



IRELAND, INDIA AND
NATIONALISM IN
NINETEENTH-CENTURY
LITERATURE

JULIA M. WRIGHT

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IRELAND, INDIA, AND NATIONALISM IN NINETEENTH-CENTURY LITERATURE

In this innovative study Julia M. Wright addresses rarely asked questions: how and why does one colonized nation write about another? Wright focuses on the way nineteenth-century Irish writers wrote about India, showing how their own experience of colonial subjection and unfulfilled national aspirations informed their work. Their writings express sympathy with the colonized or oppressed people of India in order to unsettle nineteenth-century imperialist stereotypes, and demonstrate their own opposition to the idea and reality of empire. Drawing on Enlightenment philosophy, studies of nationalism, and postcolonial theory, Wright examines fiction by Maria Edgeworth and Lady Morgan, gothic tales by Bram Stoker and Oscar Wilde, poetry by Thomas Moore and others, as well as a wide array of non-fiction prose. In doing so she opens up new avenues in Irish studies and nineteenth-century literature.

JULIA M. WRIGHT is Canada Research Chair in European Studies at Dalhousie University. She is the author of *Blake, Nationalism, and the Politics of Alienation* (2004), the editor of Lady Morgan's *The Missionary: An Indian Tale* (2002), and the co-editor of three essay collections on nineteenth-century literature. Her articles on Irish literature have appeared in various essay collections and such journals as *Éire-Ireland*, *ELH*, and *European Romantic Review*.

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Nineteenth-century British literature and culture have been rich fields for interdisciplinary studies. Since the turn of the twentieth century, scholars and critics have tracked the intersections and tensions between Victorian literature and the visual arts, politics, social organization, economic life, technical innovations, scientific thought — in short, culture in its broadest sense. In recent years, theoretical challenges and historiographical shifts have unsettled the assumptions of previous scholarly synthesis and called into question the terms of older debates. Whereas the tendency in much past literary critical interpretation was to use the metaphor of culture as 'background', feminist, Foucauldian, and other analyses have employed more dynamic models that raise questions of power and of circulation. Such developments have reanimated the field. This series aims to accommodate and promote the most interesting work being undertaken on the frontiers of the field of nineteenth-century literary studies: work which intersects fruitfully with other fields of study such as history, or literary theory, or the history of science. Comparative as well as interdisciplinary approaches are welcomed.

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Introduction: Insensible Empire

"I see, not an East-India bill, but a *West-Britain* bill preparing for dissolving not only all principles of constitution, but the constituency itself; for removing the seat of government *for ever* from the soil, and eternizing the provinciality and servitude of my country [Ireland], under an administration unalterably English."

William Drennan, *A Letter to the Right Honorable William Pitt* (1799)

"We trace the spirit of Milesian poetry to a higher source than the spring of Grecian genius; for many figures in Irish song are of oriental origin; and the bards who ennobled the train of our Milesian founders, and who awakened the soul of song here, seem, in common with the Greek poets, 'to have kindled their poetic fire at those unextinguished lamps which burn within the tomb of oriental genius.'"

Sydney Owenson (Lady Morgan), *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806)

"The beauteous forms, the dazzling splendours, the breathing odours of the East, seem at last to have found a kindred poet in that Green Isle of the West, whose Genius has long been suspected to be derived from a warmer clime, and now wantons and luxuriates in these voluptuous regions, as if it felt that it had at length regained its native element."

Anon., Rev. of Thomas Moore's *Lalla Rookh* (1817)

While scholars have dealt in some detail with Romantic and Victorian orientalism, and postcolonial studies in general have dealt extensively with colonial and imperial literatures, little attention has yet been paid to the ways in which nineteenth-century writers from colonized nations wrote about colonization beyond their own borders. Ireland, as England's first and nearest colony, offers us a unique opportunity to open up such an investigation. When the British Empire began to expand rapidly in the eighteenth century, Irish writers could respond to that expansion by drawing on a centuries-old national tradition of cultural responses to

colonialism and foreign invasion. They also had unique access to British readers and publishers because of a shared cultural economy facilitated by both geographical proximity and a language shared after centuries of colonial domination. Irish authors could thus participate in the print culture of the metropole, operating within what Jürgen Habermas terms “the public sphere” on terms that often vex any simple division between colonizer and colonized.¹ Examining, therefore, not only Irish writing about Ireland, but also Irish writing about India and British writing about Ireland and India, I shall argue, helps us to triangulate the complex relationship between British and Irish literary traditions as well as further explore the means by which members of an internal colony might engage public debate in the metropole about political sovereignty, modern nationalism, and the imperial project.

This study is primarily concerned with literary works as rhetorical and imaginative responses to the imperial project, particularly the ethical questions and representational problems that such a project raises. It is consequently historicized but not historical in its objectives. Simply put, literature has a history of its own that sometimes draws materials from social and political history but does not necessarily concern itself with accurately depicting real people, actual experiences, or the facts of history. Literary responses to the imperial project might sometimes represent colonial experience or events of imperial history, but they also include thematic investigations of ethical questions, alternatives to current imperial strategies, imaginative accounts of possible consequences, and so forth. It is, however, essential to remain “historicized” within the cultural field. The shifting “horizon of expectations” defined by Hans Robert Jauss grasps the complex ways in which myriad elements of culture — religion, politics, print culture, oral culture, literary traditions, legislation, assumptions about class, gender, race, nation, and so forth — shape representation and interpretation, including, as Hayden White has made clear, the representation and interpretation of material history.² Hence, in the remainder of this introduction, I shall outline some of the crucial contexts and framing concerns of the larger study, including some of the historical connections between India and Ireland after 1780. More importantly, I shall introduce the key rubrics available to the writers I shall discuss for framing similitude and difference on terms relevant to situating Ireland in relation to both the metropole and to India.

