts which could still appeal to and engage the wider public attention. The disadvantage however, was that terms applied in considering the operating of natural forces on species, since they were not themselves adequately defined, frequently crossed from the biological to the social domains. Edwin Lankester’s *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism* (1880) was one of the first to propose that evolution might not necessarily run in the direction of progress and the alternative, regression, was an ever present possibility were humanity to ignore the dictates of natural selection.³⁷⁷ Only through aggressive application and enterprise can the human species prevent its destiny from imitating that of the dinosaurs. Throughout the subsequent two decades, this issue of regressive process, or devolution, effectively displaced the main trust of Darwinism, allowing those with moral, social and ideological interests to dominate the biological debate.³⁷⁸

³⁷⁶ Wallace, Alfred Russel, *Darwinism: An Exposition of the Theory of Natural Selection, with Some of Its Applications* (London: Macmillan, 1889), p.477-478.

³⁷⁷ Lankester, Edwin Ray, *Degeneration: A Chapter in Darwinism* (London: Macmillan, 1880).

³⁷⁸ Morton, Peter, *The Vital Science: Biology and the Literary Imagination, 1860-1900* (London: Allen and Unwin, 1984), p.92.

The social interpretation of Darwin's theory of natural selection, therefore, frequently attached to an advocating of established middle class Victorian values as the desired end of the human evolutionary process. The position within a standard of human development of certain class groups and their quality as human material became subjects for both political concerns and for moral lessons. One frequent and potent example pointed to by degenerationists as a reinforcement of Darwinian natural selection in social theory was the existence in the dark, placid subterranean lakes in Kentucky of fish without eyes. Trapped and isolated in darkness, these creatures found no advantage in possessing sight with the result that the hereditary factors which produced blindness were not suppressed through the selective process and gradually spread through the population.

A resurgence of classical Darwinism occurred in the late 1880s and 1890s with the publication of *Essays upon Heredity and Kindred Biological Problems* in 1889 by August Friedrich Weismann in which he theorised on the imperviousness of the germ plasm to external influences, the organism containing a genetic endowment which is passed from generation to generation. Weismann's *Essays* became widely popular outside of the narrow confines of science proper during this period, while also influencing and reshaping the opinions on heredity of earlier Darwinists such as Lankester and Wallace. As a theory it re-established the bleak outlook on human destiny which had softened in the decades following the *Origin*, reaffirming the indisputable eminence of natural selection as opposed to the more optimistic concept of Lamarckian 'use inheritance'. There is no biological learning possible by Weismann's theory, the same heredity code being repeated with varying degrees of success, as it responds to its new conditions. In the absence of natural selection as a honing pressure, a species or human group, as in the example of the blind fish, will devolve rather than evolve.³⁷⁹

Much of the problem with Victorian biology was its inadequate understanding of how heredity worked. From 1859 onwards until the rediscovery of Mendel's work on particulate genetic inheritance in 1900 biologists believed that any offspring was the smooth blending of the inheritable characteristics of its parents. The connection with bloodlines which Morton associates with this misunderstanding has an echo in Lawless's depiction of Grania's 'inherited nature', combining the frankness of her

³⁷⁹ Morton, *The Vital Science*, chapter: 'Heredity before Mendel', pp.149-173.

father and the sexuality of her mother.

The mistake that heredity is essentially qualitative surely arose from the custom of describing the various observable degrees of inheritance in terms of blood-lines, consanguinity and such related concepts. Since blood is a fluid, and given its primitive status as the very essence of life, it becomes a reasonable proposition that 'blood' may be diluted or blended, fortified or polluted.³⁸⁰

As an attempt to incorporate the evolution of the human species into the overall theory of natural selection, Darwin published *The Descent of Man, and Selection in Relation to Sex* in 1871 which posited the idea that human development was not simply the product of natural selection alone but that certain traits were favoured in the process of human mating. Wallace took this particular concept and applied it to a theory of social reformist eugenics in two essays 'Human selection' published in 1890 and 'Human Progress' in 1892 in which he advocated the emancipation of women from social and economic slavery. Since, according to Wallace, women are compelled to marry for economic reasons only, freedom from such a constraint will allow their sober and well-judged choices in selecting a mate to lead to social betterment in general as they will look with scorn on 'all men who in any way wilfully fail in their duty to society -- on idlers and malingerers, on drunkards and liars, on the selfish, the cruel, or the vicious'.³⁸¹

Many of these issues were argued out in the popular periodicals of the day, in which those at the forefront of research could explicate their theories before a fascinated public readership. The *Fortnightly Review*, *Nature*, *The Quarterly Review*, *Contemporary Review*, and *Nineteenth Century* all provided the arenas through which this cultural debate took place and in which not only such scientific luminaries as Huxley, Wallace or Spencer countered each other's positions but also public and political voices which included W. E. Gladstone, George Douglas Campbell (The Duke of Argyll), various religious figures such as W. C. Magee (Bishop of Peterborough), and the anti-New Woman polemicist Eliza Lynn Linton. These figures ensured that the social and religious issues were kept in regular step with the biological and evolutionary hypotheses, cementing the relevance for writers of the life sciences to the human condition.

It is hardly surprising therefore, that in the final decades of the nineteenth

³⁸⁰ Morton, *The Vital Science*, p.145.

³⁸¹ Wallace, 'Human Selection', *Fortnightly Review* vol.48, September, 1890,

century biological evolution and its impact on social and individual development received widespread literary interest. In the novels and poetry of Thomas Hardy, the fiction of George Meredith, Samuel Butler, Oscar Wilde, the dramas of George Bernard Shaw heredity, eugenics, human evolution and biological determinism feature significantly. Revisiting the intellectual foment of these years in his biography H. G. Wells recalls how he and other enthusiasts of Darwinian biology read the essays of Huxley assiduously: 'We read his speeches, we borrowed the books he wrote, we clubbed...to buy the *Nineteenth Century*'.³⁸² Emily Lawless, as a keen naturalist -- botanist, entomologist and geologist -- from her youth and as a frequent contributor to the *Nineteenth Century* during these years, would have been very familiar with the varying interpretations of Darwinian theory and with its widespread application to social philosophy. Two of Lawless's articles, 'Fragments of Irish Chronicles: Gerald the Great' part 1 and 11 appear in the November 1890 and March 1891 issues of *Nineteenth Century* alongside Huxley's 'The Aryan Question and pre-historic man' and his retort in an ongoing debate on religion and science within the pages of the periodical between himself, Gladstone and Campbell.³⁸³

Like her fellow writers also, Lawless tends to apply aspects of Darwinian thought in a way which suits the purpose of her narrative subject without any strict adherence to one specific theory. Peggy Dowd's tracing of Murdough Blake's inherited characteristics back through his forebears is suggestive of Weismannism. Also the absence of any apparent teleological purpose behind Grania's emergence as an individual and her struggle to establish herself is reflective of strict Darwinian tenets voiced by Huxley and Weismann. This is not quite definitive however, in so far as Lawless might be intimating a degree of evolutionism which Grania represents towards a more evolved social condition. This directing progressivism is pessimistically closed off by the prevailing overwhelming drift toward degeneracy in Grania's sustaining environment. Most suggestive is the use Lawless appears to make of the concept of sexual selection. Whether from Darwin directly or through the *Essays* of Wallace Lawless explores the hypothesis of sexual selection as exercised by a discerning and free woman. Wallace's avowal that the consequence of such

pp.325-37, p.333.

³⁸² 'West, Geoffrey', (Geoffrey Harry Wells), *H. G. Wells: A Sketch for a Portrait* (London: Howe, 1930), p.49. Quoted in Morton, *The Vital Science*, p.115, n.30.

³⁸³ Volumes 28 and 29.

liberated and socially-minded women intervening in their own marital fates would be beneficial to themselves and to society is not realised however in Lawless's novel. Although Grania is presented in the Galway cabin with a vision of what conventional women are prey to and the inevitability of similar consequences for her in pursuing her choice of Murdough Blake, she herself is unable to exercise her freedom in any personally worthwhile or socially beneficial way. Lawless suggests there is a more overpowering force working on Grania's choices and actions, that of her own biology. Like Murdough Blake, Grania too is subject to inherited character traits which ultimately determine her behaviour. The embracing of an imaginary Murdough as she drowns is the blind acting out of this biological compulsion.

It is through the static biological condition dominating the island community in Lawless's novel that much of the contemporary attitudes denoting Social Darwinism become evident. Degeneration in the natural world relates to the regression of an organism back to an earlier stage of development as an effect of changed conditions. Weismann's concept of degenerative change due to disuse had a wide currency from 1890 onwards, emphasising the necessity for a species to remain actively challenged for the sake of its on viability. Within Victorian society those human groups identified as intellectually and culturally backward, physically debilitated or materially destitute were viewed as presenting warnings of such a degenerative influence. A significant aspect of the application of such thinking was what William Greenslade refers to as the concept of the urban 'residuum', a term coined by some degenerationists to designate those portions of the urban population marginalized by social progress.³⁸⁴ Such a metaphor could be deployed across the spectrum of the socially undesirable, justifying neglect of social inequality through a theory of biological determinism. Daniel Pick refers to this tendency of transferring evolutionary terms across to the social order with their biological meanings intact.

'Fitness' was now available to discursive strategies that used biological concepts to naturalise social and cultural practices. And these strategies were highly ideological. An index of this practice was the making visible of the 'waste' products of the struggle for survival.³⁸⁵

Pick also quotes from an article in the *Saturday Review* of 1862 which voices just such a practice: 'It is clear we have not yet found what to do with our criminals. We neither reform them, nor hang them, nor keep them under lock and key, nor ship them

³⁸⁴ Greenslade, *Degeneration*, p.48.

³⁸⁵ Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, p.36.

off to the Antipodes. Our moral sewage is neither deodorised nor floated out to sea, but remains in the midst of us polluting and poisoning our air'.³⁸⁶ Such language worked hard to mask the presence of real and worrying structural contradictions in society: 'It conceded that there was a deep crisis in the existing social order, but sought to offer a de-politicised theory, which deflected the terms of the discussion into concepts of nature, biology and race'.³⁸⁷

Writers such as George Gissing, H. G. Wells and R. L. Stevenson capitalized on popular perceptions of urban spaces of degeneracy, the slums and courts of 'darkest London' and the apparent sub-species of humanity which inhabited them, fostering as they did so a connection between isolated groups of humanity and separation from evolutionary progress. Gissing's *The Unclassed*, (1884), and *The Nether World* (1889) are exemplary of the literary responses to class anxieties in which Gissing musters the forces of biological determinism in order to counter working-class demands. Just as these writers created a symbolic environment in which their vision of contemporary social and cultural structures might be contextualised, Clerkenwell in Gissing's *The Nether World*, the subterranean vaults of the Morlocks in Wells's *The Time Machine*, so Lawless's transposition of the urban island or other world to a symbolic west of Ireland landscape is revelatory of her social purpose. In *Grania* the site of moral and physical degradation is, paradoxically, the simple, originary setting of Inishmaan, untouched and, therefore, seemingly unspoiled by the pollutants of modern urban living. As Jacqueline Belanger observes:

While *Grania* is identified as the island itself, and her personality intimately linked with the landscape and the natural elements of Inishmaan, it is possible to see this as both the placement of the 'native' Irish within certain colonial essentialist relationships with their environment, and as a projection onto the native of the anxieties of the Protestant minority in Ireland.³⁸⁸

With the Anglo-Irish unionist tradition to which she subscribed under pressure from an emerging nationalist ideology which routed its energies and its legitimacy through a 'native' heritage, Lawless is at pains in *Grania* to discredit the primal value to which such a heritage lay claim. The primal or originary in *Grania*, therefore, does not carry reverential overtones but rather has implications of backwardness and the anti-progressive. As will be argued in chapter four, this is evident in her later novel

³⁸⁶ Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, p.178.

³⁸⁷ Pick, *Faces of Degeneration*, p.219.

Maelcho (1896) which involves a violent struggle for survival between three distinct cultural groups, early Anglo-Norman settlers, New English and beleaguered native Gaelic clans. In her depiction of the O'Flaherties, elements of the most extreme racial degeneracy are applied to distance them from the discursive centre and they are represented, like the island community of Inishmaan, severed from all useful interaction with a wider, varied world. In both novels the point Lawless is making by stressing these conditions of isolation is the groups' drift from a developmental progressivism; she further implies that the impoverishment of their surroundings, as is the case with the urban under-class in *Gissing* for example, is a positivistic proof of the cultural and social deficiency of the people themselves. As the following textual reading will suggest, the landscape which contains Lawless's tiny island community articulates in its decay and detritus the 'naturally' dictated erosion of its isolated human population. In this regard, Lawless's *Grania* must be read on two levels, that of a New Woman critique of female subservience in a social structure dominated by and privileging men and a concern from an Anglo-Irish position with an Ascendancy class seeing itself 'as Irish, but increasingly being used as the other against whom definitions of Gaelic, Catholic Irishness were being formed'³⁸⁹.

Many of the reviews of *Grania* prefer to comment on Lawless's fidelity to ethnic character and seem blind to the critique which Lawless is evidently levelling at it and to the theme of communal oppression which the untypical heroine struggles to overcome. R. E. Prothero's review in the *Nineteenth Century* actually praises *Grania* for not falling into the current category of New Woman novels: 'Miss Lawless does not redress the inequality of the sexes by proving that though women may not be heard in the congregation they may yet preach instructive sermons'.³⁹⁰ The review itself, however, does succumb to the familiar issue of national character, with the predictable patronisation.

She is deeply impressed with the gloomy side of the Irish character, and fully conscious -- perhaps too conscious -- of the strain of wild melancholy which runs through the peasant's reckless extravagance and exuberant drollery like the rambling music of the Aeolian harp caressed by the wind.³⁹¹

³⁸⁸ Belanger, 'The Desire of the West', p.107.

³⁸⁹ Belanger, 'The Desire of the West', p.107.

³⁹⁰ Prothero, R. E., 'Noticeable Books (No.111): *Grania* by Emily Lawless', *Nineteenth Century* vol.31, April, 1892, pp.693-695, p.693.

³⁹¹ Prothero, 'Noticeable Books (No.111)', p.693.

Prothero is not entirely appreciative of Lawless's detailed evocation of the island landscape by which the novel's theme of environmental and individual symbiosis is worked out, yet, overall, does recognise the novel's sparse lyrical beauty.

For the length of the story it is possible that there are too many subsidiary figures, just as there are scenes which may be deemed superfluous, descriptive passages that, in spite of their remarkable beauty, may appear excessive, and a gloomy atmosphere which may seem too persistently melancholy. Grania has faults -- what book has not to the eye of the critic ? -- but its defects are far outweighed by its merits. It is a charming story, full of natural life, fresh in style and thought, pure in tone and refined in feeling.³⁹²

Mrs Humphrey Ward in the *New Review* sees the novel as an index of the two main Celtic types, locating a racial flaw in both: 'The boastful personal type and the melancholy phantom-haunted type, the one leading to an empty arrogance, the other to a dreamy alternation of panic and reverie, and both alike to inertia and paralysis of will'.³⁹³ A similar interpretation of the novel's engagement with racial typology is mixed with concepts of conventional and unconventional femininity in the *Athenaeum*; 'Grania, heroic in her failings as in her strength, and Honor, the pale saint, are beautiful types of Irish womanhood'.³⁹⁴ The *North British Daily Mail* recognised, however, the more modern theme of the social restraint placed on the needs of women and identifies the contrasting femininities of the sisters.

The one is full of passion for which the only object is an unworthy one, hindered by conventional ideas from giving expression even to this, feeling intensely within the narrow range which circumscribes her, unable to find compensation for the troubles of this world in the ideas taught her about the next.³⁹⁵

Overall, none of the reviews of *Grania*, the vast majority of which are complimentary, identify the real social critique which the novel expresses. This may reveal a deeper failing in the novel that Lawless cocoons the subject of her narrative in so close an ethnic condition that the wider social relevance is diminished. Readers and critics may distance the issues into the theoretical space of national idiosyncrasy and type and bypass the insight it provides into working-class and peasant women's lives. It also seems odd that the novel's depiction of a biological force operating in the lives of humans is not commented on other than as a 'gloomy atmosphere', or a persistence of

³⁹² Prothero, 'Noticeable Books (No.111)', p.695.

³⁹³ Review, *New Review*, vol.35, (!892).

³⁹⁴ Review, *Athenaeum*, vol.99, (April, 16th. 1892).

³⁹⁵ Review, *North British Daily*, (March, 25th. 1892), Lawless Papers, Marsh's Library, Dublin.

‘melancholy’. At the time, it was readily recognisable that the work of Hardy, to name one example, was intimately informed by current ideas on evolution and heredity. Like Lawless, Hardy’s work exposes the dwindling viability of the rural population in challenging conditions and the powers of a biology which was judged to hold human destiny to ransom. It is also possible, apart from the alien nature of her subjects environment, that Lawless’s position as a woman writing in an area which seemed to be the preserve of the masculine intellect simply blinded such attentive analysis.

The Novel’s Opening: Adapting to Environment.

The indistinctness of natural features which dominates the novel’s opening locates the passengers of Con O’Malley’s hooker, Con O’Malley himself, his young daughter Grania, her young friend Murdough Blake, and the island pariah, Shan Daly, in a suspended existence as they spend the afternoon fishing in Galway Bay.

Clouds over the whole expanse of sky, nowhere showing any immediate disposition to fall as rain, yet nowhere allowing the sky to appear decidedly, nowhere even becoming themselves decided, keeping everywhere a broad indefinable wash of greyness, a grey so dim, uniform, and all-pervasive that it defied observation, floating and melting away into a dimly blotted horizon, an horizon which, whether at any given point to call sea or sky, land or water, it was all but impossible to decide.³⁹⁶

The undifferentiated landscape which everywhere keeps a ‘broad indefinable wash of greyness’, has its sympathetic response in the human consciousness. This response is ingeniously conceptualised in the interaction between the clouds floating, melting and blotting visual detail and the vacillating uncertainty captured in the repeated and varied use of the word ‘decide’. The subsequent paragraph compounds the effect as the sudden breaks or windows which allow shafts of sunlight to illuminate ‘crestless waves’ and ‘bleak corners of the coast’ merge with the ‘mere reports from without’ which fail to illuminate the ‘mystic condition of things’ in the consciousness of the island dwellers.

Here and there in that wide cloud-covered sweep of sky a sort of break or window occurred, and through this break or window long shafts of sunlight fell in a cold and chastened drizzle, now upon the bluish levels of crestless waves, now upon the untrodden corner of some portion of the coast of Clare, tilted perpendicularly upwards; now perhaps again upon that low line of

³⁹⁶ Lawless, Emily, *Grania: The Story of an Island* (London: Smith & Elder, 1892), p.1.

islands which breaks the outermost curve of the bay of Galway, and beyond which is nothing, nothing, that is to say, but the Atlantic, a region which, despite the ploughing of innumerable keels, is still given up by the dwellers of those islands to a mystic condition of things unknown

to geographers, but too deeply rooted in their consciousness to yield to any mere reports from without.³⁹⁷

As the word 'indeterminate' runs throughout this opening section so too does a quality of time-weary and elemental primitiveness which condenses into the geological antiquity of the island itself. The hooker, old and patched, displays an 'old, battered, much-enduring sail of indeterminate hue', big and almost immovable on the slow sleepy swells with its cargo of loose stones for ballast and humans who display equally much-enduring and rudimentary characteristics. Con O'Malley, Grania, Murdough Blake and Shan Daly are described in animal, racial and class type terms, terms which distance them sufficiently into the area of the constant and the fundamental. The Atlantic, ploughed by 'innumerable keels' is a 'grandmother of storms' with the potential for 'how many unborn tempests for ever and for ever brooding within her restless old breast'. These are the amniotic conditions in which the young individualism of Grania is formed but it is in the island's almost primordial environment that her differentiation proper takes place.

As Grania is dropped ashore from her father's hooker, she is met by her half-sister Honor and the two set off across the fractured rock slabs towards their cabin. The child is described in the attritional language of the island itself, an almost elemental object.

The air, the rocks, the restless, fretting sea; a few keen loves, a few still keener and more vehement hates; the immemorial criss-cross of wishes, hindrances, circumstances -- these and such as these had made her education, so far as she had had any.³⁹⁸

Inishmaan is inhospitable and forbidding, a place of erosive decay ravaged by the friction of weather and sea with its rocky steps or platforms divided by innumerable joints and fissures. Devoid of any significant vegetation or soil, the island presents a surface sculpted and honeycombed with holes 'as smooth as the torrent-worn troughs of a glacier'. A substantial register of geological and prehistorical reference is employed to collapse the island's present into a temporal limbo and also to locate it in the same 'mystic condition of things' which characterizes the consciousness of the

³⁹⁷ Lawless, *Grania*, p.1.

³⁹⁸ Lawless, *Grania*, p.16.

island population. As the two cross the island they pass through a landscape defined by the remote past. A set of rocks is ‘tumbled one against another like half-destroyed dolmens or menhirs’, the whole shore of that side of the island being ‘one continuous litter of them’. Nearing the O’Malley cabin the two sisters climb onto a platform which bears a striking resemblance to the ‘backbone of some forgotten monster, unknown to geologists’.

A python, say, or plesiosaurus of undetermined species, but wholly impressive vastness, stretching itself lazily across about a third of the island, till its last joint, sinking towards the sea, disappeared from sight in the general mass of loose stones which lay at the bottom of the slope.³⁹⁹

Later that evening the child escapes from her sister’s care and scrambles over the rocks into a Neolithic world ‘only a few hundred yards from her own door’. Her hideaway retreat is the rath of ‘Mothar Dun, one of seven or eight so-called Cyclopean forts’ forming part of a wider prehistorical compass, less towering than Dun Aengus ‘nor yet covering the whole top of the island like Dun Connor or Conchobhair’. Leaving the rath she sits disconsolately on a rock looking out to sea in the direction her father’s hooker has taken while the dusk gathers round her. Earlier, as she sat perched on the ballast stones of her father’s hooker, Grania had been described as incongruous against the amorphous surroundings which comprised her world.

Seen against that indeterminate welter of sea and sky, the little brown face with its rapidly moving glances, strongly marked brows, vividly tinted colouring, might have brought southern suggestions to your mind. Small Italian faces have something of that same outline, that flash, that vividness of colouring: gypsies too.⁴⁰⁰

Now, as she sits ‘with her feet dangling over the top of the fort’ she presents an equally striking contrast as ‘a quaint little red-petticoated figure, the solitary spot of colour in all that desolate greyness’. The emerging of distinctness from such a bleak background, embryonic as that distinctness yet is, achieves its fullest expression when Grania leaves Mothar Dun and descends a ‘single gigantic stair’ to sit and muse. The setting is overwhelming and menacing, diminishing to a level of irrelevance its current occupiers and particularly the diminutive figure of the child herself.

³⁹⁹ Lawless, *Grania*, p.18. The work of Charles Lyell in the areas of geology and palaeontology, particularly his *Antiquity of Man* (1863), had a widespread influence on Victorian perceptions of the immensity of time and of the diminished status of the human species within the natural world.

⁴⁰⁰ Lawless, *Grania*, p.3.

To the north, behind the child's head, the great grey profile of Dun Conchobhair lifted its frowning mass, well-defined against the sky -- a dark, sinister fragment of a long-forgotten past, looking gloomily down upon the poor, squat, weather-beaten habitations of today.⁴⁰¹

Yet it is the diminutive figure of the child which gradually reduces and dominates in turn her surroundings, finally incorporating them entirely. Almost imperceptibly the child's consciousness begins to interact with and manipulate the landscape. 'The "Old Sea" as the islanders call the Atlantic' seems to grow 'curiously small'.

As it grew darker, the shapes of everything began to change, blend, and melt into one another. The crooked iron supports, bent and red with rust, took on new and more fantastic forms. They seemed now a company of spindle-legged imps, writhing, twisting, tugging to right and left, so as to escape from the weight of what they had undertaken to carry. Red flakes, fallen from them, lay in all directions upon the ground, mixed with fragments of black oarweed, like so many twists of old worn-out tobacco. Everything breathed a dull calm, a half stupefied melancholy.

The swell slid lazily up one side of the little pier, hiding its stones and rat-holes for a moment, then fell heavily back again down the other, with a movement that was almost suggestive of a shrug, a gesture of somewhat bored resignation.⁴⁰²

The initial blending and melting of things into one another recalls the opening paragraph's interrelating of floating, melting cloud with the human incapacity to decide. In this sequence, however, the child Grania proceeds to differentiate, deciding the issue and on her own behalf through an imaginative intervention. This intervention becomes deeply personal as the writhing and tugging of the spindle-legged imps reflects the tussle she witnessed between her adored Murdough and the reviled Shan Daly earlier in the day, while the rust fragments and oarweed make present again her father's pipe-smoking as he leaned against the traffail of his hooker that afternoon. Such a transference onto the external of her inner world is complete when her own sense of dejection is conveyed through everything breathing 'a dull, a half-stupefied melancholy', and the movement of the waves suggests 'a shrug, a gesture of somewhat bored resignation'.

This imposition on the outside world of the child's moods and concerns is the tentative founding of a subjectivity which will increasingly struggle with its inner and outer manifestations as Grania grows towards greater self-awareness. Already a disposition to shape and refine realities through an act of will is indicated as her

⁴⁰¹ Lawless, *Grania*, p.26.

thoughts run through the incidents of the afternoon.

She thought over the incidents in the boat that afternoon, and clenched her two little rows of white teeth afresh at the recollection of Shan Daly's attack on Murdough. Then she took to wondering where Murdough was, and whether he was on his way back, a vague dream of floating away some-where or other in a boat, only he and she together, rising blissfully before her mind.⁴⁰³

In terms of individual difference Grania's childhood subjectivity conceives of itself through its identifying relationship with others.

A momentary qualm as to Honor came to cross these delights, quickly dispersed, however, by the reflection that Honor had her prayers and her cross, and that she really wanted nothing else, whereas she, Grania, wanted many things, while as for Murdough Blake, that hero's wants were simply insatiable -- grew and multiplied, in fact, with such rapidity that even his most faithful admirer could hardly keep pace with them.⁴⁰⁴

The focussing of her thoughts on the 'wants' of herself and others reveals the source of divergence between her and them. Murdough and Honor equally pursue wants which have no impact on an unremitting reality. Murdough is already recognized as a dreamer of unrealisable and extravagant fantasies 'that heroes wants were simply insatiable-grew and multiplied', an observation which hints at the frustration which Grania will eventually experience from Murdough's unreliability. Honor too is understood to be self-sufficient in having her needs gratified in her religious fervour, requiring nothing else from the world but 'her prayers and her cross'. Grania is aware of her own radical dissatisfaction with Honor's way of life, simply recording in opposition to Honor's austerity -- 'whereas she, Grania, wanted many things'.

Within this emergence of a subjective focus, the narrative weight is transferred from an all-encompassing and dominant featureless world to the minute particularity of Grania's hates, loves and aspirations. From a small child dwarfed by a lowering landscape to an embryonic consciousness reflecting on its intimate concerns, the conative force at the centre of Grania's movement towards self-awareness is discovered being honed on and defined against its target environment. A willing towards something, particular rather than general, inaugurates it and will be symbolized in the fragile and tenacious plant-life which struggles to defy the island's harsh conditions. Also, however, its defiant aspect introduces the oppositional tug-of-war between Grania's demand for selfhood and that same suffocating, debilitating

⁴⁰² Lawless, *Grania*, p.26.

⁴⁰³ Lawless, *Grania*, p.26.

sameness which characterizes that environment and its attempts to neutralize individual invasion.

Stock and Pedigree: Honor and Grania.

Yet it is in the relationship with her half-sister, Honor, that Grania's difference is most pronounced. The contrast these two sisters present within the same domestic space serves to indicate the radical ingredient which separates them. The product of an island marriage whose immediate siblings have all died, Honor houses within her an endemic atrophy. Associated with sickness and suffering, she is the embodiment of the island's decay, epitomised particularly in the desolate little chapel filled with sand and its disfigured cross whose 'small boss or ridge, which apparently once represented feet' she devoutly kisses whenever she passes it. As the two negotiated the holes and fissures of the stratified bedrock as they journeyed over the landscape towards home they encounter the small ruin chapel abandoned in the surrounding barrenness.

Here, invisible until you all but brushed against its walls, rose a small chapel, roofless, windowless its door displaced, its gable ends awry-melancholy to look at, yet not without a certain air of invitation even in its desolation. Sand had everywhere invaded it, half hiding the walls, completely covering the entrance, and forming a huge drift where once the altar had risen. Looking at it, fancy, even, in calm weather, seemed involuntarily to conjure up the sweep of the frightened little atoms under the flail of the wind; the hurry-scurry of distracted particles; the tearing away of the frail covering of bent; the wild rush of the sand through the entrance; and, finally, its settling down to rest in this long-set-aside haven of the unprotected.⁴⁰⁵

The description of this chapel is, in fact, a very precise representative image of Honor herself. At the mercy of the elements and melancholy in appearance it nonetheless is 'not without a certain air of invitation even in its desolation'. Yet even more so through the language of stress, fear, deprivation and pain relieved by an almost desperate refuge, a quality is evoked which resides within the roofless, windowless structure and which symbolizes the comfort and succour Honor herself embodies for the island community. The true resonance of this setting with Honor becomes apparent when the sisters reach their cabin only to find the emaciated wife

⁴⁰⁴ Lawless, *Grania*, p.26.

⁴⁰⁵ Lawless, *Grania*, p.17.

and children of Shan Daly waiting outside its entrance. The family's resemblance to the 'frightened yellow atoms under the flail of the wind' is obvious as they huddle about the doorway waiting to be admitted and fed, described as being more like earth or rock than living flesh 'so grey were they, so wan, so much the same colour, so much apparently the same texture'. Just as the young Grania's emotions were bodied onto the movement of the waves; 'almost suggestive of a shrug, a gesture, of somewhat bored resignation', giving an external anchor to her subjectivity, so, too, Honor's individual character is projected here for the sake of concretising her. The difference, however, is that Grania is projected onto a vital, active agency, while Honor is reflected in a wasted cultural past. Consoling as Honor's function might be, it is fundamentally a passive presence, evidenced in the description of her face.

A look of peculiar contentedness, an indescribable placidity and repose, had stamped those homely features as with a benediction. The mild brown eyes, lifting themselves blinkingly to the sun-light, had something about them, chastened, reposeful, serene, an expression hardly seen beyond the shelters of the convent...⁴⁰⁶

As Grania's story begins six years after its opening episode, with her father Con O'Malley dead, and herself grown to a 'tall, broad-chested maiden', Honor is reduced to a house-bound consumptive invalid exhibiting the characteristics of a figure from devotional art.

Early Italian painters have all tried their hands at it. How well we know it! -- that peculiar look, a look of toil-worn peace -- peace caught as it were out of the inmost heart of pain; the hollow cheek the deeply marked eye-sockets, the eyes looking out as prisoners' eyes look from their dungeon bars; -- we all recognise it when great art shows it to us, though rarely, if ever, otherwise. Upon a canvas Honor O'Malley's face might have been the face of a saint or martyr. It *was* the face of a saint or a martyr, as saints and martyrs find their representation in these days of ours.⁴⁰⁷

Registering as images of female saintliness an acceptance of a fate visited on them rather than participated in, they reinforce the perception of Honor as a testament to an inevitability which borders on determinism. Her attitude is one of retreat from a reality with which she cannot cope and so the virtues ascribed to her are abstractions, with little utility in the environment which surrounds her; 'the more recondite, saintlier virtues-faith, meekness, holiness, patience'. Late nineteenth-century representations of respectable femininity concentrated on attributes of sexual

⁴⁰⁶ Lawless, *Grania*, p.16.

⁴⁰⁷ Lawless, *Grania*, p.45.

passivity, chastity, purity, innocence and, above all, sexual ignorance. This image was reproduced in a variety of cultural forms; conduct books, sketches of modern female types, essays on morals and manners in the magazines and periodicals, in the heroines of domestic fiction and in the fragile, sacrificial and nun-like images of many paintings of the 1850s and 1860s.⁴⁰⁸ In this respect Honor is being represented as the conventional domestic symbol of womanhood through abstract traits which facilitate a conceptual endurance rather than engagement and so identify Honor with the process of the island's slow erosive history.

The correlative opposite of this slow erosive history is provided by the biologically vibrant and aggressive attributes of Grania, indicators of her radical difference not only from her half-sister but from the island community in general. Grania represents variation in all its disruptive challenge to the acquiescent homogeneity which enervates her fellow islanders.

In her neighbours' eyes she was a 'Foreigner', just as her mother had been a foreigner before her, and there was much shaking of heads and lifting of hands amongst the matrons of Inishmaan whenever her name was mentioned. Even to her sister who adored her, who had adored her from the cradle, she was a source of much disquietude, much sisterly anxiety...⁴⁰⁹

As Honor is figured in terms of the decrepitude which marks the island's communal past, Grania is described in the language of evolutionary 'fitness' which distinguishes itself on a physical and biological basis. Six years after the opening scene on her father's hooker and now a young woman, Grania is firmly positioned within the discourse of natural selection. Grown into a young maiden 'vigorous as a frond of bracken in that fostering Atlantic air, so cruel to weaklings, so friendly to those who are already by nature strong', the sense of belonging to her island is couched in terms of adaptability to environment, 'It belonged to her as the rock on which it has been born belongs to the young seamew. She had grown to it and it had grown to her'.⁴¹⁰ Unlike Honor's virtues which are founded on a cultural suppressing of particular drives and the withdrawal from an unsympathetic reality, Grania's are derived from a natural favouring, answering to very basic, personal loyalties.

Such a frame as Grania's is a good, ready-made home for most of the simpler, more straightforward virtues. Honesty, strength, courage, love of the direct human kind, pity for the weak -- especially the weak that belong to you, that are your own kith and kin, and dependent

⁴⁰⁸ Pykett, *The 'Improper' Feminine*, p.16.

⁴⁰⁹ Lawless, *Grania*, p.30.

⁴¹⁰ Lawless, *Grania*, p.30.

upon you -- these were born in her, came direct from the hands of Nature.⁴¹¹

The sturdiness which these virtues pronounce and the underlying family protectiveness which motivates them places Grania's strengths at the most fundamental level, possessing the dependability of instincts. The correspondence between 'direct human kind' and 'direct from the hands of Nature' points to an affiliation which is unmediated, cleared of Honor's religious and cultural filter. The advantage such a relationship gives her is expressed as a 'special faculty' which cannot be acquired and manifests itself in a physical superiority 'She could dig, she could chop, she could carry, she could use her muscles in every sort of outdoor labour as a man uses his, and moreover, find a joy in it all' and 'for sheer muscular strength and endurance she had hardly her match amongst the young men of the three islands'. Lyn Pykett, describing the New Woman type in relation to George Egerton's *Keynotes* observes: 'The central character bears all the signs of the New Woman and her contradictions. She is both self-sufficient and 'a creature of moments', unwomanly and hyperfeminine. Her unwomanliness is signalled by her brown hands, her skill in the 'masculine' pursuit of fishing, and the fact that she roams the countryside freely...'⁴¹² Profiling of her characteristics as incarnate energy consciously deploys Grania's character against the pervasive debility of her island while the emphasising of her distinctive attributes as 'born in her' locates the source of her difference in a biology which is uniquely hers. Grania, in effect, takes on the role of male provider, labourer, protector, earner, manager of the household finances and mediator between Honor and the outside world. This gender binary involving two women functions primarily to explore the traditional roles ascribed to the masculine and feminine by contemporary patriarchal discourses. By placing side by side two very different representations of women, in this case the proper feminine type against that of the New Woman, Lawless forces the reader to re-evaluate what constitutes femininity and just what its range potentially is. For all Honor's status as a moral figure her input into Grania's life is minimal while the demands made by her on Grania's emotional and physical resources are detrimental. In a world where the passive, moral bedrock of the conventionally feminine type simply is not sufficient, Grania's emotional and physical resources are considerable and have found their resilience and realised potential significantly in, and possibly because of, the absence

⁴¹¹ Lawless, *Grania*, p.30.

of any masculine surveillance or limiting restraint. The O'Malley household is said to be the wealthiest on the island yet it is a household of women. All of the other cabins which are met with in the text have male residents and yet demonstrate various degrees of destitution or domestic failure.

