

THE DESPOTISM OF FACT: CELTICISM AND THE TRANSNATIONAL CRITIQUE OF
CAPITALISM IN ENGLAND AND IRELAND, 1865-1954

BY

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Abstract

My dissertation examines the history of the ethnological theory of Celticism, tracing its mediation of a broad range of concerns relative to the economic dimension of the colonial relationship between England and Ireland from 1865 until 1954. I argue that by propagating a conception of the Irish subject as biologically resistant to capitalism and given to aesthetic creativity, Celticism crucially shaped the colonial definition of the Irish by the British, the decolonizing and postcolonial Irish responses to this definition, and the diverse literary visions of Irishness produced by British and Irish authors. Though Irish Studies critics routinely emphasize the role of Celticism within fin-de-siecle Irish nationalism, and though they often note its anti-capitalist charge, a sustained, genealogical account of Celticism's career as a vehicle for the critique of capitalism has yet to emerge. Moreover, no existing study has addressed Celticism's manifestations in British literature. Erecting such an account from texts of both Irish and British provenance, I redefine the history of Celticism as a transnational project devoted to interrogating and imagining alternatives to the reified ontological condition of capitalist modernity.

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Chapter 1:
Matthew Arnold, the Ontology of English Capitalism and the Rebirth of Celtic Tragedy

At this moment, when the narrow Philistinism which has long had things its own way in England, is showing its natural fruits, and we are beginning to feel ashamed, and uneasy, and alarmed at it; now, when we are becoming aware that we have sacrificed to Philistinism culture, and insight, and dignity, and acceptance, and weight among the nations, and hold on events that deeply concern us, and control of the future, and yet that it cannot even give us the fools' paradise it promised us . . . at such a moment it needs some moderation not to be attacking Philistinism by storm, but to mine it through such gradual means as the slow approaches of culture, by a growth in variety, fullness, and sweetness of our spiritual life; and this end can only be reached by studying things that are outside of ourselves . . .

Matthew Arnold, *The Study of Celtic Literature*, 151-2

Against the grain of a pronounced tendency in recent studies of Celticism to marginalize his work, I begin my analysis of its place within the genealogy of nineteenth- and twentieth-century aesthetics with Matthew Arnold. Arnold's literary and social criticism of the late 1860s represents a watershed, seminal moment both in the material history of Anglo-Irish colonial relations and in the cultural history to which this relationship gave rise. Any study of the political, economic, martial, religious or aesthetic dimensions of this history would be remiss to ignore the complex and revealing inflection Arnold gives to each of them on the way toward pursuing the goal for which he is best known, the reformation of contemporary England through "Culture." Arnold, in effect, provides a concentrated case study of the multifaceted crucible of Anglo-Irish colonialism and of its ramifications for literary production in both countries during the fraught period leading up to and following the sundering of their Union in 1922. Any investigation of these dense, tortuous developments must be capable of accounting for both sides of the colonial divide, because only by attending to both can one hope to approach a proper understanding of either, and it is just such a dialectical, *transnational* vantage which Arnold's

major critical works of the mid to late sixties, *The Study of Celtic Literature and Culture and Anarchy*, begin to make available.

This Anglo-Irish historical dynamic is perhaps most remarkably manifested in the aesthetic domain. At the time of Arnold's writing, colonial difference between England and Ireland had become firmly encoded, via the burgeoning discipline of anthropology, as biological in derivation. England and Ireland were not merely separate political, religious or geographical entities, but were understood as racially distinct from one another, and this ethnological turn carried with it particular consequences for aesthetics. Along with the more material tendencies to which these racially opposed groups, the Anglo-Saxons and the Celts, were perceived to be given, tendencies of historical development arising immanently from their biological blueprints, they were also thought to be given to distinct modes of artistic production. The ramifications of this racialization of the colonial relationship were profound at every level, especially in the aesthetic, where the idiosyncracies of biological organization were expected to be visible in their purest, most telling form. Aesthetic artifacts would serve as outward and visible signs of inner and hidden racial truths, could their hieroglyphic codes but be unlocked by the discerning anthropologist or, perhaps, the discerning literary critic. Arnold fancied himself just such a one, and our concern is not so much for the accuracy of his perceptions of such Anglo-Saxon and Celtic aesthetic signifiers or their putative racial signifieds, but rather the logic underlying his deployment of these terms. By attending to his tortuous engagement with Victorian anthropology and its aesthetic ramifications, and by tracking the ideological maneuvers entailed in that engagement, we can utilize Arnold as a particularly revealing window into the dynamics of both Anglo-Irish colonial history and its aesthetic corollary, which I will call the Anglo-Celtic dialectic.

In brief, then, this chapter proceeds as follows. First, I provide an ethnological analysis of *Culture and Anarchy*, arguing that its diagnosis of the malady of English society draws on the popular racial discourse of Teutonism, the foremost racial theory through which the English imaginatively integrated themselves into the new epistemological world precipitated by anthropology. I will demonstrate that what Arnold calls “Philistinism” begins in the text as a peculiar racial proclivity of the Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon English, and that in real historical terms this supposed racial proclivity corresponds to the ontological dimension of a burgeoning capitalist modernity. My reading of *Culture and Anarchy* will trace the complex rhetorical process by which Arnold attempts to escape the determinism entailed in Teutonic racial discourse by redefining Philistinism as an alien religious institution, “Hebraism,” which has taken possession of the English and which they must throw off in order to attain the more felicitous ontological state known as “Culture.” I will argue, in short, that *Culture and Anarchy* seeks an ethnological solution to the state of alienation attending British capitalist development. I will then move to provide a reading of *The Study of Celtic Literature* that is likewise both ethnological and economic in orientation, and will argue that while the text’s primary purpose is substantively identical with that of *Culture and Anarchy*, its deployment of Celticist discourse for this purpose complicates Arnold’s prescriptions with two additional factors, the first being Anglo-Irish colonialism, and the second an increased emphasis on the aesthetic as the privileged modality for repairing capitalist modernity’s ontological fissures. Where *Culture and Anarchy* undertakes a strenuous confrontation with both the English racial discourse of Teutonism and, through it, with capitalism, in order to prepare the way for the harmonious ontology of Culture, *The Study* maintains this confrontation but employs Celticist aesthetic strategies for reaching the same ontological ideal. Read together, Arnold’s two texts inaugurate the Anglo-Celtic dialectic

as a dynamic interaction between capitalism, figured as a specifically English institution, and the aesthetic, figured as a specifically Celtic one. In the end, I will argue, in an ideological move which presages much of this dialectic's later development within both British and Irish literary history, Arnold finds that it is only in a dialectical fusion of Teutonic capitalist development with Celticist aesthetics, a hybrid mix of both English and Irish racial capacities, that the utopian project of "Culture" can come to fulfillment.

Culture and Anarchy: Teutonic Discourse and "The Manufacture of Philistines"

Beginning with the work of Robert J.C. Young in his book *Colonial Desire* (1995), there has been a marked shift in Arnold criticism in recent years toward placing his work in an ethnological context. Young was the first to take advantage of the cues contained in *The Study of Celtic Literature* as an avenue for reassessing the more muted ethnological inflections of *Culture and Anarchy*, where he views Arnold's definition of Culture as intimately connected with that of contemporary anthropologists such as E.B. Tylor. Young sees the *Study* as a forerunner of theories of multicultural hybridity in vogue in the contemporary academy. This aspect of Arnold's work is indeed prominent, and provides a useful avenue for mapping his ideological negotiations of ethnology and Anglo-Irish politics in the earlier of the two works. Before engaging Arnold's Celticist ideas, however, it is necessary to interrogate the received consensus regarding the ethnological negotiations of *Culture and Anarchy*, because it is only after comprehending Arnold's approach to English society that we can then comprehend his theorization of the colonial interface between England and Ireland. In my view, this aspect of Arnold's more famous text has been misunderstood in several important ways, with the consequences, first, that the basis of its two central concepts, culture and "machinery," has been

misunderstood, and second, that the full measure of Arnold's critical interrogation of English society has not been adequately gauged.

Along with Young, critics have typically taken Arnold's commentary on the "Hellenic" and "Hebraic" affiliations of the English as fully encapsulating his racial encoding of the nation's historical development. Young's impression that *Culture and Anarchy* tends toward identifying the English race as inherently Hellenic rests on the following passage, from the chapter that names these two groups in its title:

Science has now made visible to everybody the great and pregnant elements of difference which lie in race, and in how signal a manner they make the genius and history of an Indo-European people vary from those of a Semitic people. Hellenism is of Indo-European growth, Hebraism is of Semitic growth; and we English, a nation of Indo-European stock, seem to belong naturally to the movement of Hellenism. (135-6)

From this, it would seem a fairly straightforward conclusion to read Arnold as defining the English as "Indo-European," and therefore as biologically linked with the Greek civilization he admires for its "spontaneity of consciousness," in contrast to the "strictness of conscience" he locates in the opposed racial tendency of Hebraism (128). While Arnold emphatically identifies a countervailing influence of Hebraism in English history as a result of its Puritanical Christianity, he is careful to distance this tendency from the domain of race, the better to naturalize thereby the movement toward Hellenic "sweetness and light" as an inevitable outcome of the blueprint of Englishness. Subsequent to Young's study, critics such as Daniel Williams, Dillon Johnston and Vincent Pecora have also pointed to Hellenism as the privileged racial term in Arnold's anatomy of Englishness. While noting along with Young and other commentators such as Kwame Anthony Appiah that Arnold is often self-contradictory and inconsistent, both here and in the *Study*, in the qualities he enumerates as emanations from the national biology,

there is a persistent tendency across their analyses to draw a more or less firm line from Arnold's comments on Hellenism to his definition of the English racial constitution.¹

Pecora is more sensitive than Arnold's other interlocutors to the variations in his racial ideas, and seems to concur with Appiah's insight that the "running together of biology and politics, science and morals, fact and value, ethics and aesthetics" in Arnold's mid-1860s texts renders them unstable and difficult to pin down (47). However, Pecora finally stabilizes "the twists and turns in Arnold's ethnology" (364), to argue for "the Hellenic humor of the Indo-European races" as *Culture and Anarchy's* dominant element (377). But Arnold's conflation of English and Greek, while certainly a prominent aspect of the text, remains difficult to square with other comments of racial orientation that arise at other rhetorical moments. Specifically, in the earlier chapter titled "Barbarians, Philistines, Populace," Arnold points repeatedly to what he calls "the want of flexibility in our race" as a source of its "Hebraic" manifestations (123). How can the reader of Arnold make sense of such a comment, which seems so directly to run against the Hellenic "gift" of the English for "imaginatively acknowledging the multiform aspects of the problem of life" (136)? Pecora's suggestion that Hebraism is both an "external" influence, a religious importation that stunts the natural English tendency toward Hellenic creative consciousness, and, somehow, an outcropping of a latent English racial element, is suggestive, but finally insufficient in that he provides no contemporary discursive or ideological framework for locating this mysterious, seemingly recessive Hebraic gene. Appiah similarly stops short of fully working out the superstructure of Arnold's racial ideology, leaving off the effort with a gesture toward the permeability of analytical categories such as race, culture and nation in mid-nineteenth-century Euro-American intellectual culture.²

Part of the confusion that arises in the attempt to parse Arnold's ethnological comments derives from the fact that, in terms of its compositional history, *Culture and Anarchy* consists of a patchwork of separately written essays, and therefore cannot quite be read as a unified expression of a single set of ideas. It is not quite so surprising, given this partial dispersal of intent across the book's six chapters, that Arnold would shuttle between seemingly disparate anthropological claims.³ I would suggest, however, that there is an unregistered coherence to the racial negotiations of *Culture and Anarchy*, and that this coherence consists of a persistent evocation of the contemporary ethnological discourse of "Teutonism." Only by attending to the latent operations of this heavily ideologically-laden discourse can the reader properly assess the racial underpinnings of what I take to be Arnold's key concepts, "Culture" and "machinery," and only with such a modified assessment of these terms can the reader then locate Arnold amid the broader Victorian concerns to which his work responds. Because his reliance on this discourse spans both *Culture and Anarchy* and *The Study of Celtic Literature*, full anatomization of the concerns of the former will thereby prepare the way for subsequent examination of the latter, where Arnold expands his gaze from England to take in the larger United Kingdom.

Peter Mandler, along with others such as L.P. Curtis, Jr. and George Stocking, has argued that the dominant English racial ideology around mid-century was "Teutonism," a doctrine that traced the nation's heritage to primitive communities in northern Europe. Citing among other texts John Mitchell Kemble's *The Saxons in England*, the work which more or less coined this myth of English origins, Mandler outlines the central characteristics of Teutonism, foremost among them being "individual liberty" (54). Kemble's "spirit of independence," which he traced from contemporary England to the "misty forests" of ancient Germany, grew into what Mandler terms an "autostereotype" of English racial thought, to the point that it produced a full-blown

“Teutonic Zeitgeist” by the time of Arnold’s writing (54, 96). Mandler notes that Arnold himself coined the pejorative phrase “Teutomania” to encapsulate the racial-nationalist fanaticism of his father Thomas Arnold, and states that during the 1860s public credence in this autostereotype was at its height (87-8). It should not surprise us, therefore, to find this popular auto-ethnological discourse surfacing in *Culture and Anarchy*, the constituent essays of which Arnold penned around 1867.⁴

Before delving further into Arnold’s writing, however, the notion of a Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon racial constitution needs a bit more fleshing out. In addition to “individual liberty,” Mandler enumerates several other elements of the Teutonic myth such as “orderliness” and “domesticity” to demonstrate the extent to which it served to valorize contemporary middle-class norms. Individual liberty had of course been the linchpin of English political self-congratulation since at least the time of Burke, and served as an organic ideological link between contemporary institutions and the bygone ages of the nation’s primitive development. “Orderliness” as a racial talent would follow deductively from these same time-honored, durable governmental institutions and from the ever-intensifying rationality of English society, since this epistemology obviously entailed the capacity to “order” the world into a cohesive system of mental representations. Concomitantly, “domesticity” as a racial tendency flowed naturally from the gendered division of labor, wherein the feminine sphere of authority in the home was viewed as the center of the nation’s moral life.⁵ Beyond these three attributes, however, Mandler notes the recurrence among contemporary ideologues of another element, one which has even more direct bearing on the analysis of *Culture and Anarchy* to be undertaken here:

. . . beyond independence, orderliness and domesticity, one further characteristic was generally agreed upon . . . and that was industry. The climatic theories of Hume and Montesquieu had already laid the

foundation for thinking of northern peoples as driven by necessity to hard, steady labor . . . through the more democratic lens of the post-revolutionary period . . . industry became industriousness: perseverance towards a long-term goal, ingenuity and enterprise, and, once again, the capacity to act for oneself and one's family regardless of social standing. For Mill, 'their capacity of present exertion for a distant object' and 'the thoroughness of their application to work on ordinary occasions' was the quality that distinguished the English, and their American cousins, from most other people . . . the English were uniquely capable of the kind of industry with no or only very long-term incentives that was required for building an advanced modern economy . . . Most of Mill's contemporaries thought that the English combined industry and independence, which combination was responsible not only for the unique accumulation of material goods in Britain but also for their achievements in innovation and enterprise . . . (56-7).