The most important rubric for this study is Enlightenment sensibility. Offering a framework within which to imagine a fundamental similitude between human beings that is grounded in sympathy and affect rather

than a shared culture, sensibility provides a philosophical basis for transcending divisions such as “race,” “religion,” and “nation” in ways that both trouble imperial hegemony and facilitate cross-cultural identifications such as those which Irish writers pursue in various texts about India. Moreover, through its foundational position in Enlightenment models of justice and morality, sensibility also provides a basis upon which to argue for national merit — and hence the right to sovereignty — that is independent of political power or divine sanction. Instead of relying on “might makes right” or historical authority, nationalists could claim the moral highground through the sensibility of the people and the insensibility of their opponents. This is a two-edged sword: the colonized could be represented as sensible and so morally superior to their insensible conquerors, and vice versa. The ambiguity of the word “empire” in this introduction’s subtitle, “insensible empire” — drawing on both empire as power and empire as the site on which power is exercised — is thus intentional. Like nationalism itself, sensibility could be used to authorize both the exercise of imperial power and attempts to resist it.

IRELAND, INDIA, AND THE METROPOLE

Joep Leerssen, a ground-breaking scholar of nineteenth-century Irish literature who has been publishing in the field since the 1980s, has recently lamented the appropriation of Edward Said’s influential *Orientalism*, and more broadly the category of the postcolonial, by Irish studies over the last two decades.³ His concern about this appropriation points to the foundation of my study: Ireland’s position within Europe makes a parallel between Ireland and the “Orient” problematic even as such an identification acknowledges a long history of Irish writers who rhetorically aligned Ireland with the “East.”⁴ The irreducibility of Ireland to a binary model of imperial domination is a recurring concern in Irish Studies today. One collection of essays on Irish history asks the question, *An Irish Empire?*, in order to address the complicated ties which bind Ireland to the metropole and then involve it in British imperial expansion, while Stephen Howe’s recent, highly controversial, study, *Ireland and Empire*, rests largely on the relative uniqueness of Ireland within British imperial history in order to separate Ireland from discussions of coloniality.⁵ After half a millennium of English rule, Ireland by the 1800s was significantly though unevenly assimilated into British dominant culture; many in Ireland, particularly in urban areas, were native English speakers as well as Protestant, government employees, and/or tradespeople dependent on

British and imperial markets, and Ireland provided personnel for the British military as well. As a further complication, the dominant power was redefined over the same period — from England, to England and Wales, and then Britain (England, Wales, and Scotland) after the 1707 Act of Union. (For the sake of succinctness, I shall generally refer to the post-1707 ruling state as Britain, the pre-1707 ruling state as England, and to the four nations and geographical regions of England, Scotland, Wales, and Ireland as the British Isles.) Irish nationalists throughout the long nineteenth century argued against policies which discriminated against those who were not fully assimilated, including non-Anglicans, Irish speakers, native industries, agricultural interests, and so on. All of this, and more, distinguishes Ireland from other British colonies. Leerssen addresses this bugbear of recent Irish studies:

Indeed, I think post-colonialism, as a critical agenda and approach, is misapplied to Ireland, not just because of the general objection that Anglo-Irish relations were never really “colonial” in the proper sense of the word, but more precisely because Ireland, unlike colonies *sensu stricto*, as a European country, has participated in the nineteenth-century tradition of romantic nationalism.⁶

This is a valuable call to caution, but its binary logic risks going too far: “the proper sense of the word” colonial is historically contingent and even historically disputed. Lying behind this and other critiques of the application of postcolonial theory in Irish studies is a foreshortening of the history and space of empire that stresses colonization outside of Europe, especially in the nineteenth century, and so fails to recognize the ways in which “romantic nationalism” emerged in Europe in part to resist imperial domination.

Ireland might seem unique in the relatively exclusive focus of British imperialism, but it is far from it in the larger context of European imperialism. A fuller account of the “postcolonial” and the history of European empire is needed to fully engage the impact of romantic nationalism in the West, for nationalism in Europe arose in part because of colonization *within* the continent. The Congress of Vienna in 1814–1815 — where the British government was represented coincidentally (or perhaps not) by two Anglo-Irish military men, Castlereagh and Wellington — formalized the division of Europe into five empires. The Russian, Prussian, French, Austro-Hungarian, and British Empires ruled most of Europe; political sovereignty and in varying degrees political representation was denied to many regions that are now recognized as European nations, including Italy, Germany, and Norway. A sixth empire,

the Ottoman, ruled the eastern edge of Europe, including Greece and the Balkans. The “Young Europe” movement of the 1830s was in significant measure a loose affiliation of anti-imperial groups, and was fostered by Giuseppe Mazzini, a leader of the “Young Italy” nationalist movement termed treasonous by the power which dominated then-fragmented Italy, the Austro-Hungarian Empire. However, Mazzini suggested that, without a unifying language distinct from its oppressor’s, Ireland could not belong to “Young Europe,” even as Irish nationalists used the name “Young Ireland” and invoked Italian patriotism as a kindred cause.⁷ In other words, there were nationalist movements within Europe claiming nationhood against an imperial oppressor and, moreover, they were themselves disputing what precisely constituted “colonies ‘*sensu stricto*’” within nineteenth-century Europe. We miss much in the history of ideas on this subject if we obscure that debate with a rubric developed in the twentieth century.