The actuality of this difference is felt by Grania herself as she prepares to leave Honor and hurry off to meet Murdough Blake.

With this idea in her mind she turned to look at her sister, a mere shadow now in her dusky corner, from which the hacking sound of a cough broke, with mournful iteration, upon the silence. A sudden feeling of pity, a sudden intense sense of contrast, swept over the girl's mind as she did so. She would have been incapable of putting the thought into words, but she felt it nevertheless. Herself and Honor ! What a difference ! Yet why ? Why should it be so ? Honor so good, so patient, she herself so much the contrary !⁴¹³

Biological variation as it is embodied in Grania is presented by Lawless as an unexpected and intrusive injection of vital energy into a worn-out heredity. As Honor points out, Grania is the offspring of 'a stranger come over from the Joyce country' who had mesmerized Honor's father with her dancing at Malachy O'Flaherty's wake. As a result, the very unconventional naturalness of the courtship which followed is judged offensive.

What ailed him to think of marrying her *I* never could fancy ! A man past forty years of age and a widower too ! An extraordinary thing and scarce decent ! No fortune to her neither, nothing but a pair of big black eyes-the very same as those two shining in your head this minute...⁴¹⁴

The sense of disruption to the normal order of things is not just familial but extends communally as a breach with island custom. Grania's mother, viewed from an enclosed island perspective, is 'a black stranger' and 'not related to anyone or belonging to the place !' Her appearance at the wake, the resuscitating of Con O'Malley's widower's heart, her reliance on sheer physical attraction in spite of disqualifying poverty constitutes Delia Joyce's exploitation of absence. Exuding a seductive physical presence as she 'danced with measured, stately steps down the centre of the stone floor; her red petticoat slightly kilted above her ankles, her head thrown back, her great, dark, slumberous eyes sweeping round the room', her sensuous apprehension of life is a defiance of the morbidity of the wake and of the island and is Grania's inheritance. Having settled Honor for the evening, Grania's

⁴¹² Pykett, *The 'Improper Feminine*, p.169.

⁴¹³ Lawless, *Grania*, p.51.

movements, as she hurries over the rocks to meet Murdough, instinctively mimic that sensuousness and passion in almost a re-enactment of her mother's dance.

As she hurried along her movements brought the blood tingling through her veins, and her spirits rose insensibly. She felt glad and light, she hardly herself knew why. Leaping from one rocky level to another, her feet beat out a ringing response to the clink of the grooved and chiselled rocks against which they struck.⁴¹⁵

The exultation she experiences makes her conscious of her own resilient vitality and clashes against the ever-present despair of Honor's sickness.

Did others find the same pleasure merely in breathing-merely in moving and working -- as she did, she sometimes wondered. Even her love for Honor -- the strongest feeling but one she possessed -- the despair which now and then swept over her at the thought of losing her, could not check this.⁴¹⁶

However, Grania is also a product of an island father. Unchecked as Grania's natural impulses are by Honor's debility she is nonetheless tied into a relationship which mirrors that of her wider association with the island's community. The pleasure she finds in 'merely breathing -- merely in moving and working', while an index of Grania's exceptionality, occurs within an environment, both cabin and island, which constantly delimits that pleasure yet significantly also facilitates it. Grania's biological variation is, after all, based on her divergence from a norm and as such her difference is calculated according to the respective values of that norm. Just as Grania's vitality needs the checks of Honor's atrophy in order to fully realise itself, so her singularity relies on and is measured by her refusal to be checked by Honor's own religious orthodoxy and by the orthodox superstitions of the community. The definition of Grania's character needs its opposite, to establish itself, a strategy which illuminates the purpose behind the narrative's composite conception of subject and other, island native and foreign miscegenation. As the two sisters pass the ruined church early in the narrative, Honor bends the young Grania's head to the cross which she herself has devoutly kissed. The actual earthy taste rather than any spiritual sacredness is what registers with Grania as she turns her mind to more immediate concerns.

Grania did not exactly resist, but her eyes wandered away again in the direction of the hooker, now fast disappearing round the corner. Why had Murdough Blake gone to Aranmore, instead of coming back with her? She thought with a sense of intense grievance. The disappointment

⁴¹⁴ Lawless, *Grania*, p.66.

⁴¹⁵ Lawless, *Grania*, p.51.

rankled, and the salt, gritty touch and taste of the boss of lime-stone against her small red lips could not, and did not, alter the matter one atom, one way or another.⁴¹⁷

The sharp definition of Grania's 'small red lips' which is achieved against the impersonal lime-stone, gives the child a significance which eclipses that of the traditional symbol, rendering it to a tangible reality by its impression on her mouth. Later, as a grown young woman, this impersonality translates into the conventional authority which a subservient Honor reveres and against which Grania's independent character achieves substance.

Nonetheless, Grania's rejection of such compliant obedience is a rejection of more than just that. Honor's subservience is to an order of things which promotes a passive determinism and a neutralizing of the self. The persistent attempts by Honor to draw Grania into this position of fatalism, negating the 'stranger' in her, merely make Grania more aggressively self-assertive.

The whole thing was utterly foreign and alien to her. There was nothing in it which she could catch hold of, nothing that she could feel to attach any definite idea to...The youth in her veins cried for life, life ! Sharp-edged life, life with the blood in it, not for a thin bloodless heaven that no one could touch or prove.⁴¹⁸

Consequently, the precluding of any variation in the all-inclusive reach of this blanket determinism is a damming of Grania's potential. The exasperation with which she reacts provides the clearest opportunity for a confronting of her own purposefulness and its grounding in the self.

'The priests may tell all they will of heaven but what is it to me ? -- just *gosther* ! 'Tis here I want a little bit of happiness, so I do. Maybe 'tis very wicked, but I could not feel different, not except I was to die first and to be born right over again, so I couldn't !'⁴¹⁹

Such a dismissal in favour of a personal vision concentrated around her 'wants' is a consolidation of that subjective consciousness which her lips, when pressed against the cold objectivity the of bossed feet, had occasioned.

As Honor's orthodoxy is the means through which Grania's individuality is allowed to discover itself, so her emotional and sexual scope is allowed to find its range against the failure of her betrothed, Murdough Blake, to meet it. Ostensibly a relationship of two young people engaged in reaching a shared understanding and sympathy, Grania's and Murdough's search merely reveals the widening and

⁴¹⁶ Lawless, *Grania*, p.52.

⁴¹⁷ Lawless, *Grania*, p.17.

⁴¹⁸ Lawless, *Grania*, p.67.

unbridgeable gap separating them. However, more so than with Honor, Grania's continuing failure to find some responsive relationship with Murdough which answers to her own needs propels her into a process of anxious self analysis. The depth of feeling on which she is compelled and able to draw establishes her as superior consciousness. Yet while her struggle to understand herself results in an expansion of sensitivity, such a superior consciousness is one which nonetheless requires its comparative opposite. As with Honor, Murdough's failings are Grania's gains.

Stock and Pedigree: Murdough and Grania.

In the first encounter with Grania as a grown young woman, as she hurries to meet Murdough, an expectedness, as of some potential waiting to be realised, invigorates her.

Grania hastened her steps. A curious look was beginning to dawn in her face: an habitual or rather a recurrent one, as anyone would have known who had been in the habit of watching her. It was a look of vague expectation, undefined but unmistakable; a look of suppressed excitement which seemed to pervade her entire frame. What there was to expect, or what there was to be particularly excited about she would have been puzzled herself to explain. There the feeling was, however, and so far it had survived many disappointments.⁴²⁰

That 'vague expectation, undefined but unmistakable' is expressly seen to be pitched against Murdough himself and the terrain in which Grania cultivates her patch of green. Walking back together towards the potato plot which she is cultivating, the challenge which that poses assumes a metaphorical relevance. The part of the island which frames the pair is a deplorable 'waste of desolation' and 'almost revoltingly ugly' with 'white pools staring upward like so many dead eyes'. The ruined fort of Dun Connor 'grey even amongst that greyness' sloughs away atom by atom 'like some decaying madrepore' and everywhere, above and below 'seeming to press upon the senses with an impression of ugliness, an ugliness enough to sicken not the eyes or the head alone, but the very stomach'.⁴²¹ That Grania should establish her patch of

⁴¹⁹ Lawless, *Grania*, p.86.

⁴²⁰ Lawless, *Grania*, p.34.

⁴²¹ Grubgeld singles this descriptive passage of the landscape out for particular mention as an instance of 'Lawless's own oscillation from affection to hatred' in her response to the natural environment of the West; 'she begins by describing Aran to an unfamiliar reader and ends overwrought with disgust at the folly of any human who

cultivated ground on this side of the island testifies to the disruptive presence which she embodies. More importantly, however, it indicates what she represents, a difference founded on intervention and on the application of will. To this Murdough Blake presents recalcitrance and the pull of regression. Like the ruined forts which characterize the island, Murdough's loquacious boastings and fantasies, in which he seeks a vain self-importance, are barren, empty glories shorn of any function.⁴²² However, the sense of failed potential which he conveys is better represented by the old villa which is a constant haunt of his as a refuge for idleness and drinking. The glory to which it pretends is shown to be literally mere façade as the underlying ordinary island stone is exposed behind its stucco exterior.

In shape it seemed to have been intended to imitate some small Greek or Roman temple, the front consisting of four cut granite pillars supporting a roof, and led up to by three wide shallow steps, which steps were also of granite, the reddish feldspathic granite of West Galway. The back and sides of the building, however, were only of the ordinary blue limestone of the island, once plastered with stucco, and white, but long since blistered and broken away. Damp and decay had, in fact, got possession of the whole building.⁴²³

Increasingly Grania comes to associate this villa with her growing dissatisfaction with Murdough's character weakness and his slide into dereliction. Perched on a nearby boulder as Grania works her potato patch 'complacently surveying her labours', Murdough rambles aimlessly on about his dissatisfactions and unrecognised merit. Listening to him in perfect silence Grania feels vaguely uncomfortable and cross as disappointment replaces the expectation she had entertained earlier. As with Honor, she can find nothing concrete in Murdough's visions with which she can identify: 'There was nothing about it that she could attach any idea to; nothing which seemed to have any connection with themselves, or their own life present or future'.⁴²⁴ That targeted attitude to existence which constitutes Grania's deviation from the norm is emphasized by the concentration she directs to 'steadily cleaning out her drills,

would attempt to live there'. Grubgeld, 'Emily Lawless's *Grania*', p.120.

⁴²² This association of the Irish character with a pastness or a condition empty of any contemporary or modern relevance and in need of regenerative intervention is observed by Whelan in reference to Edgeworth's deployment of stadialism by which the Irish condition is modernized by the English remedial presence; 'The "Hibernian" mode of existence is always seen as antiquated, archaic, doomed to obsolescence. They can only be rescued from it by external agency'. Whelan, 'Writing Ireland: Reading England', p.191.

⁴²³ Lawless, *Grania*, p.25.

⁴²⁴ Lawless, *Grania*, p.40.

scraping the small stones in front of her and laying them in heaps at the side'. While Murdough shifts from one topic to another, the orderliness and application of her efforts contrast tellingly with his garrulous torrent 'which, once started, could flow as readily and continue as long in one direction as in another'. However, neither is she as yet able to articulate for herself precisely what form her expectations take. Rather, she uses Murdough as a negative value: 'She wanted -- she hardly herself knew *what* she wanted-but certainly it was not words'. Grania's demand for the singular and the personal is a manifestation of that biological intervention which her parents made in the predictable typology of the island population. Rather than just the pursuit of such an objective for its own value sake, however, Grania's inheritance is effectively the source of her drive. Yet Murdough Blake's refuge in the consolations of language is also an articulation, in its own right, of his biological inheritance.

Walking home from the day's labours, the pair pass through the village of Ballinlisheen, Grania carrying a heavy bundle of seaweed on a fork over her shoulder with Murdough 'sauntering leisurely along with his hands in his pockets' beside her. As they become the topic of conversation for the local women sitting in the doorways, attention quickly focuses on Murdough's shortcomings and the genealogical history to which he is hostage. Peggy Dowd, the island's professional storyteller and, therefore, communal historian conflates the lineage into its definitive vainglory.

'Trath, 'tis the poor lot those Blakes of Alleenageragh are, and always have been, so they

have ! There was this one's grandfather-myself remembers him when he was no older than this one -- no, nor so old by a year -- a fine bouchaleen you'd say to look at him -- broad and bulky, and a clean skin, and a toss to his head as if all the rest in the place were but dirt and he picking his steps about amongst them. Well, what was he ? He was just nothing, that is what he was, and so I tell you, women, not worth a thraneen, no, nor the half of a thraneen.'⁴²⁵

What this statement contains are the two functions with which Grania will be compelled to negotiate and which she will attempt to overcome. Most immediately related to herself is the discrepancy between desire and fulfilment. Invested in Murdough Blake are the 'many wants', the gratifying of which Grania is relying on to distinguish her existence. Represented in the Blakes of Alleenageragh, however, is the inability to realise potential, signified in Murdough's grandiose schemes which substitute for reality. The Blakes attract with the promise and appearance of

⁴²⁵ Lawless, *Grania*, p.42.

singularity but fail to satisfy. The frustration is heard in the voice of Peggy Dowd as she pronounces on another of the family.

‘There was another -- Malachy Blake his name was --a great man, full of goster and Brag; you’d think it was the world he must have for himself, the whole world, no less, ... Well, I will tell you now about Malachy Blake. The heart of him was no better than the heart of a pullet -- of a sick pullet, when the eyes of it begin to turn up, and it squeaks, when you take it in your hand and turns over and dies on the floor’.⁴²⁶

Rather than acting on potential, the Blakes contribute to its undermining, sapping the vitality from it; “‘Tis down from the sky or up from the sea those Blakes of Alleeneageeragh do expect the money to be coming to them. A gosthering, spending, *having* brood they are and always have been’”. The function of biological variation which plays such a differentiating role in *Grania* has its reciprocal antithesis in Murdough who is depicted as a replication of characteristics rather than as an individual. Peggy Dowd’s references to Murdough as ‘this one’ in the sequence of Blakes represent him as a mere manifestation of the same type with perhaps the one qualification that Murdough personifies an exhausted heredity: “‘A fine man he was anyway to look at, I’ll say that for him, Malachy Blake, finer than this one, or six of him!’”. Presented in this way, Murdough is emptied of any directing force of his own, the traits, inherited from his progenitors, determining his role. Peggy Dowd requires only to apply the typology in order to forecast Murdough’s future and that of *Grania* with him.

‘Trath, and it is none too rich she’ll find herself when she is married to Murdough Blake !’ old Peggy Dowd said bitterly... ‘Rich is it ? Gorra !’tis eight days in the week she’ll find herself working for all her money if she means to keep a roof over her head and Murdough Blake under it -- yes, and going a shaughraun most like at the tail of it all, so she will. Mark my words, women, so she will, so she will !’.⁴²⁷

Such a typology begins to make its inevitability felt as *Grania* broods on the burden and curtailment which her investment in Murdough presents, leading, in turn, to a self-questioning which frays the innate wilfulness on which she has depended. As she considers the matter, *Grania* initially demonstrates a reliance on and faith in her own resourcefulness yet, as her focus becomes more introspective, that confidence wavers with the recognition of a reality which unsettles her.

She would have liked to have taken the matter, then and there, into her own strong hands, to

⁴²⁶ Lawless, *Grania*, p.43.

⁴²⁷ Lawless, *Grania*, p.44.

have beaten Shan Daly -- recognised aider an abettor in every misdeed -- soundly with her own two fists; to have dragged Murdough by force out of this ditch which his own folly was slowly digging below him. Yet, what could she do ? There was only one way of getting any more hold on him, and that was by marrying him...Besides, even if she did marry him, what then ? could she be sure of getting any more hold on him ? of stopping him from drinking ? of inducing him to do anything she wished ? Did he care much about her in any way, in fact, except so far as he cared for the cows and the pigs, and the other possessions she owned ? Did he -- Would he -- Had he -- ⁴²⁸

The transition expressed here from self-assertion to self-doubt is the first step in a process by which Grania's personal conviction is to be systematically undermined by Murdough's reversion to type.

The fragility of her position becomes clear when her emotional and sexual confusion overwhelms her during a visit to Teige O'Shaughnessy, a young weaver of the island. Standing on a 'half-peninsula, half-island,' which suffers complete isolation from Inishmaan with the rising tide, the O'Shaughnessy cabin is symbolic of the degradation which pervades the island as a whole. Like the old church and the disfigured cross, it displays the ravages of an inevitable re-absorption by the natural landscape: 'the cabin in which they lived was so twisted, sea-battered, brine-encrusted, and generally miserable', its immersion back into its original element already indicated by the grey light of the sea 'shining upon the floor and walls with something of the cold sheen and glitter of a sea-cave'. Wind and sea combined exert a repelling force around it, isolating it in its grip.

Especially was the wind cold and boisterous upon the narrow tongue of rock that linked the O'Shaughnessys' territory to the rest of the world. It seemed to be literally sweeping in from all sides at once as Grania made her way across, avoiding as far as possible the oily coils of weed strewn over it, and, having reached the other side, clambered up the short, steep bit of cliff which intervened between it and the cabin.⁴²⁹

The O'Shaughnessys themselves represent, through their physical debilities, an exaggerated testament to the degeneracy into which the island population overall is sinking. Denny and Bidy O'Shaughnessy share their ramshackle house with Teige, both deaf mutes and 'both of them extraordinarily ugly-a frightful, little old man, a hideous little old woman'. Pariahs of the community because of their deformity, they suffer the same isolation which characterizes the rocky outcrop on which their cabin stands. Their distance from the norm is also indicated by the absence of any

⁴²⁸ Lawless, *Grania*, p.84.

reproductive capability. The genealogical chain is broken, Denny and Bidy being brother and sister and Teige a nephew, possessing neither a patrilineal nor matrilineal descent. Teige himself is equally ugly, with a face which seems ‘to verge to a cruel degree upon the grotesque’ and an almost atavistic resemblance ‘a shock head, tangled enough to suggest the historic ‘glibbe’ of his remote progenitors’. Known as the *boccach* or cripple because of his lameness, Teige’s affection for Grania, reaching back to childhood, has received a very indifferent response, Grania bestowing on him the privilege of doing many odd jobs with which she would not trouble Murdough. Yet Teige is nonetheless industrious and competent, a familiar sight as he comes and goes ‘with his bundles of flannel and coarse homespun friezes’ and acknowledged as such: ‘A patient hard-working, poor *boccach*, that everyone admitted him to be’. In that regard he is the complement and opposite of Murdough, his physical defects and application shadowing Murdough’s stature and idleness. However, more importantly, he also supplies an emotional and sexual alternative.

Requiring some flannel to make a new bedgown for Honor, Grania visits Teige who has continued the family trade of weaver on the death of his uncle. On entering the O’Shaughnessy cabin, Grania is entering a world removed from her own rational, quotidian environment. In doing so she is also rendering herself vulnerable to its fey-like influence. Already, as a child, she had been lured to this cabin’s window and gazed in at the gesticulating twins, Denny and Bidy, only to experience a sense of terror. The interior of the cabin suggests both the magical and the threatening and Grania will experience both.

To anyone entering at that moment, a first glance would have revealed no figure but that of the weaver himself. As Grania advanced into the cabin, however, an oddlooking, little, doubled-up, red object rose from a corner of the hearth where it had been squatting, and came towards her, making queer bobs, ducks, and uncanny grimaces as it did so.⁴³⁰

This is Bidy, reputed to communicate with the *sidh* and, since her twin’s death; ‘grown more elf-like and uncanny than ever, as if the one tie that linked her to humanity had now been broken.’ As an agent of disruptive force and independent of human controls, Bidy is a catalyst for the internal, unresolved, desires which Grania is struggling to comprehend. While Grania and Teige bend over the loom talking that catalytic force seems to pervade the world around them:

⁴²⁹ Lawless, *Grania*, p.92.

⁴³⁰ Lawless, *Grania*, p.93.

While they stood there talking the cold light reflected off the sea shone upon their two heads bent over the loom, Grania's dark one, from which her shawl had dropped, and Teige's carroty poll, the fiery redness of which was only modified by the dust that had gathered thickly on it in the course of his day's work. The tide rose higher and higher, wetting the rocks and stranded, half-dry seaweeds, curling round the small indentations, and shooting noisily upwards in long jets of spray. It seemed as if the little house on top must presently be overtaken and washed away by it. They had to raise their voices to a shout so as to hear one another above the tumult.⁴³¹

The sea's deliberate manoeuvring, expressive of welling subconscious desire, is matched by old Biddy as by degrees she creeps in and out of the loom's 'crazy woodwork' until she arrives unobserved beside the two absorbed over the discussion of the flannel. Clutching their two heads when they approach close to one another, Biddy holds them together 'so that for a few seconds the two faces were forcibly pushed cheek to cheek, the total unexpectedness of the movement hindering either of them from resisting'. The immediate reaction of Grania is one of fury yet, turning to Teige, she is startled to find him transfigured, his eyes 'shining as they had probably never shone in his life before'.

Grania stared at him in sheer astonishment. What did he mean? What was he staring at? What on earth possessed him? She felt confused and startled. Something was passing through her, a sudden impression, she did not as yet know what it was, but it was something new -- something at once new and disturbing -- something that meant -- What, she asked herself confusedly, did it mean?⁴³²

As an awakening to her own capacity, this experience has the effect of redirecting energies through a much more confined channel. The sexual awareness which has been unlocked brings with it deep dissatisfactions. While its newness is figured as coming to her as an 'idea dropped out of another world', it is simultaneously suggestive of some tune or notion which had often before 'sung through her brain and tingled in her ears, been heard now and then for a moment, sometimes almost distinctly, then lost, then heard again'. By conceiving of her desire as a tune intermittently caught, the narrative subtly associates that desire with the memory of her mother's sensual dancing. However, its being felt often then lost again also constellates the recurring expectations followed by disappointment which Grania has invariably experienced with Murdough. Overwrought though she is and in a blind hurry to get away from the O'Shaughnessy spell, Grania nonetheless arrives at the

⁴³¹ Lawless, *Grania*, p.94.

cliff-side overlooking Murdough's habitual haunt, the old villa. As she stares down at it, the surrounding levels of barren rock convey a dispiriting rebuke to any hopes of her ever achieving a meaningful life among them.

Ledge above ledge, layer above layer, these last rose straight, horizontal, clean cut as if laid by some builder's hands, a mass of crude, uncompromising masonry. Under that heavy, lowering sky it was about as cold and menacing a prospect as could well be imagined -- a prospect, too, that had a suggestion somehow about it of cruelty. 'Look well at me,' it seemed to say, 'you have only to choose. Life up there on those stones ! death down here upon these -- there, you see, where the surf is licking the mussels ! Choose -- choose carefully -- take your time -- only choose !'⁴³³

Her choices seem to imply the same fate of futility and waste, the only independent action allowed to Grania being the freedom to choose. The cry of frustration she impulsively emits is instinctual and frantically assertive.

No one was in sight, not even a cow, only a few seagulls overhead, and with a quick impulse, born of her own hurrying thoughts, the girl suddenly flung up her arms, uttering at the same time a low cry, half of anger, half of sheer brain-tormenting perplexity. It was like the cry of some dumb creature, vague, inarticulate, full of uncomprehended pain, and of still less comprehended dissatisfaction.⁴³⁴

In the use of the words 'quick impulse', 'perplexity', 'dumb creature', 'inarticulate', Grania is linked closely with Bidy O'Shaughnessy, her low cry and the throwing out of her arms mimicking the gesticulating and grunting which serve Bidy for communication. Teige's earlier excusing of his aunt's behaviour: 'a creature that cant speak with her tongue, nor hear with her ears, nor understand, nor a thing ! What is she but a poor old lost one out and out' provides a description equally applicable to Grania. Struggling to recover the tune she has heard and lost again Grania's bewilderment is seen to grow more intense: 'What was it ? What was the name of that tune ? Was it inside herself or outside, or where was it ?'. On returning to Honor her bewilderment persists: 'It was as if something had got inside herself, or into the air- she could not tell where. That tune; what was it ? who had sung it to her ? what was its name ? what did it all mean ?' Again a correlation of Grania and Bidy is established by the narrative as, back in the O'Shaughnessy cabin, Bidy herself settles again 'in her usual place beside the chimney, her eyes fixed with a look of eager, unblinking fascination upon a particular spot amongst the rafters' and goes through

⁴³² Lawless, *Grania*, p.95.

⁴³³ Lawless, *Grania*, p.96.

⁴³⁴ Lawless, *Grania*, p.96.

the same bewildering process of trying to grasp something insubstantial and elusive.

All at once she sprang up, made a dart forward, and caught at something, small enough, apparently, to be contained in one hand, then retreated, gibbering and chuckling, to her stool again, as delighted evidently as a child that has captured a butterfly. Cautiously she opened finger after finger, at last the whole hand; peeped round each portion of it separately, examined front, back, and sides, her wrinkled old face twisted into an expression first of high glee, next of incredulity.⁴³⁵

Having opened a door onto this other side of herself, Grania, from this point on, will take on the aspect and reputation which Bidy endures of being 'queer' in the eyes of those that matter to her. For Grania such incongruity, however, is double edged. Isolation is not an option for her, as it is for Bidy, since the realisation of what she aspires to depends on a reciprocal relationship with Murdough. Grania's desires, however, the pursuit of which being invested in a figure as unresponsive as he is typical, are suggested to be as elusive as Bidy's *sidh*. The legacy of her visit to the O'Shaughnessys is her recognition of the differential which exists between these two positions. The dilemma can only be resolved within the consciousness of Grania herself. Yet that consciousness has received a shock in the reversal of perspective which Grania suffered during her visit to Teige. Concomitant with the sense that something deeply latent in her had surfaced, with startling effect, was the equally disturbing awareness of someone's gaze on her. The placing of her in such a position has its own intent, as she is vaguely aware, though what it signifies eludes her: 'What did he mean by trying to stop her? What did he mean by staring at her? What did he mean by...?'. For the first time Grania's concentration is entirely on someone else's, rather than her own, perceiving. The strength of purpose with which she had directed her personal focus will be diminished by the discomfiture of experiencing herself in this way, an object outside of herself, given meaning beyond her control. Initiated by the recognition of herself as sexual object, this discomfiture will eventually transform itself into a fundamental reorientation which endangers her hard won subjectivity.

⁴³⁵ Lawless, *Grania*, p.97.

Individual Promise and Social Revelation.

The conflict which operates on the personal and the collective levels in Grania's growth towards self-knowledge and search for self-fulfilment is condensed into two pivotal episodes in Lawless's narrative, revolving around an apparently confirmative individual vision and a devastating social epiphany. The exceptional dimension to Grania's life, that dimension in which her desires reside, is actualised for one summer's day spent fishing with Murdough during which the disparate elements that motivate and define her character are seen to momentarily coalesce. The day is essentially a representation of Grania's inner life, a day constructed around her values and needs freed from the uncomprehended pain and dissatisfaction which bedevil them. At the heart of it is the breaking of stagnancy and the setting free of energies hitherto suppressed or dormant. Rebelliousness and disruption define the day from the outset as the 'usual ascetic aspect' of Inishmaan and the other islands is said to give way 'to one of quite comparative frolicsomeness -- the sort of frolicsomeness suggestive of a monk or nun upon an unwonted holiday'. There is an air of foreignness which renders the setting all the more unfamiliarly attractive: 'The distant headlands, generally swathed to the very feet in clouds, wore today an air of quite Italian-like distinctness, joined to a not at all Italian-like sense of remoteness and distance'. This quality of distinctness which has always signified Grania's existence against an amorphous communal and physical background dominates and is a stressing of the individuality through which the day functions. The signs of Murdough's drinking are 'happily in abeyance', his bright eyes and clear skin making him look as vigorous and comely 'as heart of maiden sweetheart could desire'. An exuberance of detail predominates, the small cabins on Inisheer visible from miles off, 'the stones in their walls distinguishable separately even at this distance', beyond them 'twinkled a tiny, weed-covered lake with a crooked cross beside it', and beyond that the cliffs of Moher equally particularised 'with all the joints and scars on its face' visible. New life is injected into the old with the lightness and resilience usually associated with it, a resilience registering, appropriately, Grania's hopefulness and expectation.

At the point where they had got into the curragh the sand was one mass of silene, spreading its reticulated net in all directions. Across this green net the still young rays of the sun had struck, lighting up the thin long stems and white pendulous flower-heads, which sprang up again every

time they were trodden down, nodding, and nodding frantically, in breezy, reckless defiance of any such accidents.⁴³⁶

Like the small flower-heads, Grania's heart leaps and bounds 'under her old, patched bodice' forgetful of recent tormenting thoughts. This new life and its resilience in the face of setback is the maturing of that moment when Grania, as child, had projected onto the surrounding landscape her childish 'wants'. The vision she had then of floating away somewhere, just herself and Murdough, now comes to fruition through a resolute act of will. Drawing as it does on the imaginative power of her intimate wishes, Grania's day is invested with all that other-worldliness which her mother manifested and which was awakened by Bidy in the O'Shaughnessy cabin. When Grania and Murdough had walked to their boat the 'air had been full of all manner of alluring promises' and that seductive and sensual atmosphere deepens with the day.

The air appeared to be filled with soft scents; an all-pervading impression of fertility and growth, strong to headiness, seemed to envelop them as they sat there, one behind the other.⁴³⁷ The strange and the mesmeric constellate around Grania making her a source of enchantment.

The warm air caressed Grania; a sense of vague intoxication and happiness such as she had never felt before seemed to envelop her from head to foot. As it grew darker a quantity of phosphorescence began to play about upon the surface, dropping in tiny green rivulets from off their oars as they lifted them. It seemed to her as if the queer green glittering stuff was alive, and was winking at her; as if it was telling her stories; some of them old stories, but others quite new -- stories that she had certainly never heard or never understood before.⁴³⁸

The urge to share this sense of things new and regenerative with Murdough, to express her sexual desire for him, is obstructed by the compulsion to observe traditional island codes 'and one of the strictest of those conventions was standing like a wall of brass right in her path at that moment'.

All the same, nature, too, was strong; the witchery of the night was strong; the whole combining circumstances of the moment were exceedingly strong. There was no resisting them entirely; so, stopping for a moment in her leisurely rowing, she stretched out her hand and laid it lightly for a moment upon his shoulder, at the same time holding up the oar so as to let the shining particles run down the blade into the sea in a tiny green cascade.⁴³⁹

Grania's holding up her oar to create a tiny green cascade in an almost spell-weaving

⁴³⁶ Lawless, *Grania*, p.105.

⁴³⁷ Lawless, *Grania*, p.107.

⁴³⁸ Lawless, *Grania*, p.107.

gesture, and the touch which accompanies it, reproduces that moment of mysterious effect which Grania had experienced with Teige, yet this time she directs it on her own behalf. As the desire is realised in Murdough putting his arm about her waist and in their first 'genuine lovers' kiss', the impression made on Grania is equally as affecting as that in Teige's cabin.

Dark or light, hot or cold, sunlight, starlight, moonlight, it was all one that evening to Grania. The world itself seemed to have changed; to stand still; to be a new world. Everything about and around her had changed -- the sea, the sky, the boat, the rocks, the shore -- above all, herself; herself and Murdough. She knew now what she had only guessed before-knew it through every pulse and artery of her body. The old walls had broken down. The common heritage was at last hers -- hers and, as it seemed to her, his also. They loved; they were together. How, then, could the world fail to have changed ?⁴⁴⁰

Transformation seems to have been brought about and on Grania's terms. The vision which defines her is now Murdough's also and a new world replaces a degenerative and stagnant one. Grania's defiance of type has had its liberating reward, a revitalisation is made possible through the agency of her will. Yet, as the phrase 'as it seemed to her' suggests, this impression of transformative renewal is a purely subjective one. There is a strong element of irony in the final sentence which emphasises the almost deliberate naiveté of Grania's emotions. Throughout the day the intoxicating effect has been almost exclusively on her rather than him. In so far as the day's activity has been a celebration of individual experience, it has been Grania's and, as such, it has involved a certain distancing from Murdough. Grania's sense that the world has changed conflicts with Murdough's actual consistency which runs like a thread from morning to dusk without any meaningful alteration. The deep sense of personal joy which Grania experiences simply mollifies the impact of Murdough's unvarying behaviour. Although his incessant volubility on what he might have achieved had circumstances been different, an increasing source of irritation for Grania, continues unabated, on this occasion it is neutralised by Grania's 'sleepy satisfaction': 'To-day, however, her mood was so placid that nothing seemed to touch it'. Having once kissed, Grania is struck by the novelty and genuineness of their intimacy whereas Murdough simply takes advantage of the respite it has given to the day's work.

Profiting by the cessation of his labours, Murdough presently pulled out his pipe, lit it --

⁴³⁹ Lawless, *Grania*, p.108.

⁴⁴⁰ Lawless, *Grania*, p.110.

though not by the phosphorescence -- sucked at it for a few minutes, and, thus refreshed, embarked upon a new disquisition upon the great advantages to be gained by being a pilot.⁴⁴¹

By this subtle use of parallel levels on which Lawless's description of the day works, Grania's construction of reality can be seen to be overly subjective. Both lovers actually drift further apart during the course of the day, particularly following their lovers' kiss which Grania interprets as consummative. While the grandeur with which Murdough conceives schemes for himself escalates to ever greater demonstrativeness:

Sometimes, in the interest of his narrative, Murdough's voice rose to a shout, as he waved his arms in the air, shook his fist at an imaginary opponent, or looked appealingly at his auditor for response.⁴⁴²

Grania sinks into a self-reflective silence.

Grania, however never uttered word or syllable. She hardly looked at him, could not have told afterwards what he had been talking about, or what had passed them by.⁴⁴³

This clarity, therefore, is exclusively personal to Grania, the fleeting vision of a world in which all her desires and needs can be fulfilled. Grania's return to the actual world, the world in which she must engage with her frustrations and 'tormenting thoughts', is figured as taking place almost as an exiting from some magical intimate wonderland.

She only came back fully to life and to ordinary reality again when they had left the sands, and the sea, and the green, uncanny phosphorescence behind them, and were mounting soberly, one after the other, up the narrow, shingle-covered track which led to the cabin.⁴⁴⁴

When Bidy O'Shaughnessy had unfolded her fingers after Grania's visit, only to find her hand empty she turned and shook her fist furiously in the direction of her nephew Teige 'evidently regarding him as in some way or other responsible for the disappointment'. It is similarly the complexity of the real world which seems to bedevil Grania, her inability to fully understand its constituent realities and, increasingly, to misunderstand the most salient of those realities, Murdough and her relationship with him. Yet, as she has already discovered, a consequence of her growing self-awareness is the encroachment on her of that external, perplexing world. The effect of that influence is felt almost immediately after their day's fishing when, like Bidy, Grania's fingers uncurl from her grasp on something only for it to be

⁴⁴¹ Lawless, *Grania*, p.108.