Thus Teutonism came to take on an economic dimension in addition to its primary political one, with the result that *capitalism itself* could be viewed as the outgrowth of a preeminently *English* racial capacity. Through this discourse then, each of the key motive forces of the English modernization process, from rationalization to democratization and capitalist production, became an outward and visible sign of an inner and hidden racial essence.⁶ According to the prevailing *Zeitgeist*, the English were the paradigmatic rational, liberal, enterprising members of human family.⁷ It is symptomatic of the ideological origins and utility of this discourse that Mandler cites John Stuart Mill as one of its central proponents, as it was the doctrines of *political economy* that most forcefully promulgated the notion of Englishness as a modernizing racial force.

Turning once more to *Culture and Anarchy*, it is precisely the components of Teutonism that Arnold identifies as controlling English racial development, and which he eviscerates as the root cause of his primary *bete noire*, "machinery," the antithesis of Culture. Indeed, the leading cause of anarchy, in Arnold's view, is a social behavioral tendency that maps neatly onto the Teutonic or Anglo-Saxonist capacity for individual liberty: "doing as one likes." The following

passage, selected from the chapter of this name, demonstrates the connection between liberty, “machinery” and anarchy:

When I began to speak of culture, I insisted on our bondage to machinery, on our proneness to value machinery as an end in itself, without looking beyond it to the end for which alone, in truth, it is valuable. Freedom, I said, was one of those things which we thus worshipped in itself, without enough regarding the ends for which freedom is to be desired . . . Our prevalent notion is . . . that it is a most happy and important thing for a man merely to be able to do as he likes . . . Our familiar praise of the British Constitution under which we live, is that it is a system of checks—a system which stops and paralyzes any power in interfering with the free action of individuals . . . Evidently this is so; but evidently, also, as feudalism, which with its ideas and habits of subordination was for many centuries silently behind the British Constitution, dies out, and we are left with nothing but our system of checks, and our notion of its being the great right and happiness of the Englishman to do as far as possible what he likes, we are in danger of drifting toward anarchy. (83)

Clearly here, “individual liberty” is a leading example for Arnold of the dogmatic reliance on “machinery,” and it feeds directly into the broader degenerative tendency toward anarchy and a national deficit of “sweetness and light.” The beginnings of a connection between this anti-Liberal notion of Arnold’s and the contemporary ideology of Teutonism arise in his comments on the feudal origins of the British Constitution. Indeed, Arnold secures the chain of historical causality between primitive Teutonic modalities and the modern principle of liberty in his critical commentary on the English aristocracy, whom he famously dubs “Barbarians”:

The Barbarians, to whom we all owe so much, and who reinvigorated and renewed our worn-out Europe, have, as is well known, eminent merits; and in this country, where we are for the most part Barbarians, we have never had the prejudice against them which prevails among races of the Latin origin. The Barbarians brought with them that staunch individualism, as the modern phrase is, and that passion for doing as one likes, for the assertion of personal liberty, which appears . . . the central idea of English life, and of which we have, at any rate, a very rich supply. The stronghold and natural seat of this passion was in the nobles of whom our aristocratic class are the inheritors; and this class, accordingly, have signally manifested it, and have done much by their example to recommend it to the body of the nation, who already, indeed, had it in their blood. (105)

Quite directly, Arnold links the anarchic tendencies of individualism to the nation's primordial aristocratic origins, the foundational principles of which have carried over from feudal practice to modern times by way of their enshrinement in the British Constitution. Arnold directly aligns the race of the nation with the Germanic hordes that overthrew the Roman Empire.

The Barbarian's shortcomings counteract whatever virtue is entailed in this Liberal behavioral principle in that the self-satisfied, machine-like "serenity" of "aristocracies of Teutonic origin, appears to come from their never having had any ideas to trouble them" (90). Liberty, as a manifestation of Teutonic biology, has become a fetish, something followed blindly and dogmatically without reflection on its potential to aid human development. Culture, the "study of perfection" that relies on studied adoption of "the best that has been thought and known in the world," would seem to confront a stubborn resistance in the very genetics of the nation's people (79). Arnold's "Hellenic" crusade to foster what he calls, here and elsewhere, a "national glow of life and thought," will need to be superimposed *on biology*, rather than being immanently guaranteed *by biology* (79).⁸ Sweetness and light— beauty and intelligence—must be injected from outside, seemingly, rather than projected from inside. Teutonic ideology, the political component of which had developed to provide an ethnological self-valorization of mid-Victorian English society, receives a decisively negative spin in Arnold's Cultural program.

It is not, however, merely the political component of Teutonism that Arnold redefines as detrimental. Arnold in fact reserves his most potent venom for Philistinism, a decisively commercial social phenomenon which corresponds closely to the "enterprising," "industrious" aspect of Teutonic racial mythology. In addition to "British freedom" and "British muscularity," Arnold lists "British industry" as one of the cardinal achievements of the nation's people, but, as with these other cardinal virtues, the problem resides in the blindness or mechanicality of their

adherence to its tenets (150).⁹ Arnold's comments on the economic basis of Philistinism are well-known, but worth quoting for reference:

Wealth, again, that end to which our prodigious works for material advantage are directed,—the commonest of common-places tells us how men are always apt to regard wealth as a precious end in itself; and certainly they have never been so apt thus to regard it as they are in England at the present time. Never did people believe anything more firmly than nine Englishmen out of ten at the present day believe that our greatness and welfare are proved by our being so very rich. Now, the use of culture is that it helps us, by means of its spiritual standard of perfection, to regard wealth as but machinery . . . If it were not for the purging effect wrought on our minds by culture, the whole world, the future as well as the present, would inevitably belong to the Philistines. (65)

More even than liberty, “wealth” and the accumulation of capital control the national *Weltanschauung*, and Arnold applies the term Philistine to this obsessive middle-class maxim. A materialist age threatens to ensue if culture cannot stem the tide, and this age will be one of Philistine predominance. The “vulgarization” of English culture that Arnold fears emanates perhaps most powerfully from the bustle of the nation's economy.

For reasons that require elucidation, Arnold's linkage of capitalist productivity with Teutonic racial attributes is less direct than his linkage of those attributes with anarchic individualism. The association of Anglo-Saxon biology with a heightened economic capacity would, as we have already seen, have been “the commonest of common-places,” to borrow Arnold's phrasing, and therefore his lamentations over the craven materialism of the country automatically take on racial connotations. Arnold goes so far as to “Britishize” industry alongside freedom as hallmarks of English achievement, but his *Teutonization* of industry is a bit indirect. Arnold remarks that “Philistine gives the notion of something particularly stiff-necked and perverse in the resistance to light and its children,” and thereby recalls the nation's inherent “want of flexibility” to mind and inflects Philistinism with a racial tinge (105). However, perhaps the primary mechanism through which *Culture and Anarchy* links middle-class

materialism and the nation's *economy* with Teutonic characteristics is *politics*. I have already demonstrated the way in which Arnold reads the British Constitution as a precipitant of the Teutonic racial proclivity for individual liberty. What one witnesses repeatedly throughout his writing is a tendency to define middle-class materialism as an offshoot or byproduct of this liberty. The passage which perhaps best encapsulates this causal connection comes not from *Culture and Anarchy* but rather from the canonical essay of three years previous, "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time":

Where shall we find language innocent enough, how shall we make the spotless purity of our intentions evident enough, to enable us to say to the political Englishmen that the British Constitution itself, which, seen from the practical side, looks such a magnificent organ of progress and virtue, seen from the speculative side . . . sometimes looks . . . a colossal machine for the manufacture of Philistines? (42)

Given that Arnold identifies the Constitution as codifying a libertarian anarchy of "doing as one likes," and given that his definition of Philistinism hinges more directly on economic than political behaviors, the reader is forced to conclude that there is some veiled connection between the nation's Liberal politics and capitalism. In other words, if the Constitution is the product of Teutonic individualism, and if, in turn, it functions as a "colossal machine for the manufacture of Philistines," there must be some element of "doing as one likes" that contributes directly to vulgar materialism. Arnold's metaphor here makes the case quite blatantly: it is as if the Constitution is a gargantuan factory churning out Philistines as its finished products.

The somewhat tortuous interconnections between Teutonic liberty and English enterprise thus bring *Culture and Anarchy* into full conformity with mid-Victorian Teutonism. The reason for the partial confusion or indirection in Arnold's social diagnostic equation, however, remains to be explained. The answer to this confusion resides in the political-economic doctrine of *laissez faire*. This doctrine, hegemonic in English political economy for decades prior to

Arnold's writing, dictated the removal of governmental interference and regulation in the affairs of capitalist production and trade in favor of the unfettered operation of Adam Smith's "invisible hand of the market." When one reassesses the machine-like insistence on "doing as one likes" that Arnold perceives in his fellow Englishmen, one recognizes in this behavioral tendency a fairly neat social equivalent to the theory of *laissez faire*: individual citizens, like the "market" which is their aggregate, operate more successfully when shielded from state interference and allowed to pursue their own natural inclinations. Arnold's well-known recommendation that the British State be reworked, in accordance with the prescriptions of culture, towards a more active, interventionist management of national affairs, thus begins to come into focus as a logical method of redress for both political and economic problems.¹⁰

In "Barbarians, Philistines, Populace," Arnold punctuates the interdependence of British politics and economics through the policy of *laissez faire* by contrasting the ineffectuality of the State with its continental counterparts on the grounds of education:

. . . in England, the action of the national guides or governors is, for a Royal Prince or a great Minister to go down to the opening of the Licensed Victuallers or of the Commercial Travellers' school, to take the chair, to extol the energy and self-reliance of the Licensed Victuallers' or the Commercial Travellers, to be all of their way of thinking, to predict full success to their schools, and never so much as to hint to them . . . that the right way to go to work with their children's education is quite different. And it is the same in almost every department of affairs. While, on the Continent, the idea prevails that it is the business of the heads and representatives of the nation, by virtue of their superior means, power, and information, to set an example and to provide suggestions of right reason, among us the idea is that the business of the heads and representatives of the nation is to do nothing of the kind, but to applaud the natural taste for the bathos showing itself vigorously in any part of the community, and to encourage its works. (118)

For Arnold, this imaginary scene constitutes an instance of "bathos" because it involves the collapse of high ceremony and intent into ridiculousness and vulgarity. The accoutrements of the State have been called forth to the consecration of trade schools. The government official's

role is simply to praise English “energy and self-reliance” in the pursuit of material gain. The Philistine “taste for bathos,” which is at the same time a “natural” one—recalling once more the inherent “stiff-necked” resistance of the English to “light and its children”—is a degenerative quality that the State as currently composed aids and abets, when it should instead be occupied with mitigating its harmful effects the better to install “right reason” in the population. One of Arnold’s later comments in *Culture and Anarchy* is worth pausing over to give final definition to the interweaving of politics, economics and social tendencies in his thinking. The passage concerns the pitfalls of the cardinal *laissez-faire* policy of free trade:

In short, it turns out that our pursuit of free-trade, as of so many other things, has been too mechanical. We fix upon some object, which in this case is the production of wealth, and the increase of manufactures, population, and commerce through free-trade, as a kind of one thing needful, or end in itself; and then we pursue it staunchly and mechanically, and say that it is our duty to pursue it staunchly and mechanically, not to see how it is related to the whole intelligible law of things and to full human perfection. (171-2)

Free trade, the removal of national barriers to the global flow of capital, is thus a primary cog in Philistine “machinery,” dogmatically affirmed without regard for its social ramifications. The state, under the aegis of “Our Liberal Practitioners,” devotes itself solely to generating the optimum conditions for material gain, the fetishized “end in itself” that most powerfully gives rise to benightedness and vulgarity throughout the nation. *Laissez-faire* fosters the reproduction and reinforcement of the English “ordinary self,” and Arnold’s reformed British State must therefore intervene all the more forcefully and immediately to wean the Philistines from reliance on machinery to assert their national “best self.”

All told, Arnold figures Teutonic Englishness as something of a downward historical spiral. Teutonic biology dictates a primordial individualism and love of liberty, and this biological principle, following the migration of Anglo-Saxon Barbarians to the British Isle,

determines the makeup of the Constitution. This legal foundation then becomes a secondary impetus to English individualism, to doing as one *likes* rather than doing as one *ought*, such that the nation's laws heighten its people's harmful natural inclinations exponentially. Teutonic economic productivity, a racially ingrained tendency to "industriousness" the unfortunate socio-historical extension of which is middle-class materialism, becomes accelerated through the political-economic piety of *laissez faire*, itself an extension of Teutonic political ideology. The hands-off, non-interventionist policy of the Victorian government, as Arnold perceives it, becomes the blueprint for the manufacture of a vulgarity to which the English already have a natural proclivity. Teutonic racial tendencies give rise to Teutonic institutions which then exacerbate those original tendencies in a nightmarish inversion of Arnoldian Cultural development, converting the nation's history into an exercise in bathos.

Repairing the Machinery of Teutonism: Hebraism and Hellenism

As we have seen, the upshot of mid-nineteenth century Teutonism was to define the motive forces of modernization as inherently English. Given that historically, as Ellen Meiksens Wood documents, England was the first nation to implement the capitalist mode of production—that is, the organization of economic life according to market dependency and the competitive production of surplus value—as a conscious and systematic program, it is somewhat appropriate that the human building block of classical political economy, the *homo economicus*, should, at this watershed moment in global economic development, on the heels of the English-led industrial revolution, be specifically defined as an Englishman. Indeed, the tenets of Teutonism conform quite neatly with the idea of this prototype human as a self-interested, pleasure-seeking producer accepting legal limitations on his strivings only in order to minimize the pain of competitive acquisition. To a significant extent, the "autostereotype" of the libertarian Teuton,

with his hatred of restraint and inclination toward steady, productive labor, can thus be understood as a post-facto racialization of English political economy as formulated by theorists from Adam Smith to Jeremy Bentham, David Ricardo, Thomas Malthus and John Stuart Mill, or, more to the point, as a post-facto racialization of the motive forces of English civilization. Such a racialization inherently ratified modernizing social tendencies toward Liberal individualist government and capitalist production, naturalizing them as the intrinsic qualities of a timeless racial essence.¹¹

Culture and Anarchy demonstrates the intense pressure this popular English self-conception exerted on Arnold's thinking. If individualism and economic acquisitiveness were racially ingrained in the nation's people, and if "doing as one likes," "wealth" and "free trade" (the third of which appears as something of a dialectical union of the first two), the central cogs of social "machinery," are therefore but natural outgrowths of Teutonic biology, then the hegemony of "the ordinary self" would seem to be inescapable, the potential to wean the English toward their best selves almost nil. It is here that the looseness and indirection in Arnold's linkage of Anglo-Saxon attributes with contemporary English social tendencies comes in. Thus far we have noted that this racial-cultural connection is quite firm for Arnold in political terms and that he views the English as inescapably individualist in governmental inclination. We have also witnessed his effort to keep the economic dimension of Philistinism less securely moored in Teutonic racial capacities, as distinct from the widespread tendency in contemporary British thinking to equate the two directly. While accepting a bare minimum of the characteristics of the self-serving *homo economicus* in his descriptions of the "ordinary self," Arnold complicates this connection in at least two related ways. First, he tends to confine the Teutonic elements of Englishness to the aristocracy, the "Barbarian" class which most naturally secures the link

between the present tense and the nation's primordial Northern European roots. Secondly, this gesture in turn marginalizes anarchic individualism as the congenital vice only of the social upper crust, thereby clearing the slate for the majority of the nation's population to be weaned away from Teutonic tendencies, henceforth partitioned according to class difference. Once Teutonic anarchy has been defined as aristocratic in provenance, the path for putting Arnold's "social idea" into practice to foster a "national glow of life and thought" is open once more.