This is not to suggest that imperial domination in Europe was the same in degree or kind as that beyond Europe, but military conquest, administrative rule, and political disenfranchisement do remain broadly consistent. There are further similarities, too, such as the trading of colonies back and forth due to shifting power relations and negotiations between European imperial powers. Denmark ceded Norway to Sweden in the wake of Napoleon’s defeat (1814), for instance, while the British toehold in India arguably began with the transfer of Bombay from Portugal to Britain as part of Catherine of Braganza’s dowry on her marriage to Charles II (1661). Further, the history of colonization within Europe was, in earlier periods, nearly as brutal as it was outside of Europe in the nineteenth century. Leerssen acknowledges that “Ireland can perhaps be described as a colony during the period from 1540 to 1690” because of economic, political, and territorial exploitation.⁸ But if we glance at Oliver Cromwell’s conquest of Ireland in 1649–1652, we see much uglier colonial practices: Cromwell massacred civilians after military battles, sent thousands of survivors into slavery in the West Indies,⁹ and seized large tracts of land. After 1695, a range of laws forbade Catholics not only the free exercise of their religion but also property rights and other broadly civil rights that would soon be defined under the Enlightenment. Those laws, known as the Penal Laws or Penal Statutes, were somewhat ameliorated over the ensuing decades, but remained in force until Catholic Emancipation in 1829. Instead of considering Ireland as failing to be colonial on the terms that non-European nations were colonial during the height of British imperial power, we need to question more thoroughly the

utility of binary formulations in order to grasp more fully the complexity of an imperial history that reaches across, and builds upon, different historical moments, geopolitical situations, imperial ideologies, and discourses of resistance. The present study works in the space between the either/or alternative, seeking to explore the ways in which Irish authors recognized, and even argued for, Ireland's difference from non-European colonies such as India while also engaging the similarities in their position.

One of the key differences between India and Ireland under British rule is a matter of chronology. While eighteenth-century Ireland had already experienced centuries of colonial domination, India at the same time was largely free of British rule. In 1800, much of India was still ruled by the Maratha (Mahratta) Confederacy; British rule, though greatly expanded from the few ports it governed in the early eighteenth century, was limited to the edges of the subcontinent. The destabilization of the Mughal Empire in India in the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries, as well as inter-European competition for key ports and coastal regions in India, precipitated changes that redrew the map of the subcontinent. The British succeeded in pushing out most other imperial competitors from Europe and during the late eighteenth and early nineteenth centuries would extend their dominion over the subcontinent despite considerable difficulties. Sultan Tipu's armed opposition to British domination in India in the 1780s and 1790s overlapped with the impeachment of Warren Hastings, Governor General of the East India Company, from 1787–1795, and was followed by a series of military conflicts, from the “Vellore Mutiny” of 1806 and the Mahratta Wars to the Anglo-Afghan Wars and the so-called “Indian Mutiny” of 1857–1858. Then the British faced growing political agitation for independence, drawing in part on the principles of nationalism, in the latter part of the century. After the impeachment of Hastings failed, and despite heavy losses during the first Anglo-Afghan War, the British busily accumulated other colonies in the region, expanding British India's borders to include Sri Lanka (then Ceylon) in 1796 and what is now Burma incrementally from 1824 to 1886, as well as adding the Seychelles (1810), Singapore (1819), Hong Kong (1841), Brunei (1888), Kuwait (1899), and myriad others, as well as extending their dominion in the subcontinent of India.

There are strong reasons for linking Ireland and India within the genealogy of British imperial discourse despite these differences in colonial timelines. Historian Joel Berlatsky argues that attention to “the place of Ireland in the British Empire” has tended to focus on comparisons between Ireland and the United States, but “equally important

insights can be gained by examining Ireland in relation to India or to African colonial areas.”¹⁰ The historical ties between India and Ireland are more than conceptual. Throughout various conflicts after the middle of the eighteenth century, the British empire not only had the same legislators and government functionaries making decisions about both India and Ireland but also deployed the same personnel in both colonial arenas. In one of the more striking instances, Lord Cornwallis, who defeated Sultan Tipu, was brought out of retirement to deal with the aftermath of the 1798 Irish uprising, and was celebrated in an 1804 tale by Anglo-Irish author Maria Edgeworth for his actions in India (see Chapter 2). More crucially, though, such migrating personnel figuratively parallel the circulation of ideas of coloniality, effective administration, and empire. As David Lloyd notes, “The metaphors that justified Britain’s colonialism in the East clearly have parallels in the discourse on the ‘internal colony’ of Ireland;”¹¹ or, put more bluntly, the imperial enterprise recycled its rationalizations, applying them to various colonies as needed. In the period considered by this study, both India and Ireland were high on the colonial agenda and were frequently discussed together in print culture as such. Moreover, there is a cultural basis for such connections: as literary scholars such as Leerssen and Joseph Lennon have established, Irish orientalist scholarship and literature also pursued, across centuries, myriad connections between Ireland and the “East.”¹²