⁴⁴² Lawless, *Grania*, p.109.

⁴⁴³ Lawless, *Grania*, p.109.

⁴⁴⁴ Lawless, *Grania*, p.110.

revealed as essentially nebulous. This revelation occurs on the day of the great Galway fair by which Lawless records a gradual journeying away for Grania from a conception of personal distinctiveness into an area of anonymity and the recurring type. Having on previous occasions entrusted her animals for sale at the fair to the care of her neighbour, Pete Durane, Grania is imposed on by Murdough to accompany him on the day's outing. For Grania, there is an intuitive and uneasy apprehension of the possible reduction to her individual dignity which might follow.

An inborn reluctance, a touch of savage pride had always hitherto made her shrink from facing

the crowds and the bustle. Of the mainland. Ever since those early days of her trips with her father in the old hooker she had hardly set foot outside their own island. There had been for her a sense of great dignity and importance in those old, lost, but never-forgotten days.⁴⁴⁵

However, expectation and promise are two potent constituents of Grania's essential difference. Honor, who wished her to go, had awakened Grania herself early that morning looking so much better 'that Grania had been able to start feeling as if all was really going well, and all would still go well with her and with all of them'. Murdough, having pictured in glowing colours the delights of what lay in store and having undertaken to look after Grania so energetically, walks briskly along the road from Cashla to Galway pointing to left and right and 'expatiating' to Grania's growing excitement. The little variation between her own island and the Connemara landscape is nonetheless sufficient 'to cause an exhilarated sense of travel' and of acquaintanceship with a world still imperfectly known and understood. However, Lawless, through the narrative's description of the road from Cashla into Galway, creates a sense of anticipation consistently delayed and frustrated by building on an expectation of change which never materialises.

Mile after mile, and still you say to yourself that the stony deluge must have reached its limits, that the stones will soon begin to cease; somewhere or other, a little farther on, at the next turn, there will be unencumbered fields again, grass, perhaps, possibly even trees; at the worst an earth free from this soul-wearying, this eternal, interminable incubus of stones.⁴⁴⁶

Neither is there any relief to be found in the destination to which this road leads since 'there is nothing till the Galway suburbs grow, grey and unlovely, upon your sight'. Similarly Grania's belief, despite her apprehensions, that, finally, all would still go well is surreptitiously being undermined by the narrative's strategy as she tramps

⁴⁴⁵ Lawless, *Grania*, p.111.

⁴⁴⁶ Lawless, *Grania*, p.111.

along the road with her fellow Aranites. While Grania is diverted by the novelty of her new experiences there is a transition in the narrative's method by which it redirects its focus from her status as an individual to her assimilation into the collective type, depersonalising her in the process.

The group of Aranites tramped rapidly along in their cow's-skin pampooties, their tongues keeping pace with their legs. In their homespun flannel clothes and queer shoes, with their quick, alert, yet shuffling tread, they formed a marked contrast to the ordinary peasants of the mainland, most of whom stopped short on encountering them, and a brisk interchange of guttural salutations took place.⁴⁴⁷

This collective identification is matched by a much deeper narrative depersonalisation through the subtle association which is implied between herself and the animals that are the purpose of the market. As the group of Aranites proceeds along the road to Galway the narrative detail turns on a distancing of them into the mode of muscular, reflexive movements akin to that of a herd of beasts. They 'tramp rapidly' as though being driven, the swinging gait of animals caught in the phrase 'their tongues keep pace with their legs'. Likewise, their tread, 'quick, alert, yet shuffling', is that of cattle being hurried then hampered, and the 'brisk interchange of guttural salutations' is drained of any human content and restricted to an instinctive impulse. Once in the market place, Grania becomes more specifically associated with the animals being bartered.

To Grania's unaccustomed ears the noise seemed to echo and re-echo from every house around, big grey or white houses -- enormously big in her eyes -- and all strange, all full of people standing in the windows and looking out, laughing at the crowd below -- that crowd of which she herself was but a solitary and an insignificant fragment.⁴⁴⁸

Their bewilderment and nervousness is reflected in her own response as the noise that echoes and re-echoes from the houses registers as 'enormously big in her eyes-and all strange'. Immersed in the market's frenzy, with Murdough having abandoned her almost immediately, Grania's anxiety is measured through the intense stress of the animals.

Left to herself, Grania soon grew utterly miserable and bewildered. She was not frightened by the crowd, for that was not her way; but the noise, the shouts, the rude shoving, the laughter, the rushing to and fro of the animals, the loud thumps upon their wretched backs, the pushing of the people about her, the constant arrival of more cars, more carts, more people, more beasts, more big, excited men in frieze coats, the necessity of being constantly on the alert, so

⁴⁴⁷ Lawless, *Grania*, p.112.

⁴⁴⁸ Lawless, *Grania*, p.113.

as to hinder oneself from being cheated -- all this disturbed and annoyed her.⁴⁴⁹

Such has been the subtle and systematic merging into collective anonymity which began with the 'soul-wearying' road from Cashla with its incubus of stones 'mile after mile, and still never a sign or hint of change, never the slightest diminution in their multitude'. The group of Aranites, the mainland peasants, people laughing from windows, the market crowd, men in frieze coats, Murdough seen twenty times in the distance 'finding, as he drew near, that it was someone else', the cattle-jobber, none of those who feature in the day's occasion are specific individuals but are rather representative types. This is Murdough's day, devised and urged by him, and as such the collective and the type are its dominant form, a form into which Grania, because she allies her own individuality with Murdough, inevitably is drawn. As the reciprocal event to Grania's day fishing, it is the cancelling out of all the 'alluring promises' and the private certainty which that day appeared to establish.

Dejected and 'smarting under a sense of wrong and injury' Grania decides to return to Cashla alone through a steady downpour of rain.

In spite of this she hurried on along the dreary, featureless road, hardly heeding where she was going, only filled with the desire of escaping from that dreadful fair, which to her had been a scene not merely of disappointment but something far worse -- a breaking down of this sweet, this newly-found, this hardly-touched happiness -- a source of intense bitterness; of a bitterness how intense she herself hardly yet knew.⁴⁵⁰

Reaching the spot where they had disembarked and unable to find a boat to cross to Inishmaan, Grania huddles, exhausted and wet, beneath a bank. As she waits, a woman exits from a nearby cabin to fetch water trickling from a pipe close to her. An emaciated creature, almost too weak to walk or stand, she gazes at Grania 'with a look of dull indifference, either from ill-health or habitual misery' before filling her pail from the pipe and turning towards the cabin again. Taking the pail from her, Grania carries it to the door.

The woman stared a little, but said nothing. Some half-naked, hungry-looking children were playing round the entrance, and through these she pushed her way with a weary, dragging step. Then, as if for the first time observing the rain, turned and beckoned Grania to follow her indoors.⁴⁵¹

Lawless's portrayal of this west of Ireland cabin and its inhabitants is bleak in the extreme, the interior said to be dark as a cellar with 'a pale, sickly glimmer' hanging

⁴⁴⁹ Lawless, *Grania*, p.113.

⁴⁵⁰ Lawless, *Grania*, p.114.

about the edges of some charred sods of turf. In the corner lies a drunken man, not too drunk 'to maunder out a string of incoherent abuse, which he directed at his wife without pause, meaning or intermission as she moved about the cabin'. Having raked the embers and put fresh turf on the fire, Grania sits opposite the woman, appalled at her 'extraordinary apathy' and the 'hideous squalor of the house'.

Something new was at work within her. She did not yet know what it was, but it was a revelation in its way -- a revelation as new and as strange as that other revelation two days before in the boat, only that it was exactly the reverse of it. A new idea, a new impression, was again at work within her, only this time it was a new idea, a new impression upon the intolerableness of life, its unspeakable hopelessness, its misery, its dread, unfathomable dismalness.⁴⁵²

Such newness, repetitively dwelt on, produces a discordance when attached to such soul-wearying insight. The conceptual clash is as strident as that between Grania's innovative nature and the relentless reality to which she is forced to acknowledge and give validity, that resigned, passive fatalism advocated by Honor.

Yes, Honor was right, the priests were right, the nuns were right, they were all right -- there was no happiness in the world, none at all -- nowhere ! Murdough Blake ? -- well, Murdough Blake would be just like the rest of them, just like every other husband -- worse, perhaps, than some.⁴⁵³

In an ironic twist to that 'all-pervading impression of fertility and growth' which had seemed to envelop her just two days earlier, Grania now foresees herself 'a dozen years later; broken down in spirit; broken down in health; grown prematurely old; her capacity for work diminished; with a brood of squalid, ill-fed children clamouring for what she had not to give them'.

With a sudden sickening sense of disgust and yet of fascination she turned and looked again at the man, still swearing and squirming in his corner. All at once an overpowering feeling of revolt overtook her, and with a bound she sprang to her feet and ran out of the cabin and down the road. Anywhere, anywhere in the world would be better than to remain an instant longer looking at those two, that man, that woman ! Who were they ? Were they not simply herself and him -- herself and Murdough ?⁴⁵⁴

The conviction that personal fulfilment could be achieved by her, and indeed had seemed to be during the day fishing, is dashed by this vision of life's inescapable misery. Thus the dilemma of the O'Shaughnessy is visit brought to its point of

⁴⁵¹ Lawless, *Grania*, p.114.

⁴⁵² Lawless, *Grania*, p.115.

⁴⁵³ Lawless, *Grania*, p.115.

⁴⁵⁴ Lawless, *Grania*, p.116.

resolution. Grania can no longer simultaneously distinguish herself from and ally herself to an island typology. Such a duality can no longer be sustained following her betrayal by Murdough. Moreover, implicated in this is the decentring which she had experienced throughout the market day. The swamping of her individuality in its collective chaos signified her threatened inclusion in a deterministic pull which she had struggled to negate. In the day's aftermath, with the recognition of her future self in the nameless, broken figure occupying the Galway cabin, that inclusion becomes reified.

The struggle for self-assertion.

Grania's coherence as a subject, her emotional and intellectual stability, derives from the enabling context of Honor and Murdough who provide the frame for her personal definition. The precariousness of this dependence is exposed with the realisation of Murdough's disregard and intractability, and the consequent defeat of all her expectations. Confessing, in a moment of frustration, her intimate difficulties to Honor, Grania rushes, distressed, from their cabin only to stop by the large granite boulder which stands sentinel beyond the door. The erupting of her sexuality in this way brings again to the surface that 'other world' of Biddy O'Shaughnessy and the taint of queerness associated with it. What she sees as necessary to vindicate her life also appears to her as aberrant and Grania herself worries that she has 'actually crossed the line that separates sanity from madness'.

Could she really be going crazy? She asked herself. Would she soon be seen gibbering by the roadside like mad Peggy O'Carroll, who was always laughing to herself at nothing, and being mocked at by the boys as they drove the kelp donkeys to and from the sea-shore.⁴⁵⁵

In an action which might anchor her thoughts, counteracting that other world's grasping for insubstantial objects, Grania embraces the stone's cold solidity.

She went to the edge of the platform and put her head against the big boulder, invisible but still present, a familiar object sustaining and comforting. Stooping down, she pressed her cheek closer and closer against the gritty surface till it began to hurt her. What ailed her? she once again asked herself, what did *ail* her, what did it all mean?⁴⁵⁶

Like the red lips which kissed the disfigured stone feet when she was a child, this embrace grounds her need in the mundane and the everyday, although this time

⁴⁵⁵ Lawless, *Grania*, p.121.

providing a sharper outline to Grania's fragility rather than her defiance. As an attempt, however, to invoke a reality with which she can cope it is a failure. By embracing the 'old stone' she is, in fact, eliciting succour from an image of Murdough himself as an effect of her own desire, 'invisible but still present, a familiar object sustaining and comforting'.

Unaware of just how deep her dependence is, Grania resolves to herself to break with Murdough, believing 'surely that would give her peace if anything would?'. Reassured by this gesture she moves about the platform of rock 'with a sense of having regained her old liberty, with a sense of being once more Grania O'Malley, the cleverest, strongest, richest girl on the whole island'. However, while in the Galway cabin the horror of its degradation had revolved around the loss of her status as strong and rich, when confronted with the prospect of a breach with her inner sustaining and comforting desires, such quantifiable considerations prove insufficient. With the shock of this realisation, Grania's self-reliance collapses in a surrender to that determinism against which she had resolutely expressed herself.

Better be ill used by Murdough; beaten by Murdough; toil, drudge, be killed by Murdough; better have her heart broken by Murdough; better have to give up the farm, and be ruined by Murdough, than live prosperously and comfortably with anyone else ! The thought of the cabin seen a few weeks before at Cashla, rushed back suddenly upon her mind, but now with none of that previous sense of disgust, none of that horror of revolt and loathing which had filled her then. Even in this extremity, even so, dead drunk in a corner, Murdough was still Murdough—the first, the only one. Idle ? yes; tipsy ? yes; cold, unkind, indifferent even ? yes, yes, yes, still he was *Murdough*, her Murdough, always the same Murdough, and what did anything else matter ?⁴⁵⁷

In respect of this collapse, Lawless demonstrates Grania's superior consciousness in effect to be disadvantaged by the world she occupies. As a dimension to her life which required for itself a significant intervention in Murdough's life also, it has compelled the renouncing of its own finer, redeeming power. The contradiction is made patent, when, running back and flinging her arms about the boulder, the stone substitute assumes an even more ironic resemblance to the actual Murdough; she 'pressed her cheek against its gritty, irresponsive surface. It was like a reconciliation !'

Simulation is not real and Grania has consistently misjudged the differential

⁴⁵⁶ Lawless, *Grania*, p.122.

⁴⁵⁷ Lawless, *Grania*, p.123.

which has existed between Murdough Blake of Alleenageeragh and her imaginary 'Murdouheen'. Rather than being reconciled to a reality, therefore, Grania has simply restructured her conception of it to her disadvantage, still resolutely intent on projecting an image of her own needs onto an unaccommodating world. Grania's miscalculation materialises when Murdough, following an absence of over a fortnight, approaches her for money. Intending to rage at him and then to confess she could tolerate his drunkenness 'if only he would care for her a little, a very little more', Grania finds herself instead being infuriated by Murdough's inept response: 'I did not think you would speak so, Grania O'Malley, when all the world knows that we two are to be married shortly, and you such a rich girl'.⁴⁵⁸ Breaking with him from sheer exasperation, Grania's alienation from herself seems to be equally complete.

She went about her work, therefore, like a dazed creature; saw to the house, cared for Honor, fed the beasts; but it was as a body with no soul inside it -- a mere shell. Was she herself, she sometimes wondered dully, or was she someone else? She really hardly knew.⁴⁵⁹

Murdough's relationship with Grania is grounded in the perception of her as a nurturing figure to him, a resource from which his uneven and indecisive nature can draw sustenance. Indifferent to her needs and objectified by him, she has, nonetheless, constituted the major support to his imaginary self. Yet the incursion into his life of this new emotional energy represents the threat of the unpredictable. That Murdough now locates Grania in that same space occupied by Bidy O'Shaughnessy becomes evident as he contemplates her deviation from the normal and the reassuringly familiar.

What ailed her? He asked himself again and again. What an extraordinary queer girl she had grown of late! He next reflected, thinking over the scene of their quarrel. What queer eyes she had! -- 'Tis as if the devil himself was sitting at the bottom of them, and staring at you -- the devil himself, no better -- enough to scare a man, so they are! Quite enough to scare a man!' he repeated several times to himself, as he recalled the look of concentrated rage with which she had sprung upon him and swept him, as it were, out of her path in her fury. 'Twasn't safe she looked, so she didn't then-not safe at all'.⁴⁶⁰

The method by which Murdough is seen to measure the change in Grania actually reflects the gap between her conception of him and the reality. Individual personal inconsistency is rejected in favour of those indicators of consistent type which have

⁴⁵⁸ Lawless, *Grania*, p.126.

⁴⁵⁹ Lawless, *Grania*, p.137.

⁴⁶⁰ Lawless, *Grania*, p.137.

no subjectivity.

The little Grania had admired him without criticism; the little Grania had no sombre moods; the little Grania never gazed at him with those big, menacing eyes-eyes such as a lioness might turn upon someone she loves, but who displeases her -- the little Grania was natural, was comprehensible, was just like any other little *girsha* in the place, not at all like this new Grania, who was quite out of his range and ken; an unaccountable product, one that made him feel vaguely uneasy; one who seemed to belong to a region in which he had never travelled; one who was 'queer' in short; the last word summing up concisely the worst and most damning

thing that could be said of anyone in Inishmaan.⁴⁶¹

By negating those qualities which actually particularise Grania, Murdough is attempting to neutralize the specifics of her subjectivity which would require a responsive adjustment from him but which he is incapable of making. The indicators he uses to differentiate the old from the new Grania are, in fact, indicators of his own limitation.

Lying in wait to accost and hopefully mollify her, Murdough proceeds, through his ready flow of eloquence and aspirations, to absorb Grania gradually back into his vacuous, ineffectual world. Yet even after Grania surrenders all the money she possesses, seeking that reconciliation she had fabricated earlier, there is still an abiding and unsettling fracture in the image of Grania present to Murdough which emphasises his rootedness in type.

Through all this satisfaction there returned, however, from time to time the same, vague uneasiness about Grania. She had only done what she ought; had given him the money right off in a lump, without any lecturings or bargains; that was all quite natural and proper, but, upon the other hand, what sort of wife would she be, this Grania, for a quiet, easy-going boy, who only wanted to live in peace and quietness. ? Wasn't she queer ? Mother of Moses ! she was queer ! The queerest girl in the whole world ! That was the burden, refrain, summing-up of all his meditations about her.⁴⁶²

Grania's alienation, which seems to intensify the more she grasps at any form of personal fulfilment through Murdough, is demonstrated in his 'burden and refrain', a summing up which measures the distance she has actually put between them. That Grania's difference from the norm is a measure of her unique identity is testified to by the unease she creates in Murdough yet it can be maintained only while its defining characteristic, her active wilfulness, persists.

⁴⁶¹ Lawless, *Grania*, p.137.

⁴⁶² Lawless, *Grania*, p.141.

Ironically, the source from which Grania is allowed to draw a new and revitalised wilfulness is the fatalistic Honor. As Honor's condition deteriorates, Grania is presented with the difficulty of getting a priest across from the neighbouring island of Inishmore in time. Having sent for Teige O'Shaughnessy and Murdough Blake without success, Grania becomes increasingly anxious. Leaving a neighbour to stay with Honor she sets out in search of Murdough herself only to be confronted outside the cabin by a blanket of fog moving in from the sea and enveloping the whole island.

She was out of the cabin and the fog had closed around her almost before the words were uttered. It was like a pall, only a white pall instead of a black one, a pall that seems to get through and through and round and round you, to swathe the limbs, to enfold you to the very skin. Down from the sky in came in white masses and up from the sea -- a new sky, a new sea

-- the very air appeared to be half solid, air that seemed to choke, yet which was light enough and cool enough as you swallowed it.⁴⁶³

As the ultimate eradication of individual detail, the fog which engulfs the area is a striking image of Grania's predicament. Since childhood she has struggled to oppose an effective individuality to the determinism of island communal life only to find herself being overwhelmed by it. In her struggle against the fog Grania is provided with a final opportunity to re-affirm a self-reliance. To achieve this she mentally reinterprets the challenge posed to her by the fog, from the barrier it places between her and the supplying of Honor's need, to the barrier which had gradually developed between herself and her own personal fulfilment. The use of fog, particularly, to detach a protagonist from the familiar as a means to precipitate critical recognitions occurs in many of Lawless's writings. That such occurrences take place on the margins between sea, sky and land also emphasises the neutralising of the protagonist's consciousness prior to its crisis of recognition. The sea scene encompassed by fog in *Hurricane* divests its protagonist of any fixed bearings, before revealing to him the treachery of Maurice Brady; Harvey and Essex in *With Essex in Ireland*, elevated on the rampart of the old Desmond castle, witness the victims of famine as they emerge from a deep mist, forcing a reality on them through a vision of the unreal. Lia Mills interprets this characteristic feature of Lawless's fiction as a metaphor for the obstacles faced by the Anglo-Irish novelist in attempting to mediate

⁴⁶³ Lawless, *Grania*, p.145.

between the different historical ways of representing the country.⁴⁶⁴ There certainly is the sense in which the observer's identification of self through place is being closed off and denied, leading to the recognition of a deep isolation. This is evidenced in Grania's reaction. On leaving the cabin to locate Murdough herself, a change of focus occurs, all thoughts of Father Tom, the sick bed, Honor's white drawn face and anxious eyes seem to fade to be replaced by a new set of images: 'It was a new goal towards which she seemed to be hurrying, for which she was fighting the fog, to which she was struggling on and on through this blinding whiteness'.

More and more as she warmed with the struggle her old self emerged, as a rock emerges which has been temporarily hidden by the waves. The thought of Murdough rose with it. It was Murdough whom she had so often gone along this path to meet; it was Murdough whom she was going to meet now.⁴⁶⁵

The thought of Murdough pre-occupies her and drives her on, not that typicality which Murdough himself represents but the desired image, the potential of which she still believes is dormant yet nonetheless present. Lawless presents a clear division between the two, establishing a division in Grania's mind between an external and an internal apprehension.

In the isolation created by the fog, in the glow of her battling with it, in the stress of her own feelings, he seemed to be already with her, to be beside her, to be touching her; not the every-day indifferent Murdough either; the unsatisfactory, conversational Murdough, the Murdough who got tipsy and mocked at her, the Murdough who was always wanting money, but the real Murdough, the Murdough she had never ceased to believe in; who had looked up at her suddenly, and then stretched out his arms to her; who caught her in them and held her; the Murdough who loved her, even as she loved him.⁴⁶⁶

In this regard, Grania appears, by her refusal to accept the conditions which prevail, to be further displaced to that extra-real existence with which Bidy O'Shaughnessy communicates, the imaginative counter to an unaccommodating world. Eventually reaching the abandoned villa where Murdough is most likely to be found Grania's enthusiasm is suddenly abashed as Murdough exits and adopts a position of authority, looking down at her from the top of its steps. That all the advantage appears to be on Murdough's side becomes obvious as Grania's resolution to force the 'real' Murdough into existence evaporates.

Instead, however, of doing anything of the kind, a sudden feeling of diffidence came over

⁴⁶⁴ Mills, 'Forging History', p.142.

⁴⁶⁵ Lawless, Grania, p.145.

⁴⁶⁶ Lawless, *Grania*, p.145.

her -- a feeling of being there a suppliant, a beggar -- of being at a disadvantage, she could not tell how or why.⁴⁶⁷

Murdough's self-esteem, viewed to this as inflated and unfounded, appears now to have acquired actual validity.

This fine young man standing at ease upon the top of the steps -- at his own hall door, as it were -- the girl -- herself -- with her petticoat over her head, appealing from below. Where had she seen those two figures that they seemed so familiar ? She did not know, but it had the effect of changing all her previous thoughts, and bringing quite a new element of confusion to her mind.⁴⁶⁸

This use of a traditional image of hierarchy to conceptualise her subservience emphasises the catastrophic disempowerment which Grania experiences. Yet this particular image also has a precise historical relevance in that Murdough, the improvident, non-propertyed regressive figure has assumed the ascendant over the rational, wealthy and regenerative Grania. Lawless has demonstrated through the narrative's evolution that it is Grania herself who has elevated Murdough to this exalted position by investing such incommensurate value in the contribution he can make towards her personal development. Such a crediting of Murdough, since he does not contain it within himself, is possible only at her abstraction. Through this drawing off of value, Grania is, in fact, experiencing that debilitation of resources prophesied by Peggy Dowd as the peculiar trait by which the Blakes of Alleenageeragh thrive. A process of concession, it requires a progressive surrendering of advantage which ultimately undermines that inherited 'fitness' by which Lawless has identified Grania's specific miscegenated difference from the island native. Within the narrative scheme and within the person of Grania herself the sense of a disturbance in the proper balance of things is registered .

Grania put her hand suddenly up to her head. A momentary vertigo seemed to assail her: a feeling of confusion, as if everything, herself and Murdough included, had got wrong, and were out of place. What had happened to them both ? she wondered.⁴⁶⁹

The disorienting effect is substantial as Grania's self-confidence crumbles into a supplicatory deference.

Grania pushed her hair feverishly off her face and let the petticoat she wore as a cloak drop from her shoulders. She felt hot and stifled. Murdough's words seemed to be coming to her out of a dream; his very personality, as he stood there, big, solid, and self-satisfied, seemed

⁴⁶⁷ Lawless, *Grania*, p.147.

⁴⁶⁸ Lawless, *Grania*, p.147.

⁴⁶⁹ Lawless, *Grania*, p.147.

unreal.⁴⁷⁰

The intrusion of a dream element in this encounter, a dysfunction of time, place, and appearance, is expressive of Grania's struggle to maintain a hold on her wavering conviction. An inability at this crucial moment to discern what is real and what just 'seems to be' endangers the objective of Grania's search. As a way to disentangle herself from such bewildering sensations she resorts to addressing herself to that Murdough she had never ceased to believe in: 'Haven't we two been always together since the time when we were a pair of little prechauns, no higher than a kish -- always together, you and me, always ?'⁴⁷¹

Appeals to a shared past and a shared heritage have little effect. Murdough's refusal to cooperate in her scheme and Grania's resolve to venture out to sea without him provokes a retrenchment which places them both on opposite sides of a perceptual divide.

'And as for your going alone to Inishmore in a curragh this night you will not do *that* either, I am thinking, so you will not. If you do, 'tis the mad woman you are -- the mad woman out and out !' And he turned upon his heel to go back into the house.

'Then it is the mad woman I am, sure and certain,' she answered, 'for it is going I am, and so good night to you, Murdough Blake.'⁴⁷²

Yet Grania, presented with the absolute fact of her own disenchantment, is prepared to make one last grasp for that elusive Murdough by which she has attempted to sustain her future by bounding up the steps in an determination to bridge the distance between illusion and reality.

The result was that, almost before he had realised that she had returned and that she was standing beside him, Murdough felt two arms about his neck, clinging tighter, tighter still, pressing about it in a convulsive, panic-stricken embrace, close and clinging as that of the very fog without, only warm, very warm, and very human; desperation in every touch of it, anger, too, but above all love -- a love that could kill its object, but that would never fail it; could never entirely cease to believe in it.⁴⁷³

Such an action, replicating the frantic embrace of the stone boulder some nights earlier, merely verifies the solidity of that Murdough for whom she had substituted an image. For Grania her desperate assertion is its own failure.

Either his look of dismay had aroused Grania to a sense of the enormity of her conduct, or the mere break in the chain of her ideas had brought her back to everyday life, in any case, she

⁴⁷⁰ Lawless, *Grania*, p.148.

⁴⁷¹ Lawless, *Grania*, p.148.

⁴⁷² Lawless, *Grania*, p.150.

was now blushing hotly. The fiery fit was past. She felt beaten down and subdued by her own vehemence. All she wanted now was to get away -- to get away quickly and to be alone.⁴⁷⁴

Despite his fixity of behaviour, however, Lawless invests Murdough with one moment of irresolution in which he almost manages to free himself from the constraints of his type. Murdough's initial impulse is one of anger and resentment, yet like the touch by which Bidy O'Shaughnessy had engineered an effect upon Grania, the sheer unexpectedness of the embrace quickly precipitates an awareness of something indeterminate and confusing.

All the same, something new seemed to be stirring within him. He, too, felt 'queer'. Could it really be the weather, or, if not, what was it? The effect in any case was that he felt suddenly disinclined to let her go. A sudden wish came over him to stop her, to hear again what she had to say; to quarrel with her, perhaps, but not to part with her so suddenly.⁴⁷⁵

However, the biological constraints from which he is trying to free himself are conceived by Lawless as historically set and Murdough's hampered scope is conveyed by the temporally slowed progress of his movements.

He made a step forward. She was still within easy reach; had only gone, in fact, a yard or two up the bank. It was on the tip of his tongue to call after her, to ask her to stop: to say that, perhaps, after all, he *would* go with her... He had made a couple of steps forward, had opened his lips, his hand was actually outstretched...⁴⁷⁶

In the course of this tentative response Murdough is arrested by that regressive pull represented by the hand of Shan Daly, 'with hairy, clutching fingers, the arm belonging to it clad in a sleeve so ragged that it literally fell away from it in filthy, sooty-coloured ribbons'.

This other hand caught Murdough's and held it fast for a minute. Only for a minute, but even when it had again released its hold, Grania was already out of reach, half way up the side of the bank, and nothing was to be seen far or near but the white all-encompassing shroud of the fog.⁴⁷⁷

The moment has passed and with it Murdough's opportunity for change and the breaking of the chain which ties him to a degenerative process in a declining sequence from his predecessors. That inability, which has characterised him throughout, to act on his aspirations causes him to fail just at that moment when possibility was clearly realisable. The chance to discover just what that embryonic sensitivity could offer is

⁴⁷³ Lawless, *Grania*, p.151.

⁴⁷⁴ Lawless, *Grania*, p.152.

⁴⁷⁵ Lawless, *Grania*, p.153.

⁴⁷⁶ Lawless, *Grania*, p.153.

⁴⁷⁷ Lawless, *Grania*, p.153.

lost to him and, by extension, to the island community.

In this final exchange between Grania and Murdough Lawless locates a gradual transition from one consciousness to another through which occurs a closing down of Grania's sense of place. Consciousness now becomes a medium by which Grania's projections of self begin to recede from external reference. That Grania is gradually retreating from that world which gave her definition is indicated by the difficulty she experiences in finding her way across what had once been her element. Rocks and fissures now obtrude on her movements forcing her to constantly re-adjust; 'now and then she found herself out upon the cliff-like edge of the step, and had to work her way back to where the terrace broadened, and the walking was comparatively safe'.

Twice she fell, and found herself clinging by her hands to the weed-covered top, her feet and nearly her whole body dangling over the edge, where there was no foothold whatever, and where she could just discern the hungry greenish swell rising noiselessly up, up, up, rising stealthily, as if determined to catch her unawares.⁴⁷⁸

Resolved on venturing out into the sea-fog herself, Grania is unexpectedly joined by Shan Daly's weak-minded son Phelim whom she sets, like a figure-head, at the prow of the curragh to watch for dangers.

Annis Pratt, surveying the traditional novel's various forms of depicting human development -- childhood immaturity to adulthood, entry into marriage and society, sexual fulfilment and personal transformation -- suggests that while the conventional sequences which characterise masculine transitions involve learning 'the true from the false in both themselves and in the world around them'⁴⁷⁹ this is not in fact true for women.

At each phase, however, the orderly pattern of development is disrupted by social norms dictating powerlessness for women: young girls grow down rather than up, the socially festive

denouements appropriate to courtship and marriage fiction are often subverted by madness and death...⁴⁸⁰

Pratt states that women's novels of development seem 'most informed by desires alien to the patriarchy', the more fully developed and true to herself the female protagonist is, the more deviant her relationship to the androcentric culture. What most characterises such heroes is the possession of a quality of consciousness that is

⁴⁷⁸ Lawless, *Grania*, p.157.

⁴⁷⁹ Pratt, *Archetypal Features in Women's Fiction*, p.167.

⁴⁸⁰ Pratt, *Archetypal Features in Women's Fiction*, p.168.

essentially antisocial, leading them to turn away from a culture that is actively hostile to their development. This results in the fictional heroes 'entering a timeless achronological world appropriate to their rejection by history, a spaceless world appropriate to rebellion against placelessness in the patriarchy'.⁴⁸¹ The venturing of Grania out into the sea-fog represents just such an entry into a spaceless world, a rejection of and an escape from the diminishing of horizons.

Once she has set off, Grania enters on an enclosed circular return to that amniotic condition from which she emerged at the narrative's beginning.

Odd-looking vortexes and currents were visible now in the dimness overhead; mysterious maelstroms, gazing up, instead of down, into which the careering fragments might be seen circling round and round; breaking capriciously off, joining together again, gathering into interlaced patterns, sweeping up and down, expanding, converging; all this movement going on along the edge of a sort of pit, scooped as it were out of the very air itself. Suddenly, while she was looking at it, the whole thing would close up, and a new vortex or funnel break out in an altogether different place.⁴⁸²

The surreal, upside down perspective and the almost cosmic chaos which this passage presents indicate Lawless's imagining of a world in the process of disordering itself, a world divested of any constant or stabilising force. A striking aspect of this passage also, and one which characterises Grania's entire journey into the sea-fog, is the complete absence of any referential detail located in geographic space, demonstrating, very effectively, the comprehensive alienation of Grania's consciousness. Whenever material detail does appear it is dissociated from any extended landscape. 'Greenish points' rise in every direction within an inch or two of the sea's surface and larger masses 'formless as the very fog itself', the relative positions of which she can only guess.

Apparently immediately above them, in reality a little way ahead, one of those same aerial funnels had just opened, and within the comparatively clear space of its air-filled hollow could be seen, not merely the careering particles of fog circling round and round, but something else, something that did not circle or move at all, a few inches of wind-tattered grass, a few inches more of bare splintered rock. There they hung, apparently in mid-air, their beginnings and endings alike invisible, but this much clearly discernible, a startling vision in itself, and a plain proof, moreover, that they were not approaching Illaunalee, or anywhere even remotely near it.⁴⁸³

⁴⁸¹ Pratt, *Archetypal Features in Women's Fiction*, p.169.

⁴⁸² Lawless, *Grania*, p.163.

⁴⁸³ Lawless, *Grania*, p.163.

Like these dissociated features of a displaced world, Grania's own personal associations are shown to become fractured and vague, all sense of time deserting her while the mechanical rhythm of her movements renders her drowsy.

Thoughts, or rather dreams of Honor visited her from time to time, thoughts, too, or dreams, of Murdough, both equally broken, confused, fragmentary. As far as her own sensations went, she might have been rowing there for the whole live-long night, so benumbing and sleep-like was that torpor.⁴⁸⁴

Grania's familiar world is systematically disintegrating, leaving vestiges of it in her mind like the splintering fragments which mesmerise her in the vortexes overhead. When the presence of a sheer black cliff-face rising above her out of the fog confirms her fears of being absolutely lost, her forward projection, like her receding past, becomes equally fragmented and indeterminate: 'on and on; yes, but where to ? To what goal ? Towards what sort of a landing place ?'. Trying hopelessly to guide her boat among the outlying rocks of the cliff-face Grania strikes against one of them, ripping its canvas cover. As the sea pours in around them she manages to scramble Phelim onto a dry, flat rock while she herself sinks 'immediately into deep water'. The impression which the water creates of manipulating and toying with its victim as she struggles against it suggests the overpowering forces against which she had attempted to sustain some purposeful life for herself and against which she had laboured to secure her individual identity.

The tide was running fast; there was no other landing-place of any kind; nothing to climb upon; nothing to catch hold of. There were rocks in plenty around her, but they were most of them inches deep in water, a stray, glimmering point appearing from time to time, like a ghost, and then vanishing again. She was caught, too, like a straw in the grip of that slow, seemingly gentle swell, which swept her hither and thither, now a little nearer to the rock, now impossibly, hopelessly, far away from it again.⁴⁸⁵

Those elements of discontinuity which had gradually detached Grania from her past and future ultimately allow a descent into an illusory world in which her personal needs and desires become realisable. Grania's distance from a recognisable reality is now absolute and silence and stillness become definitive to her changed conditions. As she ceases to struggle, a mass of laminaria entangles her, uplifting and sustaining her body.