While Arnold dispatches the political obstacle to the program of Culture, that of anarchic individualism, in fairly short order, the majority of *Culture and Anarchy* is more stubbornly vexed by Teutonism's economic concomitant. The problem of "wealth" is, indeed, much less freely extricable than liberty from any essentializing definition of the middle classes who are his primary concern and audience, in that their rise to social prominence and power in the first half of the nineteenth century resulted directly from the breakup of the feudal/aristocratic *ancien regime* by capitalist modernization. In addition to the pressure of Teutonic discourse, which forms the *ideological* straitjacket he must break out of if he is to legitimize a social reorientation around the dictates of Culture, Arnold therefore also confronts the more profoundly *material* interdependence of capitalism and middle-class mores. It is, in fact, this very material interdependence that Arnold designates most directly with his use of the term "Philistinism," and it is this interdependence which we should probe most painstakingly if we are to map precisely the socio-political gambit entailed in *Culture and Anarchy*, and subsequently in *The Study of Celtic Literature*. Only by excavating fully the complex of forces that Arnold encapsulates with this term can we then understand both the impulse toward generating an alternative set of values and practices and the import of the two agencies from which Arnold derives these values and practices, Culture and the Celt.

Arnold's eventual rhetorical strategy for extricating Englishness from "wealth" and middle-class materialism arises in his taxonomy of Hellenism and Hebraism, and it is the precise function of this *belated ethnological reorientation* to give the slip to the stultifying dictates of Teutonism. While reading *Culture and Anarchy*, we should always recall that its "chapters" were originally essays and thus present interpretive problems for those wishing to generalize a coherent position on Arnold's part across these six sections. This proves to be the case particularly in "Hebraism and Hellenism," in which Arnold significantly revises his anatomy of Englishness. Arnold supplies sufficient transitional language between chapters to make his ethnological sleight of hand imperceptible. He concludes the previous essay, "Barbarians, Philistines, Populace," where he has adduced a powerful yet ultimately incomplete basis for English "machinery" in Teutonic biology, by proposing to fill in this ethnological gray area: "But now let us go a little deeper, and try to find, beneath our actual habits and practice, the very ground and cause out of which they spring" (125). Arnold has already seemingly pinpointed this "ground and cause" in the Anglo-Saxon racial makeup, yet has been careful to leave room for renegotiation on the subject of middle-class Philistinism. Taking up this "deeper" question at the outset of the subsequent essay, Arnold seems again to verge on confining English racial potential to the preeminently Teutonic arena of material development, stating, "This fundamental ground is our preference for doing over thinking. Now this preference is a main element in our nature . . ." (126). Again, the proclivity for "doing," for "machinery," predominates in the definition of the English nature, at the expense of "thinking" or Culture, seemingly in conformity to the Teutonic auto-stereotype. However, Arnold maintains his earlier caginess through the use of an indefinite article: if the Philistine preference for doing over thinking is a main element in the

national constitution, it is nevertheless merely *a* main element, merely one trait among others, however prominent.

The duration of “Hebraism and Hellenism” predictably exploits this ethnological equivocation in order to attain ultimate ideological equilibrium. The “sleight of hand” to which I have referred operates as follows. First, Arnold redefines the racial filiations of Philistine materialism as Jewish or “Hebraic” instead of Teutonic, thereby enabling him to break free of the anthropological bind in which Teutonism has placed him. Second, he explains the presence of this racially Jewish historical tendency in English civilization as a byproduct of Puritanical Christianity, positioned as the successor to Hebraism’s moral/behavioral prescriptions, thereby enabling him to classify its influence as an external, unnatural importation. Third, having thus rezoned Philistinism as biologically Hebrew through the first two rhetorical maneuvers, Arnold then redefines Englishness as inherently Hellenistic by recourse to a generalized “Indo-European” ethnic identity. The following quotation, in which Arnold addresses the dialectical alternation of the two opposed forces in English history, demonstrates the operation of each of these rhetorical strategies in rapid succession:

Puritanism, which has been so great a power in the English nation, and in the strongest part of the English nation, was originally a reaction . . . of Hebraism against Hellenism; and it powerfully manifested itself, as was natural, in a people with much of what we call a Hebraising turn, with a signal affinity for the bent which was the master-bent of Hebrew life. Eminently Indo-European by its humour, by the power it shows, through this gift, of imaginatively acknowledging the multiform aspects of the problem of life, and of thus getting itself unfixed from its own over-certainty, of smiling at its own over-tenacity, our race has yet (and a great part of its strength lies here), in matters of practical life and moral conduct, a strong share of the assuredness, the tenacity, of the Hebrews. This turn manifested itself in Puritanism, and has had a great part in shaping our history for the last two hundred years . . . [Thus] the main impulse of a great part, and that the strongest part, of our nation, has been towards strictness of conscience. They have made the secondary [force] the principal at the wrong moment, and the principal they have at the wrong moment treated as secondary. This contravention of the natural order has produced . . . a certain confusion and false

movement . . . Everywhere we see the beginnings of confusion, and we want a clue to some sound order and authority. This we can get only by going back upon the actual instincts and forces which rule our life, seeing them as they really are, connecting them with other instincts and forces, and enlarging our whole view and rule of life. (137)

This is a remarkable instance of the tortuousness of Arnold's ethnology. At the outset Puritanism, though a Hebrew import to England, meets there a native racial element already given to a "Hebraizing turn." Because it arises most markedly in "practical life" and "moral conduct" and resists Hellenic "spontaneity of consciousness" in favor of "strictness of conscience," this native Hebraic element is almost certainly Teutonic in derivation. As the passage proceeds onward, however, Arnold minimizes this Hebraic determinism; what begins as a "signal affinity" for the Hebrew "master-bent" becomes simply a "share" of this bent, a "secondary" force or "stream" of English development, and is finally classed as a "contravention of the natural order," an order which must therefore favor the antithetical agency of Hellenism. At the outset of the passage Arnold argues for a racially-ingrained English Hebraism, but by the end he breaks from this ethnological equation to define Hellenism, the "gift of imaginatively acknowledging the multiform aspects of the problem of life," as the "signal affinity" of the national biology. Hebraism and the Philistine "machinery" that is its outgrowth have generated a "confusion and false movement" that only a restoration of the nation to its "true" course, the Hellenic one, can counteract. The passage thereby *enacts* what it *prescribes* by "going back upon the actual instincts and forces" supposedly ruling English life, Teutonic forces, "seeing them as they really are," that is, as Hebraic, deemphasizing them in favor of "other instincts and forces" of Hellenic orientation, and thereby "enlarging our whole view and rule of life," the latter being itself an inescapably Hellenic project. Because these "other instincts" accord better with the "natural order" than Hebraic ones, Arnold implies, the national attainment of culture, of

Hellenic sweetness and light, will merely constitute the restoration of a bygone racial homeostasis.

Arnold's racial identification of Englishness with Hellenism finally appears as a rhetorical move designed to extricate his Cultural program from the bind of Teutonic determinism. Because Arnold accepts the Victorian anthropological premise that culture/civilization is a manifestation of biology, both the problem of Teutonism and the solution of Hellenism remain within the assumptions of this burgeoning disciplinary *episteme*. In other words, because he adopts ethnological terms of analysis in his diagnosis of machinery as the English national malady, Arnold commits himself to a racial determinism that in turn constrains his definition of the cure for this malady; if race is the prime mover of history, Arnold's efforts to alter history's course must obtain a racial sanction. These dense ethnological negotiations present a noteworthy instance of what George W. Stocking anatomizes as the normative *ideological* response to the fundamental *ontological* problem presented to the English by the rise of evolutionary anthropology at mid-century. In Stocking's picture, the impact of Victorian anthropology consisted of the destruction of the dominant biblical historical schema and a concomitant de-spiritualization of human self-conception. The Crystal Palace Exhibition of 1851, the discovery of human fossils in Brixham Cave in 1857, and the publication of Darwin's *Origin of Species* in 1859, among other landmark events, radically elongated scriptural temporality and linked humanity irrevocably with the animal world, precipitating a radical revamping of mainstream English epistemology. Stocking describes the manner in which the longstanding explanation of humanity's superiority through scripture came to be replaced with a reason-based legitimization of its privileged place in the cosmos, and identifies this ontological

regrouping, as it were, as the self-serving accomplishment of the middle-class Victorian intelligentsia:

Mankind, which was now to be understood as natural rather than divine in origin, was nonetheless subject to rational moral purpose; evolution, which linked us to brute creation, enabled us also to transcend it. Even without the assurance of God, it was still possible to envision the movement of history as a triumph of the spiritual over the material . . . Conceived psychologically, the goals of the middle classes thus involved simultaneously liberation and repression: on the one hand, rationally uninhibited; on the other, rationality which was explicitly inhibiting and on which the achievement of individual self-improvement, social mobility, and civilization must ultimately depend . . . To recapitulate those processes as evolution was at once to give a cosmic vindication to the sacrifice that repression involved . . . It vindicated the repression of instinctual behavior that made individual mobility and social progress possible . . . and insofar as it linked social processes with biological change . . . it gave that progress an evolutionary guarantee . . . social evolutionism was a kind of cosmic genealogy for middle class civilization . . . (228-33)

Against this backdrop, *Culture and Anarchy* comes into even sharper focus. Arnold's writing postdates the Darwinian turn toward a more biological comprehension of human ontology, and thus both his diagnosis of English problems and his prescriptions for curing them logically adopt an anthropological sanction. The function of Hellenism is to guarantee the continued "triumph of the spiritual over the material" in this newly, disturbingly bestialized state of human affairs. Teutonic racial tendencies, while advantageous in many ways, remain stifling to the national genealogy and require the supplementation of a more "flexible" racial agency so as to make middle-class civilization embody Cultural "perfection," the best rather than the ordinary English self. The admirable material accomplishments of English society can only remain admirable and can only "progress" further if infused with a sweeter, lighter influence, and Hellenism, with its "right reason," is to provide this "evolutionary guarantee."

There is an element in Arnold's Cultural program, however, which goes further than merely affirming this normative middle-class anthropological "genealogy," and which positions

him as a trenchant antagonist of its main motive forces. For the duration of this section, I would like to outline the precise *ontological* import of *Culture and Anarchy*, which I take to be both dependent on and an important advancement beyond this middle-class civilizational picture. It is only with the ontological realm in view that we can grasp the full socio-historical ramifications of Arnold's mid-1860s work, and it is only at this fundamental level that his foundational role in Anglo-Irish history and the history of Celticism can come into full relief. The manner in which Arnold challenges Stocking's mainstream evolutionary ideology hinges on his critique of Hebraism, the very restrictiveness of which is Arnold's primary target. Many of the elements Arnold associates with Hebraic "machinery," such as religious "strictness of conscience" and the fanatical pursuit of wealth, are precisely the agencies that Stocking identifies as driving notions of English historical "progress." It is in fact the "repression of instinctual behavior," the moral economy on which material civilization most depends, that Arnold most would like to overcome so as to reverse the polarity of English history from Hebraic to Hellenic. Within the terminology of "The Function of Criticism at the Present Time," it is repressiveness that defines Philistine "machinery" and that makes the mid-nineteenth century an "epoch of concentration" rather than the "epoch of expansion" Arnold desires.¹²

I would suggest that what Arnold designates "machinery" is what we would call capitalist modernity, and that the Philistine materialism and ignorance against which he rails so vehemently are the end products of the radical narrowing of human existence to primarily economic or, in Marxist terminology, "instrumental" imperatives. Capitalism heightens and intensifies the existing state of instinctual repression Stocking refers to and which leading nineteenth-century philosophers of modernity such as Karl Marx, Friedrich Nietzsche and Sigmund Freud, identify as the signal feature of its increasingly conglomerated social

organization.¹³ Classical political economy can be read as in effect codifying this state of affairs, wherein the individual's pleasure-seeking self-interest must be reined in and placed in legal counterpoise with that of his (sic) competitors the better to foster collective order and progress. If we recall Mandler's citation of John Stuart Mill's formula, "present exertion for a distant object"—the very same formula which Stocking cites in order to define the moral economy of the Victorian *homo economicus*—we can easily see the extent to which the repression of bodily instincts provides the specific foundation for capitalist productivity, above and beyond its centrality to the rule of law. Marx himself mounts his early critique of the doctrines of political economy on precisely this *ontological* plane, where humanity's sensuous or animal being becomes subjected to the "estrangement" of capitalist labor. The following passage from his *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts of 1844* models what we might call the ontological critique of the capitalist mode of production, a critique which, as I will go on to show, *Culture and Anarchy* also advances:

Political economy, the science of *wealth*, is therefore simultaneously the science of denial, of want, of *thrift*, of *saving* . . . This science of marvelous industry is simultaneously the science of *asceticism*, and its true denial is the *ascetic* but *extortionate* miser and the *ascetic* but *productive* slave . . . Thus political economy . . . is a true moral science, the most moral of all the sciences. Self-denial, the denial of life and of all human needs, is its cardinal doctrine. The less you eat, drink and read books; the less you go to the theatre, the dance hall, the public house; the less you think, love, theorize, sing, paint, fence, etc., the more you *save*—the *greater* becomes your treasure which neither moths nor dust will devour—your *capital*. The less you *are*, the more you *have*; the less you express your own life, the greater is your *alienated* life—the greater is the store of your estranged being. (95-6)

Marx links the moral maxims of political economy with its more purely economic dimension in a direct causal chain, and mounts his evisceration of both the pseudo-"science of wealth" and the material processes to which it responds on the grounds of their "denial of life and all human needs." The end result of humanity's subordination to this mode of production is dually the

increase of capital and the impoverishment and estrangement of the human animal from its natural being.

When Arnold complains of the Philistines that “their idea of human perfection is too narrow and inadequate,” and when he vociferously insists to his middle-class audience that Culture “consists in becoming something rather than in having something, in an inward condition of mind and spirit rather than an outward condition set of circumstances,” I would argue that he is making the same basic argument as Marx, albeit in a different terminological register (70, 62). Like Marx, he views the prevailing, bourgeois arrangement of British civilization as hollowing out and desiccating the natural plenitude of human developmental potential. His recurrent metaphor for the processes of modernization, “machinery,” perfectly renders in figural, impressionistic form what one of Marx’s recent interlocutors dubs “social domination,” that is, the overwhelming of human life by the agglomerated apparatuses, both social and institutional, of capitalist development. When Arnold rails against the Philistine “faith in machinery,” he is attacking a “signal” incarnation of the capitalist modernization process.¹⁴

If this would seem an unlikely reading, I would like to solidify it by adducing a few further quotations from *Culture and Anarchy*, the first of which I juxtapose with another passage from Marx’s *Manuscripts* for the purpose of comparison. Marx’s comments, which I quote first, concern the nature of capitalist labor, while Arnold’s describe the historical usurpation of Hellenism by Hebraism:

What, then, constitutes the alienation of labour? First, the fact that labour is *external* to the worker, i.e., it does not belong to his essential being; that in his work, therefore, he does not affirm himself but denies himself, does not develop freely his physical and mental energy but *mortifies* his body and ruins his mind. The worker therefore only feels himself outside his work, and in his work feels outside himself . . . External labour, labour in which man alienates himself, is a labour of self-sacrifice, of *mortification* (74).