Edmund Burke is perhaps Ireland’s best-known and most widely studied writer on India. He pursued the Hastings Impeachment through lengthy speeches as a member of the British Parliament and, as Luke Gibbons has recently discussed, represented India and Ireland as similarly victimized.¹³ Of Burke’s alternating between writing projects on Ireland and on India, Gibbons writes, “It is as if the energies of one were transferred to the other, and then used in turn to revitalize the original, a form of sympathetic contagion.”¹⁴ Such similes and sympathies are limited, however, because nineteenth-century Ireland also teeters on the crux of the binary oppositions which form the foundation of contemporary British imperialist rhetoric: it was depicted as European but exotic, Christian but Catholic, literate but culturally impoverished, enfranchised but colonized, and white but feminized (with all of the shifting connotations embraced by these broad terms).¹⁵ As a consequence, orientalist discourse and the politics that it serves become more complicated when they are mobilized by writers located in that internal colony. Leerssen suggests that “There is an orientalist tradition within Anglo-Irish literature in the nineteenth century; but while it partakes of

mainstream ‘English’ orientalism as studied by Said, it also differs from this mainstream tradition, for there is a continuing tendency to self-orientalization. This means that in Ireland more than elsewhere we must be prepared to register an affinity with the Orient.”¹⁶ If, as Reina Lewis argues, “women’s differential, gendered access to the positionalities of imperial discourse produced a gaze on the Orient and Orientalized ‘other’ that registered difference less pejoratively and less absolutely than was implied by Said’s original formulation,”¹⁷ so too did the “differential . . . access” of Irish writers turn back on the Orientalist gaze. Moreover, Ireland and India were differently positioned in British imperial discourse, particularly as that discourse became more rigidly and overtly racialized, so we can also see complications arising when India and Ireland are paired in British texts, such as Matthew G. Lewis’s “The Anaconda” (see Chapter 4). In short, Ireland was represented in Irish and British writing as both like India and not like India in ways that are entangled with various discriminations and relationships forged discursively between India, Ireland, imperial Britain, and what William Drennan termed “the universality of *independent* countries.”¹⁸

Independence is a crucial term in literary responses to the political and historical turmoil briefly sketched above. For whatever we term the practices through which Britain extended and maintained power in Ireland, Ireland was neither sovereign nor culturally identical to Britain, and Irish writers frequently concerned themselves with imagining a way out of precisely that bind. While we might dispute what constitutes the essential features of a colonized nation, or indeed if such a definition is possible or critically desirable, colonialism fundamentally refers to measures that usurp an indigenous sovereignty. Economic exploitation, political oppression, and territorial seizure all flow from this one fundamental condition. Seizing sovereignty not only makes such acts legally defensible and practically possible but also conceptually imaginable. According to John Locke, “Wher-ever . . . any number of Men are so united into one Society, as to quit every one his Executive Power of the law of Nature, and to resign it to the publick, there and there only is a *Political, or Civil Society*. And this is done wher-ever any number of Men, in the state of Nature, enter into Society to make one People.”¹⁹ To deny a society’s sovereignty is, in effect, to deny the sovereignty of the individuals in that society (Locke’s “Executive Power”) and to do so on terms that facilitate state violence against, as well as differential legal rights and limited suffrage for, these supposedly unsovereign subjects. Indeed, the emphasis on Irish Catholics as “Papists” in this period

and the ongoing disenfranchisement of Irish Catholics contributes to such a representation of them as unsovereign. In many anti-Catholic depictions, Catholics obey the Pope, not Civil Society or individual will, and do so as a matter of faith rather than reason. The Lockean relationship between individual and national sovereignty also, however, makes possible literary treatments of the problems of colonialism that focus on characters who synecdochally represent the people or nation as a whole, as in the national tale.

The 1800 Act of Union abolished the Irish Parliament and brought Ireland under the direct rule of the British Parliament, thus formally ending Irish political sovereignty. Almost immediately, the national tale arrived on the literary landscape as a sub-genre of the novel in which the conventions of the marriage plot or the *bildungsroman* served the further purpose of exploring cultural differences and the possibility of reconciliation between a dominant and an oppressed national group. The variety of national tales published in the early 1800s — from Lady Morgan's *The Wild Irish Girl* (1806) to Sir Walter Scott's *Waverley* (1814), W. S. Wickenden's *Bleddyn: A Welch National Tale* (1821), and, for an American example, Catherine Read Williams' *Aristocracy, or the Holbey Family* (1832) — testify to the flexibility of the genre. The national tale is adaptable to various political positions, time periods, and national contexts even though its material origins are traceable to an historical event fixed in time and space, namely the 1800 Act of Union. The flurry of national tales in the early nineteenth century, many of them popular enough to be reprinted in multiple editions, points to the ways in which the Act of Union provoked authors and readers to wrestle with the larger questions it raised, as in, for instance, Scott's use of the form to deal with the difficulties which followed an earlier Act of Union, that with Scotland in 1707. Material history at such moments functions as a spur to cultural production: it sparks debate not only on specific events but also on related issues, thus altering the course of literary production even when it is not itself an object of representation.