With this feeling of support from below a new look came into her face; her eyes opened widely, and she suddenly stretched out her hands. 'Augh, Murdough ! Murdough !' she

⁴⁸⁴ Lawless, *Grania*, p.163.

murmured deliriously. 'Didn't I know you'd come ? Didn't I know you'd never leave your poor Grania to drown by herself in the cruel salt sea ? Arrah, take me up, then, darling, take me up ! Be quick, dear, and gather me up out of this cold, creeping water ! Augh, but 'tis the strong arms you have, though you would always have it 'twas me was the strongest, you

rogue ! Hold me closer to you, Murdough dear; hold me closer, I say; closer ! Closer still ! Augh, Murdough !...*Murdougeen* !.'⁴⁸⁶

With these frank and open expressions which had been forbidden to her in actuality, in an extended, unbroken sequence which constitutes one single sentence, Grania's entwining by the laminaria is interpreted as a sensual, sexual embracing between herself and Murdough, its tactile intensity fully answering Grania's constant appeal for the comfort of being 'loved back'.

And with a movement as if Murdough Blake had indeed come at last to the rescue, and was lifting her in his arms, she let her head fall back upon the seaweed, her cheek resting upon it as if upon his shoulder, her eyes at the same time closing with a long-drawn sigh of satisfaction, and so resting and so sighing she sank slowly, insensibly, and without a struggle into the great folds of the laminaria, which, after supporting her in that position for perhaps a minute, began gently to loosen its long, sashlike strands, floating presently away by degrees over the hardly undulating surface, returning again and again, and sweeping back, though in a less compact mass, now under, now over, now round her, the great brown ribbons swaying in easy serpentine curves about the floating form, the two getting to be hardly distinguishable in the all-pervading dreaminess, a dreaminess of which the very fog itself seemed to be but a part; a dream too deep and apparently too satisfactory to be ever again disturbed or broken in upon by anything from without.⁴⁸⁷

The collapse of subject and object, including the fog itself, into the 'all-pervading dreaminess' of Grania is an achieving of that integrity which had eluded her throughout the narrative. However, it is a compensatory one, only achieved by the complete withdrawal from a world which had failed to facilitate and match it. That such an issue is the only one available if Grania is to achieve individual destiny is Lawless's ultimate indictment of the island's oppressive influence. In effect there is no possibility of revitalising such an all-pervasive communal apathy. This suggests both that the community is beyond regeneration and that to engage with it on a level such as Grania's is detrimental to that very element which constitutes forward-looking, innovative intelligence. Eagleton notes in relation to John Eglinton's

⁴⁸⁵ Lawless, *Grania*, p.166.

⁴⁸⁶ Lawless, *Grania*, p.168.

⁴⁸⁷ Lawless, *Grania*, p.168.

bemoaning of the absence of free individual spirits in Ireland that ‘Eglinton was not the only Anglo-Irish liberal to regard his own social group as a bastion of civilized intelligence in a conformist nation, a free-thinking modernist intelligentsia marooned amidst a benighted race’.⁴⁸⁸ The rationale behind Lawless’s novel, particularly as it is expressed in the fatalistic outcome, is the articulation of such a view. Grania’s self-sacrifice for the sake of Honor’s irrational religious zeal and through the saving of the mentally deficient Phelim acts against those principles of individual value which the narrative has been at pains to prioritise.

Degeneration: Individual and Communal.

It is significant that the only witness to Grania’s death is the dull-witted Phelim, a son of the island and therefore its population’s future.

Huddled like a frog, his knees and chin almost touching each other, Phelim Daly lay upon the rock and watched her, dull, sick, despairing apathy written upon every line of his small white face, his big, always unnaturally prominent eyes staring down with hardly a trace of comprehension or intelligence in them.⁴⁸⁹

The attributes which define Phelim are those of a type which has sunk into state of unmistakable degeneration; apathy, feature deformity, a lacking in basic human understanding.⁴⁹⁰ Most striking, however, is the frog-like attitude by which he is described, sitting upon an isolated, barren rock. While this mimics the situation of the community, which he encapsulates, clinging to its island home, it also forcefully concludes an overall process of debasement measured according to a devolutionism which has been used consistently to place the level at which this human group is deemed to exist. As the overall deterioration of the island occupancy is signalled through the residue of its remote past and the inevitable reduction back to an elemental substratum, so the present human stock is seen to demonstrate a similar devolution. A seemingly logical consequence of the heredity principle by which the text is ruled, the island population is condemned to a regression in biological form. In a textual symmetry which reflects this, the description of Shan Daly is used at the opening of the novel to initiate a strategy which the description of his son Phelim so consummately closes.

⁴⁸⁸ Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p.237.

⁴⁸⁹ Lawless, *Grania*, p.167.

over Nay, if you chose to consider it critically, you might have called it a dangerous face, not ugly, handsome rather, as far as the features went, and lit by a pair of eyes so dark as to be almost black, but with a restlessly moving lower jaw, a quantity of hair raked into a tangled mass an excessively low brow, and the eyes themselves were sombre, furtive, menacing -- the eyes of a wolf or other beast of prey -- eyes which by moments seemed to flash upon you like something sinister seen suddenly at dead of night... Every time his line neared the surface with a fish attached, he clutched at it with a sudden clawing gesture, expressive of fierce, hungry desire, his lips moving, his eyes glittering, his whole face working. Even when the fish had been cleared from the line and lay in a scaly heap at the bottom of the boat, his looks still followed them with the same peculiarly hungry expression. Watching him at such a moment you would hardly have been surprised had you seen him suddenly begin to devour them, then and there, scales and all, as an otter might have done.⁴⁹¹

In this description Shan is seen to slip rapidly from one order to another, from the position of a debased human being to that of simian and eventually reducing into the lower order of mammals, a slippage which is calculated to stress his irreversible and horrifying degradation. The normal everyday function of fishing mixed with aspects of the subhuman which makes up Shan Daly's characterisation in this passage operates through a distorting of the quotidian by the grotesque. This technique and the revulsion it is calculated to evoke is the principle behind many of the community character portrayals and is employed mainly to suggest the atavism of the community into which the modern, normative aspirations of Grania are introduced. Even the seeming tempering of such descriptions with expressions of compassion or affectionate understatement contributes to an increase rather than diminishes the strangeness of the characters. The narrative voice steadfastly anchors itself in a specific cultural and class context to which it consistently refers, invoking its values as a means to contain the community with which the narrative deals. Appeals to particular fields of knowledge and shared perspectives outside those of the island community appear as fissures in the text, therefore, fortifying the division between both worlds. The depiction of Shan Daly is framed by narratorial asides as 'Nay, if you chose to consider it critically, you might have called it a dangerous face'; 'Watching him at such a moment you would hardly have been surprised had you seen...'. Couched in rational, dispassionate language such asides affect a distance which attempts to secure narrator and reader from the narrative subject. The direct categorising of him in the terminology appropriate to a specific scientific field of

⁴⁹⁰ Greenslade, *Degeneration*, p.16.

knowledge situates Shan sufficiently to dehumanise and contain him.⁴⁹²

In the description of Bidy and Denny O'Shaughnessy such condescension only serves to distance them further into the regions of the inferior and the degraded. This can be adequately observed in two related passages involving descriptions of both. The considered, socially conscious manner in which the deaf, mute twins are introduced early in the narrative suggests a sensitivity to their fragility and misfortune.

The two were twins and earned their bread, or rather the old man earned it for both of them, by weaving...the O'Shaughnessys were rather pariahs upon Inishmaan. This was not on account of their poverty, which is never a really damning reproach in Ireland, and probably, therefore, was due partly to the fact that, compared to most of its inhabitants, they were newcomers...partly to their extreme ill-favouredness, and, still more, to the fact that the two old people were deaf and dumb, and could only communicate with their neighbours and the rest of the world by signs -- a sufficient reason surely in a much less superstitious community than that of Inishmaan for regarding them as lying peculiarly under the disfavour of Heaven, and likely enough to bring that contagion or blight of disfavour upon other, and more fortunate, people if unduly encouraged and associated with.⁴⁹³

Yet this carefully structured attitude is, nonetheless, complicit in its own dramatic reversal, its clarity of perception and wisdom directed towards a maximizing of a subsequent affect as its very considerateness becomes a licence for caricature. As the child Grania peers through the O'Shaughnessy cabin window at the twins the narrator's attitude changes, the basic human act of communicating engaged in by Bidy and Denny is used to degrade both.

Now it was the old man who, squatting down towards the ground, would spread out his arms widely, then springing suddenly erect wave them over his head, apparently imitating someone engaged in rowing, fishing, or what not, the whole performance being carried on with the breathless vehemence and energy. Then the old woman would take her turn and go through a somewhat similar evolution, expressive seemingly of weaving, spinning, walking, eating, or

⁴⁹¹ Lawless, *Grania*, p.2.

⁴⁹² Morton pinpoints the logic behind this Victorian deployment of specific language: 'The easiest way to deal with an uncomfortable problem is to conceptualise it afresh. If beggars, instead of being casualties of an inadequate man-made system, could be seen instead as domestic pigs reverted to a worthless feral form by their own built-in retrogressive tendencies, then this identification removed much perplexity. Though they might disturb, atavisms in the social structure like paupers and criminals were not ultimately things one had to worry about, for they could safely be left to nature with her complex but infallible system of checks and balances.' Morton, *The Vital Science*, p.94.

⁴⁹³ Lawless, *Grania*, p.24.

whatever she wanted to express, while, whichever was the principle performer, the other would respond with quick comprehensive jerks of the head, sudden enough and sharp enough apparently to crack the spinal column. It was less like a pair of human beings communicating together than like a pair of extraordinary automata, some sort of ugly, complicated toy set into violent action by its proprietor and unable to leave off until its mechanism had run down.⁴⁹⁴

The languages of both passages belong to very different registers, the first making use of familiar, homely and inclusive phrasing, the other reflecting disgust and repulsion. While the latter is purported to be the excited impressions of the child Grania, the ongoing narratorial perspective remains within that register whenever Bidy is later presented. The portrait is consolidated and relied on as a standard of her character, the kindly, considered earlier appraisal bestowing an aura of informed legitimacy on it. The description of Bidy, when years later Grania enters the cabin in search of Teige, resorts to this established caricature.

As Grania advanced into the cabin, however, an odd-looking, little, doubled-up, red object rose from the corner of the hearth where it had been squatting, and came towards her, making queer bobs, ducks, and uncanny grimaces as it did so.⁴⁹⁵

For a while she contented herself with gazing up at them, her wrinkled old monkey-face puckered into a variety of quaint grimaces -- a wonderful old human gargoyle, beyond the imagination of even a Gothic carver adequately to reproduce.⁴⁹⁶

While these are individual depictions of representative characters in order to designate a degraded type, the same narrative strategy is employed to devalue the island community collectively, by a concentration on the domestic space and the family which locates both in a world of disorder. The Durane household, by its placement in a context alien to it, is an example of this. Accompanied by all the endearments of human family life which profile the better its deviation from that standard, the domestic space of the Duranes is described in terms of a chicken coop, the children themselves bearing the weight of this metaphor.

When the family were collected together, space, as may be guessed, was at a premium since even upon the floor they could hardly all sit down at the same time. There was, however, a sort of ledge, covered with straw, about three feet from the ground, upon which four of the five children slept, and where, when food was being distributed, all that were old enough to sit alone were to be seen perched in a row, with tucked-up legs and open mouths, like a brood of half-fledged turkeys. At other times they gathered chiefly upon the doorstep, which, in all Irish cabins, is the coveted place, and only ceases to be so in exceptionally cold weather, or after

⁴⁹⁴ Lawless, *Grania*, p.27.

⁴⁹⁵ Lawless, *Grania*, p.93.

⁴⁹⁶ Lawless, *Grania*, p.94.

actual darkness has set in.⁴⁹⁷

The members of the family are described as being secreted away in various corners, on the floor, behind the door, in the loft, beside the fireplace, indicating the complete absence of any recognisable divisions within the house itself and stresses its remoteness from the regularised domestic space. It is defined instead as the random, makeshift convenience of a shelter for livestock. The storm which engulfs the island is a means to demonstrate this as the comical disarray and cumulating bickering as one disturbance leads to another, culminates in the action of the niece, Juggy Kelly, on being awakened by the squabbling.

Unfortunately the action brought her elbow into sudden sharp contact with the head of the youngest little girl who had nestled close up to her for warmth, and who immediately responded with a loud howl, which in its turn aroused Juggy Kelly, Pete's niece and the general servant of the establishment, who slept with the chickens in a sort of loft overhead, and who, with a vague idea that something was suddenly being required of her, began, half awake, to hist and hoost vigorously, as if she were driving in geese or turkeys to roost.⁴⁹⁸

The majority of the families met with are centres of disorder, either disjointed, such as the O'Shaughnessys, or more frequently presenting households which buckle beneath the burden of reproductive excess such as the Blakes, Duranes, and Dalys. In an environment barren and hostile to the rudiments of life, the families of the Blakes, Duranes and Dalys are shown to proliferate apparently indifferent to the consequences.⁴⁹⁹ In their indigence, physical weakness and domestic squalor they represent the momentum of that heritable degeneration which grips the community. Figured as being both in a position of dependence on and as posing a threat to the resources of Grania O'Malley, their perceived social value is most starkly conceptualised in the reduction of the Durane children to mere, disembodied hands grasping frantically at potatoes.

What with the all but total absence of glass in the paper-patched windows, and what with the smouldering eddies of turf-smoke which rolled overhead like some dull domestic cloud, it

⁴⁹⁷ Lawless, *Grania*, p.68.

⁴⁹⁸ Lawless, *Grania*, p.88.

⁴⁹⁹ Morton comments on the prevalence of this attitude to the breeding habits of the lower classes, citing that of H. G. Wells as an example: 'Like them, (eugenicists Greg, Galton and Pearson) Wells places the causes of degeneration firmly in the differing reproductive rates of the social classes. Like them, he reacts almost with nausea to the dysgenic spectacle of "a mean-spirited, under-sized, diseased little man, quite incapable of earning a decent living even for himself, married to some underfed, ignorant, ill-shaped, plain and diseased little woman, and guilty of the lives of ten or

was at first so dark that Grania could see nothing except the piles of potatoes and the children, or rather the children's hands, which, being fitfully lit by the fire, kept darting into the light and out again, like things endowed with some odd galvanic existence of their own.⁵⁰⁰

This strategy reaches its climax and receives full narratorial endorsement with the revelation in the Galway cabin when Grania's frustration is directed towards the insight which the scene is meant to present to her.

Why *should* people go on living so ? she thought. Why should they go on living at all, indeed? Why, above all, should they marry and bring more wretched creatures into the world, if this was to be the way of it ? How stupid, how useless how horrible it all was !⁵⁰¹

The clear narratorial involvement up to this point in the schematising of this strategy has been to ensure the coalescing of both narrator and protagonist in order that Grania be permitted to see and express this truth. Grania's outburst in the Galway cabin, therefore, is essentially a narratorial declaration of one of the text's most prominent themes. As such Grania becomes a spokesperson for the narrator at a crucial moment in the text, that of a fundamental revelation regarding class ideology. By neither the narrator nor the protagonist is there any attempt to locate the causes of the island's endemic misery in any thing other than in the characters themselves and in the genetic formula of a type. This relegating to a biological cause of the community's abject conditions has a purposefulness to it in that social and political responsibilities are thereby superseded by a natural force which justifies and explains such conditions.⁵⁰² Such a relegation is matched by the community's geographic remoteness, well beyond the boundary lines which secure the cultural hegemony of the author and the text's implied reader.⁵⁰³

twelve ugly ailing children". Morton, *The Vital Science*, p. 134.

⁵⁰⁰ Lawless, *Grania*, p.69.

⁵⁰¹ Lawless, *Grania*, p.116.

⁵⁰² Margaret Kelleher identifies a similar displacement of cause and effect in Rosa Mulholland's story of famine and hardship on the island of Inisbofin, 'The Hungry Death': 'The political and economic causes of hardship receive little attention...Instead famine is attributed, primarily, to the harsh climate endured by the isolated island and is fought against by a local moral economy, "so long as the monster can be beaten back by one neighbour from another neighbour's threshold" '. Kelleher, Margaret, *The Feminization of Famine: Expressions of the Inexpressible ?* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1997), p.115.

⁵⁰³ This geographic distance is as much an environmental one also: 'Acres ! As one writes down the word, it seems to rise up, mock, gibe, laugh at, and confound one from its wild inappropriateness, at least to all the ideas we commonly associate with it. For, be it known to you, oh prosperous reader-dweller, doubtless, in a sleek land, a land of earth and water, possibly even of trees -- that these islands, like their opposite

Dissociation occurs, therefore, on all levels by which the community might be defined -- human, social, political, cultural. Such a strategy has as its object the fixing of borders, particularly as they relate to a subject perceived as threat and this strategy situates the narrative's oblique argument fully in its late nineteenth-century Irish context.⁵⁰⁴ The containment of the challenge posed by the native population to an Ascendancy elite in nineteenth-century Ireland, morally and politically, demanded the consigning of its culture and 'blood-line' to a degenerative process. This was a commonplace manoeuvre of the ruling elites in many national contexts, not just in Ireland, in the final decades of the century. As Greenslade notes: 'Degeneration established the necessary boundaries in a period in which the longing for strict border controls around the definition of gender, as well as race, class and nationality, becomes especially intense'.⁵⁰⁵ The physical and intellectual atrophy of the community is figured by Lawless as the consequence of a biological fixity which functions in the community as a restrictive force. Such diminishment translates also as an incapacity to direct cause and effect, a depriving of active agency, and is based on the perceived inability of the native population in late nineteenth-century Ireland to govern itself. Yet Grania herself shares a dual 'blood-line', native islander and foreigner. The enlightened, modern individualism which stamps her foreignness and is figured as aggressively self-determining, is designed, however, to effect a relief against this background island inheritance. The text's charting of her difference and ultimate withdrawal is, therefore, a diegetic correlation of that authorial boundary fixing. In an odd twist of psychology, author and protagonist are being disentangled from a particular kinship through the projecting by Lawless of a generic degeneracy onto that part of their personal heritage which had become troublesome. As member of the Anglo-Irish dominant class, Lawless also contained within herself native, racial energies which that class was ideologically required to prefigure as threat.

Such an internalised 'other' parallels that 'secret sharer' of post-Darwinian culture which represented the presence of monstrous disruptive instincts beneath the

neighbour, the Burren of Clare, are rock, not partially, but absolutely'. Lawless, *Grania*, p.14.

⁵⁰⁴ Greenslade identifies this method by which social misfits and dissidents are marginalized: 'Social groups and deviant types are tactically dispatched to a "safe" zone of abnormality; this renders them innocuous and deprived of the power to challenge the dominant order'. Greenslade, *Degeneration*, p.18.

⁵⁰⁵ Greenslade, *Degeneration*, p.18.

surface of modern man.⁵⁰⁶ Robert Louis Stevenson's Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde, H. G. Wells's Morlocks and Eloi in *The Time Machine* and Conan Doyle's implacable antagonists, Holmes and Moriarty, are instances of Victorian fiction's doubling of the human entity, the residual primitive and the refined citizen, functioning in a split yet shared present. Dr. Jekyll's struggle to come to some understanding of his dual nature reflects, to an extent, Lawless's efforts in *Grania* to achieve some personal clarity.

I saw that, of the two natures that contended in the field of my consciousness, even if I could rightly be said to be either, it was only because I was radically both; and from an early date...I had learned to dwell with pleasure, as a beloved daydream, on the thought of the separation of these elements. If each, I told myself, could but be housed in separate identities, life would be relieved of all that was unbearable.⁵⁰⁷

For Lawless, the placing of the 'other' within a socio-biological frame allowed safe examination of the relationship between self and 'other'. Grania's shock in the Galway cabin is the recognition of the self in the 'other' and the danger of mergence into its perceived degraded state renders more imperative a sustained mechanism of control. That mechanism is the imaginative will and Grania's constructing of such an imaginative world wholly dependent on her 'wants' may be read also as Lawless's own re-establishing of the self in a sanitising yet ultimately recoiling act of fiction. Authority is maintained but at a cost. In an almost prophetic realisation of the Anglo-Irish predicament Grania is disengaged from that real world which comprises her identity.

To the extent, therefore, that Lawless effects such a dissolution of the tie between Grania and the island community with which she intuitively associates herself the question arises as to whether Lawless's novel is a socially directed fiction, particularly in the personal dimension through which the realist novel communicates a public paradigm. There is little or no latitude available to interpret an obvious socialising vision from the text other than as a negative presence. Margaret Kelleher, in 'Factual Fictions', comments on the prevalence in many late nineteenth-century Irish domestic novels of a female character 'who possesses both peasant and upper-class ancestry and through whose fate contemporary class and gender anxieties gain

⁵⁰⁶ See Greenslade, *Degeneration*, chap.4.

⁵⁰⁷ Stevenson, Robert Louis, *The Strange Case of Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde* in (ed.) Barry Menikoff *The Complete Stories of Robert Louis Stevenson* (New York: Modern Library, 2002), p.307.

an imagined reconciliation'.⁵⁰⁸ While Lawless does not conceive of Grania as upper-class on a national scale, her protagonist is declared to be of higher breeding than those around her while also contained within the peasant community. Belanger quotes from a private letter of Lawless: 'A Grania, on the other hand, I have never known in that rank of life [the peasantry]. The idea is taken from something a good deal higher up in the social scale'.⁵⁰⁹ However, unlike the novelists which Kelleher discusses, Lawless does not engage in a transfer of values by which there is 'the fantasy of an ideal union' and through which 'reconciliation occurs within the female character and within the disparate classes which she embodies'. In Kelleher's examples such a union within the individual female character is reinforced by a marriage which is intended to curtail 'the more radical implications of the heroine's identity'. Lawless's refusal to reconcile conflict through Grania, to avoid those 'strained and improbable novel endings' to which Kelleher refers, and to establish the radical implications of Grania's identity as unassimilated, heightens the representational 'realism' of her protagonist and clarifies for herself and her readers the irreducible realities which confront contemporary class and gender anxieties.

It is that fraught interaction of gender issues with class ideology which severely complicates any straightforward interpretation of the novel. Gerardine Meaney notes the work of Lawless as registering the difficulties inherent in attempting to navigate the insidious straits between gender and politics in an Irish context.

Lawless's work makes clear precisely what was at stake in negotiating the complex relationship between gender and national identity. This is nowhere more apparent than in the contrast between her progressive views on gender and retrogressive ones on land reform. *Grania* indicates how the habit of figuring Ireland in feminine terms could complicate writing firmly opposed to nationalist politics and how the habits of imperialist perception could haunt progressive, feminist thinking.⁵¹⁰

Such an interpretation relies on conventionalities which do not necessarily accord with Lawless's representational method in *Grania*. Grania herself can not be said to faithfully represent the conventional symbol of the nation feminised, a 'doomed epitome of a traditional Irish identity' but rather a very particularised figure which is deployed precisely in an opposition to such symbolisms, whether social or ideological. It is, like much of Lawless's work, a deliberate attempt to relocate the

⁵⁰⁸ Kelleher, Margaret, "Factual Fictions", p.86.

⁵⁰⁹ Belanger, 'The Desire of the West', p.107.

⁵¹⁰ Meaney, 'Decadence, Degeneration and Revolting Aesthetics', p.162.

angle of perception, introducing into the seeming integrity of a traditional symbolism a disruptive unassimilated element. The Irish iconographic embodiments, equivalents of a wider social gender politics, of the romantic young woman and the maternal nurturer signified in the alluring figure of Roisín Dubh and that of the Countess Cathleen, are both unmasked in the figure of the hard-working, tempestuous peasant woman.⁵¹¹ The conflicted, and unpredictable nature of Grania's character, particularly in its sexual turmoil, while it presents a healthy antithesis to such male prescribed unrealities, also denies the conventional stabilities required by national images. The questioning and discriminating mind which comprises the character of Grania displays those very qualities which prevent the construction of a culturally emblematic, static womanhood.

This accords with the most significant aspect in the work of New Woman writers which was the contribution made to feminine self-awareness and empowerment. Sarah Grand, O'Toole notes, 'created a feminist figure who could stand up to societal pressure, exploiting the growing fissure between women's potential and the roles foisted upon them in a patriarchal society'.⁵¹² Yet the extent to which Lawless achieves this liberating strategy is debatable. For O'Toole, Grand's achievement was the deploying of a technique by which her readers were included in her heroine's campaign: 'The assumption made by her narrators that they are addressing reasonable, progressive adults empowers her readers to take up the struggle on their own behalf'.⁵¹³ The pessimism and the almost fatalistic futility which features in Grania's story of rebellion could be judged as undermining any possibility of feminist aspiration through the narrative.

The personal dependence which Grania herself appears to place on her attachment to Murdough contributes to the sense of overall frustration and defeat in the text. For Emer Nolan, the novel falls short of a required social relevance due to the concentration on Grania's personal desire. The frustrating of Grania's drive to achieve sexual fulfilment absorbs the attention of Lawless's novel inordinately, according to Nolan, rendering Grania deeply introspective and, therefore, ultimately irrelevant to the island's needs. Nolan points to this preoccupation as the significant failing of the novel.

⁵¹¹ Meaney, 'Decadence, Degeneration and Revolting Aesthetics', p.165.

⁵¹² O'Toole, 'Ireland: the Terra Incognita of the New Woman Project', p.127.

⁵¹³ O'Toole, 'Ireland: The Terra Incognita of the New Woman Project', p.127.

Desire is given an exclusive, emancipatory role, disarticulated from the novel's account of the actualities of Irish life. Lawless's understanding of Grania's condition inhibits any investigation of women's desire as a sphere of creative conflicts. She confines the spare, poetic narrative of *Grania* to the story of desire fighting only with *absolute* repression; it is in racial mythology alone that any reason for this can be found. This severely curtails the power of the novel as social critique.⁵¹⁴

The absolute repression and racial mythology to which Nolan refers belie the real social issues behind much of Grania's and the island community's poverty of thought and action. The fundamentals which occupied the efforts of New Woman novelists of the time were deeply enmeshed in concrete social inequality and issues which required to be addressed directly through direct analysis. The pivotal scene in the Galway cabin, particularly, does present an opportunity for social insight into gender and class exploitation and poverty. However, there is no purposeful addressing of the forces behind it, the novelist choosing rather to let it stand merely as a social fact. Yet, on the level of the political, Lawless's intention seems to be to expose the absolute limitation which the reduction to an enclosed ethnic stock places on the expansion of human horizons and social well-being. If *Grania* is seen as Lawless's fictionalising of the political through the personal, as she does in *Hurricane*, then *Grania's* baulked desire becomes a metaphoric consequence of social reductionism for those marginalized by it. The implication is not simply that Grania is disadvantaged but that the entire social fabric, the island men and women who stand as representative of that reductionism, suffers commensurably. As Grand, Egerton and Caird all testify, the enslavement of women by a male-skewed social structure is detrimental to society as a whole, not just its genderized element.

It is odd that, unlike the earlier more positive portrayal of feminine power presented in *With Essex in Ireland*, *Grania* appears to collapse into frustration and an ineffectualism. The achievement of that feminine presence in *With Essex in Ireland* was its oblique influence which worked to deflect social violence back to its source and socialising that source as a consequence. To achieve this, it was required to be figured in socially conventional terms. However, what differentiates *Grania* from the earlier novel is the attempt by Lawless to create a singular feminine subjectivity, rather than a collective and mollifying feminine presence; a subjectivity which defines itself directly against those forces intent on denying and frustrating its social

⁵¹⁴ Nolan, *Catholic Emancipations*, p.145.

dimension. This is, therefore, not a novel conceived as a participatory social expression but one centred around feelings of social isolation and enforced difference. Grania's achievement can be seen as her realisation of that subjective awareness in the face of sustained and demoralising opposition. While the final outcome of the novel is tragic, Grania's achievement of full selfhood through difference is her, and the narrative's, ultimate success.

Maelcho, published two years after *Grania*, revisits this theme, translating its geographic distance into the historical. As *Grania* narrates the collision between a modernising impulse in the figure of Grania and the reactionary island community, *Maelcho* tells of the collision between two opposing conceptions of the nation, the feudal community and the modern centralised state. Built also out of tragedy, *Maelcho*, nonetheless, holds the key to Lawless's eventual synthesising of the national search for cohesive identity and an Anglo-Irish search for historical inclusion.

Chapter IV.

Historical Fiction.

Part II.

Maelcho.

National Tale and Historical Novel.

For her final significant novel dealing with an Irish subject, Lawless returned to the late sixteenth-century conflict which had figured in her 1890 novel *With Essex in Ireland* between an indigenous Irish feudal culture and the centralising impetus of an absolutist English monarchy. Set during the period of the second Desmond rebellion, 1579-1582, Lawless chronicles in *Maelcho* the fortunes of the Munster Geraldines and the opposing English forces through the experiences of two protagonists; an English youth, Hugh Gaynard, who, driven from his home in Connaught, finds himself embroiled in the rebellion, and the eponymous Maelcho, a traditional Irish senachie and military aide to Sir James Fitzmaurice, cousin to the Earl of Desmond and leader of the Gaelic and Hibernicised Old English rebel forces.

As Lawless herself recounts the events of the rebellion in her history *Ireland*, in May 1579 James Fitzmaurice, having toured the Catholic capitals of Europe

petitioning support for a military campaign against Elizabeth, landed at Dingle with a small contingent of Italian and Spanish soldiers.⁵¹⁵ With Fitzmaurice was a disaffected English refugee, Dr. Nicholas Saunders, appointed to the expedition by the Pope as papal legate, Father Allen, a Jesuit and chaplain to Fitzmaurice, and Fitzmaurice's wife and two young daughters. Fortifying a small peninsula at Smerwick, Fitzmaurice resolved to bide his time while reinforcement from the surrounding clans could take place and a full national rebellion set in train.

The expected support from the Earl of Desmond himself failed to materialise initially, cowed by previous experiences of English military strength and personal imprisonment during the years of the first Munster rebellion; however, Fitzmaurice was joined at Smerwick by the Earl's two brothers, James and John Fitzgerald. Fitzmaurice's landing had thrown the whole of the south into a tumult and also began to foment an uneasy restlessness among the lords of the Pale, the Geraldines of Leinster and many of the Connaught tribes. As the expected rebellion gathered momentum, however, on the 18th of August 1579, James Fitzmaurice, having set out with a small group of followers for Connaught to encourage the smouldering insurrection there, fell into dispute with a contingent of the local Burkes and was shot dead. Deprived of its leader the revolt lost much of its cohesion and direction.

Prominent among the English forces attempting to crush the yet only incipient rebellion was Sir Nicholas Maltby, governor of Connaught, who marched against the Desmond castle at Askeaton, destroying the town, the abbey and the tombs of the Desmonds, and precipitating the vacillating Earl into open revolt. A destructive laying waste strategy was pursued by the English under the Lord Deputy Sir William Pelham and the Duke of Ormond by which large tracts of Munster were systematically devastated, men, women and children exterminated, livestock slaughtered and all traces of occupation erased. With only lightly armed clansmen with which to resist English depredations the Desmond and his supporters became fugitives restricted to engaging in savage but relatively ineffectual skirmishing. The arrival at the Smerwick fort of four Spanish vessels carrying 800 men and a large supplies of arms for the rebels was too late for an insurrection which had all but collapsed. The new Deputy, Lord Grey de Wilton hurried south from Dublin to confront the new threat, accompanied by a small band of officers which contained a young Walter Raleigh and

⁵¹⁵ Lawless, *Ireland*, pp.181-192.

Edmund Spenser. After a period of heavy firing and finding the fort to be untenable, the invading Italians surrendered unconditionally. As Spenser, an eyewitness, states in *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, the Spanish colonel 'did absolutely yield himself, and the fort, with all therein, and craved only mercy; which it being not thought good to show them...there was no other way but to make that short end of them as was made'.⁵¹⁶ The garrison was executed to a man, a few officers spared for ransom, and a number of women and priests were separately hanged. Following the suppression of revolts in Leinster and Connaught, the rebellion in Munster dwindled to the hunt for the fugitive earl. Both his brothers were dead, Sir John Desmond having been killed near Cork and his body, by order of Raleigh, suspended, head downward, from a bridge on the river Lee. The papal legate, Saunders, unused to the life of a hunted prey, died from the hardships of cold and exposure. Eventually receiving news of the Earl's whereabouts, English soldiers surrounded an isolated cabin in the early morning, broke in the door, and stabbed him, as Lawless asserts, 'before there was time for him to spring from his bed'.⁵¹⁷ With this act the old feudal order in Munster effectively ceased and the policies of a centralised English state were put into operation.

The famine which accompanied Pelham and Ormond's despoliations and which continued for some years after, was responsible for the deaths of many thousands, far outstripping those who succumbed to slaughter and execution. The description which Spenser provides in *A View*, quoted by him as proof of such a strategy's efficacy, is as stark as it is unperturbed.

They were brought to such wretchedness as that any stony heart would have rued the same. Out of every corner of the woods and glens they came creeping forth upon their hands, for their legs could not bear them; they looked like anatomies of death, they spake like ghosts crying out of their graves, they did eat the dead carrions, happy where they did find them, yea, and one another soon after, insomuch as the very carcasses they spared not to scrape out of their graves; and if they found a plot of water-cresses or shamrocks, there they flocked as to a feast for the time, yet not able long to continue there withal; that, in short space, there were none almost left, and a most populous and plentiful country suddenly left void of man and beast; yet sure in all that war, there perished not many by the sword, but all by the extremity of famine, which they themselves had wrought.⁵¹⁸

Such a catastrophe sealed the total collapse of the old clan system and facilitated the

⁵¹⁶ Spenser, *The Complete Works*, p.511.

⁵¹⁷ Lawless, *Ireland*, p.192.

settlement programme which the English pursued founded on a commercial self-interest - lands were offered rent free for ten years and goods could be exported from the colonised Munster province free from duty. In an English landed policy which saw the establishment of individual estate owners and a tenanted population, the plantation of Munster was an attempt to transform an Irish social system into a replica of the typical English shire.

Writing about the long term strategy of the Tudors for the reforming of Irish social structures, Colm Lennon in *Sixteenth-Century Ireland* remarks that the ‘dream of extending crown jurisdiction to the provinces seemed to offer sufficient enrichment to relieve the drain on the English treasury’ as well as promising that ‘the reordering of financial, military and political relations within this new scheme for national composition would be an engine of social reform, with the emergence of a shired, freeholding society modelled upon that of England’.⁵¹⁹ In *A New History of Ireland*, the mission of Elizabeth and her counsellor Cecil is viewed in the same terms: ‘They had no doubt that the Irish organization of society was inferior to their own and they could, in reflective moments, convince themselves that the existence of the Irish system of independent local control was an obstacle to attempts to remodel Ireland’.⁵²⁰ Both of these judgements attribute a stadial concept of social and cultural development to the English state’s attitude to Irish colonisation, the designating of the Irish system as backward in comparison to the English and the subsequent necessity for its modernisation.

Both are coincidentally echoed by Lawless in her own treatment of the period in *Ireland*: ‘Our pity for the victims’ doom, and our indignation for the cold-blooded cruelty with which it was carried out, is mingled with a reluctant realization of the fact that the state of things which precede it was practically impossible, that it had become an anomaly, and that as such it was bound either to change or to perish’.⁵²¹ And again: ‘Such a state of things, it was plain could not go on indefinitely, would not indeed have gone on as long but for the confusion and disorder in which the country had

⁵¹⁸ Spenser, *The Complete Works*, p.510.