To get rid of one's ignorance, to see things as they are, and by seeing them as they are to see them in their beauty, is the simple and attractive ideal which Hellenism holds out before human nature; and from the simplicity and charm of this ideal, Hellenism, and human life in the hands of Hellenism, is invested with a kind of aerial ease, clearness and radiancy; they are full of what we call sweetness and light. Difficulties are kept out of view, and the beauty and rationalness of the ideal have all our thoughts . . . Apparently, it was the Hellenic conception of human nature which was unsound, for the world could not live by it . . . it was premature . . . Therefore the bright promise of Hellenism faded, and Hebraism rules the world . . . Through age after age and generation after generation, our race, or all that part of our race which was most living and progressive, was *baptized into a death*; and endeavored, by suffering in the flesh, to cease from sin. (130-3)

While the subjects of these two passages would seem to diverge, with Marx undertaking a very concrete analysis of labor activity and Arnold a very abstract analysis of the grand historical shift from Hellenism to Hebraism, I have italicized a common terminology wherein the two converge: that of mortification or death. Marx's identification of mortification as a specifically capitalist illness requires little commentary, but the connection in Arnold is not so easily perceptible. In his description, Hebraism "baptizes" the English solely in a religious register, whereby the effort of surmounting the instinctual sins of the flesh precipitates a zombie-like state of death-in-life. However, when we recall the ineluctable economic implications entailed in Arnold's mild anti-Semitism, we begin to glimpse the crucial hinge articulating the thought processes of these two canonical mid-nineteenth century commentators on English society.

It is not unintentional on Arnold's part that he describes the Philistine reliance on "machinery" as a "faith" early in *Culture and Anarchy*, and it is likewise not unintentional on Marx's part that he defines the morality of classical political economy as *ascetic* in character in the passage quoted earlier. Indeed, as Max Weber's seminal work *The Protestant Ethic and the Spirit of Capitalism* documents, the seemingly secular process of capitalist modernization which rose to dominance in the nineteenth century in Europe and America in fact had direct religious

origins. As Weber famously argues, the capitalist production of surplus value through steady labor derives from the behavioral norms of Puritan Christianity. In Weber's words,

the religious valuation of restless, continuous, systematic work in a worldly calling, as the highest means to asceticism, and at the same time the surest and most evident proof of rebirth and genuine faith, must have been the most powerful conceivable lever for the expansion of that attitude toward life which we have called the spirit of capitalism (172).

Thus did the ascetic labor practices that Marx views as mortifying the capitalist worker arise out of a popularized monasticism, a widespread adoption of mortification of the body as the surest path to salvation. In strict historical terms then, whenever Arnold complains of the repressive practices of contemporary English Puritanism, he is also complaining of the moral ideology which was the engine of capitalist productivity. The dead he witnesses walking the streets of England are the same walking dead witnessed by Marx, and just as Marx reacts to this mortified humanity by prescribing a utopian ontological recalibration through Communism, so Arnold attempts to foment an identical recalibration via Culture.

Perhaps the most remarkable feature of Arnold's critique of middle-class "machinery" in *Culture and Anarchy* is that he openly recognizes the inherent linkage of Puritan morality and capital accumulation. He states the matter explicitly in one of his many diatribes on the Philistines' "stiff-necked" resistance to Culture:

Nothing is more common than for people to confound the inward peace and satisfaction which follows the subduing of the obvious faults of our animality with what I may call absolute inward peace and satisfaction,—the peace and satisfaction which are reached as we draw near to complete spiritual perfection, and not merely to moral perfection, or rather to relative moral perfection. No people in the world have done more and struggled more to attain this relative moral perfection than our English race has. For no people in the world has the command to *resist the devil*, to *overcome the wicked one*, in the nearest and most obvious sense of these words, had such a pressing force and reality. And we have our reward, not only in *the great worldly prosperity which our obedience to this command has brought us*, but also, and far more, in great inward peace and satisfaction. But to me few things are more pathetic than to see people . . .

employ, concerning the incomplete perfection and the religious organizations within which they have found it, language which properly applies only to complete perfection. (68, second emphasis added)

Arnold emphasizes religion as the prime mover of Philistinism, and directly evokes contemporary evolutionary discourse to describe its imperative as that of “subduing the obvious faults of our animality.” But he simultaneously identifies the production of “worldly prosperity” as a result of “obedience” to the commandment to “overcome the wicked one.” When we recall that Arnold unmistakably conjoins these two aspects of English machinery, the religious and the economic, in his adoption of the terminology of Hebraism, the contours of his Cultural program gain yet sharper definition. Hebraic morality, “strictness of conscience,” enacts a baptism into death, suffocating rather than efflorescing English potential, and the wealth that is its material byproduct then becomes one more cog in the “machine” of modernity before which the Philistines bow down, one more *external* accoutrement distracting the English from *internal* cultivation, one more mode of *having* that bars them from a perfected state of *being*.

Arnold, of course, has no great reputation as an economic thinker. Nonetheless, this reading suggests that the economic dimension of his social theory is quite pronounced, albeit veiled beneath a predominantly religious terminology which, as we have seen, is a crucial aspect of his ethnology strategy for giving Teutonic Philistinism the evolutionary slip.¹⁵ Before concluding this section of the chapter, I would like to reinforce this Weberian reading of *Culture and Anarchy* by quoting another passage where Arnold openly connects religious morality with capitalist production. For purposes of comparison, I will place this passage alongside another from Weber’s *Protestant Ethic*, quoting the latter first. The convergences between them, both terminological and thematic, are striking:

In fact, the *summum bonum* of this ethic, the earning of more and more money, combined with the strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of life . . . is

thought of so purely as an end in itself, that from the point of view of the happiness of, or utility to, the single individual, it appears entirely transcendental and absolutely irrational. Man is dominated by the making of money, by acquisition as the ultimate purpose of his life. Economic acquisition is no longer subordinated to man as the means for the satisfaction of his material needs. This reversal of what we should call the normal relationship, so irrational from a naïve point of view, is evidently [the] leading principle of capitalism. (53)

The whole middle class have a conception of things [in which] the main concerns of life [are] limited to these two: the concern for making money, and the concern for saving our souls! And how entirely does the narrow and mechanical conception of our secular business proceed from a narrow and mechanical conception of our religious business! What havoc do the united conceptions make of our lives! It is because the second-named of these two master-concerns presents to us the one thing needful in so fixed, narrow, and mechanical a way, that so ignoble a fellow master-concern to it as the first-named becomes possible; and, having once admitted, takes the same rigid and absolute character as the other. (147)

The rhetorical form and analytical content of the two passages are nearly identical. Just as Weber bemoans the smooth transition from Puritan fundamentalist morality, the “strict avoidance of all spontaneous enjoyment of life,” to the domination of “man” by the impulse to “economic acquisition,” so Arnold laments the “united conception” in normative “middle class” ideology of the same two “master-concerns,” the “second-named” of which, “the concern for making money,” he likewise interprets as spawned by the “first-named,” the “concern for saving our souls.” And just as Weber documents the deification of capitalism into an “entirely transcendental” imperative succeeding its religious predecessor, so Arnold traces the emergence of the compulsion to capitalist accumulation into a “rigid and absolute,” idol-like preeminence from the “narrow and mechanical” observation of religious morality. The “summum bonum” or greatest good of Weber’s schema is thus identical with Arnold’s “unum necessarium,” the “one thing needful” of middle-class Philistinism. For both writers, the “machinery” of modernity has Puritan asceticism for its engine, and for both there is something both “irrational” and “unnatural” about this regime that calls out for reformation.¹⁶

In retrospect then, Arnold's reclassification of middle-class materialism and capitalist accumulation as external, religiously-derived social tendencies, rather than as inherent, biological characteristics of the English, makes more than merely rhetorical sense. The transition from the strict ethnological determinism of Teutonic ideology to the discourse of Hebraism, which spins middle-class "machinery" as a racially alien importation to England, properly configures ascetic Puritanism and its capitalist byproduct as artificial, and therefore open to modification. Arnold remains caught within the episteme of the mid-Victorian period and therefore seeks out an anthropological sanction for the program of Culture, which thus comes to be founded on an Indo-European commonality linking the English with their putative Hellenic ancestors. In Arnold's strained ethnological schema, Teutonic biology, which on its own terms is ideally suited to modernization, represents something of a recrudescence of human history to a renewed state of semi-animal existence, "machinery," and therefore demands ontological transcendence via an alternative, untapped ethnic potentiality, that of the "Indo-European." Once the Teuton dons his Hebraic disguise, and once his historical struggle with the Hellene resolves in favor of the later, what results is a reconfigured version of Stocking's "cosmic genealogy" which recruits evolutionary ideology to the cause of reforming, rather than attaining, the civilizational forms of capitalist modernity.

The Study of Celtic Literature: Colonialism and the Aesthetic Reform of Capitalism

As we shall soon see, Arnold's other major work of the mid-1860s, *The Study of Celtic Literature*, enacts an ethnological strategy of reform in relation to the "machinery" of English capitalism that is both similar to that of *Culture and Anarchy* and, in several crucial ways, different from it. Where *Culture and Anarchy* enacts a searching internal critique of English society with only a remote historical era, the Hellenic, to throw contemporary times into negative

relief, the *Study* presents a more complex interpretive challenge in that it engages with Arnold's historical present in a far more fraught manner. The question of the Celt and her (sic) aesthetic capacities drew Arnold gravitationally into the realm of British colonialism, the real political concerns of which could not help but inflect his terms of analysis. While these Welsh and, predominantly, Irish preoccupations certainly appear in *Culture and Anarchy*, they do so only sporadically and remain subordinated to Arnold's primarily English focus. In ways too numerous to catalogue here at the outset, the wider lens of the *Study* makes it an even more revealing instance of the socio-historical situatedness of Arnold's Cultural theories.

In what follows, I will argue that recent critics have mishandled Arnold's *Study* in several interrelated ways, both on its own terms and in relation to *Culture and Anarchy*. Specifically, three problematic tendencies have recurred in nearly all the studies published in the last two or so decades. First, there has been a tendency to read Arnold's work strictly as a document of imperial political machinations, whereby Arnold sought to shore up British rule over Ireland during the tense mid-century moment which gave rise to the Fenian and Land League resistances.¹⁷ Because most critics who engage this angle of interpretation do so with a postcolonial agenda of understanding Ireland's traumatic experience under British rule, and of recovering alternative experiences suppressed by that rule, I will refer to this tendency, in which the *Study* becomes reduced to a strictly political tract, as the Irish Studies reading. The second tendency I will address consists of a gesturing toward the ontological dimension of Arnold's *Study* that is without adequate historical theorization or grounding, such that his recourse to the figure of the Celt answers questions latent in mid-Victorian Englishness, questions which, however, remain vague, general and abstracted from the conditions of production for the national being at this time. This tendency arises both in the Irish Studies Arnold and in the ethnological

accounts of Arnold which we have already encountered. The third tendency I will attempt to counteract occurs mostly in the latter group of critics, those who consider Arnold from an ethnological perspective, and consists of a conflation of what I take to be two distinct, though related, ethnological figures in his writing, the Celt and the Hellene. I will engage these three problems in more depth as they become relevant to my purposes in analyzing the *Study*. By the end of this section, however, with a more grounded and comprehensive picture of the *Study* in place, we will attain a more complicated reading of the literary-historical significance of Arnold's work than any previous account has provided.

Among the Irish Studies school of Arnold criticism, there is a marked overemphasis on the political implications of the *Study* at the expense of the other concerns it inevitably raises, in particular its economic ones. To take a prominent example, in her book *Allegories of Union*, Mary Jean Corbett places Arnold squarely within the history of the gendered political discourse used to naturalize Ireland's colonial subordination in "compulsory wedlock" to England during the nineteenth century (149). Although she usefully anatomizes a densely imbricated set of intercultural ideological negotiations in his writing involving metropole and colony, Corbett's primarily political lens of analysis leads her to declare, finally, that Arnold seeks not just a formal, governmental hegemony over Ireland but a more comprehensive dominance, extending to the level of English social norms. She therefore concludes that "to be sure, [Arnold's] effort aims to construct a 'bourgeois hegemony'" throughout the United Kingdom (159). Corbett borrows this last phrase from the book *Writing Ireland* by David Cairns and Shawn Richards, a foundational Irish Studies text, wherein the authors contrast the *Study* to Ernest Renan's "The Poetry of the Celtic Races," the text which most directly influenced Arnold and which offers a mainly positive conception of the Celt, in order to demonstrate that "the arguments put forward

within [his] essay were developed by Arnold for the purpose of developing a bourgeois hegemony, and safeguarding the public order of the British Isles” (46). In adopting the argument that Arnold’s ultimate intention is to help consolidate a “bourgeois hegemony,” both Corbett’s and Cairns and Richards’ readings slide perceptibly from the realm of politics and the rule of law into the realm of the socio-economic; English rule is not a merely political regime here but, in that it is *bourgeois*, must necessarily consist of a set of social practices and norms specific to the capitalist mode of production. This unwitting overlap of the political and economic in the Irish Studies interpretation of the *Study*, a slippage between domains that amounts to an elision of their differences, is even more blatant in works such as W.J. McCormack’s *Ascendancy and Tradition in Anglo-Irish Literary History*, which asserts, despite noting the intercultural complexities in Arnold’s thinking, that “it goes without saying that his norm is industrial, nineteenth-century England” and that his agenda is “to legitimize the activities of British Industrial capitalism in the world” (228).¹⁸

Each of these examples of Irish Studies approach to Arnold moves seamlessly from a political orientation into a very cursory economic commentary more or less neatly aligned with those political considerations, without attempting a nuanced differentiation of Arnold’s handling of these discrete, or at least “semi-autonomous,” historical realms.¹⁹ The consensus is that Arnold, who openly declares his belief that Ireland must remain politically subordinate to England both in the *Study* and other writings, must therefore approve of and ratify in the same motion the civilizational forms of the metropole as the ideal modality for both locales. As I have already demonstrated, however, a central component of Arnold’s work in the mid-1860s is anti-capitalist, is caustically critical of the middle-class materialism and ascetic morality which are the hallmarks of mid-Victorian capitalist development. Indeed, the term “bourgeois” could

scarcely be better defined than by these two qualities. When Arnold proposes Culture as an antidote to “machinery,” he is in fact attempting to alter and reshape the foremost “norm” of British “bourgeois hegemony,” and it would seem difficult to uphold such a reading of his economic ideals alongside the more straightforward political implications of his work.

It remains to be seen, of course, how far the lessons drawn from *Culture and Anarchy* will go toward unlocking the *Study*, the original lectures of which Arnold delivered at Oxford University *before* composing the essays that make up the former, more famous work. I would suggest, however, that the *Study* addresses the same fundamental group of contemporary British concerns, although in a slightly modified form, and that amid these broad-ranging preoccupations the economic again proves paramount. Once we recall the manner in which his variously Teutonic, Hebraic and Hellenic ethnological maneuverings cluster around the problem of capitalist “machinery,” and once we have recognized the fundamentally *ontological* import of this modern civilizational malady for Arnold, we will have already gone a long way toward pinpointing the problem to be solved by the earlier work and its own ethnological protagonist, the Celt. Against this common backdrop, we will then be able to map the differences between the two texts in addition to their striking thematic similarities.