The national tale is a salient example for my purposes because it also arises in relation to modern nationalism. While there were ideas of nationality long before 1800, modern nationalism emerged across Western cultures during the latter years of the eighteenth century as a new way of thinking about political sovereignty and cultural community. Whether we follow Ernest Gellner in ascribing the emergence of modern nationalism to the Industrial Revolution or Benedict Anderson and Anthony D. Smith in viewing the French Revolution and Napoleonic

expansionism as the catalysts, it remains clear that a populist, culturally centered notion of nationality caught fire in late eighteenth-century Europe.²⁰ Sovereignty no longer lay with the monarch or, by extension, the government, but with the people as a whole on quasi-Lockean terms; nationalism was Lockean insofar as it viewed sovereignty in relation to the people, but not in its insistence on the uniformity and univocality of the people.²¹ In nationalism, the people are determined by their nationality, not the other way around. Further, the notorious ideological fluidity of nationalism — amenable to both liberatory movements and fascism — made it possible for nationalism to define various positions in the colonial debate. Nationalism was used to mobilize support for British imperial expansion, and it provided a basis for the intensification of Irish resistance to colonial rule through the populist nationalist organizations of the 1780s and 1790s and then the struggle for Catholic Emancipation in the 1820s. Because it made culture central to national identity, moreover, nationalism cleared an ideological space for literary genres, such as the national tale, in which the relationship between culture and nationality could be explored.

A STRANGE NEIGHBOUR: AT THE LIMITS OF MIMICRY

While it is important to move beyond classifying Ireland as either a colony or not, it is also vital to grasp the ways in which the island was multiply located within often conflicting geopolitical perspectives salient to different debates at the time. Ireland was discursively and politically understood as a region on the edge of both the transatlantic sphere and Western Europe, as a culture within both the British Isles and Catholic Europe, and as a nation among both subjugated European nations and British colonial possessions.²² Leerssen's note of caution about the Europeaness of Ireland remains, however. It is particularly essential to keep in mind that the Irish writers discussed in this study were generally no more familiar than their British counterparts with the details of British colonization in India or India itself. Indeed, the sources and facts that they cite suggest that they knew more or less what the British knew about India because they read the same orientalist texts, newspaper reports, and journal articles — and they in turn helped to shape British understandings of India through such popular Irish orientalist texts as Morgan's *The Missionary* (1811). As a consequence, the historical details of British India are less relevant to this study than the cultural responses

within the British Isles to colonization and the ethical problems raised by it.

For this reason, English-language literature is a necessary focus for this study. English-language Irish literature speaks out of and to a readership that was largely trained in British cultural traditions, while the Irish-language tradition remained largely a tradition apart from the philosophical and literary grounds on which the nationalist debate proceeded. Particularly important in this era are the conventions of literary sensibility and their grounding in the Scottish Enlightenment's ethical framework or, as Adam Smith put it, the "theory of moral sentiments." The pre-eminence of sensibility in the English-language literary tradition is indisputable, running through poetry from the Graveyard School to the Romantic poets as well as becoming entrenched in prose narrative forms during the early decades of the novel via Samuel Richardson and Sarah Fielding in the 1740s.²³ Critiques of sensibility began to emerge almost immediately in works such as Charlotte Lennox's *The Female Quixote* (1752), but the sentimental novel and the ethics of sensibility remained a force in British and Irish letters. Irish author Frances Sheridan was best known not for her plays but for her sentimental novel, *The Memoirs of Miss Sidney Bidulph*, published in both London and Dublin in 1761, a novel that was republished in each subsequent decade of the eighteenth century and counted Richardson among its enthusiasts. Her compatriot Laurence Sterne is the author of *A Sentimental Journey* (1768) and, of course, *Tristram Shandy* (1760–1767). As we shall see in the chapters that follow, sensibility is traceable throughout Irish literature of the next half century as well.

Enlightenment philosophy simultaneously influenced political thought. Echoes of Locke resound through Irish writing in English, from William Drennan's *Letter to the Right Honorable William Pitt* (1799) to Morgan's *The O'Briens and the O'Flahertys* (1827).²⁴ Drennan, responding to the Act of Union which would bring Ireland under the direct rule of the British Parliament in the following year, imagines something akin to the United Nations to manage the sovereignty of nations:

I do assert that the great perfection of this sublunary system would be such a law of nations, recognized and supported, as might cover the universality of *independent* countries, fulfilling their duties and asserting their rights, with its tutelary authority, defending the weakest from the most ambitious, and guaranteeing to all the full possession of their independence, under the ægis of a common power.²⁵

While Drennan is responding to the events of the late 1790s, he is also drawing on the Scottish Enlightenment and, of course, the English language and its rhetorical conventions in articulating that response. Locke in particular is explicitly cited and implicitly the foundation for his utopian view of a community of nations, as Drennan vows not to let “the principles of John Locke wither in [his] hand, or in [his] heart.”²⁶ David Hume and Adam Smith are similarly ubiquitous, with lesser lights such as Henry Home (Lord Kames) making occasional appearances as well in this body of writing.

The engagement with English-language culture in Britain is not a simple matter of colonial mimicry, as Homi K. Bhabha defines it, because of what Young Irelander Thomas Davis termed in the 1840s “the filtered colonisation of men and ideas.”²⁷ Focussing on “post-Enlightenment English colonialism,” with which the present study is also concerned, Bhabha describes mimicry as a means by which the colonized are encouraged to appropriate the behaviours and values of the dominant culture while it remains clear that they can never belong to the dominant class, in part because the logic of mimicry ascribes presence to the colonial subjects and offers only masks to the colonized abjects. “Mimicry is like camouflage,” Bhabha writes, “not a harmonization of the repression of difference, but a form of resemblance, that differs from or defends presence by displaying it, in part, metonymically. Its threat, I would add, comes from the prodigious and strategic production of conflictual, fantastic, discriminatory ‘identity effects’ in the play of a power that is elusive because it hides no essence, no ‘itself.’”²⁸ Bhabha’s formulation has been challenged in recent years but remains useful as an articulation of a theory of difference mobilized in this era’s colonial discourse — it is also a theory that is put under strain by the Irish example in suggestive ways. Anne McClintock notes, “Contrary to some critics, I do not believe that Bhabha means to suggest that mimicry is either the only, or the most important, colonial phenomenon. . . . Nonetheless, for Bhabha here colonial authority appears to be displaced less by shifting social contradictions or the militant strategies of the colonized than by the formal ambivalence of colonial representation itself.”²⁹ I recognize the cogency of McClintock’s critique, and the value of her acknowledgment that Bhabha is identifying an effect rather than the hallmark of colonialism, but it is precisely mimicry’s connection to “the formal ambivalence of colonial representation itself” that makes it a useful term for my purposes. Colonial Ireland thwarts the definitiveness that modern racism and proto-anthropological notions of cultural