⁵¹⁹ Lennon, Colm, *Sixteenth-Century Ireland: The Incomplete Conquest* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan, 1994), p.186.

⁵²⁰ Hayes-McCoy, ‘The Completion of the Tudor Conquest and the Advance of the Counter-Reformation 1571-1603’, in (eds.) T .W. Moody, F. X. Martin, and F. J. Byrne, *A New History of Ireland* vol. iii. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1976), p.95.

⁵²¹ Lawless, *Ireland*, p.181.

always been plunged, and especially the want of all settled communication'.⁵²² The alignment which Lawless creates between social disorder, or absence of a social cohesion, and a pastoral or clan based social structure typifies the philosophical premise of stadial theory. The belief that Gaelic Ireland became a modern, cultured and progressive society as a result of the centralising imperialism of the British state would consequently comprise a definitive, supporting position of Lawless's ideological argument in *Maelcho* as it is directed towards a confirming of the originary, complementary impact by which the Anglo-Irish historically represented their national relevance. Such an argument predetermines to an extent the choice Lawless makes of this historically seminal clash between the Gaelic system and that of the English state. Focussed, from a nineteenth-century context, on the challenging questions of national identity and cultural validity, Lawless, like many of her Ascendancy contemporaries, was anxious to formulate a credible continuity for her ethnic class within the frame of an overall shared national history. The difficulty, however, following the nineteenth-century historical novel's generic function of representing, in Lukàc's view, the past's felt relationship with the present, was the reconciling of that history with a nationalist historical memory of violence, dispossession and cultural occlusion. How, also, was a nationalism which presented a revitalised threat to that same Anglo-Irish sense of ownership and belonging to be assimilated yet simultaneously disarmed ?

Lawless's representation of this historical transformation is centred around two key protagonists, each displaying the characteristics which denote, in Lawless's typology, the defining symbolism of their respective social signatures. The young English adventurer, Hugh Gaynard, with whose travails and experiences the first volume of the narrative is primarily concerned, displays all of the youthful vigour and individualism of the emerging modern English state, particularly its motivation by material gain, its ascendant status replicated in Gaynard's own conviction of his personal providential destiny. As an indicator of the Gaelic culture's identification with the spiritual, the mythic and a clan collective consciousness, Maelcho, James Fitzmaurice's loyal and aging senachie, receives the concentrated focus of the narrative's second volume, as it chronicles the culture's endurance of conflict, hardship and systematic disintegration.

⁵²² Lawless, *Ireland*, p.183.

Considering the novel in this representative way, therefore, this chapter will first, through a close reading of the text, interpret the main events and the key characters as vehicles for Lawless's strategic manipulation of this crucial historical moment, particularly the way in which she presents those events as explicable, not through random cultural clash but as an expression of a destinator vector which determined their outcomes. This close reading will track, through volume one, Gaynard's incarceration by the O'Flaherties for two years prior to Fitzmaurice's landing, which provides a depiction of the clan's leader Cormac Cas and his servile attendant Flan-an Pus, and the cultural progression which ensues with his escape and subsequent involvement with the rebel forces at Smerwick and the persons of Fitzmaurice, the papal legate Saunders, and Maelcho himself. Volume one closes with the death of Fitzmaurice and the break up of the small band, including Gaynard, which accompanied him. Volume two allows for a more revealing analysis of Lawless's method as Gaynard is absorbed into the ranks of the English forces as protégé of Lieutenant Fenwick, and the pragmatism and ruthlessness which characterise the state's policies are demonstrated through the persons and tactics of 'Black' Thomas, Duke of Ormond, Sir Nicholas Maltby, and Sir William Pelham. The inexorable onslaught which these commanders unleash on Munster is paralleled with the suffering of a dismembered social body, a suffering which Lawless presents mainly through the eyes and experiences of a distracted Maelcho as he interacts with an uprooted and famine-stricken Gaelic population.

On foot of this close reading, the chapter will proceed to a consideration of Lawless's text in its contemporary context and the reliance for ideological purposes which Lawless places on a resource of Anglo-Irish and British racial theory and ethnic identity formation. Collating material from Matthew Arnold and Samuel Ferguson as a means to indicate Lawless's use of a structuring method of national identity, the assessment will also involve an examination of the influences evident in Lawless's novel of the thinking of Standish O'Grady, particularly his conceptualising of a distinctive Anglo-Irish historical contribution to a unionist self-image which sought to define nationalism in its own terms and, in turn, also accommodated a continued contemporary participation in an imperial Britishness.

Fiction and Stadialism.

Ostensibly a chronicle of the sixteenth-century transition from feudal based to state orientated societies, *Maelcho* betrays many of the concerns expressed in late nineteenth-century Irish political and cultural fora towards the expansion of a state centralism into areas previously the reserve of a more traditionally sanctioned code. Coincident with a process by which the landed elite were inexorably becoming a casualty of modernizing forces transforming both Britain and Ireland, Lawless's narrative depicting the collapse of a late sixteenth-century aristocratic order and its replacement with a vibrant and iconoclastic centralized state system gives fictional voice to the bitter and minatory observations of Standish O'Grady that Ireland had seen three aristocracies come and go -- the Celtic, Hiberno-Norman and now the Anglo-Irish, 'The third, the Anglo-Irish, putting into the aisle of the sirens; all too plainly in these days have determined to leave their bones on the strand, a historic monument to the power of those immortal maidens'.⁵²³

Maelcho was published within two years of the founding of The Irish National Literary Society in 1892 through which members of an Anglo-Irish intellectual movement attempted to establish a new definition of Irish identity which might accommodate an Ascendancy interest to an increasingly dominant and essentialist Gaelic definition. While Lawless would not have shared Douglas Hyde's stated need to de-anglicize Ireland she would have agreed with his apprehension at the encroaching evils of mass culture and the surrendering of hereditary values to the impulses of modern individualism. With the founders of The National Literary Society Lawless also shared many of the late nineteenth-century discursive preconceptions regarding race and national character, although with an appropriate adjustment for specific ideological differences. Gavan Duffy's vision of a race which would combine the almost feminine qualities of the Celt with 'the sterner strength of the North' and the discipline of the 'Norman genius of Munster' relies on racial typologies which form the basis for Lawless's own conceptualisation of a national identity which would involve the disparate qualities of Ireland's contributory historical conquests.⁵²⁴ Hyde's declaration 'we must strive to cultivate everything that

⁵²³ O'Grady, James Standish, 'Ireland and the Hour - I', *Selected Essays and Passages* (Dublin: The Talbot Press, 1918), p.221.

⁵²⁴ Duffy, Sir Charles Gavan, Dr. George Sigerson, Dr. Douglas Hyde, *The Revival of*

is most racial, most smacking of the soil, most Gaelic, most Irish' combines, as does *Maelcho*, the complementary issues of race theory and a stadial concept of culture in its association of the Celtic race with a resistance to progressive, modernising historical processes. It also consequently locates at a level of social development, the articulation of the Irish ethnic type as an anachronism. The 'purity, piety, and simplicity' by which the Irish racial qualities were expressed by Gavan Duffy was itself curiously suggestive of a native pastoral world with its connotations of an obedient and submissive peasantry.⁵²⁵

The stadial theory of social evolution which is interwoven, explicitly or otherwise, into both the discursive methods employed by The National Literary Society's manifesto and Lawless's novel emanated from the Scottish Enlightenment which sought to rationalize the British state's imposition of authority on a Scottish native system. Registering a significant impact on British social and historical thinking throughout the nineteenth century such theories functioned through a coalescence of the cultural and the psychological as an expression of historical relevance, its 'politics of stadial ethnography' endorsing a hierarchical version of culture and race. Symbolic of a national Bildungsroman, social evolution was figured as the maturing of a childish ethnic culture under the supposed tutelage of the adult central authority.⁵²⁶ The overseeing and adapting of racial and cultural signatures in a quest for a greater national identity with which both Lawless and the National Literary Society's founders engaged, along with its assumed superiority of the Anglo-Irish vision, involves a curious manipulation of these theories, their ideological deployment as a bulwark against progressive modernity indicating the inherent contradictions which bedevilled the Anglo-Irish position during this transitional period.

The pervasiveness of race theory and its projection onto history, culture and national identity in the late nineteenth century is obvious not only in Lawless's novel itself but also in the way it is applied as a standard of novel's veracity by its reviewers. Its deployment by Lawless was used by the critic of the *Athenaeum* as an indication of Lawless's objectivity.

Irish Literature: Addresses by Sir Charles Gavan Duffy, Dr. George Sigerson, Dr. Douglas Hyde (London: Fisher Unwin, 1973), pp.19-20.

⁵²⁵ Duffy, *The Revival of Irish Literature*, p.12-13.

⁵²⁶ Whelan, 'Writing Ireland: Reading England', p.186.

There is no attempt to extenuate the inherent weakness of the Celtic character any more than to palliate the brutal savagery of the English soldiery. ‘Maelcho’, in this respect, is a standing rebuke to those critics who deny to women the attribute of impartiality.⁵²⁷

In the *Saturday Review*, its reviewer identified the novel’s almost exclusive preoccupation with race typology.

Its definite purpose -- if it can be said to have any -- lies in the contrasting of the Saxon and the Celt...It is a psychological study, as applied to race, not to individuals.⁵²⁸

The reviewer in the *Spectator* likewise focussed on Lawless’s wider collective engagement, understanding the novel’s use of its protagonists as being emblematic of a greater cultural experience.

We do not quite know how much is fiction and how much is history, and we do know that the vividness of the whole is less due to the author’s sympathy with the individual beings born of her own imagination than it is to her keen sympathy with the hapless people of whom she records one of the most miserable of many miserable episodes.⁵²⁹

In volume one of *Maelcho* the sequence of events follows the typical pattern of the late nineteenth-century adventure tale and the imperial romance in which, as critic Patrick Maume has noted, a representative young man achieves ‘individual maturity and social position by fighting alongside great military leaders, usually in the service of the British empire’.⁵³⁰ An English youth, Hugh Gaynard, narrowly escapes from his father’s ransacked castle on the banks of Lough Corrib and finds himself wandering through the night across dangerous bogs and mountains. Coming upon an opening in the mountain wall he climbs to an enclosed valley and enters the secret tribal refuge of Glen Corril, home of the O’Flaherties. From this point on, almost inevitably, the tone of the narrative begins to change although still adhering ostensibly to the standard adventure format. With Gaynard’s confinement in Glen Corril two diametrically opposed worlds are brought face to face thus opening the text to all the tensions and biases revolving around contemporary issues of race, political philosophy and cultural superiority which were dominating discourses in late nineteenth-century British society. Essentially a pilgrimage which begins at the most distant point from civilisation with the O’Flaherties, Hugh Gaynard’s journey will

⁵²⁷ Review, *Athenaeum*, vol. 104, 1894, p.639. Quoted in Hansson, *Emily Lawless*, p.132.

⁵²⁸ Review, *Saturday Review*, (December, 1894), Lawless Papers, Marsh’s Library, Dublin.

⁵²⁹ Review, *Spectator*, (October, 1894), Lawless Papers, Marsh’s Library, Dublin.

⁵³⁰ Maume, Patrick, ‘Emily Lawless’s *Maelcho* and the Crisis of the Imperial

take him through the mid-way station of the Desmonds, eventually reaching a goal, according to a stadial process of development, among an energetic, progressive English community.

Benighted and tribal, its cohesion and rationale centring around Cormac Cas, the aging leader of the O'Flaherties, the social system which Hugh Gaynard enters is figured as hostile to all those principles of self-representation and individuality characterising the racial ethos with which Gaynard himself is identified. In the almost two years of captivity which Hugh endures, he comes to revile what he views as these unregenerate people and to assume an unassailable esteem for his own race and its greater destiny. From its inception in this meeting of the two cultures the conventional shortcomings which Lawless adopts for her profiling of the Celtic nature in *Maelcho* are measured against an aggressive, clear-sighted English character, the narrative's standard of value, which, from the narrative's outset, is established from this comparative situation of the purposeful English youth immersed in the closed and potential-limiting aboriginal setting. Self-aware and self-motivated, Gaynard is contrasted strikingly with the portrayal of the pure, native O'Flaherties, youths like himself yet almost insensible to basic human consciousness. In *Maelcho*, the isolationism of a vaunted aboriginal purity signals, as a consequence, a debilitating cultural atrophy.

These midnight soliloquies amid the sleeping tribe formed a growing epoch in Hugh's life. Imaginative he was not. A tougher bit of Anglo-Saxon dough never yet was kneaded. The Occult, the Remote, the Supernatural -- all that dim realm of mystery which stirred these inchoate souls around him -- never had ruffled and never would ruffle a hair of his head... He came of a fine tenacious *having* stock, strong to will, firm to grasp, clear-sighted and shrewd in everything that concerned its own interest, a stock with the word success stamped in its very integument.⁵³¹

Set in the chronotopic remoteness of Glen Corril, a mountain valley cut off from the surrounding world and having little or no communication with it, the beliefs and customs which the O'Flaherties observe are seen to be primitive in the extreme.⁵³²

Romance', *Eire-Ireland* 41:3 &4, Fall/Winter, 2006, pp. 245-266, p.252.

⁵³¹ Lawless, Emily, *Maelcho: A Sixteenth-Century Narrative* (London: Smith, Elder & Co., 1894), vol.i. p.110-111.

⁵³² The internal border characteristic of the historical novel and the national tale and represented by Lawless as the enclosed mountain valley of the O'Flaherties, is conceived by Moretti as an anthropological one. Movement in space 'is also, and in fact above all, the movement in time'. Moretti, Franco, *Atlas of the European Novel*

Although visited by travelling friars, the community's religious disposition is essentially pagan, with its devotion focused on a large upright stone, Cloch Corril, its apparent mystic inscriptions decipherable only by the tribal leader Cormac Cas. As a community ruled by savagery, fear and superstition its degenerative nature is epitomised in the ugly and deformed human specimens, Flann-an-Pus, the tribe's factotum and general enforcer, incarnating the community's subhuman, almost evolutionary deviant, makeup.

It was the figure of a monster -- of a dwarf and giant rolled into one -- a black deformity apparently portentous breadth and more than portentous ugliness. Above the two shoulders rose a big head, surmounted with a dense thatch of hair which covered it down to the eyes, and stood out like a judge's wig. Hardly any neck was visible, only those two monstrous shoulders and a body which, though broader than that of an average man, dwindled down to a meagre pair of legs, from the ends of which two flat, fin-like feet extended at right angles.⁵³³

Ullach, the wife of Flann-an-Pus, is described in equally repellent terms, and the narrative's employment of an almost scientific distance serves to remove further the person from the region of the human.

She was ugly enough, poor wretch, to frighten the very goats. A mass of reddish hair hung down in long elf locks about a face upon which misery appeared to have so stamped itself as almost to have produced idiocy...He had seen her a thousand times, this ugly, down-beaten creature, with stupidity and misery stamped upon her face like an ineradicable birth-mark. The specimen before him was bigger, perhaps, and wilder-looking than any specimen he had seen before, still in all essential points it was the same. The wives and daughters of his uncle's 'bodachs' had all been just like that -- as ragged, as gaunt, as haggard, as wretched-looking, with just the same expression of vacant misery written upon their faces.⁵³⁴

Such physical description is extreme in its repulsiveness, verging almost on the vitriolic, an excess which serves to divert attention away from the subject and onto the barely concealed anxiety behind the narrative description itself. That of Cormac Cas is equally disturbing:

Cormac Cas turned his head slowly towards his daughter. It was like the movements of a snake, the slow, deliberate wrinkles of the neck, the puckers round the chin, where the skin rose in thin brown lines over the surface. Hugh watched these movements with a sort of fascination, and sickened as he did so to the very bottom of his soul.⁵³⁵

These descriptions, concentrated as they are on a physical deformity which is directed

1800-1900 (London: Verso, 1998). p.37.

⁵³³ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol.i. p.42.

⁵³⁴ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol.i. p.44.

⁵³⁵ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol.i. p.92.

towards the evidencing of an intellectual and cultural one, are calculated to counter the vaunted purity on which 'organic' nationalism's originary claims traditionally rely. Conceived of as a closed culture, non-tributary to the mainstream and whose elective difference is corrosive of its own vigour, the community of the O'Flaherties is figured in the narrative's argument as reverting, through isolation, back to an animal level, their developmental trajectory reversed.

On the scale of cultural indicators by which Lawless's narrative desires to estimate social progress and cultural sophistication, the indigenous is utilised as a base measure simply by virtue of its perceived absolute difference from the cultural backdrop of the text itself. Cultural difference, however, is difficult to visualize and less determinate in its effects. The saturation of this section of the narrative with repulsive visual description is Lawless's manipulation of the colonial status of the 'other', the extremes employed to describe the colonial subject in this way being related to the fact that the Irish 'native' could not be differentiated according to skin colour. Luke Gibbons notes that colonial discourse establishes its legitimacy by locating discrimination 'in a primal act of visual recognition'. Yet a native population which cannot be distinguished in this manner defeats many of these constituents of colonial discourse: 'The 'otherness' and alien character of Irish experience was all the more disconcerting precisely because it did not lend itself to visual racial divisions'.⁵³⁶ As Gibbons notes, this visual recognition is all the more contradictory in its application of the Lacanian Imaginary which itself functions according to principles of similarity and identification in which there is no conscious division between the self and objects. Yet, for Lawless, the deployment of racial theory in *Maelcho* is predicated on the distance of racial purity from the concept of integrated identity and enhancement by which the Anglo-Irish type is to be distinguished.

The means by which the colonial subject, therefore, might be differentiated in Lawless's narrative is by the imposition of identifying features which isolate and contain its objectivity. As with Carlyle's remark regarding the Irish, 'Black-lead them

⁵³⁶ Gibbons, Luke, 'Race Against Time: Racial Discourse and Irish History', in *Transformations in Irish Culture* (Cork: Cork University Press, 1996), pp.149-163. Gibbons quotes from Charles Kingsley's record of a visit to Sligo in 1860. 'I am haunted by the human chimpanzees I saw along that hundred miles of horrible country. I don't believe they are our fault. I believe...that they are happier, better, more comfortably led and lodged under our rule than they ever were. But to see white chimpanzees is dreadful; if they were black, one would not feel it so much, but their

and put them over with the niggers', animal characteristics, and cultural signification which is familiar yet debased, provide a mechanism by which a disconcerting proximity might be obviated. So the O'Flaherties are accorded not only the lowest social structures equating with the lowest mental and cultural expression but are also reduced in evolutionary terms, even to the point of environmental value, whereby the natural conditions which contain them are expressive of them. Put otherwise, the tribe of the O'Flaherties is defined in relation to the wilderness which contains and stamps it. In her study of *Grania*, Jacqueline Belanger refers to the historical connection between the natural environment and the colonial 'other', 'This linking of the native with the natural environment and landscape has a long history in colonial discourses, where the native "barbarity" is linked to the wilderness or impenetrability of the natural environment'.⁵³⁷ The bogs and marshes are caught in the figuring of Flann-an-Pus entering a tribal gathering, the extended metaphor also drawing the community into its compass.

Every seat was filled, and no one stirred to give him room. Gazing round with an air of prodigious displeasure, he stamped twice upon the ground, and advancing to his master, stood before him, ducking his frog-like head, and, in a loud croaking voice, pouring out his complaints... Finally, with a piteous squeak, his voice dropped, his air lost its importance, and with a croaking gurgle he shrank back, and, creeping amongst the ranks of the women, squatted down like a toad upon the ground, his eyes fixed in terror upon his master.⁵³⁸

The young men and Ullach, tending the cattle in the mountain-enclosed glen, are merged in instinctual reflex with their animals, raising heads and staring, in near identification with the actions of the cattle, at newcomers, two friars from the outside world, who exhibit almost a herders' effect on their consciousness.

The speckled cows lifted their horned heads to stare at this figure, waving its arms so excitedly

in their midst. Ullach, the wife of Flann-an-Pus, opened her eyes and stared with just the same air of bovine perplexity. The young men who had come down from the glen gazed too, blank bewilderment written upon their faces, peering up at him from under their uncombed 'glibbes', and hardly understanding more of what he was talking about than she or the cows.⁵³⁹

While the O'Flaherties perceive their stronghold as a defensive preservation, Gaynard, innately ambitious and restless, is shown as suffering the detrimental effects

skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours'.

⁵³⁷ Belanger, 'The Desire of the West', p.102.

⁵³⁸ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol.i. p.81.

⁵³⁹ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol.i. p.126.

of such limitation placed on his personal potential.

How to escape in the first instance from his present position, and how afterwards to make a way for himself in the world, this was the whole stuff, the whole tenure of his dreams. That by some means, he did not yet know what, he would escape, would make a way for himself, would be something and somebody, so far he felt positive. It was in his blood. He came of a fine tenacious *having* stock, strong to will, firm to grasp, clear-sighted and shrewd in everything that concerned its own interest, a stock with the word success stamped in its very integument. Hugh had inherited his full share of that stamp.⁵⁴⁰

During a disappointed journey into Munster in support of James Fitzmaurice's return from Spain, Hugh Gaynard escapes from the contingent of the O'Flaherties only to find himself detained within the camp of the rebel Geraldines at Smerwick. It is here he meets the Maelcho of the title, Sir James Fitzmaurice's legendary senachie, and it is with the introduction of this southern environment that a fundamental shift occurs in the narrative. The arena is expanded to a scale which calls into play the full cultural impetus of the two races, Anglo-Saxon and Celtic, and creates the narrative scope for a detailed profiling of their perceived respective, ethnic qualities. While the earlier Connaught episode placed the individual Hugh Gaynard in the role of civilised foil among the O'Flaherties, in Munster English and Irish social philosophies contend with each other for dominance. In accordance with the expansion in canvas a corresponding widening of the racial elements occurs. Irish native traits are seen to be refined by contact with other sources and take on a more idiosyncratic yet personable tint. Dreaminess and unreality are among the salient features characterising this Irish pedigree, frequently valorised by the narrative as imaginative. Yet such character definition, translated into the narrative's field of actions and intent, also materialises as harmfully impulsive and hopelessly disorganized. James Fitzmaurice's campaign is shown as prosecuted in an almost madcap, reckless atmosphere, motivated by a variety of disparate incentives. Religious crusade, racial hatred, political hegemony and undisguised belligerent enthusiasm drive the equally disparate forces that rally to the Desmond cause, a configuration by which the narrative demonstrates the confused and non-centralised aspect of the social and political system behind it. The headiness, desperation and irresponsible commitment to illusory objectives are in marked contrast to that almost bovine dormancy of the O'Flaherties. Nonetheless, presented as undisciplined and misdirected, such extravagant and enthusiastic harnessing of

⁵⁴⁰ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol.i. p.110.

human agency is shown to be as much the conventional articulation of the Irish national character, the stage Irishman of Victorian melodrama, as Lawless attempts to capture, through her various descriptions of Fitzmaurice's campaign, the eccentricity and sheer volatile and misguided signature of the Desmond rebellion, and by implication, all Irish grand political designs.

Did ever madder combination, ever more desperate scheme of invasion issue even from the brain of a political enthusiast ? ⁵⁴¹

As for the death and ruin involved in failure, well, they must come if they must. After all, a man has but some sixty or seventy years to live, and a few months, nay, a few weeks, full to the brim of fighting, fun, vengeance -- of anything that stirred the blood and put life into the heart-- was worth the risk of more than that ⁵⁴²

It was a day that breathed somehow of hope, and of enticing promises -- delusive hopes, treacherous promises, as Irish ones are wont to be, but still very seductive, very encouraging -- . ⁵⁴³

In a wonderfully expressive use of metaphor the enthusiastic embracing of 'enticing promises-delusive hopes' informing the native racial type and perpetuating the narrative of Irish history receives sympathetic resonance in the natural world which surrounds Fitzmaurice and is, again, an indication of an inter-definition between environment and national subject. As the newly arrived rebel forces settle down for the night at their Smerwick camp, their new venture is compared to a small stream contributing some minute new addition to the perennial tale of the sea.

A small stream overhead trickled with a continuous sleepy murmur over the face of the cliff, smothered for a while in weeds and shingle, then issuing again at the base, and bringing a sprinkle of fresh water -- perhaps too of new ideas -- to the purple sea-urchins and green snaky antheas in the rock pools at the bottom. The sea kept repeating over and over the same monotonous, old-world stories which it had been telling to the rocks and the sands ever since they first began to keep company together; booming them out mysteriously in a hollow voice into the darkest recesses of the small rocky caves; coming out again, and hurrying to repeat them, without the smallest variation, to the narrow reefs, cut into knife-like edges, and nearly worn out of existence by sheer attrition; then, as if there was not a moment to lose, hastening away, with heavy flouncing curves and a general sense of fuss and monotony, to tell the same things in the same hollow voice to the remote tiny islets, and little half-submerged skerries, far out in its own dim cloud-laden breast. ⁵⁴⁴

This expanded image, while beautifully capturing the spirit of the moment, is,

⁵⁴¹ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol.i. p.187.

⁵⁴² Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol.i. p.259.

⁵⁴³ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol.i. p.265.

nonetheless, also astutely tendentious in its figuring of Irish aspiration as an incessant, futile gesture. Such enterprises are presented as informed by an almost primeval story which mesmerises and deludes, an ancient monologue to which the Irish return again and again. Yet this incessant solicitation is also suggested as motivating and giving definition to the nation and its history, a consolidating and identifying discourse by which the Celtic and Hibernicised system maintains its focus and continuity. The suggestion also is that only on this wider canvas can such a differentiating and sustaining story be fabricated, not within an introspective and isolated tribal image, the monotonous tale connecting land, islets and skerries. Equally identifying, those stories retold are conceived as the perpetuation of an 'old-world' ethos. Already, the conflict between the ancient system and the modern, which the English forces typify, is established within the narrative method.

Because this cultural environment of the Desmonds which the narrative conjures up is more refined and expansive, seeded with qualities from the Old English and from European contact, the Irish psyche in this form is enabled to present an acceptable companion balance to the perceived English racial type which appears as emblematic of practicality and efficiency. Within the person of Fitzmaurice, a hybrid of Anglo-Norman and Celtic strains, both racial identities are shown as fighting for possession, the seeming inadequacies and irrationality of the one being seen as partially redeemed by the pragmatism of the other.

If a long line of Irish mothers had made him three-fourths of a Celt himself, the remaining fourth retained something of the old Norman grip and tenacity; or if it is objected that these elderly definitions are out of date, let us say that, by training and habits of discipline acquired outside of Ireland, he had shaken off some of that inconsequence, which hung like an Atlantic mist over the rest of his house. If two and two were not necessarily four, at least he had no prejudice against that number. It was not with him a point of honour, almost a religious obligation, that they should make three or five.⁵⁴⁵

That pragmatism is presented as enervated and, therefore, hampered by what is construed as a native 'inconsequence'. The situation which Fitzmaurice finds himself in at Smerwick is used to emphasise that insufficiency, certain defining native characteristics rendering the Celtic type inadequate to the necessities of a practical world. Fitzmaurice's entire entourage, like himself, is conceived of as disabled in this way.

⁵⁴⁴ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol.i. p.218.

As he looked about him at Smerwick he failed just then to discern a single being, with the doubtful exception of Dr. Allen, in whom the typical and hereditary traits did not so predominate as to extinguish all others.⁵⁴⁶

However, it is to the Celtic type's complement that the narrative turns in order to make its point. The exigencies facing Fitzmaurice are used to delineate Gaynard's innate difference, a difference which is observed to contain a gem-like quality which the natives obviously lack. The use of the term 'gem' emphasises what the narrative judges to be the Saxon's superior value. As that superior value resides in a simple 'common-sense', it serves to disqualify the Celt from the world of the modern, being deficient in so basic and usually so quotidian a characteristic.

If qualities are valuable chiefly in proportion to their rarity, no quality ought to have had a more gem-like value amongst that remarkable community just then gathered about Smerwick Fort than the golden if unromantic one of common-sense. Perhaps it was so valued -- unconsciously, that is to say -- and that it was to the possession of this jewel-like quality that we must set down the degree of favour which Hugh Gaynard about this time began to acquire amongst its defenders, and especially in the eyes of Sir James Fitzmaurice himself.⁵⁴⁷

Those who rally to Fitzmaurice's banner, the representatives of Gaelic culture and racial singularity, are defined by the mutually inclusive un-modern and the geographically peripheral.

The very day after Davells' and Carter's murder, three thousand of the Desmond clansmen joined the standard at Smerwick -- O'Sullivan Bere and O'Sullivan More, MacDonaghs, O'Keefes, O'Callaghans, MacAuliffes, O'Donoghues -- chiefs from castles perched like guillemots' nests along the surf-tormented edge of Kenmare, Bantry, and Dingle Bay; lords of black wastes of bog; owners of stony hillsides and naked heath-encumbered territories; these all began to collect with their war paint on, and their retainers at their heels... All the Celtic, all the anti-progressive, all the anti-Protestant, anti-utilitarian elements in the country rose suddenly to their full strength.⁵⁴⁸

Lawless's categorisation not only operates on a typology of Celtic and its relatedness to other 'backward' colonial subjects indicated by the words 'war paint' but indirectly locates the position of its racial opposite, English, within that area of comparison denoted as progressive, Protestant and utilitarian, while also implying that race's identification with environments opposite to that of wastes, stony hillsides and heath-encumbered territories. As with the tribe of the O'Flaherties earlier in the

⁵⁴⁵ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol.i. p.250.

⁵⁴⁶ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol.i. p.250.

⁵⁴⁷ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol.i. p.247.

⁵⁴⁸ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol.i. p.258.

narrative, synonymous with these semi-barbaric clans, and with the anti-English elements in general, is an affinity with a landscape which is made to mirror their Celtic characteristics deemed to be peripheral to the mainstream of social development.⁵⁴⁹ The identification of an ethnic type in this way conflates the temporal with the spatial as a means by which coevality is suppressed. According to Kevin Whelan, the stadialism and racialism of the Enlightenment were merged in a nineteenth-century evolutionism which located Saxon cultural achievement at the summit of human development, ‘Two discourses of distance were thereby fused: evolutionism (distance in time) and racial diffusionism (distance in space). That sense of distance was crucial to the construction of the other: distance is difference, in these formulations’.⁵⁵⁰ A negating of simultaneity supports a discursive concept ‘that each society is encapsulated in its own time’, and, therefore, in its own stage of developmental process. The distancing of the Celt to the geographic margins is also a relegating of the race to a pastness of which their geographical remoteness represents a manifestation. As strategies, associated with the binaries of civilised/savage, here/there, traditional/modern, they represent instruments of power and are deployed as a sanctioning or justification for actions which are ideological and state driven. As Lawless is intent on narrating an historical transformation which involves the crises of suffering and dislocation, the grounds on which its occurrence might be sanctioned are already prepared for within the narrative’s historicizing of geography and spatializing of history.⁵⁵¹ All of the epithets associated with such a strategic discourse are utilized in the perception attributed to Gaynard of the distinguishing features characterising both racial types: the geographic terms circumscribing the Celt (‘wastes’, ‘unprofitable’, ‘barren’) in direct contrast with those forward and expansive terms which contain the motivating aspect of the Anglo-Saxon (‘value’, ‘power’, ‘prosperity’, ‘clear-sighted’, ‘efficient’, ‘duty’) suggestive of a commercial and

⁵⁴⁹ Renan and Arnold both equated Celtic traits with the typical Celtic landscape: evocative, wild, naturally expressive. Matthew Arnold, referring to the presumed shortcomings of Celtic culture in the plastic arts, states: ‘The forest of trees and the forest of rocks, not hewn timber and carved stones, suits its aspirations for something not to be bounded or expressed.’ Such a classification by definition excludes the Celt, therefore, from that form of social organization which involves regulated interaction. Arnold, Matthew, *On the Study of Celtic Literature* (1866: London: Dutton & Co., 1932), p.95.

⁵⁵⁰ Whelan, ‘Writing Ireland: Reading England’, p.188.

⁵⁵¹ Whelan, ‘Writing Ireland: Reading England’, p.188.

imperial abstraction freed from any geographic particularity.

Wastes of sea, and of unprofitable bog; dripping forests, and such-like barren places, decked here and there with a little haggard beauty, might be the natural heritage of the Celt, but anything of value; anything that meant power, money, or prosperity; anything that tended to a good position and repute in the world at large, was meant, he knew, to belong to the clearer -- sighted, more efficient race; had been set out by Providence as its heritage, one which it was its duty, not alone to itself, but to the rest of the world, to take possession of with as little delay as possible. ⁵⁵²

James Fitzmaurice's setting out from the rebels' established base, leaving behind the papal legate Sanders and the Spanish contingent, and moving into the hinterland with the intention of raising support from the native clans, ignites in him a sense of place, not simply conceived of as a recovering of an old familiarity with home, but which is made to represent the rediscovery of an almost elemental embodiment of self.

Sir James especially was conscious of it, and, as he galloped along, the touch of that friendly earth, the look of those familiar skies, brought a sense of indescribable comfort to a breast, rather badly in need, just then, of some such cordial... Yonder ill-tempered mist-laden Atlantic -- so detested of Sanders and the other strangers -- was like home and the face of a friend to him. In the direction too in which he was then going, the whole South of Ireland -- in its length and in its breadth, in its greenness and in its greyness -- rose up bit by bit before him, and he knew it intimately; knew it as only a wolf or a fox... The entire province, with its leagues of dripping forest, its interminable stretches of bog, its lowering clouds, its spots of wild and gleaming beauty, was as familiar to him as the insides of most men's houses are to them. ⁵⁵³

The alienation of Sanders and the other strangers from this instinctual sensation of home simultaneously distances Fitzmaurice from that civilising indicator 'the inside of most men's houses'. Such a seemingly symbiotic relationship with place is in keeping with the narrative's imbrication of the Irish into the natural landscape, and, therefore, into a form of regionalism which encloses them in its own defining encapsulated time. Yet the contradiction involved in the contrasting use of 'home' and 'house' is striking in that it employs a reversal of the familiar standard to disorient the focus, mapping the movement of Fitzmaurice backward in terms of the temporal as much as the geographic. Fitzmaurice's home is that of the open landscape, which locates him in the backward area of a stadialism which measured the development of civilization as parallel with the development of a concept of fixed

⁵⁵² Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol.i. p.249.

⁵⁵³ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol.i. p.266.

property. In the course of Lawless's narrative, Fitzmaurice is depicted as moving away from Sanders and the social complexity of civilization back towards a phase at which he and his race are judged properly to reside.

Having traversed the wide pasturelands and their implicit association with a stadial phase of pastoralism, Fitzmaurice and his small band reach the fringe of the great forest, presenting a moment where the narrative's conception of this merging of the subject into the determining condition of its natural surrounding through a regressive movement is manipulated with great subtlety by Lawless as Fitzmaurice's almost subliminal reversion to the savage is achieved.