An economic emphasis lends historical grounding and specification to the persistently vague, abstract and impressionistic commentaries critics have advanced regarding the ontological service rendered Arnold by the Celt in the *Study*. Along the way toward iterating the Irish Studies consensus on Arnold’s politics in his book *Inventing Ireland*, Declan Kiberd makes a cursory comment which exemplifies this tendency, classifying the text as “a celebration of the Celtic personality which, [Arnold] hoped, might yet save the Philistine English middle-class for poetry and high feeling” (31). Corbett, similarly, refers to the Celt as compensating for a “lack

of psychic wholeness” for Arnold, but, again, confines this “psychic” lack to the domain of “political fragmentation within [the] Union” between England and Ireland (136). Seamus Deane, in the introduction to the Field Day collection *Nationalism, Colonialism and Literature*, advances more or less the same thesis, that around the mid-Victorian period, for a number of leading intellectuals like Arnold, “it was quite suddenly revealed that the English national character was defective and in need of the Irish, or Celtic, character in order to supplement it and enable it to survive” (12-3). One further instance of this ontological tack comes from another leading Irish Studies text, Luke Gibbons’s *Transformations in Irish Culture*, which describes the English milieu in which “apologists for imperial rule such as Matthew Arnold advocated a commingling of the Saxon and Celt, and called for an infusion of Celtic Blood into the enervated body politic of post-Benthamite England” (150). From Kiberd’s “Philistine English middle-class,” to Corbett’s lack of psychic “union,” to Deane’s “defective” English character and Gibbons’s “enervated” English “body politic,” there is a common tendency to define Arnold’s Celt as a balm for healing an ontological rupture in the English national being. For the most part, however, these gestures toward ontological considerations remain perfunctory and undeveloped. Insofar as the nature of this ontological rupture does receive definition, that definition—as we have come to expect from the Irish Studies approach of which each of the above is a specimen—is solely political. Although Kiberd’s formulation seems more comprehensive in that it deploys a language of social class similar to Arnold’s own, he provides no basis for evaluating the precise relationship between economics and ontology in Arnold’s Celtic writings, thereby leaving the political as the only salient register in his account as well.

Taking *Culture and Anarchy* as a guide, however, one is led to seek out the source of the English ontological rupture in economics instead of politics. Only an economic emphasis

enables the analyst of the mid-Victorian period to trace English ontology to the ground level. Without succumbing to a “vulgar” Marxist interpretation of the relationship between this economic “base” and the “superstructural” domains erected above it, we can nonetheless assert that capitalist economic processes have served as the engine of modernization since the nation’s early modern period, and therefore offer a comparatively direct mode of access to the ontology of modernity as a whole. Weber’s thesis on the causal interconnection of Puritan asceticism and capitalist labor demonstrates the extent to which the moral and material aspects of capitalism coalesce with one another, the extent, that is, to which English social norms are “instrumental” to consolidating of the capitalist mode of production. Additionally, the liberal equality that defines the modern nation state has its historical foundation in the contractual equivalence of economic participants in the marketplace. The political ontology of citizenship, in other words, rests on an economic norm of exchange which legitimates the formal, if not the actual, equivalency of modern subjects. Although “superstructural” realms such as politics and religion maintain a functional independence or “semi-autonomy” from the economic “base,” they remain subject, finally, to economic overdetermination, and therefore ultimately reproduce in refracted form what I have anatomized as the ontological state of capitalist modernity: the narrowing, hollowing out and impoverishment of human species being known variously in Marxist accounts of history as “alienation,” “reification,” “instrumentalization,” “rationalization” or “domination.”²⁰

This capitalist ontology generates the fissures in English national being at mid-century to which the *Study* and *Culture and Anarchy* both respond, the horror of the “machinery” of conglomerated modernization from which both seek relief, and it is here, as with the latter, that an analysis of the ethnological structure of the former must begin. Much more openly than does *Culture and Anarchy*, the *Study* defines modernity as a specifically Teutonic state of affairs.

What is a veiled, mainly implicit equivalence between modernization and Teutonic racial capacities in the later text proves to be an overt and explicit equation in its predecessor within the Arnold oeuvre. The *Study* refers freely to the Teutonic origins of Philistinism and “machinery,” and these become direct offshoots of the attributes of the “creeping Saxon.” The following passage, in which Arnold distinguishes the compound English “humour,” defined as “energy with honesty,” from the purer Teutonic humor of the German, demonstrates this causal link:

Take away some of the energy which comes to us . . . in part from Celtic and Roman sources; instead of energy, say rather steadiness; and you have the Germanic genius: *steadiness with honesty* . . . the danger for a national spirit thus composed is the humdrum, the plain and ugly, the ignoble . . . the excellence of a national spirit thus composed is freedom from whim, flightiness, perverseness; patient fidelity to Nature,—in a word, *science* . . . The universal dead-level of plainness and homeliness, the lack of all beauty and distinction in form and feature, the slowness and clumsiness of the language . . . this is the weak side; the industry, the well-doing, the patient steady elaboration of things, the idea of science governing all departments of human activity—this is the strong side; and through this side of her genius, Germany has obtained excellent results, and is destined . . . to an immense development. (82)

Here, both sides of the coin of modernization, positive and negative, are classed as Teutonic. The German “steadiness with honesty” is a boon insofar as it enables the advance of “industry,” “science” and the overall “development” of material civilization, but it is a bane insofar as it also makes Germanic peoples “humdrum,” “ugly” and “ignoble” in the cultural realm. If Teutonic discourse provides for a “patient steady elaboration of things,” both epistemologically and materially, in Germany and England (and also, implicitly, in the United States), it also explains the “lack of all beauty and distinction” in these Saxon nations. Teutonism drives Arnold to link the historical progress of modernization with its social byproduct, a “humdrum” tendency toward “ugliness” and “ignobility” which is easily recognizable as Philistinism, as dual manifestations of the Anglo-Saxon racial blueprint. Capitalism would seem, again, inescapably Teutonic and, for the Teuton, inescapable.

Already, however, the above passage begins to provide a glimpse of the ethnological strategy that Arnold will deploy in the *Study* to elude Teutonic racial determinism. In *Culture and Anarchy*, the transposition of Teutonic discourse into the Hellenic/Hebraic binary accomplishes this purpose effectively, if heavy-handedly, but here we must search for the key to Arnold's maneuverings in the mixed character of the English race, the element that makes its humor "energy with honesty" instead of simply "steadiness with honesty." Already, Arnold mentions "Celtic and Roman" sources as supplying the "energy" that leavens Teutonic steadiness and complicates the predominantly Germanic makeup of the English, but it is the former of these, the Celtic, that Arnold most persistently emphasizes as supplementing that dominant component with an alternative tendency. The precise nature of that alternative tendency and its effect on the predominant Saxon one becomes evident in a later passage, a passage which also serves to affirm the identification of Philistinism with Teutonism:

Out of the steady humdrum habit of the creeping Saxon . . . has come, no doubt, Philistinism, that plant of essentially Germanic growth, flourishing with its genuine marks only in the German fatherland, Great Britain and her colonies, and the United States of America . . . This steady-going habit leads, at last, as I have said, up to science, up to the comprehension and interpretation of the world. With us in Great Britain, it is true, it does not seem to lead so far as that; it is in Germany, where the habit is more unmixed, that it can lead to science. Here with us it seems . . . to meet with a conflicting force, which checks it and prevents it pushing on to science; but before reaching this point what conquests it has won! And all the more, perhaps, for stopping short at this point, for spending its exertions within a bounded field, the field of plain sense, of direct practical utility. How it has augmented the comforts and conveniences of life for us! Doors that open, windows that shut, locks that turn, razors that shave, coats that wear, watches that go, and a thousand more such good things, are the invention of the Philistines. Here, then, if commingling there is in our race, are two very unlike elements to commingle; the steady-going Saxon temperament and the sentimental Celtic temperament. (92-3)

In this remarkably dense description, several things become clear. First, Philistinism, connected in more detail here than anywhere in *Culture and Anarchy* with the domain of capitalist

development and middle-class materialism, the domain of “direct practical utility” and “comforts and conveniences,” is an “essentially Germanic” social modality, cropping up everywhere across the globe where peoples of Teutonic stock hold sway. Second, Philistinism is not the endpoint of the development immanent in Teutonic biology; rather, that endpoint is “science,” “the comprehension and interpretation of the world,” the very definition of the rational “light” by which Arnold defines Culture. Finally, the counterinfluence in English biology which prevents it consummating its Germanic destiny is the “commingling” of Teutonic stock and its “steady-going” temperament with the “sentimental” Celtic one native to the British Isles. In other words, Arnold simultaneously defines Philistinism as the product of a Germanic racial tendency toward material development and as the product of a counteracting or diluting of this tendency by a “Celtic vein” he sees “running through” the English (73-5). This leads the reader to assume that the ancient Celtic infusion of blood into England’s Anglo-Saxon invader population bears part of the responsibility for the Philistine rut into which their mid-Victorian descendants have fallen.

To understand the reason for the Celt’s interference with Saxon modernization, a bit of historical context is necessary. As Thomas A. Boylan and Timothy P. Foley document in their outstanding book *Political Economy and Colonial Ireland*, throughout the middle of the nineteenth century the apparent differences of the Irish from the English in racial terms and of Ireland from England in material terms presented a stubborn challenge to the pretensions of English political economy to universal theoretical validity. As a result the Great Famine of midcentury and the Irish nationalist “land agitation” that followed in its wake, among other factors, Boylan and Foley trace the emergence of a counter-consensus, “an opposing tradition in political economy . . . that Ireland was different,” that it was an anomalous case resistant to political-economic orthodoxy, resulting, finally, in a relativization of its laws as specifically

English in historical derivation and applicability, rather than universal (134). Their description of this process, and of the markers of Irish difference which were its impetus, is significant:

By the end of the 1860s most commentators on Irish affairs . . . felt, in many cases reluctantly, that the price to be paid was either the abandonment or the radical redefinition of political economy. The imperial rule of political economy was over . . . Roman Catholicism, Irishness, and engrained familial ideology, all perceived as economically regressive forces, not only resisted the onslaught of political economy but forced the establishment into a moral and sociological critique of its own absolutism. (160)

Thus the resistance of Irish social norms like “familism” and entrenched cultural institutions like the Catholic Church spurred a short-circuiting of the “imperial” discourse of political economy and a fracturing along racial lines of its paradigm of human historical development. As is indicated by their mention of “Irishness” as a crucial component of this colonial disciplinary interface, Boylan and Foley also document that “contemporary evolutionary views were used to validate the notion that Ireland was insufficiently developed to come under the sway of political economy” (160). Ireland became the locale of a racially-encoded economic recalcitrance.

Terry Eagleton and Mary Poovey have provided similar accounts of the process by which Ireland grew to be distinguished from England in economic theory in the early and mid-nineteenth century. Eagleton’s commentary, like Boylan and Foley’s, centers on the Famine as a watershed event in Anglo-Irish economic history, and argues that it instantiates the fundamentally divergent epistemological relationship which the Irish and English bore to the physical earth as a result of their disparate states of material development and their hierarchical political relationship with one another. Whereas the English, from a highly developed vantage, had come to view the land as primarily an object of removed, aesthetic contemplation, the Irish, conversely, from a far less developed standpoint, and in a state of political disenfranchisement that severed them from their natural environs, understood the land in much

more intimate, material terms. For Eagleton the Famine punctuated the Irish people's greater proximity to nature next to the insulated, domesticated condition reflected in English cultural institutions like Romantic poetry and landscape painting, and thus served as a frightening reminder to the English of the ultimate basis of their social order in the natural world:

. . . on the very threshold of modernity, Ireland experienced . . . all the blind, primeval force of the pre-modern, of a history as apparently remorseless as Nature itself, a history not naturalized but natural . . . this in turn will feed back into the metropolitan nation as an image of the very Darwinism which is just about to shake them to their ideological foundations: Nature as random and purposeless, as a shattered landscape lurking as a terrifying possibility at the root of their own civility. (11)

Famine Ireland was both a product of a deliberately-enforced state of underdevelopment and a symbol to the English of such a state, a signifier of the bestial origins of the genealogy of modern civilization to which they might one day revert. Of course, as I have already shown, and as Eagleton goes on to note, this Darwinian genealogy proved readily malleable to the ideological imperatives of middle-class England, and the Famine could thereby be made to signify a racially-ingrained incompetence in the Irish which had little or no self-reflexive applicability. The Irish could be slotted into a primordial evolutionary position at a safe remove from English cultural development smoothly enough.

Poovey, in her analysis of James Phillips Kay's 1832 treatise on *The Moral and Physical Condition of the Working Classes Employed in the Cotton Manufacture in Manchester*, argues that Kay figures English working class moral and economic degeneration as the product of the influence of Irish immigrants. As her reading shows, the Irish bestiality Eagleton portrays was not strictly an external, specular phenomenon for the English, but rather had direct domestic relevance given the nation's ever-growing Irish population. I borrow the following passage of

Kay's from Poovey to display the remarkable extent to which Irishness could be defined as a counterinfluence threatening to derail British economic development:

This immigration has been, in one important aspect, a serious evil. The Irish have taught the laboring classes of this country a pernicious lesson Debased alike by ignorance and pauperism, they have discovered, with the savage, what is the minimum of the means of life, upon which existence may be prolonged. The paucity of the amount of means and comforts *necessary for the mere support of life*, is not known by a more civilized population, and this secret has been taught the laborers of this country by the Irish. As competition and the restrictions and burdens of trade diminished the profits of capital, and consequently reduced the price of labour, the contagious example of ignorance and a barbarous disregard of forethought and economy, exhibited by the Irish, spread . . . the labouring classes have ceased to entertain a laudable pride in furnishing their houses and in multiplying the comforts which minister to happiness. (64)

In Kay's political-economic account, the Irish are not merely themselves "debased," "savage," ignorant and "barbarous" in their habits but also spread their imprudence and congenital "pauperism" to the English working classes, both by simple bad example and by depressing the wages of English labor to a subsistence level consonant with bare animality. The criterion of economic development, the proper behavioral code for promoting that development, which Kay applies in his survey, is the same criterion by Stocking defines the *homo economicus* of political economy: "forethought." This "respectable middle-class man," according to Stocking, observed "a prudent self-denying industry," both economic and sexual, which distinguished him from those races or classes "who had not achieved respectability" and therefore opted for "present self-indulgence" (216). Returning to the formulation of John Stuart Mill which I have already cited, in Kay's description the Irish lack the capacity to undertake "present exertion for a distant object," instead giving in to their basest instinctual impulses. Another of Kay's diatribes highlights the interdependence of morality and economics in his view of the Irish:

Want of cleanliness, of forethought, and economy, are found in almost

invariable alliance with dissipation, reckless habits, and disease. The population becomes gradually less efficient as producers of wealth—morally so from idleness—politically *worthless* as having few desires to satisfy, and *noxious* as dissipators of capital accumulated. Were such manners to prevail, the horrors of pauperism would accumulate. A debilitated race would be rapidly multiplied . . . (quoted in Poovey 69)

The Irish, a “debilitated race” given to slovenliness, drunkenness, generalized recklessness and disease, exert through their base animality a drag on English productivity. Not only does their lack of prudent forethought prevent them from accumulating wealth in the manner of the English middle-classes, it also threatens to spread their state of craven “pauperism” throughout the lower ranks of the population. At a moment when classical political economy is concerned to promote the exponential increase of the nation’s capital, the presence of the Irish, the “dissipators of capital,” cannot be suffered.²¹

From Kay’s study of 1832 through the Famine of the 1840s and the political economy of the 1860s, then, we can see a widespread tendency in English thought to identify the Irish and Irishness as anti-economic agents threatening to counteract national capitalist development. If capitalist modernity is preeminently a Teutonic state of affairs, the Celtic variable in the economic binary opposition is intrinsically anti-capitalist. Within this context, Arnold’s painting of the Celtic element in the national racial composition as counterproductive to the attainment of “light” and perfected material civilization becomes more legible. Indeed, Arnold relies directly on the popular conception of the Irish as racially anti-modern, as is evident from the following passage where he formulates the defining characteristic of the Celtic “humor”:

Sentiment is . . . the word which marks where the Celtic races really touch and are one; sentimental, if the Celtic nature is to be characterized by a single term, is the best term to take. An organization quick to feel impressions, and feeling them very strongly; a lively personality therefore, keenly sensitive to joy and to sorrow; this is the main point . . . For good or for bad, the Celtic genius is more airy and substantial, goes less near the ground, than the German . . . Sentimental,—*always ready to react against the despotism of fact*; [this term] lets us into the secret of its

dangers and of its habitual want of success. Balance, measure, and patience, these are the eternal conditions, even supposing the happiest temperament to start with, of high success; and balance, measure and patience are just what the Celt has never had. (85)

The Irish penchant for “sentiment,” a powerful sensitivity and susceptibility to external stimuli, defines the Celt as a primarily emotive rather than rational being. As “an essentially feminine race,” a characterization which Arnold takes directly from his predecessor in matters Celtic, Ernest Renan, the Celts lack the practical *male* capacity for “high success” in the world of “fact.” Their “habitual want” of economic talent and acumen derives from their congenital inability to subordinate the body’s natural drives to capitalist organization, which demands “balance, measure and patience”—in a word, *forethought*. Because of the ancient commingling of their Saxon blood with the Celtic, the English remain mired in a state of imperfect Cultural development, stalled at an intermediate point on the ladder to evolutionary perfection.²²

If this would seem to confirm the Irish Studies consensus on the political ramifications of Arnold’s theories for Anglo-Irish colonial relations, we must recall that his program of Culture does not consist only of “light,” the Germanic realm of “science” and reason with the progress of which Celtic “sentiment” interferes, but rather requires the attainment of “sweetness,” an altogether different quality to which the Celt will bear a very different relation indeed. In the end, there is never much mystery to the political dimension of Arnold’s writing. To borrow the terms of his 1859 work *England and the Italian Question*, Arnold does not consider the Irish a “greater nationality,” and therefore denies Ireland the honor of independent statehood.²³ His “commingling” of Teuton and Celt in the internal racial organization of the English quite straightforwardly serves to naturalize the hierarchical subordination of the latter to the former, and to legitimate as a biological *fait accompli* the domination of the Irish by the British. Irish racial difference seems to call out for eradication by the steamroller of English modernization,

after which erasure and subsumption the march toward perfection can then proceed unhindered. However, we must recall that Philistinism and “machinery” cannot be reformed within the intrinsic logic of the Teutonic, but requires an external influence to be successfully pointed back in the direction of Cultural perfection. The function that the Hellene serves for Arnold in *Culture and Anarchy* will be served, therefore, by the Celt throughout *The Study*—at least in part. Specifically, the Celt’s particular talent for “sweetness” or beauty positions her as an invaluable resource for reforming the coarseness and ugliness of Anglo-Saxon Philistinism.

Indeed, it would be a mistake to read *The Study* as even a primarily political tract, when its overwhelming emphasis is not on politics, nor even on economics, but rather on *the aesthetic*. This is the socio-historical domain in which we would expect to look for Arnold’s “sweetness,” and this proves to be the domain for which the Celt, in an inversion of her disadvantage in the world of practical affairs, has a marked advantage and racially-ingrained affinity. “Sentiment,” the preternatural, feminine receptivity of the Celtic constitution to “impressions” which places it squarely within the realm of nature and outside material civilization, is just what provides Celtic literature with its uncanny power. Surveying English history for signs of Celtic influence, Arnold summarizes the results of his investigation as follows:

It is in our poetry that the Celtic part in us has left its trace clearest, and in our poetry I must follow it before I have done . . . If I were asked where English poetry got these three things, its turn for style, its turn for melancholy, and its turn for natural magic, for catching and rendering the charm of nature in a wonderfully clear and vivid way, I should answer, with some doubt, that it got much of its turn for style from a Celtic source; with less doubt, that it got much of its melancholy from a Celtic source; with no doubt at all, that from a Celtic source it got nearly all its natural magic. (113)

The keystone of Arnold’s theorization of the Celtic aesthetic capacity he sees surfacing in the best English poetry is the last attribute listed: “natural magic.” The Celt’s proximity to the state of nature, indeed her near identification with that state, provides her with an amazingly “vivid”

ability to render its “charm.” Arnold goes on to define the aesthetic attribute to which these biological endowments give rise as that of “style.” Celticized English verse displays

a style which seems to have for its cause a certain pressure of emotion, and an ever-surg-ing, yet bridled, excitement in the poet, giving a special intensity to his way of delivering himself. In poetical races and epochs this turn for style is peculiarly observable . . . The turn for style is perceptible all through English poetry, proving, to my mind, the genuine poetical gift of the race; this turn imparts to our poetry the stamp of high distinction. (115-6)

The ideal poetic style which the Celtic element in the English equips them to produce depends on an “ever-surg-ing” emotion, a visceral “intensity” of utterance that is the formal manifestation of the natural magical capacity of this “poetical race.” The Celt’s semi-animal position on the evolutionary scale of human development, which renders her unfit for equality with the “greater nationality” of England in the political register, transmogrifies into a position of superiority and privilege in the aesthetic register.

Arnold even goes so far as to place Celtic “sentiment” at the heart of “the ideal genius.” However, as the above quotation already intimates, Arnold stops short of advocating an undiluted aesthetic Celticism, insisting that the Celt’s natural magic must be “bridled” in order to achieve its full potential. It is here, with the notion of a “bridling” of the Celt’s aesthetic gifts, that we can address the third problematic tendency of the Arnold criticism to date which I listed at the outset, namely the almost uniform tendency among those who emphasize the ethnological dimension of his writing to equate the Celt with the Hellene of *Culture and Anarchy*. A few brief examples from those critics I have already listed under this approach will serve to instantiate this problem. Young, first, describing the shift in focus that occurs between *The Study* and the later text, declares that “the Celts have been unceremoniously abandoned for the Greeks, with whose culture Arnold doubtless felt more comfortable identifying himself,” thereby implying that the two figures serve identical purposes in the structure of Arnold’s thinking (86).

Similarly, Daniel Williams refers to “the Hellenistic appreciation for nature found among the Celtic peoples,” in effect erasing any distinction between the two (41). Johnston, couching his description of Arnold’s utopian ideal for the future in the terms of “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time,” refers to this regenerated English age as “a more expansive Celtic/Hellenic epoch,” thus, again, rendering Celt and Hellene as identical (50). Even Pecora, who for the most part remains sensitive to the nuances of in Arnold’s “ethnology,” at times slips into equating the two, such as when he asserts that the “Celtic aptitude for sentiment and beauty” imbues the Saxon with *Hellenic* attributes (374).

Arnold, however, makes a series of very clear, analytically pivotal distinctions between these two figures which we must take note of if we are to map the architectonics of his ethnologically encoded ideology, both within *The Study* itself and across his late 1860s oeuvre. What Arnold seeks, first and foremost, is a way simultaneously to take advantage of the aesthetic potential of the Celt to infuse the English with “sweetness” and to avoid falling prey to the Celt’s perceived practical deficiencies, the racially inherent deficit of “light” that has stalled the national development in a state of Philistinism. Accordingly, just after he has emphasized its practical incapacity, Arnold quickly attempts to recuperate the Celtic humor for aesthetic production:

And yet, if one sets about constituting an ideal genius, what a great deal of the Celt does one find oneself drawn to put into it! Of an ideal genius one does not want the elements, any of them, to be in a state of weakness; on the contrary, one wants all of them to be in the highest state of power; but with a law of measure, of harmony, presiding over the whole. So the sensibility of the Celt, if everything else were not sacrificed to it, is a beautiful and admirable force. For sensibility, the power of quick and strong perception and emotion, is one of the very prime constituents of genius, perhaps its most positive constituent; it is to the soul what good senses are to the body, the grand natural condition of successful activity. Sensibility gives genius its materials; one cannot have too much of it, if one can but keep its master and not be its slave. Do not let us wish that the Celt had less sensibility, but that he had been more master of it. (89-90)

The Celt provides nothing less than the central “positive constituent” element of the “ideal genius,” which is “sensibility, the power of quick and strong perception and emotion,” a “beautiful and admirable force” which need only be “bridled” or “master”ed to round out its imperfectly “successful activity.” It is just this supplementary “law of measure, of harmony, presiding over the whole,” which Arnold discovers in Hellenism. Another passage describing the Celt’s inability to bring her gifts to material fruition begins to outline the distinction between her qualities and those of the Hellene:

Even in world of spiritual creation, he has never, in spite of his admirable gifts of quick perception and warm emotion, succeeded perfectly, because he never has had steadiness, patience, sanity enough to comply with the conditions under which alone can expression be perfectly given to the finest perceptions and emotions. The Greek has the same perceptive, emotional temperament as the Celt; but he adds to this temperament the sense of measure; hence his admirable success in the plastic arts, in which the Celtic genius, with its chafing against the despotism of fact, its perceptual straining after mere emotion, has accomplished nothing. (86)

The Hellenic genius advantageously supplies what the Celtic lacks, the sense of measure needed to channel raw emotive and perceptual powers toward artistic accomplishment. While the Hellene possesses an aesthetic capacity that matches the Celt’s, a capacity which is surely at the root of the mistaken critical tendency to equate the two, *he* also possesses the organizational capacity the Celt lacks, a masculine talent for “mastery” of his feminine sensibilities.

What emerges then is a tripartite schema involving three distinct ethnological entities, the Teutonic, the Celtic and the Hellenic, each possessing a different proportion of aesthetic and material-developmental abilities. In one compact description, again devoted to definition of the Celt’s “sentiment,” Arnold distinguishes the three figures and does so, importantly, according to their distinct *representational* propensities:

The Celt's quick feeling . . . gave his poetry style; his indomitable personality gave it pride and passion; his sensibility and nervous exaltation gave it a better gift still, the gift of rendering with wonderful felicity the charm of nature. The forest solitude, the babbling spring, the wild flowers, are everywhere in romance. They have a mysterious life and grace . . . they are nature's own children, and utter her secret in a way which makes them something quite different from the woods, waters, and plants of Greek and Latin poetry. Now of this delicate magic, Celtic romance is so preeminent a mistress, that it seems impossible to believe their power did not come into romance from the Celts. Magic is just the word for it,—the magic of nature; not merely the beauty of nature,—that the Greeks and Latins had; not merely an honest smack of the soil, a faithful realism—that the Germans had; but the intimate life of nature, her weird power and fairy charm. (132-3)

Arnold classifies the differences between the talents of Celt, Hellene and Saxon against the common backdrop of “nature,” and defines their relation to this common aesthetic referent as consisting respectively of “magic,” “beauty” and “a faithful realism.” The Celt offers a “weird power and fairy charm” in her poetic rendering of nature which is directly opposed to the tame, realist fidelity of the “humdrum” Saxon, and between these two extremes resides Hellenic art, which retains some of nature's raw affective power but mutes that power with an element of control and specular distance.²⁴ The Hellene walks a middle ground between Saxon and Celtic aesthetics.

Anthropological discourse at mid-century distinguished primitive and civilized races from one another in several interdependent registers. We have already witnessed what is perhaps the most crucial of these, the economic, and the methods by which political economists and others of the Victorian intelligentsia constructed the opposition between the Irish and English according to their putative racial bent either for or against the “prudent, self-denying industry” that is the engine of capitalist development. Within this morally-freighted economic discourse, the Teuton had a marked propensity for such industrious self-government whereas the Celt displayed a “barbarous” propensity for self-indulgent, dis-accumulative behavior. This disparity

in the *material* realm, however, rested on a parallel disparity in the *epistemological* realm, such that Teutonic capabilities derived from a racial proclivity toward rational, logical thought, while Celtic attributes derived conversely from a proclivity toward “magical” or, as the terminology of anthropologists such as E.B. Tylor and, later, James Frazer, had it, “homeopathic” mental habits.²⁵ As we attempt to parse the consequences of anthropological distinctions for the *aesthetic* theorization of the mid-Victorian period, this epistemological anatomy of primitive and civilized races becomes pivotal. The rational/magical epistemological binary devised by ethnological thinkers as a means of explaining biologically the drastically different states of material development of groups like the Irish and English also delimited the aesthetic practices toward which each group could be understood to tend. Given that modernization placed the English at an insular remove from original nature, it is therefore logical that Arnold figures the Teutonic aesthetic capacity as one which muffles nature’s uncanny power almost beyond recognition. Moreover, given that Teutonic modernization rests on a representational regime that is *rational* in substance, a regime which Arnold simply dubs “science,” it is therefore to be expected that he defines this Teutonic aesthetic as a *realist* one. Conversely, because the Celt was understood to reside outside modernity and to be directly immersed in original nature, it is logical that her aesthetic capacity renders nature’s “weird power and fairy charm” in a comparatively direct, unfiltered manner. Because Celtic epistemology is “homeopathic,” and therefore consists of a “sentimental” or primordially sensitive perceptual relation to its objects, it is logical for Arnold to define her aesthetic as a *magical* one.

Arnold’s maneuvers between the material and aesthetic registers via the epistemological one that conjoins them reveal the full complexity of his ethnological theories. Arnold reviles Philistinism, as a sort of degenerated version of material development wherein the English are

reduced to “machinery”-dependent automata, deficient in both light and sweetness. His political commitments demand that he define the path toward increased “light,” which is but a code word for reason, as racially inherent in the predominant Teutonic component of the English, because only such an equation between reason, perfected modernity and Anglo-Saxonness can ratify the role of the English as the imperial masters of the modern world. At the same time, however, reason and capitalist development, however far they might be pushed, cannot fully transcend the ontological deficit entailed in Philistine machinery because both, reason and capitalism, require the repression of natural energies that are necessary to attain a harmonious, humanist state of Culture. Thus, these modernizing forces of “light” having been defined as Teutonic, a counteragent to Philistine ontological alienation, “sweetness,” must be sought in a racial elsewhere, in the makeup of the figure defined as exterior to English modernity, the Celt. So as not to interfere with the material realm of politics and economics, this compensatory or palliative force must be confined to the aesthetic domain, a marginal position from which the Celt can exert a “sweet” influence with no chance of disturbing Anglo-Irish power relations.

The Study of Celtic Literature is clearly a very conflicted document, but it is a legible one. Arnold finds the Celt’s evolutionarily vestigial being a wellspring of energies capable of repairing the ontological damage wrought by capitalist development, but cannot bring himself to embrace the political correlative to this bold aesthetic gesture. Indeed, ultimately his conviction that the Celt is materially hapless and ineffectual spills over into his aesthetic analysis, with the result that his ideal aesthetic formula cannot remain strictly Celtic. It thus becomes Hellenic in direct prefiguration of the prescriptions of *Culture and Anarchy*. The term by which Arnold finally defines the Hellene’s paradigmatic Indo-European epistemology and, by implication, Hellenic aesthetics in the *Study*, “imaginative reason,” neatly encapsulates his desire to attain a

fusion of magic and rationality, instinctual fulfillment and material development, sweetness and light: in this compact formulation, Arnold manages to fuse the Celt's visionary "imaginative" abilities, her adroitness in perceiving nature through "the eye of the mind," and the Saxon's orderly, scientific, realist perceptual modality (125, 101). Through the emulation of this hybridized evolutionary figure, in Arnold's words, the English can effectively farm their own "mixed" biological resources and "use the German faithfulness to Nature to give us science . . . [and] use the Celtic quickness of perception to give us delicacy, and to free us from hardness and Philistinism" (147). The Hellene, as a figure who marries Teutonic "measure" to Celtic "sentiment," thus becomes the racial paragon of Arnold's Cultural ideal, and enables him to resolve the inherent ideological tension between his political disenfranchisement of the Irish Celt and his aesthetic celebration of her unique talents. Just as *Culture and Anarchy* will utilize ethnological transcoding to provide for the reformation of Teutonic Philistinism and "machinery," so *The Study* performs a slightly different transcoding, one complicated by the real political demands of Anglo-Irish colonial relations, toward this same end.