difference would claim: the Irish are European, predominantly Christian, comparable in education and literacy to their British counterparts, and have a similarly structured economy and society.

If Ireland is, from the British perspective, a “strange country” or “anomalous,”³⁰ it is precisely because it does not easily and thoroughly fall into the binary categories of either otherness or sameness. It is not, like India, “beyond the pale of representation” in colonial romance.³¹ Nor is the manner of its ethnographic or popular representation readily grasped as another demonstration of Bhabha’s point that “the objective of colonial discourse is to construe the colonized as a population of degenerate types on the basis of racial origin, in order to justify conquest and to establish systems of administration and instruction.”³² There are notorious cartoons in the Victorian period of the Irish in simian form, and the stereotype of the drunken Irishman quickly rose in the nineteenth century, but these icons are relative latecomers to anti-Irish discourse.³³ While eighteenth-century concepts of “race” and “national character” are traceable in writings on Ireland, they do so as supplements rather than as originary determinants of colonial discourse in Ireland, piling onto medieval and Renaissance formulations of “barbarity” that draw not on “degeneracy,” like Victorian slurs, but on prior concerns with linguistic competence (in English, of course), fashion, manners, and social order. By the eighteenth century, moreover, a few generations after Cromwell and in the wake of the Enlightenment circulation of the idea of a universal humanity with varying degrees of education and cultural training, Ireland follows Wales and Scotland into the English imaginary as a rural backwater rather than an alien space. As McClintock notes in her brief discussion of the ways in which the Irish challenged the “chromatism” of British colonial discourse, the “*domestic* barbarism of the Irish” was used “as a marker of racial difference,” part of an “iconography of *domestic degeneracy* [that] was widely used to mediate the manifold contradictions in imperial hierarchy.”³⁴ Ireland was not only multiply located within different geopolitical spheres, but also variously denominated within a British Isles geography — colony, internal colony, and province.

Eighteenth- and nineteenth-century representations of the Irish frequently, though not exclusively, draw on stereotypes of provincialism: the superstitious peasant, the boorish farmer, the incompetent estate manager, the inhabitants of the slovenly home that McClintock identifies with “domestic barbarism,” or the yokels with whom urbane characters must contend when they flee ignominy by disappearing into the rural periphery. Conversely, from Drennan’s 1799 critique of the

Act of Union (see the first epigraph to this chapter) to Thomas Meagher's 1842 speech in favour of repealing that Act, "West Britain" was used rhetorically to contest the representation of Ireland as a province of Britain. Meagher asks, "Shall this ancient Irish town be degraded into an English borough? — and will you, its citizens, sacrifice your principles and your name, embrace provincialism, and henceforth exult in the title of West Britons?"³⁵ Ireland holds an ambivalent position within post-colonial studies precisely because it is partly representable in domestic terms as a distant province, disabling the various totalizing discourses (stereotype, romance, racism) which came to support the British imperial project as well as offering a limit case of the mimicry that exposes the "double vision which in disclosing the ambivalence of colonial discourse also disrupts its authority."³⁶ One conventional device for negotiating Ireland's ambivalent status as both province ("West Britain") and distinctive country is the partition of Ireland into Anglicized urban and unAnglicized rural spaces; thus, in such novels as *The Wild Irish Girl* and Charles Robert Maturin's *Melmoth the Wanderer* (1820), the protagonist's journey from Dublin to a rural Irish space figures a descent from the familiar to the strange and incomprehensible (literally incomprehensible, in part, because of linguistic difference). And this doubled national-provincial status also simultaneously problematizes the nationalist discourses which emerged in nineteenth-century Ireland. National character, as a basis for the nation's coherence and distinctness, risks reifying the racism which was increasingly validating the imperial project. Antiquarian or bardic nationalism risks authenticating imperialist charges of primitiveness — an element of imperial discourse that is, anachronistically, still with us in the OED's definition of colonialism as "freq[ue]ntly used in the derogatory sense of an alleged policy of exploitation of backward or weak peoples by a large power."