A couple of ridges to north and south seemed to be shoving the forest up upon their sides; owls

hooted; wolves howled dismally in the distance, but Sir James never changed his attitude, never relaxed for a moment from that air of alert and eager anticipation, the air of a man who at last sees his way, who has at last reached firm ground. This forest, it must be remembered, was in a sense his own; he had made it his, and had written his name broadly across it. A good friend to him in the old time, it seemed only natural that it should prove a good friend to him now. His nostrils dilated as if to sniff its fragrance, and his eyes sought its recesses with a smile of happy proprietorship.⁵⁵⁴

As with the description of the stream at Smerwick, this is a beautifully written passage and captures perfectly the innate relationship which the narrative is endeavouring to establish between the Irish and their definitive 'naturalness'. Yet again, phrases such as 'alert and eager anticipation', 'at last reached firm ground', 'nostrils dilated', 'sniff its fragrance' also endow him with the characteristics of the forest's animal dependents, Fitzmaurice revealing his affinity not only with place but also with evolutionary process, exhibiting all the instincts of a stag or wolf reaching safe sanctuary.

⁵⁵⁴ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol.i. p.275.

Temporal Otherness.

Within this forest an encounter and dispute with Fitzmaurice's Burke cousins results in the shooting dead of Sir James and the disbandment of the travelling group containing Hugh Gaynard. This disaster precipitates fractures in the forces lodged at Smerwick, a consequence of which is that Maelcho, as close ally of Fitzmaurice, is immolated by order of Sir John Fitzgerald in a cliff cave for many months, gradually deteriorating psychologically as simultaneously the forces of Gaelic culture collapse. Eventually released from his captivity, Maelcho wanders through the debris of a shattered social system, unable to accept the realities to which he bears witness.

Stumbling upon a force of English soldiers burning a native village, Gaynard is captured and mistaken for a wood-kerne. At this turn in the narrative Hugh Gaynard is finally re-united with his own race, yet the transition is punctuated by direct appeal to a nineteenth-century present in order that the shock of the temporal rupture might be maximised, its echoing of the adventure novel giving it an incongruity which equally accentuates what is to be considered as an overall dramatic shift; 'Picture to yourself a group of American officers engaged upon frontier duty suddenly hearing an Indian in war paint and moccasins declare himself in good nasal English to be a citizen and a brother'.⁵⁵⁵ Having concentrated to this point on those figures representative of an Irish ethnicity the narrative now brings to the fore the main agents in the English cultural project, the most prominent being the Earl of Ormond, Sir Nicholas Maltby, Sir William Drury and Sir William Pelham and the aspiring Lieutenant Henry Fenwick under whose guiding influence Gaynard now comes. The ethnic characteristics which Hugh Gaynard personified as an individual are now also fully fore-grounded, his ambition, common-sense and tenacity along with his conviction of personal superiority, being extended onto the wider canvas of the collective national type. The result is that an already present and unsettling ambivalence becomes more pronounced as a specific ideology, voiced through this ethnic type, causes the narrative to waver between admiration and critique. The description of Henry Fenwick is a prime example.

For Lieutenant Fenwick *was* a remarkable young man...National character, if on the whole a fairly fixed commodity, is also one that under certain circumstances seems capable of being curiously quickly revolutionised. After for centuries a duller and heavier type had become

stamped as the typically Britannic one, recently -- within twenty or thirty years, that is, of the time we are looking at -- the sudden throwing open of new doors, the sudden letting in of new lights of all sorts, had produced a startling modification in all that was ordinarily summed up in the word Englishman. There were a good many unmistakable sons of the great Italian renaissance at that time walking about upon English soil, and this young man -- late Lieutenant of the Berwick bands -- was one of these. He possessed all the mental nimbleness, the personal distinction, the curious, flowerlike grace and attractiveness which marked the type; he possessed also its sensitiveness of organisation, verging upon effeminacy; its clear cold tenacity of purpose; above all its absolute and truly magnificent indifference as to the means by which that purpose was to be carried into effect.⁵⁵⁶

This description of Lieutenant Fenwick incorporates two forms of the English national stereotype, using one as a foil to the other. It also, incidentally, mixes class stereotype, the 'duller and heavier' reflecting the portrayal of the common soldiery in the narrative. Presenting Fenwick as the newer, more engaging 'revolutionised' form selects him as a figure worthy of our attention, irresistibly so as the exemplar of those admirable human characteristics which he is seen to manifest -- 'youthfulness', 'intelligence', 'determination'. As a newer type replacing an older duller one which has dominated 'for centuries', Fenwick also accommodates the narrative's theme of transition from old world to progressive modernity, a process which the narrative implies is one that tends to perfect and refine. Therefore this type is conceived of as more consummately cultured, the language used 'flowerlike', 'attractiveness' 'sensitiveness', 'mental nimbleness', conveying this refinement. The profiling of Fenwick in this way weakens any moral observations which the narrative attempts, his actions and those of the imperial forces implicitly countenanced by a formal and admirable appropriateness to function. This appropriateness in turn fits with the deliberate and single-minded structuring of Lawless's narrative prose, a formal synthesis which superintends the text in general, undercutting any infringements of it by an extraneous deference to a conventional rectitude. This is most obvious in the ironic reservation which the narrative attempts in Fenwick's 'magnificent indifference', the irony undermined by the very language used to contextualize it.

Throughout the text, therefore, a morally based, historically informed irony is tacitly yet consistently undermined due, in the main, to the fact that two historical viewpoints are made to co-exist without being satisfactorily reconciled. The decided

⁵⁵⁵ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. ii. p.23.

⁵⁵⁶ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. ii. p.100.

ambiguity of voice is a consequence by which the narrator frequently assumes the personal consciousness of a subject, most particularly Hugh Gaynard's, following his train of thought as a means of producing some insight into his character, often an ironic insight, yet betraying a sympathetic identification with him. When Hugh Gaynard was imprisoned among the O'Flaherties the presenting, through free direct discourse, of an internalised self-reassurance is understandable.

He would walk up and down under those silent questioning stars, clenching his fists and vowing to himself that he would be heard of yet. Hugh Fitzwilliam Gaynard was not going to be beaten, not going to knock under to fate, not going to spend the whole of his life in a filthy Iar Connaught shanty ! No, they need not think it -- they -- all that vague world of enemies, De Burghs, O'Flaherties, and the rest. He would beat them yet, they should know it, the world should know it, his own kinsfolk the Gaynards should know it. ⁵⁵⁷

Again, on being captured and mistaken for a wood-kerne by Fenwick and his soldiers, the narrator assumes the exasperated mental processes of her subject.

It seemed hardly worthwhile to have lived if this was to be the end of it ! As well have been killed by Cormac Cas, or Muredagh, as well have perished in any one of the various adventures that had befallen him since his uncle's castle was burnt; if he were only reserved for this. To be killed as a wood-kern ! The ignominy of the idea rankled. It was worse, unmistakably worse, than even the pang of death itself. ⁵⁵⁸

The flow from the narratorial voice into that of the subject is naturally seamless here and dramatically justified yet other instances occur where it is difficult to distinguish the two and where such a conflating of voices appears inappropriate.

Not that Hugh was a boaster. He left that to senachies, and such-like beings -- big talkers and little doers. The innate superiority of his blood was perhaps in nothing more shown than the absolute non-effect which his surroundings, at what is called the most susceptible age of a man's life, had practically had upon him. His long stay amongst the O'Flaherties had not Celtified him even in the faintest degree. If anything it had *un*-Celtified him, fostered and hardened the original, anti-Celtic qualities which were his by nature. The sense of being apart from all those people, and not belonging to them in any way, had grown more and more definite with every hour he stayed. Driven inwards by force of circumstances, it had settled there, and become bone of his bone, the one superstition of an otherwise distinctly the reverse of superstitious mind. How could the superiority of the one race be questioned when every hour you remained in the society of the other only made that superiority more manifest ? ⁵⁵⁹

That 'innate superiority of his blood' cannot be ascribed to the internalised musing of Gaynard given the authorial statement of fact which follows, 'than the absolute non-

⁵⁵⁷ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. i. p.111.

⁵⁵⁸ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. ii. p.16.

effect which his surroundings, at what is called the most susceptible age of a man's life, had practically had upon him'. Such statement of fact locates all of the succeeding passage in the narrator's voice register and therefore assigns to it narratorial authority. By this slippage in voice therefore, the moral pronouncements which ground the narrative in an overseeing common humanity are significantly devalued. Similarly, with the narrative's description of the activities of the English forces as they torch and devastate north Munster, the apparent moral reprobation is, in fact, diminished by the narrative's close mimicking of the efficiencies characterising those activities, the reprobation dissipated in the means used to convey it. The following are two textual examples:

This time the orders were carried out with praiseworthy celerity. The women and children, some of whom had strayed back to the spot, were hunted away like so many sheep and lambs. The corpses -- possibly in some cases shamming corpses -- upon the ground were put beyond all doubt in this respect; the prisoners, with the exception of Hugh, were either hanged or piked. Some amount of noise and confusion went on during these various processes, but in no case did they take very long, for habit had bred expertness, and in about half an hour comparative quiet had returned to the place.⁵⁶⁰

As for the amount of steady, methodical butchering which they got through between sunrise and sunset, that was all part of the day's routine, and in fairness must be discounted as such. The clearing-off of rebels, young, old, resisting, unresisting, was as much part of the regular business for which they had been hired as the making of horse-shoes is of a blacksmith's, or the tinkering pots of a tinker's. They did it as a housemaid, let us say, clears a window of flies when desired to do so by her mistress.⁵⁶¹

This is highly effective, capturing the sheer indifference to suffering in the interests of achieving an objective which the narrative wishes to convey as the mental structure behind the type's modernising efficiency. Yet this devastation is systematised and, therefore, associated with utility, compliance, control and the imposition of order. The untamed is in the process of being harnessed and directed and the consequent suffering, displacement and even eradication are somehow programmed to a maintainable purpose.

Through a sustained implication, therefore, mainly by metaphorical suggestion, the efficiency of the one racial type promotes and sanctions, however regrettably, the view of the other as in need of reconstituting. The lack, by this method, is figured to

⁵⁵⁹ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. i. p.248.

⁵⁶⁰ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. ii. p.27.

⁵⁶¹ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. ii. p.70.

originate in the Celtic psyche rather than in the English. The narratorial voice constantly slips into this telling trap. An established norm, the product of a split historical perspective, is adopted by the narrative, a recognisable one to nineteenth-century readers, whose representatives are Sir Nicholas Maltby, Sir William Drury, Hugh Gaynard and all the systematic disciplines for which they deputise and not the feudal oriented mentalities of Cormac Cas, Sir James Fitzmaurice, Maelcho and wood-kernes. The more Lawless imbues the feudal Irish with characteristics of the wild the further they are located in the socially arbitrary. By adopting this subtle privileging the narrative is invoking a nineteenth-century contemporary mechanism (examples of which will be discussed later in this chapter) for deflecting social and political grievance back onto the victimised.

With the death of James Fitzmaurice, Maltby and Ormond wreak devastation on the heartlands of the Geraldines, systematically eradicating men, women, children and livestock, and reducing the region to starvation and ruin. Compelled to watch helplessly from Askeaton castle as the English forces devastate the town and surrounding lands, ‘After all his doublings and windings; after his promises to both sides; after his innumerable inconsistencies; after all and sundry his hesitations, follies shifts, the Earl of Desmond stood before the world of Ireland a ruined man’.⁵⁶² By the attritional nature of the war the Irish become fugitive prey. As a consequence animal imagery becomes more pronounced and definitive, not just as a register of their reduced physical conditions but as an accentuation of that instinctual pre-disposition of the type already established by the narrative. Through narrative descriptions such as that of a distraught mother surveying her ruined village or of victims cowering in caves and hollows, Lawless draws on a sympathetic functioning which operates outside the area of the human.

Every time she looked at one particular heap, a little to the left of the village, her mouth twitched, and over the poor little wrinkled face there passed a piteous expression of misery, dumb, uncomplaining, uncomprehending. It was like the misery of some small hedgerow sufferer, whose lifelong home in the ground, or in some hollow tree, has been ravaged, and its inmates destroyed, it knows not why, or by whom.⁵⁶³

Like the young of any other hard-driven beasts, like newly dropped fawns, like young wild water-birds, the very babies had learned to keep still; to hide themselves in the leaves; to hold even their breath when the pursuer was on foot; had acquired the thousand and one protective

⁵⁶² Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. ii. p.160.

⁵⁶³ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. ii. p.218.

arts which the impartial mother instils into her worst used and most hardly reared foundling.⁵⁶⁴ Through such a deployment of imagery the narratorial tone betrays itself as complicit, the apparent insightfulness into the misery of these fugitives earned from the narrative's comparative positioning of the victims as uncomprehending, innately instinctive fauna. With the culture already narratorially distanced, the narrative is consequently incapable of eliciting a sympathy for its representative people commensurate with true human value. This, essentially, is the narrator's concurrence with that internalised voice of superiority and distance which characterises Hugh Gaynard and Fenwick's attitudes.

With Gaynard absorbed by his racial community, and the focus now centred on the plight of the harassed Irish, the experiences of Maelcho become the narrative means by which this ethnic disposition is explored. The true import of the clan's disaster is shown in the small earthen rath, used by villagers as a makeshift storehouse and finally a place of refuge, in which the bodies of Fitzmaurice's wife and children lie dead, huddled together 'in the same ruin, caught by the same fate, slain by the same brutal hands, as the wives and the children of mere "bodachs" and "herdsmen"'.⁵⁶⁵ Deranged and demoralised, wandering through a ravaged landscape, it is not coincident that Maelcho is placed outside the humanly rational. The parameters and reference points of language, imagery and dramatic conception which track his internal and external sufferings are located predominantly within and mediated through the uncomprehending and the instinctual. Aimlessly moving through the devastated countryside, Maelcho reaches the coastline of Dingle where burnt villages stretch into the distance.

Towards morning he was roused by a wild stampede of frightened creatures -- men, women, children, animals -- it was impossible to say who they were, or what they were, for the very lineaments of humanity seemed to be blotted out in the panic of that hour. Whoever they were, they all came tearing madly along that shore, not far from where he lay; scampering distractedly, in little groups of three or four, as rabbits and hares scamper when some unusually active *battue* is on foot.⁵⁶⁶

'Pushed', as Lawless describes it, by 'some unexplained instinct', Maelcho seeks out the great forests of the north-east of the province where 'his master' had perished six months earlier.

⁵⁶⁴ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. ii. p.249.

⁵⁶⁵ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. ii. p.211.

⁵⁶⁶ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. ii. p.220.

Like some friendly animal, grown savage by ill usage, he wandered along, day after day, dangerous to meet with, as such an animal may and easily does become, when it loses all that it has ever cared for, and has ceased to possess either a master or a home. Day after day he wandered, and night after night he lay down to sleep in some leafy corner, or sat crouched, his chin and his knees together, upon a stone, sleeping heavily, waking at early dawn, and going on again he did not himself know where. Owls hooted at him from the tree-tops, wolves howled, foxes barked, bats squeaked, the thick darkness of the woods encompassed him like the darkness of a grave.⁵⁶⁷

As representative of his shattered community, Maelcho's mental collapse symbolises the cultural disorientation which has resulted from the incessant shocks of the English onslaught.⁵⁶⁸ Yet the collapse is not just a collapse of culture or system, but more significantly represents a reduction to those elements which have constituted the race's true sustaining bedrock, the essentially primitive. The characteristic simplicities are considered as the foundational substance which belies the veneer overlaying it and beyond which it exhibits no further potential or aspiration. Instinctual, unsophisticated and operating on a quasi-conscious realisation of self, Maelcho is conceived as exemplifying the native system's racial strength and his own cultural relevance. Struggling to overcome a bewildering sequence of impressions, and unable to fathom what has befallen him and his revered Geraldines, he reverts to a recovering of the past, struggling to reconstitute its meaning and immediacy.

Throughout his insane experiences in the forest and elsewhere Maelcho is shown to be torn between the perplexity of those images which haunt him and a desperate attempt to rediscover previous actuality. Not to be achieved, however, in an irrevocably transformed present, the basis on which he and his culture are to persist is re-defined by the narrative. A method of reconciling Maelcho to this new definition is slowly developed and its subtle evolution is indicated by the voice he hears as he revisits the burnt and abandoned town of Dingle.

It was not a single voice, he then perceived, but many voices, only they were all uttering the same word. It was his own word, too, that they were uttering, *Marbh ! Marbh ! Marbh !* over and over in chorus. It echoed up and down the deserted streets; it came back to him in broken reverberations from the roofs, and seemed to be repeated in mocking accents even from the

⁵⁶⁷ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. ii. p.239.

⁵⁶⁸ Discussing a related matter, the Irish family chronicle, Katie Trumpener states that its disconnected, repetitive nature 'bears witness to the unassimilable nature of the violence done to Ireland: to become "wild", to go mad, is the only sane response'. Trumpener, Katie, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (New Jersey: Princeton University Press, 1997), p.153.

insides of the houses. *Marbh ! Marbh ! Marbh !* It was as though a whole legion of mocking devils had taken possession of ruined and deserted Dingle. He sat up, and gazed about him, his eyes wide with terror. Suddenly he heard another voice; a voice different from the rest; a voice that seemed to be coming from higher up, as if someone were standing upon a housetop, and proclaiming a message from there. *Ni marbh acht a dtaibhse an bhais.* [Not dead, only seeming to be dead.].⁵⁶⁹

The dead are not dead, only seeming so, and maintaining a vital occupancy in the consciousness of the old system. However, there is the sense that the old culture's existence now functions only on the immaterial and the imaginary. Memory, therefore, is figured by the narrative to be the most potent faculty in the racial repertoire, appearing as a distinguishing, sustaining and liberating agent in the individual and collective psyches, enabling the residual past to interact with the present, interpreting and motivating it. Most tellingly, it is Maelcho's discovery of a parallel existence to counteract the real and the unacceptable which best reflects the investment made by the Irish in memory as Lawless envisages it. Escape into memory is conceived by Lawless as a compensatory recessive movement, a means by which the immediacy of the present is somehow redirected back through an historical channel. Trapped by its own historicity, the native Irish or Celtic tradition is deprived of a linear, forward-moving progression from past into present into future time.⁵⁷⁰

The distancing of a Gaelic cultural identity into a temporal otherness, its efficacy reduced to an effect of the memory, is evidenced by the ruined structures which Maelcho encounters and uncertainly identifies as remnants of his former existence. From this point on the narrative establishes a reciprocal relationship between the native culture's dwindling material existence and that of an English insurgency which becomes all the more embedded in the actual. Balancing Maelcho's own deranged preoccupations are the fleeting images of a Desmond spectral presence which seems to flit in and out of reality as it recedes further and more irretrievably into its historically determined oblivion. Like that of the racial nature already rendered into inconsequence by Lawless, the Celtic culture is perceived as possessing a silhouetted existence, present only from the confirming lambent energy of its opposite.

This view is made all the more striking as the forces of the centralising English state are seen to have merely exposed the tribal elementalism at the heart of the clan system. As the Desmond and his followers doggedly persevere against the odds, the

⁵⁶⁹ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. ii. p.225.

struggle is shown to move out of the truly political and into the local, the Geraldines and Butlers pursuing a territorial and family vendetta which drives the continuance of unnecessary violence.

It was now, as it had always been, the Geraldines against the Butlers, and the Butlers against the Geraldines. The Geraldines, unfairly overmatched, beaten and desperate, pent into a corner, but still fighting furiously; fighting for their name, for their chief, but above and beyond everything else, for revenge. The Desmond stood out for his own hand. His name against his rival's name, his rights against his rival's claims, himself against his detested usurping stepson ! Hopeless, and outnumbered by a hundred to one, he was still The Desmond, and it was absolutely impossible that any Desmond could surrender to a Butler.⁵⁷¹

As the inevitable end closes on the house of Desmond, both its representatives and Maelcho, therefore, recede into a nebulous historicity. Roaming the forest for many months among the residue of the old community Maelcho falls in with a company of fugitive monks inhabiting a cave deep in the forest and encounters the dying monk Michael Galbraith whose enthusiasm and comforting words revives his distraught mind with a vision of personal and racial destiny.

He was an idealist, as all his race are; it was in his blood, as it is in the blood of every one of them. Born clansman, too, and practically serf though he was, the idea of freedom, of getting away somewhere into the open -- 'Phew ! Phew ! Away !' -- as the little monk said, had always been a favourite one with him, and of late had returned to him often, only in a new fashion. He had felt it about all these dead creatures -- dead men, dead women, dead children, dead animals -- of which he had recently seen so many. *They* were free; *they* were out of it; *they* had got into some country where nobody could do anything more against them; *they* had even triumphed after a fashion, the only fashion in which it was open to anyone to triumph in those days in Ireland. These dumb notions of his, coming back to him now from the friendly lips of the little monk, took hold of his mind, and filled it.⁵⁷²

The encounter with Michael Galbraith consolidates Maelcho's investment in a parallel world, giving it context in recoverable memory. The retreat into recollection of past glories and kinships which occupies Maelcho's thoughts from this point on allows him to transcend the suffering he endures, and makes the past far more immediate and relevant than the present. With the English discovery of their hiding-place, Maelcho is captured while facilitating the monks' escape. Brought before Lieutenant Fenwick, the old system and the new come face to face. While Fenwick's matter-of-fact dismissal of the senachie is indicative of the new regime's material ascendancy,

⁵⁷⁰ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*. p.227.

⁵⁷¹ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. ii. p.283.

Maelcho is perceived as already beyond the lieutenant's field of action.

With a sudden realisation of what was taking place, he looked up, knowing perfectly where he was, and what had befallen him. He was caught; the end, so long delayed, had come; there was no doubt of that. It was not upon this obvious fact that his mind, however, lingered. Like an arrow from the bow it flew back to the past. He was once again Sir James Fitzmaurice's senachie; he was again with them, with his own little *girsha* ladies. Again he walked beside them; again he played with them; again he heard their prattling voices, and as clearly as he had ever done in his life. *Where* he was walking with them -- in what region, country, or planet, whether in Munster or some still larger province, in one of the courts possibly of Heaven itself -- that he did not indeed know, and moreover did not care. He was with them, and that was enough.⁵⁷³

This recognition has the reassurance of a reality to it which is non-contingent, relying solely on its own sustaining relevance and thereby also providing a method of triumphing over de facto absence. The exchange between Maelcho and Fenwick is the moment when this perpetuation through memory seems to achieve a degree of dominance.

Looking up he saw the brilliant hazel eyes of the young English commander gazing at him with an expression of curiosity, and he looked back at him with a smile. It was a strange wild smile, one in which that feeling of freedom, and of exultation, shone and pierced unmistakably.

Captain Fenwick drew his head back, as if a wasp had stung him. The look that had met his from under that tangled grey glibbe was the very last he would have expected to see there. Hatred, in its wildest, most frantic manifestations; hatred, and an impotent desire for revenge, he was prepared to see, and, as a student of fallen humanity, rather interested in seeing. Such a look as this, however, was quite outside the range of his calculations, and was therefore annoying, as any circumstance that differs entirely from what we could possibly have anticipated, is apt to be annoying.⁵⁷⁴

The sting which his smile inflicts on Fenwick is not just the evasion of Fenwick's assumed superiority, it is also the realisation that there are areas which Fenwick's materialistic, utilitarian culture cannot touch nor for which it can compensate. The senachie, the cultural heart of the community, manages to attain an elusiveness and a defiance. Taken out for execution to the fringe of the great forest where the woodcutters are engaged in its clearance, Maelcho is propped against a giant beech and as he waits there the present and the past inter-merge with a clarity that belies any difference.

⁵⁷² Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. ii. p.309.

⁵⁷³ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. ii. p.324.

⁵⁷⁴ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. ii. p.326.

By moments he remembered quite clearly all that had lately taken place; then these newer scenes and impressions would melt away, and other and older ones come in their room. Little incidents of the past two years kept appearing for a moment before his eyes, and then vanishing again. A violent snowstorm which had assailed him and others in the wood of Kilquegg rose for a moment vividly. He recognised the drowned look of the forest, with its tufts of prickly gorse, and other undergrowths, all roofed over with snow, and the crowd of shivering creatures trying to shelter amongst them. His eyes seemed actually able to follow the descent of the feathery particles, circling, circling down from above, so soft looking, and so cruel. Suddenly this picture was crossed by another picture, that of a rush of armed men sweeping back into camp, from some deed of prowess.⁵⁷⁵

In this crystallisation of communal experience, ‘the crowd of shivering creatures’, ‘a rush of armed men sweeping back into camp’, characteristic moments of suffering and conflict are made not only to articulate that community’s history in Lawless’s narrative but also to figure as the pivotal dynamic in an historical transition which Lawless is intent on establishing for the relationship on which past and present are to coexist. This vividness of detail is important for the narrative’s conception of a culture whose shattered fragments can be directed, as an informing effect of history, towards the production of a national identity rather than the comprising of sufficient and actual national identity itself.

The relationship between residual culture and present national composition is the determining drive behind Lawless’s narrative and it is this dimension which exposes a fundamental orientation in both Lawless’s historical and contemporary perspectives. The cultural characteristics of language, traditional practice, textual and annalistic continuity in *Maelcho* are made to possess a superficial presence in the main due to Lawless’s determination to concentrate on the more pertinent and deeper societal philosophies on which the conflicting ideologies are founded. Crucially, it is a concept of social foundation which is being fought over and in demonstrating this Lawless manages to bring the sixteenth-century ideological battle into the heart of the nineteenth-century debate. While implicitly espousing a centralised, orderly governmental system through narratorial privileging and the stadialism which designates the feudal order as anachronistic, there is an overt criticism of the values such a system promotes and a corresponding sympathy for those values seen to be propagated by the more traditionally based society. The forces of the state in *Maelcho* are shown to be motivated not by devotion to cause but by a pursuance of function,

⁵⁷⁵ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. ii. p.340.

appetite and reward. The social philosophy which they represent is conceived as not one of stable relationship but one which is energised by a constant demand for status mobility, for the acquisition and exercising of power and influence. Hugh Gaynard and Lieutenant Fenwick are portrayed as ambitious agents of state policy and likely to gain optimum advancement by service to it. Gaynard's contempt for the native Irish is based on their undervaluing of '(A)nything that meant power, money, or prosperity; anything that tended to a good position and repute in the world at large'. Authority figures such as Sir William Drury and Sir Nicholas Maltby are wielders of a state machinery which is inexorable and aggressive and have a quick eye for good material suitable to its requirements. Maltby recognises in his protégé, Fenwick, an 'energy and a cold, keen tenacity of purpose which allowed nothing to turn or distract it'. The simple rank and file soldiery are no less driven by personal considerations, its abiding obsession being with 'meath and dring' and its remuneration, 'Eight groats a day, and those not paid!'. However, it is the quality of efficiency which most characterises the state forces in *Maelcho*. Strategies of massacre, desolation, famine, torture and summary execution are set to with expertness and without the slightest reservation. The efficiency is that of an administrative body working according to strict, legally formulated procedures and operating along clearly delegated responsibilities, an organisational structure which is representative of the centralised, progressive state.

The antithesis to this conception of an efficiently run state machinery is the indigenous system, with all its complex familial alliances and interdependencies. There is a dividing line in the narrative between the clash of ideologies and the feuding of related clansmen, a dividing line which is seen to be breached and overlap in the figures of Ormond and Desmond. While both represent clans which contest for supremacy in their respective areas, Ormond is also a representative of the Crown forces. This blurring of fields, however, only emphasises the intimate association between community and politics in the traditional culture. The Irish forces are motivated by extended affiliation, affiliation with place, leader, clan, religion, received heritage and with service based on obligation and belonging rather than reward. They are shown to be disorganised, de-centred and fractious yet to possess a conviction which enables them to endure conditions of extreme hardship and sacrifice. While the strategies they employ are narrow and defensive this accentuates their communal justification and it is this element in *Maelcho*, the defence against communal dismantling, that Lawless is attempting to valorise. The value sympathies

in this are clear: the state elements display a distance, a remove from context, which renders their activities abstract and intrusive, determined mainly by imperatives defined elsewhere. They therefore represent a de-humanised, de-racinated system relentlessly displacing a fundamentally organic, relationally complex one. Yet the implications of Lawless's representation go deeper than a simple opposition of sentiment and utility. The obvious Protestant meritorious ethic which she identifies as definitive of the English forces underpins the progressive stadialism which constitutes political development towards a modern, stable statehood. The dedicated loyalty and collective purpose of the indigenous culture however, while disadvantaging it in a movement towards an individually motivated society, nonetheless contains the missing values which might make the modern system communally relevant. Ultimately, the standpoint from which Lawless narrates this conflict is that of a British oriented, Anglo-Irish ethic whose production of the Gaelic 'other' is a means by which the perceived valued attributes of the feudal Gaelic society might be appropriated to a social and political programme which fortifies an Ascendancy hegemonic position. The exchange between past and present which distinguishes the narrative's conception of Maelcho's reverie represents a fictional expression of the politically relevant trading between racial signatures, a topic central to much of the political discourse of late nineteenth-century Ireland.

Racial Theory: Lawless and Contemporary Discourse.

The theory of racial characteristic as a determining force in human historical and social development exerted a considerable influence during much of the nineteenth century as national character became a defining motif for emerging national identities. Originally conceived as a means to describe and appreciate distinctive national characteristics and their associated cultural expression, and founded on an appreciation of cultural and linguistic pluralism, the notion of national and racial character gradually became the building blocks for respective ethnic value as, under the influence of German nationalist theory, a scale of hierarchy was substituted for parity of difference.⁵⁷⁶ Leerssen notes how, during the formative stages in such ethnological theories, national character came to be seen as a blueprint for each ethnic

⁵⁷⁶ Cairns David, and Shaun Richards, *Writing Ireland: Colonialism, Nationalism and*

group's historical destiny. Quoting Thomas Crofton Croker's disparaging delineation of the Irish character in 1824 Leerssen states that 'For a unionist like Croker, it defines the problem that a nation with this type of character is unfit for self-government and must be led and constrained, difficult as that may be, by a superior (British-based) government'.⁵⁷⁷ The Irish character in this instance was to become the Celtic element in the racial composite which comprised Croker's and later Lawless's unionist identities, separable and distanced when ideological requirement dictated. Such discrete definitions become problematic in contested national structures, particularly when totalization becomes a necessity of national unity.

The racial categories as formulated by Matthew Arnold in *On the Study of Celtic Literature* are directed towards the development of a mode of identity integration by which difference is recognized and overcome.

The fusion of all the inhabitants of these islands into one homogeneous English speaking whole, the breaking down of barriers between us, the swallowing up of separate provincial nationalities, is a consummation to which the natural course of things irresistibly tends; it is a necessity of what is called modern civilization and modern civilization is a real legitimate force; the change must come, and its accomplishment is a mere affair of time.⁵⁷⁸

According to David Lloyd, 'Arnold's argument in *On the Study of Celtic Literature* is entirely predicated on the refusal of the fragmentation of the Empire, on the refusal, that is, of the alternative of separation'.⁵⁷⁹ In contrast to the perpetuation of difference which characterized the opposites of coercion and separation in the political arena, Arnold's *via media* aims at the production of identity by a process which, although possibly long drawn out, will nonetheless prove reconciling in its effects.⁵⁸⁰ Quoting directly from Arnold's exhortation to the 'Celtic members of this empire' to transform themselves 'though the summons to transform themselves be often conveyed harshly and brutally', Lloyd observes that:

The argument implied here, which commences from a *de facto* bondage of the Celt to the Empire, is that the coercion which is not an obtrusive imposition can be converted into sympathy, that bondage can be converted into the bonds of a kinship which is at once deeper than and prior to actual difference. The eradication involved will be no longer the uprooting of

Culture (Manchester: Manchester University Press, 1988), p.44.

⁵⁷⁷ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p.22.

⁵⁷⁸ Arnold, Matthew, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, p.20.

⁵⁷⁹ Lloyd, David, 'Arnold, Ferguson, Schiller: Aesthetic Culture and the Politics of Aesthetics'. *Cultural Critique* no. 2. Winter, 1985-1986, pp.137-169, p.142.

⁵⁸⁰ Lloyd, 'Arnold, Ferguson, Schiller: Aesthetic Culture and the Politics of

the evicted tenant or dispossessed native but the turning up of common roots.⁵⁸¹

Arnold's process towards complementary identification of the two racial types, therefore, implicitly contains violence as a constituent of its reconciling mechanism. The violence which is advocated is one which does not perpetuate the division of identity but rather facilitates unified identity by eventual and recognized assimilation. The dictum which Arnold invoked 'force till right is ready', which in immediate English domestic affairs involved the deployment of force during the interval in which class redefinition might be prepared, was also extended to the domain of Anglo-Irish relations, an extension which for Cairns and Richards in *Writing Ireland* meant that 'Here, the deployment of main force was to precede and secure the conditions for the eventual willing acceptance of England's cultural pre-eminence which, in turn, would lead to England's hegemony in succession to its coercion'.⁵⁸²

Yet in Arnold's prescription and in the narrative frame of Lawless's *Maelcho*, systematic assimilation is predicated on the conviction of the Celt's inferior status both on the cultural and political plane. The designation as ineffectual in aesthetic and material culture equates with an ineffectuality in politics for the Celt. Arnold's oppositional categories, therefore, put a politically independent future for the Celt beyond realisation as 'the skilful and resolute application of means to ends which is needed both to make progress in material civilization and also to form powerful states is just what the Celt has least turn for...as in material civilization he has been ineffectual, so has the Celt been ineffectual in politics'.⁵⁸³ While the amalgamation of both races was desirable in its exchange of qualities, the directing force is entirely towards a valorizing of the 'English' genius as it breaks down and absorbs the colonized other into the imperial system. It becomes incumbent upon the Celt to subordinate himself, therefore, to that race 'whose "genius" is more politically, formatively directed'.⁵⁸⁴

The vantage point, discursive and temporal, from which Lawless narrates the historical disruption of the late sixteenth century is that of its realised effect, an

Aesthetics', p.143.

⁵⁸¹ Lloyd, 'Arnold, Ferguson, Schiller: Aesthetic Culture and the Politics of Aesthetics', p.143.

⁵⁸² Cairns and Richards, *Writing Ireland*. p.44.

⁵⁸³ Arnold, Matthew, *On the Study of Celtic Literature*. p.35.

⁵⁸⁴ Lloyd, 'Arnold, Ferguson, Schiller: Aesthetic Culture and the Politics of Aesthetics', p.144.

arguably hybrid and integrated national identity which holds its existence as a symbol of that historical consequence. Unionist traditionalism had as part of its repository of reference the ideological exercises of such authors as Samuel Ferguson whose writings can be viewed as an expropriation of nationalist historical material as a means of controlling its interpretive value.⁵⁸⁵ For Ferguson, the failure to ‘embrace a thorough knowledge of the genius and disposition of their Catholic fellow-citizens’ was the reason for the insecurity of the Anglo-Irish.⁵⁸⁶ So, an historical process, for Ferguson, by which Irish and Saxon blood might become mixed and a more complex Irishness emerge has, as justification for that history’s accompanying violence, a teleological prize: ‘Race after race has now been transplanted into our social garden, and all is ready for the final engraftment’.⁵⁸⁷ The merging of racial bloodlines is associated with and interpreted through perceived characterising ethnic qualities; ‘While we are becoming every day more English in intellectual habits, in industry, and in prosperity, we, referring to the population at large, are growing, even in greater ratio, more Irish in blood and temperament’.⁵⁸⁸ Stadial progress and racial refinement are openly stated as the result of such miscegenation: ‘the same considerations must always arise, namely that as the Irish mind seems daily approaching more nearly to maturity, we ought daily to expect some demonstration of peculiar powers, such as have been exhibited by other races of men arrived at eras of full intellectual age’.⁵⁸⁹ Ferguson’s ostensible concern with origins, ‘Three distinct races of men inhabit the island, all of them originally settlers, and all, more or less, dispossessors of former occupants’, like that of the Scottish Enlightenment, masks an actual interest in destinations.⁵⁹⁰

⁵⁸⁵ Eve Patten disagrees with such an analysis of Ferguson’s writings preferring to ‘shift emphasis from political teleology to cultural practice, in order to reveal a writer who drew inspiration from varying literary and political contexts and authority from a sequence of ideological and cultural formations’. Patten, Eve, *Samuel Ferguson and the Culture of Nineteenth-Century Ireland* (Dublin: Four Courts Press, 2004), Introduction, p.27.