Commodity Fetishism and The (Abortive) Rebirth of Celtic Tragedy

In his excellent book *Modernism, Romance and the Fin De Siecle*, Nicholas Daly offers an attempted revision of Marx's theory of commodity fetishism which is directly relevant to my reading of Arnold's Celticism. Daly argues, in effect, that Marx's notion of the commodity fetish, which famously understands the emergence of this social phenomenon as an outcome of alienated labor, such that the social character of capitalist production becomes displaced into the world of objects, lending a quasi-magical aura to those objects which in reality consists of reified collective energies, is too simplistic to grapple with the diversity of objects circulating in the British market in the late nineteenth century. Specifically, Daly cites the presence of Egyptian

mummies in the domestic marketplace as eluding Marx's production-centered commodity schema, because these colonially-imported objects arrive to England from outside, not inside, its domestic economy, and therefore cannot be said to have a place in its relations of production. As Daly explains, referring to those late-nineteenth century stories which feature this mysterious foreign object,

the mummy suggests the existence of objects whose commodity nature is not the effect of production . . . If Marx wants to hold onto the rational kernel at the cent[er] of the magical commodity form, to show that the commodity's seeming autonomy is the effect of alienated lab[or], the mummy narrative implies that the relations of consumers and commodities are fundamentally irrational—or, in other words that they are driven by idiosyncratic desire . . . These objects clearly entered the British economy as commodities, yet it is unlikely that all or even most of them could be described in Marx's terms. (90-4).

Daly thereby accuses Marx of couching his commodity theory in “nostalgically domestic terms,” and of enacting a “strategy of containment” which “disavows the other-worldly nature of these commodities” (94-5).

To achieve this modification, however, I would argue that Daly simplifies Marx's theories to a significant degree. Although he does not account directly for the presence of externally-derived or imported commodities such as the mummy, or the many other foreign objects which would have been available to English consumers during the long run of the Crystal Palace Exhibition and after, Marx's understanding of the commodity's power provides a model of the relations between production and consumption which can easily be expanded to encompass these “foreign” objects. In essence, Marx's theory of alienated labor, to which I have already referred, argues that the repressive character of capitalist productive activity awakens human energies which are then siphoned off into the abstract system which “dominates” the laboring subject. Marx's theory of the commodity fetish, like Freud's theory of the sexual fetish, consists of an economy of energies wherein, once repressed in the subject or expropriated from

him/her, these energies then return to the subject in alienated or estranged form. In the *Economic and Philosophical Manuscripts*, Marx in fact warns against the sort of limited interpretation that Daly proffers, which views “the alienation of the worker only in one of its aspects, i.e., the worker’s relationship to the products of his labour,” and implores his readers to keep in mind, “estrangement is manifested not only in the result but in the act of production—within the producing activity itself . . . the product is after all but the summary of the activity of production. If then the product of labour is alienation, production itself must be active alienation, the alienation of activity, the activity of alienation” (74). Capitalist labor, in other words, produces an ontological deficit for the subject of which his/her relationship to the *direct product* of that labor is only one index among many.

The subject who experiences this deficit seeks to have his/her alienated energies returned to him/her in the marketplace, where the commodity, offering ontological restoration, then takes on the charge of the laborer’s projected desire for what has been lost. The model of commodity fetishism as *the return of the repressed* is just as applicable to the mummy as to domestically-produced objects, therefore, because foreign commodities, however external their presence to English relations of industrial production, are equally appropriable as sites of this projected desire. Capitalist labor produces an ontological deficit which commodities of any variety can function to reduce or restore. Insofar as we understand capitalist labor as necessarily “ascetic,” to return to the term that is triply Marx’s, Weber’s and Arnold’s, and as therefore enforcing a quasi-monastic demand of “mortification” of instinctual desire toward productive ends, commodity consumption of any kind serves the purpose of compensatory instinctual or sensuous gratification and fulfillment. Furthermore, the “rationalization” of human behavior that is the hallmark of capitalist modernity reinforces the place of colonial objects such as the mummy

within Marx's paradigm: these objects, culled from regions of the world which Victorian anthropology, and the middle-class ideological regime that was its counterpart, classified as primitively hedonistic and libidinally unfettered, could meet the consumer demand for the return of repressed instinctual energies all the better for their very foreignness.

Arnold's Celticism, if pushed a bit further, would entail the prescription of nothing less than a *modernist* primitivist aesthetic program for the recalibration of English middle-class ontology. *On the Study of Celtic Literature* is thus an exemplary instance of the long history, dating from the early modern period in the seventeenth century, of the effort to heal modernity's wounds via the aesthetic which John Guillory, Terry Eagleton, Peter Burgher and others have copiously documented.²⁶ Celtic "sweetness" offers an invaluable resource for reforming Philistine machinery and for reversing what Mary Poovey calls the "disaggregation" of social domains in capitalist modernity toward the utopian attainment of "harmonious" human development.²⁷ Indeed, Arnold's aesthetic ideas in *The Study* come remarkably close to those of Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy*, the text which many literary critics read as inaugurating the program of modernist primitivism toward just this utopian goal.²⁸ Just as Nietzsche anatomizes the history of aesthetics as a dialectical alternation between starkly opposed rational/logical and instinctual/passional polarities, the "Apollonian" and the "Dionysian," bemoaning the ontological state of late-nineteenth century Europe as overly Apollonian and insufficiently Dionysian, as what he calls an "Alexandrian" age, and therefore urges the *rebirth* of the Attic tragic form in which the two capacities were more properly proportioned, so Arnold divides aesthetics into the rational and instinctual polarities of the Teutonic and the Celtic and urges the Hellenic union of both capacities as a dialectical path toward overcoming the same overly-rational, repressive modernity in its particularly intensified English form. In the end, however,

Arnold stops short of advocating the kind of radical hierarchical reversal that Nietzsche advocates, wherein the primitive Dionysian experience would be paramount and the civilized Apollonian one merely its adjunct or handmaiden. In accord with his material ideological commitments, Arnold's Hellenic ideal in fact inverts this binary arrangement of primitive and civilized modalities to subordinate Celtic aesthetic powers to Teutonic rational control, thereby robbing his Cultural ideal of most of its radical ontological potential. As we shall see in the next chapter, whereas Nietzsche's plan for the rebirth of Attic tragedy would result in an avant-garde, aesthetically revolutionary program of *modernist* primitivism, Arnold's plan for a rebirth of Celtic tragedy, while it bears the same unconscious motives and utilizes fundamentally the same evolutionary terms, would instead end in a program of simple *romantic* primitivism, an aesthetic modality that produces comparatively conservative social results.

Chapter 2: Hegemonic Hybridity: British Imperial-Romantic Celticism in Fiction

As I hope to have demonstrated in the previous chapter, Matthew Arnold's criticism of the late 1860s represents a watershed in the history of British aesthetics. Arnold finds that the most promising solutions to the economic and political maladies of British civilization reside in the aesthetic, and, in the attempt to find precedent for the kind of radical aesthetic modality that would counteract Britain's material shortcomings, he locates this modality in the "primitive" racial makeup of the Celt. Ethnology provides the master code for Arnold's criticism as a whole, couching each of his tortuous ideological maneuvers within a racial-determinist epistemology, and as a consequence of this mentality, Arnold must cross over from strictly British concerns to embrace racially alien capacities identified as Irish in derivation. What is dissatisfactory in the culture of the metropole can be mitigated through an engraftment of culture from Britain's nearest colonized population, and the hybrid social modality that results will embody a utopian equilibrium between material development and instinctual fulfillment. Arnold's utopian modernity represents the *aufhebung* of the homologous antitheses capitalism/the aesthetic, Teuton/Celt, and England/Ireland.

The fact that Arnold persists in his political subordination of Ireland to Britain makes his criticism only more symptomatic of the anxieties inherent in normative mid-Victorian ontology. Arnold, in effect, displaces the political implications of his aesthetic embrace of Celtic "sentiment" in his endorsement of the Hellene as his ethnological ideal, and his final prescriptions thus attempt to resolve the dense contradictions between his economic, political, aesthetic and racial thought. Where contemporaries like Marx self-consciously antagonize the ontological trajectory of British capitalism, Arnold's opposition to the logics of this economic regime remains an impressionistic, half-conscious enterprise. It is, perhaps, because of this

impressionistic critical mode of engagement that Arnold is able to articulate simultaneously such a broad range of historical concerns, between which he seems shuttle with little regard for their discrete logics. However, the all-encompassing thrust of Arnold's formulations derives even more directly from his *ethnological* bent. Within this Victorian discourse, all areas of human endeavor, from the political, economic and aesthetic to the sexual, religious and epistemological, could be lumped together as emanations from an essential racial core. As a result of its *determinist* convictions, Victorian ethnological thinkers of the Arnold stripe can never attain full self-reflexivity for their social theories, which remain ineluctably tied to a *naturalizing* set of assumptions.

Caught within this early, essentialist phase of the history of anthropology, British social and aesthetic theorists sought out *racial* explanations for *cultural* problems, and racial solutions to those problems. If culture manifests biology, such solutions cannot be derived from a homogeneous English racial stock, because whatever problems obtain at a given historical moment themselves represent essential English tendencies. What is needed, then, is a redefinition of English biology itself as *already* hybridized and compound. Arnold's "composite English genius," a motley patchwork of Teutonic and Celtic elements, provides simultaneously for the solution to British cultural problems and the maintenance of a racial-determinist epistemology. As it contains both the rational, liberal and industrious seeds of the Teuton and also the instinctual, "sentimental" and anti-capitalist potentialities of the Celt, this "composite" constellation of Anglo-Irish attributes enables what might be called a *creative determinist* resolution of the various levels of Arnold's ideological desire. Arnold's criticism thus would seem both a highly symptomatic example of the contradictions latent in the normative ontology

of the mid-Victorian period and a highly idiosyncratic example of the imaginative possibilities for resolving them.

In this chapter, I seek to demonstrate how Arnold's answer to the problem of British ontology at mid-century represents the beginning of a heretofore unnoticed tradition in British aesthetics, a tradition controlled by what I have called the Anglo-Celtic dialectic. Within this tradition, the radical ideological solutions devised by Arnold become affirmed as something more than a personal eccentricity. This minor tradition of British Celticism manifests in two distinct phases within British fiction in the period from the fin-de-siecle to about 1925, phases distinguished by the intimately linked aesthetic and socio-political agendas of the authors representing them. The first phase, which I will refer to as the *imperial romance* phase and which will preoccupy the present chapter, is embodied in two British authors whose careers span the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Arthur Conan Doyle and Rudyard Kipling. I will argue that Conan Doyle and Kipling carry out a near-perfect fictional fulfillment of the ideological solutions painstakingly forged by Arnold in the late 1860s, whereby both authors envision Anglo-Celtic hybridity as an ideal route for resolving the practical problems presented by late Victorian British imperialism. Imperial romance fiction rests on an ethnological foundation which has yet to move beyond the determinist presuppositions from which Arnold wrote and thus, in its efforts to negotiate the anxieties of racial difference attending the imperial enterprise, the genre immanently demands Arnold-esque solutions of a creative determinist variety. Conan Doyle and Kipling find the hybrid figure of the Anglo-Celt an ideal resource for negotiating the tensions of racial difference produced by the British imperial enterprise, and, also like Arnold, they find this hybrid figure a commodious one for the maintenance of their fundamentally *imperialist* ideological agendas. Developing in fictional form the racial-aesthetic

ideology of Arnold's late 1860s criticism, these practitioners of imperial romance deploy Anglo-Celtic hybridity as an imaginative *suture* for binding together the putatively incompatible identities composing the British empire—the identities of colonizer and the colonized—and for shoring up a global British hegemony amid a threateningly different and resistant colonial world.

Where the first, imperial romance phase of British Celticism deploys Anglo-Celtic hybridity as an apparatus for maintaining British imperial hegemony, its second phase, which I will simply designate the modernist phase and which will preoccupy the next chapter, follows a very different agenda. While relying on the same basic ethnological and socio-historical raw materials, modernist British Celticism moulds them into an aesthetic form that is the mirror opposite of its imperial romantic predecessor. Where authors like Conan Doyle and Kipling duplicate the ideological pattern we have witnessed in Arnold, whereby the initially radical and progressive potential of colonial otherness to replenish and recalibrate the ontology of the British metropole becomes stunted by an ultimately conservative ideological agenda, modernist British authors seek instead to preserve this radical reformatory potential by embracing the “primitive” to a far greater extent. Specifically, I will examine how two “modernist” authors, Joseph Conrad and D.H. Lawrence, utilize Celtic attributes as the aesthetic vehicle for accessing and imaginatively inhabiting primitive otherness as defined by British imperialism and its ethnological accomplice in the Victorian period. If Conan Doyle and Kipling deploy this racial identity as a sort of suture or binding between the “civilized” and “primitive” peoples of the British Empire, a binding that will enable the shoring up the interlocking hierarchies of imperialism and capitalism, Conrad and Lawrence, conversely, deploy it as a resource for overturning these hierarchies and for forging a more completely “other” ontological modality for the subjects of British capitalist modernity.

As a concomitant to this socio-political agenda, modernist British Celticism also evinces a very different aesthetic bent than does its imperial romantic precursor, one nonetheless reliant on many of the problematic assumptions of Victorian anthropology whose operations we have already witnessed at work in the case of Arnold. In effect, the whole of British Celticism, from Arnold until the mid 1920s, represents the working out of the complex consequences of mid-Victorian race science, and even those authors whose ideologies are radically counter-hegemonic remain to a large extent bound by the terms forged by the British intelligentsia during this period. British Celticism functions as a sort of mathematical permutation of the aesthetic possibilities made available by this mid-Victorian *episteme*, and its development reaches a point of natural termination or immanent conclusion in the work of its most radical practitioner, D.H. Lawrence. This chapter attempts simultaneously to trace the manifestation of these possibilities in British fiction in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries and to conduct a meta-commentary on the larger historical implications of British Celticism for the understanding of metropolitan British society, of British imperialism/colonialism in general, of Anglo-Irish colonialism in particular, and of the capitalist dynamics undergirding each of these. While it is indeed my intention to demonstrate the extent to which the exploitation of (ostensibly) Celtic racial capacities by British authors is symptomatic of broader metropolitan and colonial concerns, my foremost aim is to document the manner in which British Celticism is specifically symptomatic of the unique historical concerns of the Anglo-Irish colonial context, concerns that many Irish Studies critics have rightly classed as “anomalous” in the history of the British Empire. British Celticist fiction will thus serve here as a vehicle for teasing out further implications of the Anglo-Irish case beyond those made available by Arnold, and also as a vehicle for broaching the

historical and aesthetic concerns which subsequent chapters of more strict Irish orientation will go on to explore from the opposite vantage of the colonial divide.