As Lloyd has ably argued in such works as *Nationalism and Minor Literature* and *Anomalous States*, the specifics of Ireland's colonial condition make it impossible to incorporate it into English narratives of social order and, I would stress, into the character types upon which such narratives depend. The complex lines of affiliation which criss-cross nineteenth-century Ireland constantly undermine the kinds of discriminations which would turn colonial subjects into the romance-types of devoted followers or despairing expatriates, or even committed anti-imperialists or earnest mimics. As Srinivas Aravamudan notes in a survey of colonial authors, including the Irish anti-colonial author Jonathan Swift, "none of these figures can be readily characterized as colonialist

villains or anticolonial heroes.”³⁷ Consequently, while Bhabha’s analysis relies upon the impossibility of mimicry rising to identity, the lack of discernible difference between the Irish and the British was a topos of eighteenth- and nineteenth-century Irish literature. For instance, in Thomas Sheridan’s *The Brave Irishman*, staged throughout the second half of the eighteenth century, Betty remarks of “Irishmen” that they have “as much politeness and sincerity as if born in our own country.”³⁸ In an 1812 play by Sheridan’s daughter, Alicia Lefanu, a family that is prejudiced against the Irish (mis)recognizes an Irishman as English, while insisting that they could spot an Irishman instantly; after the hero’s true nationality is revealed, they accept him into the family and disavow their former prejudice.³⁹

Ireland thus demands a complication of the binary formulations on which much nineteenth-century imperial discourse, and modern analyses of it, often tacitly depend. Instead, the positioning of Ireland in relation to the metropole and the larger empire can usefully be grasped through John Barrell’s model of “this/that/the Other.” In his important study of Thomas De Quincey and orientalism, Barrell writes,

There is a “this,” and there is a something hostile to it, something which lies, almost invariably, to the east; but there is an East beyond that East, where something lurks which is equally threatening to both, and which enables or obliges them to reconcile their differences. The translation of the London poor, experienced as oppressive, into “the enormous population of Asia,” may already have provided an example of the process used to make safe more serious threats. . . . It may be the representation of the poor as oriental, when they are experienced as “oppressive,” that enables them to be experienced also as “sympathetic”: whatever is bad about them is characterized as exotic, as extrinsic, as not really them at all, with the effect that they are separated from, and contrasted with, their own representation as oriental. There are the cities of London and Westminster; there is the East End [of London]; and there is the East.⁴⁰

This model allows us not only to deal with the shifting position of “this” in relation to “that” and “the Other,” but also with the complex allegiances of “that” when constituted within this tripartite and fluid order. To move away from the specifics of Barrell’s argument — De Quincey’s representation of the London poor in relation to metropole and orient — the category of “that” can arguably embrace various imperially constituted categories, including the native informant, the colonial agent “gone native,” the colonial mimic, the offspring of colonizer and colonized, and so forth. These categories frequently function in imperial discourse as medial states through which the imperial master narrative must pass in

order to reconstitute the stabilities of “this/the Other.” Kipling’s Irish Kim, for instance, reinforces imperial administrative power by “passing”⁴¹ as Indian in order to function effectively as a spy for the British Raj, maintaining colonial order precisely by occupying a position that moves easily between colonizer and colonized without fully belonging to either one. Similarly, in Bram Stoker’s *The Lair of the White Worm*, an “Anglo-Burmese” character helps to protect the flower of English womanhood until Saxon order can be reestablished.

If Ireland is “that” — European but colonized, Christian but not Protestant, rebellious but providing soldiers and administrators for the British Empire — the question then becomes whether “that” is best described as allied with “this” or “the Other.” And herein lies the nub of much nineteenth-century Irish anti-colonial writing in English. In some texts, Ireland is sufficiently “like” Britain that it does not require colonial administration; it can, in almost Althusserian terms, work by itself within European modernity without losing itself entirely in British national identity.⁴² In other texts, however, identifying Ireland with other colonial spaces, particularly those which, like India, were more subject to emerging racist paradigms, makes possible the dramatization or defamiliarization of colonial abuses in Ireland. Thus, at stake in many of the texts considered in this study is the consolidation of “that” through the transformation of its relationships with “this” and “the Other” without collapsing the medial (and sometimes mediating) figure of Ireland into one of the polarized categories. This fluid middle category retains Irish distinctness from both the metropole and the new colonies and so can be used to argue both for Irish autonomy and the impropriety of colonial dominance in Ireland.

SENSIBILITY: NATIONAL FEELING AND COLONIAL SYMPATHY

Crucial to the new models of nationality and international relations emerging around 1800 is the powerful discourse of sensibility that appeared in English-language literature and philosophy in the early 1700s. While I shall discuss sensibility and Irish nationalism at greater length in Chapter 1 and revisit this issue in subsequent chapters, it is important here to introduce briefly its relationship to imperialist discourse. Broadly speaking, sensibility posits that sympathy with others’ feelings, especially pain, is the basis for benevolence, justice, and other “social virtues.” If we see someone in pain, we imagine their suffering and so are motivated to end it. This capacity is universal, but the more refined the sympathy the more

refined the morality, and vice versa. To imagine another's pain and then to act to end that pain is a fundamentally moral act; not to do so is "insensible" and necessarily immoral. This provides a basis for a "fellow feeling" (in Adam Smith's phrase) between the citizens of an oppressed nation and between oppressed nations. While more reactionary texts often identified Ireland and India as colonial trouble spots marked by religious division and violent disorder,⁴³ key anti-imperial Irish writers identified India and Ireland as bound by sympathy because of their shared oppression — a sympathy that rhetorically puts morality, if not might, on their side. As James Clarence Mangan writes in an address to the "youths of Ireland" in the 1840s,