⁵⁸⁶ Ferguson, Samuel, ‘Hardiman’s Irish Minstrelsy. No. I.’ *Dublin University Magazine* no.1.3, April, 1834, pp.465-478.

⁵⁸⁷ Ferguson, Samuel, ‘Attractions of Ireland. No. III - society’. *Dublin University Magazine* 8, December, 1836, pp.658-675.

⁵⁸⁸ Ferguson, ‘Attractions of Ireland. No. III - society’, p.660.

⁵⁸⁹ Ferguson, ‘Attractions of Ireland. No. III - society’, p.660.

⁵⁹⁰ Whelan, ‘Writing Ireland: Reading England’, p.187: ‘Seen from this perspective, the Scottish Enlightenment’s ostensible concern with origins carefully masks its real (and *realpolitik*) interest (and self-interest) in destinations.’

The refutation by Eve Patten of current critical analyses of Ferguson's role in forwarding a 'Celticist political strategy' is persuasive, particularly in her re-configuring of Lloyd's Arnold and Ferguson dynamic. Patten locates Ferguson in the role almost of an ingénue in relation to contemporary controversies and discourses centring on race.

Ferguson's review of Hardiman draws on traditions of eighteenth-century anthropology, but in its rambling speculation on racial primitivism and stunted social development it also engages with the most common clichés of early nineteenth-century public debate on race.⁵⁹¹

Nonetheless, in relation to Lawless, writing some sixty years after Ferguson's contributions to this tradition, the Hardiman Review and Attractions of Ireland articles do comprise part of that strategic formation of texts, to use Cairns and Richards's phrase, on which Lawless was enabled to draw. As with theorists of race such as Renan, Arnold and Ferguson, Lawless's position within a textual hierarchy empowers and supports her judgements. Renan's argument as a Celt writing from within a nation of mixed Teutonic and Celtic strains was that 'nations were composites of several races in which the characteristics of the individual races were mutually complementary'.⁵⁹² As the resource on which he was drawing was the corpus of texts by which the Teutonic was represented as the pinnacle of the European racial type, Renan privileges the cultural contribution of the Celt as a balancing, civilizing influence on what he perceived as the more savage Teutonic element. For Arnold, however, writing as a member of the Teutonic race and concerned to consolidate a English middle class social hegemony at home and an imperial philosophy contradicted by Celtic dissidence in a wider British structure, the subsidiary Celtic element was identified as the 'beaten race' which justified the swallowing up of its separate provincial nationalities.

The focalisation throughout *Maelcho* which studiously upholds an English pre-eminence indicates Lawless's chosen position within the texts of racial hierarchy and difference. Quite apart from the categories of distinctive traits which differentiate both racial types according to inconsequence or progressive rationality there is no sense at any point in *Maelcho* that the loss of Irish cultural or political traditions is a retrograde development or the rupturing of an alternative historical potential. The wholesale destruction of the native feudal society, including the symbolic destruction

⁵⁹¹ Patten, *Samuel Ferguson*, p.69.

⁵⁹² Cairns and Richards, *Writing Ireland*, p.46.

of an environment which is made to identify it, is presented as the detached chronicling of a representative phase in an evolving historical process by which a backward and obsolete system is reduced to tractability as an inevitable preliminary to its induction into modernity.

Committed to an integration by which Britain and Ireland would benefit and yet constrained to circumvent the growing separatist capital which nationalism was deriving from a history of conflictual relationship, Lawless's translation of an historical event into this nineteenth-century discourse of racial theory represents the adoption of a specific discursive system's language as a means to dissipate the political through the racial. By investing the cultural groups with racial traits which define and determine their status according to a standard of social and political antinomies, Lawless is able to rationalise their conflict while also achieving a positional superiority for those elements derived from an 'English' connectedness. As with Arnold's theory, the application of such a strategy by Lawless allows an ideological appropriation to be achieved through the construction of a fixed character, Celtic, whose defined and determined racial nature is directed towards providing a subject for 'an evolving assimilation of the uncultivated, and therefore incomplete, to the civilized and complete' whatever the violence which such a process might entail.⁵⁹³ It is through the clearly defined nature of the racial types and their respective social systems, therefore, that Lawless attempts to realise an ideological imperative in an historical outcome.

In the historical novels of Walter Scott, which provided an exemplary model for subsequent nineteenth-century historical novelists, Lukàcs identifies Scott's competence 'in bringing the past to life as the prehistory of the present' and giving a felt experience to those 'historical, social and human forces' which have made 'our present-day life what it is'.⁵⁹⁴ Scott's ideological defence of that present is what motivates and enables his depiction of the 'endless field of ruin, wrecked existences, wrecked or wasted, heroic human endeavour, broken social formations, etc. which were the necessary preconditions of the end-result'.⁵⁹⁵ Petty aristocratic conservative, like Lawless, Scott is on the right side of the developmental line, affirming its end-

⁵⁹³ Lloyd, 'Arnold, Ferguson, Schiller: Aesthetic Culture and the Politics of Aesthetics', p.153.

⁵⁹⁴ Lukàcs, Georg, *The Historical Novel* (trans.) H. and S. Mitchell (1937: London: Merlin Press, 1962: Peregrine Books, 1968), p. 57.

result and its necessity since that result ‘is the ground on which he stands’.⁵⁹⁶ The progressive revolutionary energies by which such historical development proceeds are consolidated and their future impact defused by the settlement after the fact, the middle way which Scott’s fictions valorize and on which the stable modern British state bases its legitimacy. Moretti observes that internal borders define a modern state as a composite structure and, being made of many temporal layers, ‘as *historical* states that need historical novels’.⁵⁹⁷ That need is to represent internal unevenness in order to abolish it, the ultimate aim of the historical novel being to narrate the incorporation of the internal periphery into the larger unit of the state, a process that involves consent and coercion.⁵⁹⁸ The problem for Irish historical novelists of the nineteenth-century generally was, as Ina Ferris notes, ‘Few points of vantage presented themselves to yield the clear temporal differentiations and divisions on which depended the control of narrative distance central to Scott’s authority for nineteenth-century readers’.⁵⁹⁹

The evading of this problem and the point from which Lawless narrates *Maelcho* is effectively that of a totalized perspective purporting to reconstruct the exchanges of the disparate racial components in the national historical narrative. Yet Lawless’s unflinching stare at the realities behind the narrative’s textual matrix, the matter-of-fact slaughter and misery which *Maelcho* depicts, presents problems for the text’s representational fidelity to historical progressivism. The visions of displaced populations, famine-stricken communities and a landscape deprived of any means to sustain its inhabitants, visions directly associated with an English presence in Ireland would have had deep and disturbing resonances for a nineteenth-century Irish population for whom the mid-century famine was a living memory. Such a catalogue of racial lesions also would have created a powerful counter argument to any reconciling vindication in Arnold’s, Scott’s or Ferguson’s formulations or any sense of an historical procession which underpinned them.

A difficulty arises for Lawless, therefore, between her committed position within

⁵⁹⁵ Lukàcs, *The Historical Novel*, p.58.

⁵⁹⁶ Lukàcs, *The Historical Novel*, p.58.

⁵⁹⁷ Moretti, Franco, *Atlas of the European Novel 1800-1900* (London: Verso, 1998), p.40.

⁵⁹⁸ Moretti, *Atlas*, p.40.

⁵⁹⁹ Ferris, Ina, *The Romantic National Tale and the Question of Ireland* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2002), p.136.

a specific formation of texts and the fictional representation of its historical operations. The racially driven rationale risks failing as the historical content overflows the narrative's structural intent, the racial categorizations of a late nineteenth-century perspective potentially inadequate to contain the historical trauma. Yet it is this provoking of the specific race's experience that allows Lawless to exploit just such an effect. By connecting both periods in this way Lawless is able to conflate the traumas, defusing both through the same objectifying agency of racial destiny. By fully establishing the fixity of racial type Lawless is enabled to evoke the emotional characteristics associated with the Celtic nature, its historical signature of suffering, and, therefore, its heightened felt relationship with the past which that involves, valorizing it while also disabling its force by suspension in the race's own mystical, timeless lament. The fact that Lawless identifies this racial destiny with the doomed forest, the lost forest of Ossory, emphasises its ethnic characteristic of loss and the celebration of loss, the irretrievably past which is to be reconstituted through memory only.⁶⁰⁰

Such a strategy by Lawless of isolating and distancing a Gaelic culture beyond any material relevance other than nostalgic memory, however, also risks obstructing any worthwhile or meaningful conception of an integrated Irish identity. As *Maelcho* draws both on the form of the Irish national tale and of the historical novel formulated by Scott, its ideological mandate impedes its development of either. The typical English protagonist of the Irish national tale is conventionally drawn deeper into an Irish otherness which unsettles his convictions of superiority and closed culture, broadening his awareness of both himself and his new environment. The fact that Hugh Gaynard is essentially English and the articulation of the modern spirit of progressive utility means that he ought to be demonstrated as expressing some synthesis with or inculcation from his Irish experiences which would represent the complementary contribution which the vanquished race or culture might be construed as making. Hugh Gaynard imbibes nothing of the various native and Hibernicised communities that he encounters. Rather they each in turn represent curtailments of his own exclusively ethnic potential, a potential which is only fully exhibited with reintegration into an ethnically homogenous community. Furthermore Gaynard's proximity to and close scrutiny of these native representatives not only fails to soften

⁶⁰⁰ This strategy mimics that of the fictional Maelcho who can only recover the stray

his superior gaze or incite him to a revision of his preconceptions but instead confirms him in that aloofness of the English cultural arrogance with which he began. Gaynard's journey through his Irish experiences is a journey towards a greater distance from the Irish context rather than towards a closer understanding of or intimacy with it.

As a minor character through whom the actions of greater persons and the consequences of significant historical events are interpreted, Gaynard in the tradition of Scott ought to occupy a middle ground. According to Lukàcs, the function of the minor hero in Scott's fiction is to bring the extremes, whose struggles are the novel's concern, into contact with one another, not simply contiguously but sympathetically. As the historical crises which occupy his novels involve 'hostile forces, bent on one another's destruction' and since these warring forces are always led by passionate partisans of their respective sides, the 'compositional importance of the mediocre hero' is his ability to enter into human contact with both camps.⁶⁰¹ Only a subject 'who sides passionately with neither of the warring camps in the great crisis of his time' is capable of bridging the divide through a human sensitivity to both positions.⁶⁰² Passion, however, preoccupies both extremes of Gaynard's consciousness, that of a passionate contempt for his Irish captors or fellow travellers and his passionate determination to elevate himself in the meritorious system of his English forebears. Lawless's informing principle of racial difference which constantly punctuates both the narrative proper and Gaynard's own personal reflections disqualifies him from any possibility of bringing into human relationship the cultural motivations of the feudal system and the antagonistic English absolutist state.⁶⁰³ Lawless herself, in the dedication to *Maelcho*, acknowledges the rupture in form which has occurred during the novel's writing and identifies it as an inherent problem of her subject. Expressing the difficulty tellingly through the medium of racial type, Lawless betrays that specific element which determines the novel's structure itself:

moments of a past culture.

⁶⁰¹ Lukàcs, *The Historical Novel*, p.37.

⁶⁰² Lukàcs, *The Historical Novel*, p.37.

⁶⁰³ Patrick Maume observers in relation to this incompatibility of Lawless's two cultural types; 'The harsh colonial rationality of Gaynard and the self-absorbed, naïve fantasy of *Maelcho* are envisioned as two halves of a single being; their failure to achieve mutual recognition becomes, as it were, a microcosm of Ireland's tragedy'.

Begun as an adventure book pure and simple, this story has grown grimmer somehow, and more lugubrious, as it went on. Ireland is in this respect a very misleading individual to follow. You imagine that you are hand in hand with an inconsequent, but at any rate a very lively, companion, and, having gone some little way under this delusion, you find, when you least expect it, that you have linked yourself to a Sibyl or a Niobe.⁶⁰⁴

The breakdown of *Maelcho* as a national tale, or as Lawless refers to it ‘an adventure book’, and its slippage into the grimness of the historical novel centres around the conception by Lawless of national continuity. For Katie Trumpener, the national tale as it is seen in the early work of Edgeworth and Owenson, ‘maps developmental stages topographically, as adjacent worlds in which characters move and then choose between’, the movement of these novels considered as geographical rather than historical.⁶⁰⁵ In this genre the influence of geography on character, setting, and events, and particularly manifested in concentrated and politicized forms, demonstrates the distinctiveness and autonomy of place. Nationality within this form is conceived of as ‘a self-evident legacy; the result of unbroken continuity and a populist community that unites aristocracy and folk’. This generic aspect of Lawless’s novel is apparent in the sympathetic relationship to place which the native and Hibernicised populations encountered by Gaynard exhibit. The functioning objective behind Lawless’s ideological design depends on such a conception of national continuity yet also must be perceived necessarily as emanating from a specific historical moment. As Hugh Gaynard represents a transformative and identifying impetus within Lawless’s racial typology the historical novel’s phenomenological development of places becomes definitive. Historical catalysis, therefore, becomes a defining element mid way through the novel, the disruption which engulfs the narrative of *Maelcho* being the result of an ideological imperative. As Trumpener states ‘The historical novel draws heavily on this vision of national continuity, but it posits the moment of nationalism at a further stage of historical development: only through the forcible, often violent, entry into history does the feudal folk community become a nation, and only through dislocation and collective suffering is a new national identity forged’.⁶⁰⁶

The transformative historical moment is therefore incorporated within a process

Maume, ‘Emily Lawless’s *Maelcho*’.

⁶⁰⁴ Lawless, *Maelcho*. Dedication.

⁶⁰⁵ Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, p.141.

⁶⁰⁶ Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, p.142.

of historical events from which the multi-form identity of the Irish nation is constructed. What the protagonist singularly fails to do, therefore, the text succeeds in doing. While physically and ideologically profiling Gaynard against a deficiency in the Irish character emphasising an English pre-eminence, Lawless's novel itself, nonetheless, effects a close interaction on its own narratorial terms with native Irish historical experience and, therefore, with what she construes as its intrinsic sentience of itself. By reducing Irish experience to an emotional registering of conflict and defeat Lawless is able to subsume it into an overall plurality of attributes within a multi-originated history. This can only be achieved through an engagement with its historical sensitivities, reframing them within a context which serves the present. It is not sufficient, therefore, for Lawless to depict racial opposites mechanically, she must redefine the material of Irish experience through susceptible typology, re-interpreting its substance in a fashion similar to Edgeworth, Morgan and Samuel Ferguson. While English and Irish, or Hibernicised, subjects are oppositional in their stark relief as racial signatures, Lawless's text moves to integrate, through its aesthetic effects, their disparities into the modern composite Irish subject. Implicitly, Lawless's types do not equate with a polygenetic belief in the separateness of races. As is evident in the assertions in 'A Note on the Ethics of Literary Forgery', Lawless professed a belief in environmental and material determinants when considering human difference. Such an evolutionary process is necessarily dependent on the human ingredients on which it draws as well as the environment occupied and this belief she utilizes fully in her arguments for the ameliorative effects of English settlement in Ireland and a British integrationism.

Like Arnold's Anglo-Saxon and Celt, types which imperceptibly merge into the already composite Englishman, Lawless's native Irish must thus be figured as already manifest within the Anglo-Irish frame.⁶⁰⁷ Representational sympathy with a shared historical experience is a mediating of origins designed to achieve such an objective, valorizing its English providentialism while valuing its Irish sense of place. Within this format, therefore, the reconstruction of Irish historical experience is critical as a

⁶⁰⁷ See Lloyd's 'Arnold, Ferguson, Schiller: Aesthetic Culture and the Politics of Aesthetics' for a discussion of Arnold's method by which he presents 'a polarization of characters in which the establishment of a magnetic field of attractions is implied' and 'For the greater whole which is the product of cross-multiplying Anglo-Saxon and Celt is the English race itself, a fact which it is the burden of Arnold's argument to demonstrate', p.150.

means for consolidating the reconstituted Irish identity in the aftermath of conquest.

Historical Realism: Fiction and Historiography.

In his study of the Irish historical novel James Cahalan traces a process in the nineteenth-century Irish historical novel from the Banims, Carleton, Lover, Le Fanu, which involves a desire to evade the trauma of Irish historical experience, culminating in a willingness to confront in fiction its realities only at the century's end. While John Banim's *The Boyne Water* (1826) represents a considerable achievement in the transposing of Scott's method onto an Irish subject, problematizing Scott's middle way by a determined recognition of the intractable in the Irish condition, the novel, according to Cahalan, betrays its weakness where John Banim 'permits his zealous desire to present a balanced view of history to obscure his own position'.⁶⁰⁸ Emer Nolan states that Banim's espousal of O'Connellite politics meant that 'the Irish novelist ostensibly speaking up for the historically vanquished, must actually underplay conflict and antagonism, and take the emphasis on moderation to absurd lengths'.⁶⁰⁹ Such evasiveness characterised subsequent historical novel writing through much of the following century which, although seeking to emulate the achievements of the Banims and Scott, chose to focus on periods and subjects which allowed an escape from rather than an exploration of present and recent political contentions. The dilemma of such writers is expressed by Eagleton as the risk involved in unlocking an intricately historical present which simultaneously opens the nightmare of history and thereby prove counterproductive, 'The ancient quarrels which hold the key to the present, and so to a reinvigorated future, may end up by overwhelming both'.⁶¹⁰ Unable to reproduce the 'powerful shaping perspective' which represents the present as a product of history, Irish historical novelists were defeated by 'the difficulty of totalising a coherent tale from the ruptured course of Irish history itself'.⁶¹¹ Otherwise fraught historical moments were translated as a result into anodyne passivity by recourse to adventure or heroic romance.

The increasing interest in and production of popular histories represented an

⁶⁰⁸ Cahalan, James, M., *Great Hatred, Little Room: The Irish Historical Novel* (Dublin: Gill and Macmillan: Dublin: 1983), p.55.

⁶⁰⁹ Nolan, *Catholic Emancipations*, p.78.

⁶¹⁰ Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p.183.

alternative access to Irish historical experience and, by extension, an opportunity to illuminate distinctly individualised conceptions of the origins of a present still in need of resolution. However, the historical controversies involving Catholic and Protestant scholars over the intervening years, and the emphasis placed eventually by Lecky on detailed factual evidence, resulted in a sharper attention being paid to the material sources underpinning the ‘realities’ of historical events.⁶¹² An increased professionalisation led to an emphasis on records and the referencing of archival material. Coupled with this was the opening of the Public Records Office in Dublin in 1869 and the regular publication of Irish state papers. The archivist, John Gilbert, responsible for much of this archival research and its publication maintained the surest method by which the romance of Irish history might be dissipated was through the publishing of those ‘facts still slumbering in...obscure record repositories’.⁶¹³

Lawless’s *Maelcho* may be seen in the context of this forensic approach to Ireland’s past and particularly its engagement with contemporary, contentious visions of that past. The realism which Cahalan detects in Irish historical novel writing only in the early years of the following century is already apparent in Lawless’s narrative as are those elements of historiography which were formational in accommodating a strategic change in attitudes to the form. Standish O’Grady’s *Red Hugh’s Captivity* (1889), a text noted by Cahalan to be ‘replete with footnotes and scholarly digressions’, represents the interaction of both historiography and historical fiction. O’Grady, never fully convinced of what form he was working in, remarks in the preface that:

The pages of contemporary historians, and the State papers which for this epoch are most abundant, teem with rich and varied details. So prolific was the age in this respect, that I can hardly imagine a place left for the historical novelist, provided the writers of historical monographs collect and wisely use the minutiae which our records supply. So perfect are the delineations yielded by contemporary historians and by the archives of the state, that it may be doubted whether Sir Walter Scott himself, having these before him, would do more than transmute their varied details and descriptions into one harmonious stream of continuous narrative.⁶¹⁴

⁶¹¹ Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p.212.

⁶¹² See chapter five of McCartney’s *Lecky*.

⁶¹³ O’Halloran, Clare, ‘Historical Writings, 1690-1890’, in (eds.) Margaret Kelleher and Phillip O’Leary, *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature* (Cambridge: Cambridge University Press, 2006), p.622.

⁶¹⁴ O’Grady, James Standish, *Red Hugh’s Captivity: A Picture of Ireland, Social and*

For Lawless, as a late nineteenth-century Anglo-Irish historical novelist intent on a searching exploration of Ireland's present condition as a means to further pressing ideological adjustments, such a merging of forms, and more importantly, such an application of actual historical sources to narrative subject facilitated an examination in fiction of historically fractious issues previously considered too divisive for fictional representation. The interest which a disputed historical past had generated over the intervening years and, therefore, the ideological premium which was seen to be placed on its 'proper' conceptualisation made such a project all the more imperative. Recent disputes regarding the alleged massacre of Protestants by Catholics during the 1641 rebellion, particularly, proved an indication of where a nexus of historical relevance resided. Both nationalist and unionist historians, intent on a confirming of racial stereotype and difference, and particularly engaged in the renovating or demonising of the Irish character, exploited this seminal historical issue of violence, exacerbated by Froude and Lecky's introduction of a particularly English-Irish division. Lecky's repudiation of Froude's racist and sectarian management of historical events became an example of how history, and Irish history specifically, might better be served and, in consequence, the present. It is significant for developing unionist attitudes to an Irish past that Lecky dismissed religious contention as the fundamental issue behind Irish/English conflicts and located it instead in the subject of national identity.⁶¹⁵ By a determination to achieve impartiality Lecky had 'stamped a certain amount of his own tolerant and circumspect spirit on a subject which, until then, had merely provided the ammunition for sectarian and racial recrimination'.⁶¹⁶ The violence of Irish experience could be perceived as presenting a source of integration rather than division for unionist and nationalist alike, to be achieved by its rendering out of politics and into history. One of the prompt-sources for Lawless's realistic presentation of English military atrocity in *Maelcho* was probably Lecky who, in a summary of Irish history, declared that the suppression of the Irish during Elizabeth's reign was 'carried on with a ferocity that surpassed that of Alva in the Netherlands, and was hardly exceeded by any page in the blood-stained

Political, in the Reign of Queen Elizabeth (London: Ward and Downey, 1889), Introduction, p.14.

⁶¹⁵ McCartney, *Lecky*, p.79.

⁶¹⁶ McCartney, *Lecky*, p.74.

annals of the Turks'.⁶¹⁷

Lawless's fidelity to historical detail permeates *Maelcho*, from the authoritative tone to the attention paid to character, setting, and event through to the constant reference to records and state papers with which the narrator punctuates the narrative. The record references produce, in particular, the sense of a shared knowledge as the reader is frequently directed, if need be, to verify the facts narrated as when the narrative describes the capture by Ormond, early in the rebellion, of one Desmond stronghold.

From the report of an eyewitness it does not seem to have been a very perilous undertaking. That report, which will be found in the State papers for the year, is, by the way, such a model of succinctness that it may be transcribed just as it stands: It ran thus:

'They made no deffence off fyght,, butt, the howse being entered, they yielded, and sum sowght to swim away, butt there escaped nott one, neither off man, woman, nor childe'.⁶¹⁸

Likewise, the proclamation of the Earl of Desmond as traitor is accompanied by the narrative's referral to the relevant documentation:

The original document, with all its signatures, may still be seen by those who take an interest in such matters, and bears, besides those of Pelham, Maltby, and the mayor of Waterford, a long ominous row of Butler names, all, save that of Lord Ormond himself, those of distinguished ci-devant rebels, and no less than four of them those of the luckless man's own stepsons.⁶¹⁹

Supplementing such usages is the constant inclusion within the narrative itself of excerpted phrases or single words, quoted directly from such records, which create the impression that the narrative is, in fact, acting in complement with some original document or documents: 'with their daggers despitefully cut and trust through them', 'dead sicke', 'mislike to have to annoy his people'.

This recourse to historical and archival reference, effectively absent from the novel's adventure format in volume one, becomes insistent as the form of the historical novel proper emerges and the narrative is forced to engage forthrightly with the detailing of the savagery involved in the rebellion's prosecution and suppression. By submitting the fiction to such an historiographical filter, a degree of objectivity is sought by which Lawless might be allowed to confront painful and still divisive events without the direct charge of partisanship. Such objectivity tended to afford a certain distance not just to the writer but also to the history itself, an anaesthetising

⁶¹⁷ Quoted in McCartney, *Lecky*, p.78.

⁶¹⁸ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. ii. p.162.

effect of its source pastness. The realism of *Maelcho* has a striking matter-of-factness which reduces its observations and recorded events to cold statement, an inescapable reality which is, therefore, conceived of as fixed, immutable and no longer contingent on ideological perspective. Lawless, by this method, produces an interaction between personal or discursive assumptions and material collected from archival sources, interchanging the concrete with the subjectively contingent, the archive material extending a semblance of credibility to the ideological. The realism which Lawless affects is in fact little different from the romance or adventure idiom which characterised the earlier evasions of Irish experience in the historical novel. While the Banims can balk at a direct presentation of historical conflict and affect a conciliatory attitude in order to appease an English and Anglo-Irish readership, Lawless engages in an appeasement which itself involves a foregrounding of potentially provocative elements. The realities of massacre, displacement and dispossession which the narrative of *Maelcho* confronts are so enmeshed in the conceptual demands of late nineteenth-century unionism, subordinated to a different historical context, that the energy and impact are effectively symbiotic. The impression of Lawless's 'realism', therefore, on Irish historical experience and its consequences bears the unconcealed signature of a traditional unionist need which characterised the late nineteenth century.⁶²⁰

The fantasizing of the Irish in the crisis of suffering associated with 'realism' in *Maelcho*, along with the identifying of the English forces with utility and an erasure of the imaginative, fictionalises a perception of modern coldness as it encroaches on a juxtaposed comforting organic sensibility. The chthonic quality with which the Irish, in particular, are conceived in *Maelcho* inextricably links them with an originary and foundational principle and equates, therefore, their destruction with the defacement of the natural landscape and both with a levelling of something distinctive and identifying. The 'meath and dring' which preoccupies the thoughts of the English

⁶¹⁹ Lawless, *Maelcho*, vol. ii., p.174.

⁶²⁰ Lady Gregory notices the cold objectivity of Lawless's narrative, the lack of what would be expected, in the circumstances, of national resentment: 'The whole later part of the book is of horrors, of the terrible cruelty of the English soldiers, their extermination of the people - and of the trees - the forests. Yet it is not written in a gust of anger, or wrath, although the bare unemotional putting down of the list of the horrors make them seem the more horrible'. Murphy, Daniel J., (ed.) *Lady Gregory's Journals, Volume Two, Books Thirty to Forty-Four, 21 February 1925-9 May 1932* (Gerrards Cross: Colin Smythe, 1987), p.423.

soldiery throughout the narrative and particularly as they march away from the body of the old senachie and the doomed, primordial forest signals the inception of a modern, materialistic present and a judgement on it. Such a perception accords with a late nineteenth-century crisis of social and political change which expressed itself in an increasing interest and re-interpretation of the Elizabethan and Cromwellian impacts on a traditional Gaelic and Hibernicised aristocratic order. Foundational as regards Anglo-Irish heritage, the historical period from whose conquests and settlements the Anglo-Irish derived their hegemonic mandate and racial identity also afforded a mirroring impression, through the epiphanies of defeat and displacement, of their specific contemporary predicament. The unionist historian John. P. Prendergast in his *Cromwellian Settlement of Ireland* (1865) had brought detailed archival research to bear on his study of Catholic dispossession and historical incidents of atrocity committed during the Cromwellian settlement suggesting, an historical impartiality in his approach which appeared to replace the conventional sectarian bias. The apparent impartiality and persuasive fidelity to historical sources, however, represents an appropriation of native Irish historical capital, particularly the association of dispossession and violence as a means by which a particular contemporary class interest might be projected as well as the impinging of a progressive land reform policy on the conservative ‘wellspring of political power in Ireland.’⁶²¹ According to O’Halloran, Prendergast made no attempt to conceal his political message: land reform ‘would usher in another social revolution which would drive out “the only class accustomed to government” and ensure the impoverishment of the country’.

For an Anglo-Irish unionist such as Standish O’Grady, as with Lawless herself, the Elizabethan conquest represented a decisive fracture between an outmoded feudalism and a superior modern statehood; ‘In blood and flame and horror of great darkness it was fated that Ireland should pass from barbarism to civilisation, from the wild rule of “monocracies” to the reign of universal law. If it was England that prevailed over that death and new birth, the fact, I think, was to Ireland’s gain and not loss’.⁶²² As with Ferguson and Arnold, O’Grady viewed both the violence employed and the progressive outcome as inevitable as they were salutary since ‘between Ireland and her incorporation for ever with this mighty English-speaking race stood

⁶²¹ O’Halloran, ‘Historical Writings, 1690-1890.’, p.623.

the Irish chiefs of the sixteenth century'. Yet O'Grady also exhibits a degree of self-identification with those same 'independent captains and princes' whose feudal autocracy he appears to deem outmoded, his measured tone of historical distance gradually rising, however, to a defiant eulogy which carries in its enthusiasm an obvious, if vicarious, celebration of an Ascendancy heritage, and the contempt for a resented centralised government bureaucracy bent on its dismantling.

And yet the men themselves have strong claims upon the sympathy of generous minds, more especially when their rebellions and their ruinous overthrow alike lie so far behind us in the quiet depths of the past...All that they were and that their fathers had been before them, it was now the rigid purpose of fate and the fixed determination of the Government that they should cease to be...Now, in this sixteenth century, their power was to be taken away and given to Viceroy and provincial presidents, to circuit-going judges and Dublin courts of justice, to county sheriffs, often strangers and often low men, to escheators and tax-gatherers, and to magisterial benches manned by their born vassals'.⁶²³

The merging of predicaments is unmistakable here. O'Grady can both condone and exploit the historical experience of suffering and dispossession, expressing a dilemma for unionists who saw in this developmental stage of Irish history and those historic social types an image of their own position of feudal redundancy. The imaginative element associated with the feudal Irish lords, evident in the attitude of O'Grady and expressed in *Lawless* as an ethnic quality inappropriate to modernizing exigencies, becomes, nonetheless, a means by which their own anachronism might be reformulated in face of the logic and practical importunity of the late nineteenth century. Through its embattled, beleaguered stand and its perceived natural quality of leadership, the old Celtic or Gaelic order becomes both an image of heroic defiance and an example of tragic disinheritance.

Lawless's friend and mentor, W. E. H. Lecky, could write bitterly at the time, in the manner of O'Grady but in a direct contemporary reference, about the apparent breach of trust and interdependence between peasant and landlord as a result of the progressive social change which land acts and democratisation had entailed. Advocating the suitability for governance of a landed aristocracy which was born into a tradition of government and politics and had inherited the virtues necessary for administering the state, Lecky lamented; 'An amount of democracy which in one country (England) leaves the main direction of affairs in the hands of property and

⁶²² O'Grady, *Red Hugh's Captivity*, Introduction, p.3-4.

⁶²³ O'Grady, *Red Hugh's Captivity*, Introduction, p.5-6.

intelligence, in another country (Ireland) virtually disenfranchises both, and establishes a system of legalised plunder by transferring all controlling authority to an ignorant and excited peasantry, guided and duped by demagogues, place-hunters and knaves'.⁶²⁴ Such an image, reversing the psychic trauma of a dispossessed native population by whose suborning Lecky's own class had benefited, is transposed by Lawless into the narrative of *Maelcho*, as is Lecky's averred conviction that democracy gave an organised priesthood access to power and influence as the words of a murdered Fitzmaurice are recounted, "Madmen ! Madmen !" he presently muttered. "Priests and madmen ! Nothing but priests and madmen left ! No luck for Ireland ! no luck, my God ! no luck !"⁶²⁵ Patrick Maume thus sees a connection between Lawless's portrayal of the death of Fitzmaurice and that of Parnell;

Maelcho's appearance coincided with the disintegration of the Liberal government of 1892-95 after the defeat of the Second Home Rule Bill. Echoing the fate of Parnell and the subsequent chaos of the Irish Parliamentary Party, Lawless describes the death of the only competent rebel leader at the hands of former allies and his replacement -- at the behest of Catholic clerics-with leaders far less competent and more savage, but more acceptable to the priests. Tellingly, Edith Somerville advised her friend Alice Kinkead to read *Maelcho* on the ground that the novel gave a true picture of Irish society, implying that its portrayal of sixteenth-century Ireland retained direct contemporary relevance'.⁶²⁶

The idealistic struggle for country and a traditional way of life carried on by Fitzmaurice and later by the Desmond is depicted as fraught with the characteristic factionalism and betrayals which are equally identifiable as characterising late nineteenth-century Irish political activity. The initial indolence and weakness exhibited by the Earl of Desmond later provoked into fierce action by English injustice is reminiscent of O'Grady's charge of degeneracy against the landowning class whose country has called on for leadership and example. Yet it is the common bond incorporated in the shared experience of suffering and death that aligns the old aristocratic order and by implication the Anglo-Irish with the mass of the Irish people. The depiction of the Earl of Desmond's final months and weeks spent in lowly cabins and surviving off the land, and the squalid life and death as refugees of Fitzmaurice's wife and children culminating in the common grave which they share with their peasant followers, in contrast with that image of modern, democratising self-interest

⁶²⁴ Comerford, R. V. in (ed.) Vaughan, W. E., *A New History of Ireland* vol. vi. (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1996), p.109.

⁶²⁵ Lawless, *Maelcho*, p.296.

cited by Lecky, reinforces the image of a communal solidarity which amounts to identification through sacrifice.

Maelcho represents the maturing of a process, therefore, which was initiated in *With Essex in Ireland* five years earlier by which Lawless sought to reconstitute Anglo-Irish subjectivity. While the earlier novel charted, as a consequence of conflict and suffering, the emergence of a reformed individuality through the historical figure of Essex, *Maelcho* concentrates on the more expansively conceived transformation of a cultural and ethnic individuality through an absorption of identities. The consciousness of a national identity which Lawless attempts to forge within a reproduced history in *Maelcho* centres on and is motivated by her own class's representational need within that history. The necessity is, in the tradition of Samuel Ferguson, Matthew Arnold and, latterly, Standish O'Grady, to render a Gaelic cultural tradition impotent prior to its assimilation, as sympathetic Celtic complement, into the corpus of an Anglo-Irish composite identity. The image required to be recognised, therefore, is reciprocal and dual. The subordinated native culture is to be naturalised in that subordination, the result of conquest, while national identity and cultural continuity are to be shown as originating in and emanating from that moment of historical experience. The forging of that consciousness is equally dependent on the dismantling of that tradition through the fracturing of the formal representation of cultural continuity inherent in the form of the national tale, its accretive, annalistic process ruptured by the process of radical transformation whose catalytic moment is represented in the alternate form of the historical novel.⁶²⁷ Coercion and consent, violence inflicted and also sympathised with and shared retrospectively, are the means by which the form of the historical novel achieves its aims, ownership of a past and present with both ideologically linked in a felt relationship. Through the coincidence of historical event and narrative voice in Lawless's *Maelcho* the dynamics and the nature of that relationship are established.

⁶²⁶ Maume, Patrick, 'Emily Lawless's *Maelcho*', p.262.

⁶²⁷ For a definitive distinction between both genres based on the attitude to 'place' of each, see Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism*, p.141-142.

Conclusion.

Lawless and Subjectivity.

A key consideration during her own lifetime and in subsequent critical appraisals has been just how representative of her contemporary Ireland was Lawless and on whose behalf did she speak in those fictional representations which engaged so fundamentally with Irish issues of nationality, class, land disputes, historical perspective and cultural traditions. While in actuality the perspective in Lawless's writing was significantly informed by her political affiliation, that affiliation was usually presented and received obliquely. So specifics within each novel could be used by Lawless herself or by reviewers and readers to reinforce or to deny her an Irishness which it was deemed necessary for her to earn. Whether through sympathetic or libellous characterization, representation of peasant violence, the rendering of historical events or even the use of approved or unapproved dialect, all could provide a channel for ideological argument, both on the part of Lawless herself and on that of her critics.

The determination by critics and contemporaries hostile to Lawless's views centred on the question of whether her version of the Irish national consciousness was internal to her and therefore legitimate and relevant or external and therefore fictive, tendentious and, ultimately, non-representational. So Yeats could remark that Lawless was 'only able to observe Irish character from without and not create it from

within'.⁶²⁸ This is tantamount to regarding Lawless as an outside observer, insufficiently sensitive to the Irish condition and therefore unqualified to represent or judge it. Lawless was herself aware of this attempted exclusion and sought to address its essentialist bias by redefining ethnic character itself in, what appears from this distance, her very tactical appraisal of Stokes's and O'Grady's translations of ancient texts. Like Irish identity itself, such texts are how you see them; translations, originals or forgeries. As Yeats had decried her compressing of an 'indecipherable nation' into the mould set by forensic historians, privileging, as he did so, the nebulous over the factual, Lawless stubbornly applied Darwinian environmental evolutionary theory in response, asserting the contingent element in all identities.

A good deal of talk goes on these days about the Celtic spirit, but does any one really know what that spirit is ? Has any one ever tracked it to its secret home; ascertained where it was born, and of what elements it was originally composed ? If we look at it closely and quite dispassionately, is it not nearly as much a topographical as either a philological or ethnological spirit ?⁶²⁹

For Lawless, any 'prosaic, pure-bred East Briton' might just as easily 'in time grow positively Celtic in spirit' if exposed to the influence of the Atlantic breath just as 'a very Celt of the Celts' might become Saxonised 'in the atmosphere of caucuses and committee rooms'.⁶³⁰ The trite stereotyping and comic tone is quite deliberate as a deflationary mechanism, yet the point is nonetheless purposeful. Conditioning by one's habitat, qualification according to residence and familiarity, not only packages Lawless's own Anglo-Irish right of belonging but also manages to tie a neat unionist bow around the concept of racial difference. It is a statement of position from which there emerges more ambiguity rather than less, despite the forensics, an ambiguity which diffuses the concentrated discernment of cultural and political nationalism.

Yet Lawless's disappearance from the Irish literary memory after her death is maybe due as much to that national consciousness with which she had engaged having withdrawn from any meaningful interrogation of itself. With those issues which ignited earlier stages of the national debate having been settled, those elements of literary history which had fostered alternate viewpoints were seen as effectively redundant, even reactionary. Lawless's dialogue with inchoate nationalism had little

⁶²⁸ Yeats, W. B. *Collected Letters, vol. I: 1864-1895* (ed.) John Kelly, (Oxford: Clarendon Press, 1997), p.442.

⁶²⁹ Lawless, 'The Ethics of Literary Forgery', p.92.

⁶³⁰ Lawless, 'The Ethics of Literary Forgery', p.92.

or no relevance in the new dominant nationalist context. Instead she represented a cultural register from which the new state was seen to have emerged and rendered irrelevant, a British or cosmopolitan identity, dualisms of native and Anglo-Irish, landlord and peasant, unionist conservatism and liberal modernity. Lawless had given voice to more than this, however, through her constructions of the concept of dialogue itself, the issue of female participation in cultural and political debate, the openness of a wider world view and the accommodation of a broader social exchange. In effect Lawless represented the concept of difference within, rather than merely outside of, the national compound.

As Heidi Hansson says: 'The question of literary value has to include the question for whom and in what circumstances a work has value, and the political complexity of Lawless's novels deprived them of worth in the context of the emerging new state'.⁶³¹ Just as the positive 'noise', as Hansson refers to it, surrounding Lawless's reception, reviews, and evaluations was reduced to inaudibility by the new state and by authoritative pronouncements leaving only the negative assessments to justify her exclusion from the literary canon, Lawless might be seen now as representative of that imagined 'other' nation holding in reserve its dissenting, varied, suppressed, discouraged, disowned, and ultimately empowering resistance. For regardless of whether her political or her cultural vision is accepted or denied, it is her value as an acknowledged voice of such a vision which decides her right to be heard. The purpose of this study has been to make that alternative voice more audible through the close reading of Lawless's primary Irish novels. This has been pursued not simply as a means to instate Lawless as a canonical Irish writer of significant literary value. The novels involved do display outstanding literary merits inexcusably overlooked in the years following her death. *With Essex in Ireland* and *Grania* particularly deserve to rank alongside any of the fiction of George Moore or Somerville and Ross. The fact that these other writers give expression to elitist mores or dissident loyalties and yet remain current staples of Irish literary history begs the question why Lawless has not remained so. In part, this study has attempted to outline those elements in Lawless's writing which contributed to this neglect. Lawless's novels deployed the same arsenal and contested the same areas of power that engaged the attentions of the political activists, cultural propagandists, social ideologues.

⁶³¹ Hansson, *New Contexts*, p.7.

While Moore and Somerville and Ross pursued no overtly political mandate, concentrating rather on the evidences of the political in the social orders, Lawless addressed precise social and political ideologies on the contemporary battlegrounds of ethnicity and land and at their historical nerve centres. In the area of late nineteenth-century Irish fiction, Lawless is by far the most articulate and accomplished representative of a unionist nationalism and of an Anglo-Irish Protestant literary-political ethic.

The inherent weakness in Lawless's position and, therefore, in the strategy which her novels adopt, is the absence of any constructive intervention in the search for a definitively independent cultural identity which was preoccupying Ireland during this period. In this respect she personifies that dilemma outlined by Ina Ferris as the underlying problem with the Ireland and Britain relationship which originated in the Act of Union 1801. Concentrating on the awkwardness of the phrase 'the United Kingdom of Great Britain and Ireland', Ferris observes that the new state is defined from the start more as a problem rather than a solution.

The very name adumbrates a dilemma: Ireland is at once a part of the kingdom (a political subject) but not a part of Great Britain (not a national subject). Where the names of Scotland and England have been resolved into the larger unity of Great Britain, holding out the possibility of both preserving and assimilating national difference, Ireland stands within the union but outside the unity, ambiguously attached through vague coordination: "and Ireland".⁶³²

Lawless's political subjectivity was disjoined from her national subjectivity and the two were never convincingly integrated in her work. The capacity or the intellectual room available to Lawless and fellow unionists to construct for themselves, and by extension, for the nation, an affiliation which was both cohesive and definitive was all but impossible given the conditions of the time. Historically, the momentum of the preceding century was decisively against them. Following the campaign for Catholic Emancipation, the Repeal Movement and the Protestant Repeal Association, unifying to an extent Protestant and Catholic political energies during the mid century, graduated into the campaign for Home Rule in the final two decades of the nineteenth century and into the twentieth. The extension of the franchise over this period opened up a mass of Catholic voting power with which Unionism entertained little affinity and consequently with which it could not effect any constructive

⁶³² Ferris, Ina, *The Romantic National Tale and the Question of Ireland*, p.1.

political dialogue. Councils across the country, particularly those in the large urban areas, which had formerly been the preserve of Unionism, were falling wholesale under Catholic nationalist control. Lecky's growing contempt for lower-class Catholic voters betrays his complete inability to come to terms with and direct their increased political power.

Lawless refused the full 'impatriation' strategy adopted by Cultural Revivalists which afforded them a way out of this predicament. This involved Lawless in a refusal to participate in the ennoblement of the native Irish peasant stock and its perceived cultural significance on which Gregory, Yeats, Hyde and others were embarked and on which much of Revivalism built its literary credentials.⁶³³ The use of a dystopic setting in *Grania* in order to reverse the idealism which was being infused at this time into the isolated west of Ireland and its perceived unadulterated native stock seems quite explicit in its intention. The remoteness which was viewed as preservative of an indigenous purity from an external, debilitating modernity is portrayed by Lawless as productive instead of a degenerative isolation, an atrophy which is both cultural and physical. The innocence and simplicity of the Irish peasantry as a regenerative image for a new Ireland was not to be portrayed in its actual ignorance and debilitating poverty. Neither was its drive towards political self awareness to be depicted as misdirected. In the circumstances, this made texts such as *Grania* and *Hurriish*, appear antipathetic to the political texturing of the nation.

The continuance of traditional social relationships and the established hierarchical order was seen by like-minded acquaintances of Lawless, such as her cousin Horace Plunkett and W. E. H. Lecky, as essential to the maintenance of a stable and prosperous nation, a determination which precluded in principle, any prospect of Home Rule for the foreseeable future in what they perceived at the time to be already divisive and impassioned conditions.⁶³⁴ The Land Wars of the 1880s with which *Hurriish* ostensibly concerns itself are effectively marginalized in Lawless's narrative as the concentration falls instead on what she sees as the underlying and more corrosive influence of an implacable and poisonous ethnic nationalism which

⁶³³ Brewer observes that characterizations of the peasantry, particularly peasant violence, which were admired in Carleton before her, 'were damned in Lawless'. However, Brewer does not identify the purposes behind attitudes to national characterisation by both Lawless and her detractors. Brewer, 'She Was a part of It', p.122.

⁶³⁴ Hansson, *Emily Lawless*, pp.18-19.

refuses a conciliatory future. Particularly astute is Lawless's extending, as part of the narrative strategy, of an ideological republican zeal both backwards and forwards to connect evolving and forthcoming nationalist supremacy with a past century of terror and societal disruption.

Typically presented in such novels as *Grania*, *Hurrih* and *Maelcho*, as misguided, superstitious and a prey to demagoguery and clericalism, the mass of the population in the estimation of Lawless, as with fellow unionists such as O'Grady and Lecky, could better be managed by its re-incorporation into a socially responsible hierarchical relationship. So Lawless tended to immerse her creativity in representing the material and economic imperatives which sustained communal existences, almost invariably in what she saw as typically hostile and unremitting landscapes or circumstances. This was a strategy intended to exemplify the shared realities operating on a national population but inevitably also smacked of a socially removed patronisation. The traditionalist retrenchment, which this effectively was, demanded the representation of a skein of social and political dependencies for its argument. Irish national identity is, therefore, presented by Lawless in her fiction as a relational concept rather than the metaphysical essence which national separatism posited in an isolationist and introverted vision. To separate a particular section of Irish society from the total structure and strip it of its integrated function would be judged from Lawless's perspective as depriving it of its rationale while also naturally divesting the rest of the structure of any meaningful cohesion. One feature which distinguishes the narrative of *Grania*, is the breakdown of relationship, not just between Grania and her lover Murdough, but between the island and its national context. Identity is fragmented and proves unsustainable by the novel's end.

In the two novels dealing with contemporary issues, *Hurrih* with Land War agitation and *Grania* with ethnic difference, Lawless expresses a failure to reconcile social division through the disappointed expectation which she constructs in the experiences of her characters. Alley Sheen in *Hurrih* represents that morality invoked by Lawless at the end of the novel, a humanity directed by 'kindliness, faith, purity', that same socializing energy which so much Victorian realist fiction depends on and effects yet which clearly fails to achieve its ends in Lawless's novel. In *Grania*, its heroine, Grania O'Malley, is frustrated in her design to incorporate Murdough Blake into the paradigm of lover and honest dependable husband which she desires for herself and the island as a whole. Neither attempt succeeds given the

context assigned to it. Alley is disillusioned by Maurice Brady and robbed of Hurrish, while Grania finds only a succouring image of Murdough to comfort her as she drowns. Margaret Kelleher notes that the instabilities of Irish domestic fiction are due to the inclusion of contemporary social and political content which ‘renders the genre’s typical privatizing and depoliticising impulses difficult to accomplish’.⁶³⁵ The inability of Grania and Alley to achieve the personal happiness which is seen to motivate them is due to the resistance which the political and ideological design of the text exerts on the domestic form. In a reverse fashion, Lawless is intent on demonstrating a profile of social stability through its negative image. The contemporary social and political conflicts which defy reconciliation are projected against a backdrop of a still discernable social model, its traditional domestic frame taking within it the design of the contentious text.

The heavy reliance by Lawless on systems of classification was one means by which to structure such a coherent and traditional template, particularly in the application of ethnic and national typology. A discourse of confident, solid judgement which a cache of ready-made categories of value made possible was a means by which a panoramic overview of the Irish condition, both historical and contemporary, might be conveyed, at least with some semblance of comparative assurance. What Lawless is engaged in by such a method, however, is not the strategic use of racial and class categories as part of a cultural intervention in the manner of Irish revivalists.⁶³⁶ Rather, in its wider hegemonic derivations, Lawless is involved in the deployment of an entire discursive system as a counterbalancing of what she perceived to be a too narrowly based localized ideology, particularly that employed by the Gaelic League and the Irish National Literary Society. Culturally *in situ*, Lawless becomes a spokesperson reviewing and collating Ireland and Irish issues within a British context and through the enlightened and concerned ethic of a broader imperial consciousness. The anatomising of Shan Daly’s criminality in *Grania* for instance betrays all the cultured condescension of English social morality, while the referential detail dispersed throughout the novel further situates the centre of awareness so solidly in an English locale that the use of the pronoun ‘we’ cannot but register the narrator/author in an English, or at least pan-British, identification.⁶³⁷

⁶³⁵ Kelleher, ‘Factual Fictions’. p.90.

⁶³⁶ Deane, *Strange Country*, p.250.

⁶³⁷ Lawless, *Grania*, p.9.

As the furtherance of an Irish/British attachment such a method is consistently directed towards the deflecting of the felt pressures of alternative ideological 'realities' within the narrative subject of Lawless's novels. It is hardly surprising that Lawless should adopt such a discursive position. Lawless's struggle with nationalist strategies was fought out in that same rural environment in which nationalism was constrained to locate its resources. David Lloyd observes that nationalism's antagonism to urban Ireland was due to its being forced to seek its authenticating difference from the imperial culture by an appeal to a rural and Gaelic culture already in decay: 'The antagonism to the urban is, accordingly, an antagonism to the inauthenticity legible in its cultural forms'.⁶³⁸ Lawless, therefore, imbues her presentations of this rural context with an urban consciousness expressed through a vocabulary which draws on, among other sources, a reservoir of habitual, trite social and racial thinking, discredited or misapplied scientific formulations and an unfathomable resource of periodical, newspaper and popular stereotyping. Gerardine Meaney, referring to the Galway cabin scene in *Grania*, points to the reproduction of certain stereotypes of domestic degeneracy current at the time in Victorian commercial advertisement and political cartoons such as *Punch* and *Puck* by which the normal domestic order is reversed in depictions of Irish family life.

The cabin's inhabitants are dehumanised; the woman of the house is unable to nurture, establish order, or properly to maintain the boundaries between private and public, as a proper Victorian mother should; the brutish, incoherent drunk recalls the simianized king of a Shantee; the imagery of a neglected hearth locates the source of this poverty internally, in a lack of proper care and in industry, not in the external worlds of social and economic life.⁶³⁹

So, quite apart from the insight to which the particular repertoire of civility and moral values pretended, Lawless also employs, as a general lingua franca, the complement of racial typologies, social theories of control, stadial conceptions of social and cultural history, and a vexed attitude to modernity and tradition, which underpinned a broad late nineteenth-century metropolitan mentality.

The most significant of these measures in the overall structure of Lawless's fiction is the central one of race, a preoccupation which mirrored that interest in nationalist thinking across Europe yet, in the Irish context, was an ever present, materially and religiously identifiable, issue of division. Racial typology punctuates

⁶³⁸ Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, p.93.

⁶³⁹ Meaney, '*Decadence, Degeneration and Revolting Aesthetics*', p.166.

Lawless's narratives and in all but one of the novels examined here is made to bear the weight of fundamental textual arguments. Its widespread use in *Maelcho*, a novel which has the capacity to provide an unflinching search of the colonial motivations behind such a crucial opening up of the imperial settlement of Ireland, radically impedes the novel's potency and scope. As a means to construct the principles on which the various social groups and systems are seen to exist, ethnic qualities are relied on to direct and oversee the cultural imperatives which determine and rationalise the novel's historical outcome. Nonetheless, even in that seeming exception, *Hurrish*, the issue of race is subtly interwoven into the narrative's ideological fabric. Hurrish O'Brien and the Bradys have their subordinate social status demonstrated by a flawed civility, the ethnic traits which characterise them intimating their deviance from the domestic, the cultural and linguistic standards of author and presumed reader alike. Pierce O'Brien, the Anglo-Irish landlord, is presented as a mediating, enlightened figure displaying the flexibility of a knowing miscegenation, while a matter-of-fact English remove, an externalised representation of order, is signified by the sub-inspector Higgins. An entire social mores is effectively constituted on the basis of racial or national caricature.

National character is the most predictable of this range of race/class features and in its apparent ordinariness and self-evidence it can be made to convey a significant cargo of socially constructed pre-conception. The stereotyped or stage Irishman, according to Leerssen, is not necessarily a prejudiced indictment in its own right: 'What makes a character Stage Irish is not the degree to which its characterization is stereotyped (for that is a constant from Macklin to Somerville and Ross), but the variable degree to which a changeable audience chooses to accept the stereotype as sympathetic or obnoxious'.⁶⁴⁰ However this overlooks the context in which such stereotyping is used. There is a degree to which mere praxis governs role, but the intention of the writer can be quite deliberately purposeful. Given the context in which Lawless is writing and the issues she addresses, stereotypes have a working function. Placed alongside the discourses already indicated, which provide the novels with their dominant ethic, they assume a relationary validation in the complex ideological web being spun by Lawless. A reinforcing of traditional stabilities, particularly within the British/Irish project, encourages an endorsing of preconceived

⁶⁴⁰ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p.173.

stalwarts which might verify authority, particularly through a naturalization of them.

The stage Irish features of such figures as Hurrish, Maurice Brady, Maelcho and Murdough Blake are employed by Lawless to justify their continued inclusion beneath the aegis of a steering enlightened social and state formation while also providing Lawless with a means to deal with the unsettling prospect of individual definition erupting from collective anonymity. All of these mechanisms of typology are ultimately means to confirm deeply felt class and ethnic convictions through a deterministic fixing of positions and relations. The reliance by Lawless on such a deterministic concept, whether conceived as genetically innate, culturally inscribed, or nationally representative, severely limits any meaningful representations of Irish social, political, and historical issues which the novels might attempt and severely limits any lasting worthwhile insights and resolutions to which the narratives might otherwise be open.

Socialization and Alienation in Lawless.

The intent behind Lawless's use of a discursive register which appears to be neutrally voiced is to oppose it to totalizing, closed narratives presented in her fiction as restricting individual scope. Therefore, a disabling strategy operates at the centre of all four of Lawless's novels reviewed, which involves a fracturing of the individual subject from his or her particular context. This presents difficulties for the socializing principle which ought to operate behind the fiction. Eagleton observes that in the realist novel 'personal relationships are the medium in which social issues become active and incarnate. Such relationships are in fact metonymic of society as a whole, but it is in the nature of realist writing to recast this metonym into metaphor, recasting social processes as personal transactions'.⁶⁴¹ This only occurs where the social structure has developed a 'cultural ideal that existed outside the individual', as Armstrong characterises it, and to which the individual might be led to conform.⁶⁴² Lloyd refers to the 'unreduced multiplicity of forms of socialization' evident in agrarian movements and shifting class allegiances which he identifies as frustrating any overall synthesis achievable within the Irish realist novel.⁶⁴³ Due to the partisan

⁶⁴¹ Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p.181.

⁶⁴² Armstrong, *How Novels Think*, p.81.

⁶⁴³ Lloyd, *Anomalous States*, p.149.

nature of the Irish social context an overarching aspirational process along the lines suggested by Armstrong is unavailable. In Lawless's fiction, therefore, the significant alienation of the subject is enacted as a means to isolate those principles seen to be necessary to the construction of the system's cultural ideal. As a reformative yet isolated subjectivity, Lawless's protagonists present an alterity to the pressures exerted by an ideological, confessional or ethnic mandate, instancing a humanist ethic which purports to supersede the limitations of the communities which contain them.

Consequently, separation, alienation, or a sense of individual/communal disjunction are the means by which Lawless attempts to produce an ethical subject, a symbolically powerful, morally provocative figure who embodies a protest against the reduction through which so called common identity is achieved.⁶⁴⁴ Central, therefore, to Lawless's narratives are symbolic figures whose displacements from communal and cultural contexts occur as a result of their own singularity. Hurrish, Essex, Maelcho and Grania, all cultural and communal isolates, contain within them the insight of a deeper and more meaningful socialization which finds itself thwarted as it teeters on the brink of a new definition.⁶⁴⁵

The extent to which such a conception by Lawless might be seen as involving her in a modernist vision is problematic. The lack of a self-determining capacity which characterises modernist figures coincides with the specific displacements which Lawless's protagonists experience along with an equally defining sense of disinheritance. Caught between the contending forces of modernity and tradition, such modernist figures present a backward, often nostalgic look at a discredited establishment while simultaneously looking forward towards a future with both anticipation and anxiety. Maelcho's grasping at clearly outlined memories through a disintegrating consciousness while a progressive system overwhelms him is indicative of this dilemma, as are the asynchronous sensitivities of a very alienated Essex. Yet the thinking of modernism is implicitly radical and iconoclastic however couched it may be in the symbolic language of the past. Lawless's use of the alienated subject runs counter to any such programme; she does not utilize tradition as a means of

⁶⁴⁴ In this respect Lawless's novels promote a socialized subject in specific conditions which are, nonetheless, unreconciled to the national drive towards a totalized citizenry.

⁶⁴⁵ For example, the utilitarian and exploitative machinery of state politics which Harvey discovers during his Irish campaign conflicts with the romance of his essentially Medieval consciousness.

establishing a modernist alternative, nor does the individualistic consciousness of the modern subject which represents a freeing of the modern mind from the restrictive grip of that tradition relate with that of Lawless's protagonists. Both Hurrish and Grania are atavistic in their thinking, symbols of loss rather than freedom, and Essex's interrogation of the new centralised state's pragmatic values applies a medieval communitarian perspective rather than that of a renaissance man.

The fracturing signature of Lawless's narratives, however, figures not only in the representation of the narratives' protagonists. Lawless's landscapes equally reflect the ideological determination to split the connection between Gaelic Ireland and the exotic, and split the formal ambiguity which had accommodated a dilution of realism through romance. In the novels of Owenson and subsequent nineteenth-century Irish writers, including the poetry and drama of the Literary Revival, a chronotopic landscape, symbolic of Gaelic otherness, is made to occupy a position of suspension from contemporaneity.⁶⁴⁶ From the anachronistic, yet geographically coeval, domain of the Prince of Inishmore through the ordnance survey collections of George Petrie to the Lake Isle of Inisfree the perspectives from which such idyllic spaces are constructed are those same against which the space is designed.

In the novels of Lawless, likewise, there is a recurring formal structuring of idealized or idyllic settings which signifies a utilization of this tradition but to other purposes, such settings being compelled to endure the intrusions of a reality whose exclusion is no longer accepted as possible or credible. Teampull a Phoill, the enclosed sanctuary with its well of timeless votive offerings, to which Alley Sheen retreats for peace and quiet in *Hurrish* is shattered and rendered unusable by Maurice's invasive violence, transforming it into a site of conflict and hate. So, too, the recuperative serenity of Maelcho's forest retreat, overrun by victims of violence and famine, becomes, in turn, the location for his nightmarish disorientation and death. Grania's ecstatic vision, induced by the mesmerising environment she enters while fishing in the middle sea between the islands and the Galway coast, is dissipated by her and Murdough's return to the degenerative realities of Inishmaan. It is in that almost consecrated space between the islands that Grania eventually drowns. Quoting Thomas Flanagan's observation that *The Wild Irish Girl* 'gave first form to

⁶⁴⁶ 'Another result is the fact that Gaelic Ireland, characterized by its pastness, exists only in certain areas cordoned off from the normal world'. Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination.*, p.50.

the rhetoric of Irish nationalists', Leerssen judges the literary tradition which incorporates such a conception of romantic space and which originates with Owenson's novel, to herald the beginnings in nineteenth-century Ireland of political romance and romantic politics.⁶⁴⁷ For Lawless, facing the loss of specifically Anglo-Irish Ascendancy ground

to that symbolic space, preserves of romantic terrain might well have seemed in need of re-colonization.

As an element of this method, the realistic, the naturalistic and the bathetic become means by which the preciousness of nationalism's own categories are reduced. Their use to undermine expectations of a conventional exoticism in both *Hurriah* and *Grania*, are built on the foregrounding of poverty, personal frustration and dissolution which reduce geographic and cultural distance to the socially contiguous, the contemporary and, therefore, the mundanely recognisable. In both *With Essex in Ireland* and *Maelcho* what appears initially strange and mythic is found ultimately to reside in the mundane of violence, the perceived romance of an otherness revealed to be merely inflated ignorance dissipated in the catastrophe of human conflict. The sense of disjunction and distance which such a fraught approach to the subject of Ireland reveals in Lawless's novels also brings the concept of identification home to within the self, stripping it of its specifically cultural/literary rationale. Lawless's determination to problematize a friction between realism and romance so centrally within her narrative subject indicates not only its ideological capital but also its personal reference. An unresolved authorial attitude to landscape permeates the novels which mirrors that of the narratives' own division between real space and chronotopic location. While landscape as an active component of the narrative reflects that narrative's moments in sentiment or intent, providing a physical verification, its application can swing, within the same novel, from an environment of sinister involvement to one of a sustaining regenerative support. So setting can be made to reflect a disingenuous and tendentious role when placed within the register of ideology, and as such its features and resonances are manipulated as an active participant of that ideology. Yet, alternatively, when a direct personal interaction with place occurs it registers instead a solacing, accommodating sympathy and responsiveness. This represents more than just pathetic fallacy. The solitary

⁶⁴⁷ Leerssen, *Remembrance and Imagination*, p.65.

appreciation occupies a space which is antithetical to that occupied by the functioning argument. The author in such moments seeks refuge in the natural setting from that realist, tendentious element in the narrative which determines the landscape's other significance.

This is the dimension within the narrative in which Lawless invests the natural setting with elements of a romantic consciousness whose register lies outside the novel's fictional resolve. Such a perspective is achieved mainly through the protagonist by whom a diegetic apprehension of the natural setting is rendered personal. So, while the narrative voice in *Grania* assumes what is, in effect, an ideologically driven evaluation of the island's environment, Grania's own appreciation takes the alternate form, allowing an intimately personal and subjectively involved responsiveness to place. A comparable process occurs in *With Essex in Ireland* whereby a uniquely personal response to the beauty of the landscape breaks through and undermines the ideological cant with which Harvey is most associated. Similarly split responses can be demonstrated in *Hurriah* and *Maelcho*. The authorial presence therefore appears to exist on two levels, working against itself as intention obstructs feeling. In other words, Lawless can achieve a projection of identity onto a personally resonant landscape yet must deny that identification when, narratorially, that landscape requires a specific cultural definition; then that same landscape is figured as alien, hostile and complicit.⁶⁴⁸

What this vacillation exposes as it works itself through each narrative is an action of negative self-assertion which tends to accentuate the sense of fracture as the novels unfold. Lawless's authorial presence manifests itself through refusal or rejection, a presence which initially expresses itself through desire. This is most evident in the area of sexuality. In *Hurriah* and *Grania* Lawless expresses the prospect of an almost unconditional surrender in both novels only to draw back, an artifice which she cannot fulfil. So late in the novel *Grania* determines to throw all her scruples aside and embrace a life with the more native Murdough, no matter how wasteful and dissolute, yet in her final rejection of him, she re-establishes her own wilfulness and, therefore, her own unique character, setting out to sea without and despite him. In *Hurriah*, Alley Sheen, the character through whom narrative morality

⁶⁴⁸ It is significant in this respect that Lawless, in later years, settled in Somerset and constructed for herself a garden in the likeness of a west of Ireland landscape, equipped with typical limestone features.

is embodied, discovers through her sexual association with Hurrish and Maurice a near identification with the communally sanctioned violence she abhors. Yet, robbed of Hurrish, she too avoids such identification by her utter rejection of her betrothed, Maurice Brady, transmuting her involvement instead into a convent life of female celibacy. In these two novels Lawless's positing of a sexuality which is empowered with redressive potential but is then allowed to fail is an admission of the frustration apparent within her own choices. Such a position is also present in *With Essex in Ireland* although its apparent reversal is so only due to the reversed gendered perspective which Lawless uses. In that novel a feminised Ireland is persistently gazed at and speculated upon from an English male perspective. Harvey's secret gazing at the native woman singing to her child is highly sexualized and her image haunts his thoughts, bringing him nearer to sympathy with an exoticized Ireland. However, such an identification bodes trouble as Essex proves, and Harvey's intimacies with the feminine ultimately mutate into the fatal vision of the Grey Washer Woman of the River.

Lawless's positing of an exoticized other space, therefore, which is then withdrawn or closed off, its romantic, idyllic allure denied, can likewise be seen as symbolic of a similar sexuality which issues as desire yet results in its refusal for the given context in which it is constrained to operate. Cultural conflicts and relationships, therefore, can be reconstituted through a parallelism of sexuality, allocating to it an active, if negative, agency. Active yet negative, in effect, becomes a fitting description of Lawless's political perspective. While the desire for national identification motivates the interrogations Lawless engages in through her narratives, those narratives are also constructed on a principle of incompatibility. So a sexuality of disillusion, of prohibition, of control and categorization provides a representational method for social and cultural relationship whose inhibition and restriction culminates in a complex impasse. The fictional impasses which Lawless's narratives reach are a reduction to and a function of this parallelism, and as with the tradition of realist fiction, can not be resolved, therefore, other than on this level.⁶⁴⁹

The occupying of liminal space by Alley Sheen within the communal landscape and by Grania within the geographic neutral zone between the islands and mainland, the use of intimation which operates below the level of language as an instrument of

⁶⁴⁹ Eagleton, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*, p181.

female intervention prominent in *With Essex in Ireland* and the marginalized female presences in *Maelcho*, are all recognitions by Lawless of the difficulty involved in achieving a meaningful interaction with a world in which feminine participation is only peripherally or obliquely formative, empowered with the capability to merely affirm or negate. For Lawless, as woman writer, such a recognition is provocative as much in its fictional repercussions as in actuality.⁶⁵⁰ The unrealised aspirations, the frustrations and the silencing which Lawless's women are shown to experience in her narratives result in fictional deadlock, for them and for the narrative argument inflected by them. No ostensible progress can be made within the diegetic context due to the central position these characters occupy. Instead, and through a negative agency, Lawless is able to allow the narrative process to convey an interpretive logic situated in these figures whose central argument is articulated by the impasse they experience. With a subtlety of function which mimics the feminine element in the narratives themselves, this logic operates through a resource of humanity occupying the silences and the frustrations inherent in these characters. Its frustration is, therefore, presented as a debilitating lack within the site of the fictional world and, by implication, in the real which it represents.

Incidence of impasse, obscurity of vision and also those instances in which Lawless opposes such inconclusiveness with an element of hope, the affirmation which accompanies such deadlocks, are likely reflections of the unresolved nature of the Irish political conflicts which surrounded her. It is interesting to compare the conclusions to two editions of her history *Ireland* written 25 years apart, in 1887 and 1912. What is shared is precisely that resource of humanity reaching beyond the apprehension of its context. In 1887 Lawless was concerned with the immediate consequences of Land War and Home Rule agitation and speculates from that position on what a future might hold. The struggle between disquiet and hope is apparent in this earlier edition more so than in the later.

It may be a great deal better than we expect, but, on the other hand, it may be worse, and in ways, too, as yet we hardly foresee. Whatever else Home Rule may, would, could, or should be, one thing friends and foes alike may agree to admit, and that is that it will mark an entirely new departure. It will be no resumption, no mere continuation of anything that has gone

⁶⁵⁰ Reviewers of Lawless's work consistently commented on how she confirmed or failed to confirm national preconceptions.

before, but a perfectly fresh beginning. A beginning, it may be asked, of what ?⁶⁵¹ Sentiment shifts from one pole to the other and settles in an indecisive midpoint but is nonetheless provocative, the simple statement of fact is sufficient to suggest possibility. By 1912, Lawless is again caught in an anxiety which centres itself in the unresolved deadlock of a politically disturbed Ireland, but now as in her fictions that deadlock itself becomes the means for the articulating of sanguine optimism drawn from that very predicament's logic.

That remarkably menacing-looking clouds are at this moment once more circling about her devoted head; that a party animosity, bitterer than could possibly be founding any other English-speaking community, promises during the next few years to turn her into a battlefield for two furiously contending forces, are facts too patent to be denied. Beyond all such unpleasant facts however; beyond the din, and the glare and the dust of even the noisiest, fiercest, most repellent of battlefields, the true lover of his country may be allowed to let his eyes wander away until they rest at last upon the light shining on her still far-off fields, a light which he for one will never cease to look for and expect.⁶⁵²

This vision being located beyond the region of the action is comparable with Grania's reverie and Alley Sheen's escape into comforting isolation, escapes which in themselves are figured as powerlessness yet symbolically reinforce their own unshakeable faith. As the responses of her own creative integrity to the difficulties which confronted her, Lawless's writings present just such an unshakeable resource.

The rationale behind this study has been to demonstrate that the neglect of Lawless as an Irish novelist has been founded not on any inadequacy of the novels themselves or her ancillary writings but rather on the tangential contact which those writings were seen to have with that 'new beginning' which she so astutely forecast for an independent Ireland. The greater range of vision and specifically the 'difference' of outlook which Lawless's writings open up to the student of late nineteenth-century Irish studies and the necessity of that range and difference to a truer appreciation of the period makes familiarity with Lawless's work indispensable. Equally important, the issues and the angles of engagement with them which Lawless explored remained definitive factors in the ongoing literary work of many of her successors, particularly in the areas of intellectual and political dissidence, communal interdependence and its concomitant oppressiveness -- notably with regard to sexuality and the status of women. The sense of a closing over of scope within the

⁶⁵¹ Lawless, Emily, *Ireland* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1887), p.416.

⁶⁵² Lawless, Emily, *Ireland* (London: Fisher Unwin, 1912), p.435.

national spirit intimated at its inception by Lawless was still being excavated throughout the twentieth century by Edna O'Brien, John McGahern, Colm Tobin and many others. Lawless in this regard provides an invaluable point of reference for that seminal change of direction in the national psyche and in its literary expression. That Lawless's writings were consigned to obscurity in many respects because of their strangeness to a contemporary Ireland reveals more about that Ireland's imaginative limitations than of Lawless's deeper national resonance and if this study has managed to make more accessible the complexity and relevance of Lawless's work and thought to the Ireland of today then it too has achieved its own value.

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