Gentler gifts are yours, no less,
Tolerance of the faults of others,
Love of mankind as your brothers,
Generous Pity, Tenderness,
Soul-felt sympathy with grief:
The warm heart, the winged hand,
Whereso suffering craves relief.
Through all regions hath your fame
For such virtues long gone forth.
The swart slave of Kaffirland,
The frozen denizen of the North,
The dusk Indian Mingo chief
In his lone savannahs green,
The wild, wandering Beddaween
'Mid his wastes of sand and flame;
All have heard how, unsubdued
By long centuries of sorrow,
You still cherish in your bosoms
The deep Love no wrongs can slay.⁴⁴

I have quoted this passage at length because it neatly lays out the premise that feeling is the basis for both national virtue and international relations between oppressed nations, putting Ireland into a feeling community of the colonized that encompasses a variety of orientalized groups. Leerssen has persuasively argued that Irish orientalist discourse in the eighteenth century situated Ireland in an anti-imperial genealogy that runs counter to the imperial tradition of Greece, Rome, and Britain.⁴⁵ But Mangan's emphasis on feeling, especially "Soul-felt sympathy with grief," grounds the basis for this association in the Scottish Enlightenment's philosophy of sensibility which, as subsequent chapters of this study will demonstrate, helped to shape Irish nationalism in

the nineteenth century. As British and Irish writers addressed the place of Ireland in a growing and increasingly racist British Empire, sensibility proved a useful tool for imagining, and polemically addressing, the complexities of Irish affiliations with both the metropole and with more distant colonies.

As a universalist model of subjectivity that seeks to articulate the social relations which unite the polity for the common good, Enlightenment sensibility helps us to investigate the theoretical apparatuses which work against imperialist discriminations in nineteenth-century culture. While Enlightenment writing on sensibility could be ethnocentric and often crudely racist, it nevertheless assumes that sympathy, as a mode of identification rather than differentiation, is the engine that drives a just, moral society. The literature of sensibility can often be, to our post-modern eyes, rather clichéd or maudlin, but this social and moral framework gives a reason for its rhetorical excesses — affect is crucial, and so the literature must be affecting. Sensibility offered writers, particularly in the “Age of Revolution,” a means by which to solicit support and sanction various causes, including abolition, child-labour reform, women’s rights, and the French Revolution. The intensity of their language must, in the logic of sensibility, match the rightness of the cause and be powerful enough to motivate active support.

While pro-imperial texts argue for a pedagogical mode of assimilation akin to what Bhabha terms “mimicry,” sensibility proposes that there is a fundamental and universal sameness which culture — necessarily learned, artificial, and specific — can obscure or refine. This sameness, moreover, does not depend upon the processes of recognition upon which postcolonial theories such as Bhabha’s that draw from psychoanalytical theory tend to rely. Sensibility takes as its starting point — quite literally in Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* — the premise that every individual can recreate, through the imagination, the feelings of another. Sameness thus does not lie in physiological features or behaviours — as identifications associated with the specularity of the Lacanian mirror-stage demand — but in a capacity for forging a sympathetic bond with one who suffers that, in many of the works considered here, *supersedes* the specular differences stressed by imperial discourse.⁴⁶ But that sympathetic bond must be demonstrated through bodily effects and behaviours (weeping, meaningful looks, benevolent actions) that are culturally governed and visible. Hence, the final chapters of Smith’s *Theory of Moral Sentiments* demonstrate the ease with which thinkers could segue from sympathy to specular difference, beginning with a universal human subject and then

creating exceptions for those subjects who belong to different cultures. Broadly speaking, in the romance-related works that are the focus in Part I of this study, cross-cultural identification is enabled by the developing recognition of this essential sameness and the subsequent rendering of cultural and ethnic difference as arbitrary and superficial, though no less meaningful to the universalized feeling subject precisely because of attachment to family, friends, and community. The wedding of a young woman to her lover's father, threatened execution, wrongful imprisonment, open rebellion — these are the moments at which authors pit divisive cultural mores against visceral identification. In the gothic texts considered in Part II, however, the proximity of identification is always a threatening one: they tend to suggest that this imaginative capacity is a dangerous vulnerability, providing access to the psyche of the otherwise defended subject.

Crucial to both romances and gothic narratives is the involved spectator who experiences the collapse of self and other in a moment of emotional crisis. In his compelling analysis of Burke's theory of sensibility, Gibbons suggests,

In its classic formulations in Scottish Enlightenment ethics, the operation of sympathy presupposes communal boundaries and a common culture, or, if it extends beyond this, a renunciation of local or national allegiances in favour of a "generalized other," or "impartial" standard of humanity. In both cases it involves homogeneity or sameness, either of our own community or that of a universal human nature. Burke's procedure, by contrast, is to prevent the absorption of the (concrete) particular into the (abstract) universal by bringing two particularities into contact through the sympathetic shock of the sublime. Hence the passion of local allegiances — the love of "our little platoon" — is not restricted to our own community but brought to bear on our concern for justice in other cultures, by virtue of their particularity or difference from us.⁴⁷

If Burke allows sympathetic identification with the Other while still "discerning in the most elemental experiences of pain the inscriptions of cultural difference," then he paves the way for the recognition of the pain that arises from "the breaking of common social or cultural codes."⁴⁸ Cultural difference, in other words, can be acknowledged within Burkean sensibility and even given a supplementary frisson by what Gibbons terms the "sympathetic sublime," an emotional jolt which "enabled vital expressions of cross-cultural solidarity without recourse to the abstract rationality of universal rights, the ethical projections of an 'impartial spectator.'"⁴⁹ It is such a "sympathetic sublime" which marks such texts as Morgan's *The Missionary* and Denis Florence MacCarthy's "Afghanistan."