“White Chimpanzees”: Irish Racial Hybridity in Late Nineteenth-Century Britain

After decades of intense debate between historians and critics of nationalist bent and those of conservative or “revisionist” persuasion, something of a rapprochement has unfolded in recent years on the question of the colonial nature of Irish history. Prior to this shift, a tug-of-war raged between those convinced of the colonial character of Irish experience over the last four centuries and those convinced that Irish experience has been qualitatively indistinguishable from that of Britain, Ireland’s would-be oppressor, during this epoch. Given the intractability of their opposed methodologies and political convictions, it is fitting that the new school of interpretation in Irish Studies concedes some of the central points advanced by each camp, producing a kind of *aufhebung* which cancels and preserves the defining presuppositions of both. The new perspective reads Irish history as complicatedly colonial and non-colonial all at once, implicitly declaring the extreme assessments of earlier exponents on both sides, nationalist and “revisionist,” to have been simultaneously accurate and inaccurate, adequate and inadequate. Splitting the difference between their profoundly antithetical accounts, the current trend in Irish Studies has opened productive new space for the interrogation of Irish history in its social, political, economic and aesthetic aspects (to name just a few).

Ireland’s history presents an “anomalous” case in the annals of British colonialism.²⁹ In several historical registers, Irish experience since England’s plantation of the island in the early modern period cannot adequately be labeled either colonial or non-colonial/metropolitan. The analytical binaries of postcolonial theory, central among them being the opposition between colonizer and colonized, are only partially suited to illuminating Irish history, which while

displaying some features that are ineluctably colonial in character, features that link Ireland with other colonial territories within the British Empire from India to Africa and the Carribean, displays others which seem to conform better to the experience of the British colonizing power. This mixed colonial condition has precipitated new critical terminology in Irish Studies designed to reflect more mimetically the complexity of Irish experience. Proponents of this critical view have devised labels such as “domestic colony,” “metropolitan colony,” “semi-colonial” and “metrocolonial,” in order to render conceptually this liminal, hybrid quality of Ireland’s imperial position.³⁰ Where the canonical texts of Postcolonial studies, from Alberto Memmi’s *The Colonizer and the Colonized* to Franz Fanon’s *Black Skin, White Masks* and *The Wretched of the Earth* to Edward Said’s *Orientalism* and *Culture and Imperialism*, tend toward defining the experience of European imperialism in dualistic terms, such that participants in specific colonial histories are either colonizer or colonized, Irish Studies has persuasively demonstrated that the case of Anglo-Irish colonialism blurs the boundaries of such clear-cut binary oppositions. Irish history is a colonially *hybrid* entity, compounded of elements both colonial and metropolitan, and thus demands an analytic which responds to its immanent concerns in a way that traditional Postcolonial methodology cannot.

There are at least five aspects of Irish history which serve to highlight the *hybridity* of its imperial situation. Three of these have received the majority of critical attention and elaboration within recent Irish studies. A brief outline of these aspects is necessary to provide historical context for the particular concerns raised by British Celticism in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, as in many ways this literary corpus derives its raw materials directly from Irish historical sources. The first aspect of Irish colonial hybridity provides a concise means of outlining Ireland’s divergence from standard postcolonial concepts. As Joe Cleary has argued in

a very insightful recent essay, Irish society under British rule consisted of at least three different strata, while other British colonial contexts consisted, generally, of only two. Cleary draws this distinction based on a taxonomy of colony types borrowed from the American sociologist George Fredrickson, whereby European colonies from the seventeenth century on are grouped into four categories: “administrative colonies,” “plantation colonies,” “mixed settlement colonies” and “pure settlement colonies” (110). According to this taxonomy, the vast majority of British colonies during the eighteenth and nineteenth century fall within the first category, that of “administrative” colonies, which “aimed at military, economic, and administrative control of a politically strategic region and were never settled by Europeans on a mass scale” (110). An example of this type of colony would be British India, where the British occupying presence was fairly miniscule when compared numerically with the native population whose subjection and exploitation it “administered” militarily, economically and politically from the mid-eighteenth through the mid-twentieth centuries. According to these criteria Britain’s African and Caribbean colonies, as well as others like Hong-Kong, would also fall within the “administrative” category. This observation at once illuminates the reason for Postcolonialism’s predominantly *binary* analytical tendencies: the foundational figures within Postcolonialism all mount their theories on specific colonial histories that are “administrative” in character, and which thereby consist of a neat, stark division between colonizing and colonized groups. In contrast to these histories, Ireland, from the seventeenth century onward, constitutes an instance of “mixed settlement” colonialism, in which a colonial settler class over time came to function as a “buffer” between the native and imperial classes. Thus did the English settlers of the sixteenth century transform, after centuries of residence in Ireland and intermingling with its “native” Gaelic or Celtic subjects, into a liminal social group compounded of both Celtic and Saxon loyalties and mores, a

group appropriately known as the “Anglo-Irish.” Irish “mixed settlement” colonialism presents a tripartite social hierarchy rather than the bipartite one that obtains in “administrative” contexts, and thus in terms of its social makeup cannot be confronted adequately by standard postcolonial methods.

In addition to its social liminality or hybridity, a mixed colonial state emblemized in miniature by the Anglo-Irish class, Ireland also displayed a mixed character in terms of its position and role within the British Empire. While the English settlement of Ireland in the seventeenth century and its subsequent political, economic and military domination of the island affirms in no uncertain terms its status as a British colony, the significant mobility of the Irish within the structures of the Empire more broadly demonstrate their relative status superiority over their “administrative” counterparts.³¹ As Keith Jeffery has argued, the prominent role they played in the British military meant that while colonized at home, the Irish functioned as *colonizers* abroad, such that on average, to cite one example, forty-five percent of the British army in the Indian province of Bengal was Irish from 1825 to 1850 (94). Along the same lines, Kevin Kenny has noted that during the Indian “Mutiny” of 1857, half of the 14,000 soldiers of the East India Company, “and perhaps 40 per cent of the 26,000 regular British troops in India, were Irish,” thus placing them in the ambivalent position of carrying out the imperialist suppression of an anti-colonial insurrection at the same historical moment in which they were advocating domestically for a termination of British rule through the “Repeal” of the Anglo-Irish Union (104-5). Alvin Jackson describes the conflicted and contradictory position of the Irish within the broader British imperial setting eloquently and succinctly:

One of Ireland’s defining qualities was that it occupied a half-way house between Britain and the Empire . . . for Ireland was not only a half-hearted colony, it was also a half-hearted component of the imperial metropolis; and Irish people who might be constrained at home also had free access to the Empire and to the social and

economic opportunities it provided. For Ireland, therefore, the Empire was simultaneously a chain and a key: it was a source both of constraint and of liberation. (136)

The Irish, constrained at home by the straightjacket of British imperial rule, enjoyed a freedom and authority abroad akin to that of the British themselves. While their domestic experience was imperially homologous to that of British colonial subjects of India, Africa and the Caribbean, within those colonial settings the Irish position was homologous to that of their imperial masters. Again here, we might say that where “administrative” colonial experience was *either/or*, Ireland’s “mixed” condition was instead *neither/nor*.

A third, more nebulous category of Irish colonial liminality or hybridity that has received much critical attention in recent years is easily deducible from the first two—social makeup and imperial position—namely *culture*. While its colonial subordination determined that Ireland remain distinct from Britain in many ways, its proximity to the ruling power drew it gravitationally into the sphere of influence of Britain’s domestic culture. In addition to the English heritage of the Anglo-Irish settler class, the Anglo-Irish Union, by functionally dissolving many of the political and economic boundaries between the two islands, precipitated a long process of cultural assimilation by the Irish in the nineteenth century, a process that was accelerated by the annulment of the Catholic Penal Laws in 1829. Particularly within the southeastern English “Pale” region, and most fully within the epicenter of that region, the city of Dublin, Irish culture gradually assumed the civilizational norms, institutions and mores of the British metropole. The persistence of the colonial hierarchy throughout this period determined, however, that Ireland’s cultural “Union” with Britain remain partial and incomplete, so that within the cultural domain Ireland resided in a liminal state very much homologous to its “mixed” social makeup and imperial position. In the words of the Irish historian F.S.L. Lyons,

“Ireland seemed doomed by a malignant fate to occupy the very worst position in the English scale of operations—too distant to be understood, too close to be ignored” (13). While “proximity and history alike seemed to dictate a policy of assimilation which might eventually raise the country to the status of an English region,” Ireland’s colonial subalternity persistently modulated this assimilative course with reassertions of Irish difference (13). In Lyons’ account the Irish, both like and unlike the British, presented their rulers with “a problem which seemed familiar but was in fact outside the normal range of English experience”; a perplexing compound of similarity and difference, Ireland’s cultural composition “helps to explain the fluctuations of policy from indifference to reform to coercion, and back again to indifference” on the part of the imperial power throughout the nineteenth century (13). Lyons goes so far as to define the mindset of the class most emblematic of Irish liminality, the Anglo-Irish, as “schizophrenic” as a result of its tortuous combination of native and imperial cultural elements. The deeply fraught, cognitively dissonant experience of this border class, and indeed of all those Irish caught within the “Pale” of metropolitan British culture, placed them in a state of intense contradiction.

The final two aspects of the hybridity of Irish colonial experience have been less remarked than those I have outlined thus far. It is with these two aspects or domains that the bulk of this study is most concerned both in this chapter and those to follow. The first of these is the *economic*. Again here, Ireland displays elements that align with both halves of the standard postcolonial binary of colonizer/colonized. From the early seventeenth century until around nineteen hundred, the rural native population of Ireland found itself caught up in Britain’s relations of production. The settlement of the island by English planters at the outset of this era effectuated the economic subordination of the Celtic or Gaelic Irish to England’s imperial representatives, those who would become the Anglo-Irish landlord class. Throughout the

seventeenth, eighteenth and nineteenth centuries, to differing extents, the native populace was forced to labor and generate agricultural surplus value for this ruling class, and their position within the British economy thus rested on their social, political and religious subordination to the metropole. In contrast to this politically, socially and often militarily enforced state of economic exploitation, however, especially in the later nineteenth century Irish society, as a byproduct of its broader cultural anglicization, achieved a state of parity in several respects with British society. Particularly in urban centers like Belfast and Dublin, the Irish inhabited an economic lifeworld in many ways identical to that of domestic Britain. Especially in the areas of the Irish economy related to *consumption*, Irish subjects, as a valuable target audience for the sales of domestically-produced British commodities, were functionally indistinguishable from their British counterparts. Many of the same cultural attractions available to the British, from the music hall to art exhibitions and theatrical productions, were made available to the urban Irish, and the burgeoning British advertising industry of the latter nineteenth century addressed itself to Irish and British subjects in an undifferentiated manner. Thus, while the Irish in some segments of the imperial economy found themselves subordinated and exploited to a degree comparable to Britian's other colonized populations in India, Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere, in others they found themselves incorporated and *interpellated* as peers and equals of the British to an extent unimaginable for those populations.³²

In subsequent chapters I will probe more deeply the profound consequences and far-reaching implications of the hybridity of Ireland's position in the British imperial economy, a category of hybridity which of course informs, and is in turn informed by, the foregoing categories of social makeup, imperial position and culture. This chapter, however, is more directly concerned to elaborate the significance of another category of Irish colonial hybridity,

namely *race*. In my analysis of Matthew Arnold's deployment of race categories for socially reformative aesthetic purposes, I demonstrated the manner in which he utilizes "race" as a pseudo-scientific metalanguage or master code for grounding and sanctioning a wide variety of non-racial assessments and prescriptions. Though Victorian "ethnology" held pretensions to scientific objectivity, the case of Arnold—and the cases of many other British authors around mid-century—highlights the striking extent to which race was a construct responsive to other historical forces. Hence, when I refer to Irish racial "hybridity," I intend by this term something very different from a literal biological commingling or mixture. Indeed, the racial definition of the Irish in the latter half of the nineteenth century, part of which we have already glimpsed through the lens of *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, was essentially a crystallization of the more material domains of "mixed" Irishness outlined above. In other words, in keeping with the *episteme* of Victorian ethnology/anthropology, Ireland's racial status at this time is a reflection of the political, social, cultural, imperial and economic issues immanent to its colonial makeup. It is not at all surprising, given Victorian ethnology's penchant for essentializing civilizational elements like these, that the British racial definition of the Irish displays a "mixed" character homologous to its liminality in the material domain. The obverse of this epistemological phenomenon, whereby race theory serves as an index or precipitate of material forces, is that such race-based negotiations as the authors addressed in this chapter undertook inevitably carried with them material implications. In other words, though this chapter is most explicitly concerned with imaginative visions of Anglo-Celtic racial hybridity, each such vision, on the part of both imperial-romantic and modernist fictional practitioners, communicates a coded socio-political ideology relative to more strictly material concerns—foremost among which, for my purposes here, are British imperialism and its capitalist concomitant.

My analysis of Irish racial hybridity is heavily indebted to the work of L.P. Curtis, Jr., whose canonical *Apes and Angels* remains unequalled as a resource for studying British perceptions of the Irish in the late nineteenth century nearly four decades after its first publication. Curtis demonstrates that popular perceptions of the Irish reflected in British “comic weeklies” like *Punch* responded directly to Irish nationalists’ political and military challenge to British rule during such key moments as the Fenian disturbances of the late 1860s and the Land Wars of the 1880s. Curtis’s survey of the comic illustrations of British artists like George Cruikshank and John Tenniel establishes convincingly that at such moments of heightened Irish resistance to British imperial hegemony the British middle classes came to perceive the Irish through a lens colored increasingly by racial difference. Specifically, in reaction to the Irish nationalist threat, a threat punctuated by the dynamite campaigns of the Irish Republican Brotherhood or Fenians, British weeklies undertook a concerted effort to “simianize” the Irish and define them as evolutionarily retrograde. The stock depiction of the Fenian revolutionary as a “hybrid ape-man” or “Celtic Caliban” functioned to define the Irish as racially “mixed” in a manner corresponding to their broader colonial liminality. If the Irish were both metropolitan and colonial, both colonizers and colonized, both politically subordinate and partners in governmental “Union” with Britain, both economically exploited by the imperial power and treated as equals with British consumers, and if their culture was simultaneously Anglicized and traditionally Celtic, it is logical and natural that Irishness as a racial category would occupy a middle position along the scale of British race classifications, a position halfway between the “civilized” British and the “primitive” colonial peoples scattered throughout their empire in India, Africa, the Caribbean and elsewhere.

As a result of these complicated overdetermining factors, and as a result of Irish

nationalist agitation which accentuated Ireland's status as "a problem which seemed familiar but was in fact outside the normal range of English experience," in Lyons' description, the British came to define the Irish as racially liminal, as a race of "white negroes," in the popular print media surveyed by Curtis. As Murray Pittock, one of several authors who have sought to build on Curtis's seminal book since its publication, summarizes the matter, such "terminology is striking: citizens of the core state were being described in terms normally reserved for the inhabitants of the most far-flung and 'savage' of its possessions" (26).³³ As their threat to British society and the British imperial status quo mounted, the Irish were subject to an *evolutionary demotion* of sorts. Their violent behavior inspired the panicked British class to revoke their "white" credentials and to re-codify them as the evolutionary kin of the "primitive" "black" peoples residing in fully colonized sites throughout the globe. One of the more famous instances of the racial blackening of the Irish during the late nineteenth century is worth quoting here for illustrative purposes. The text is *Charles Kingsley: His Letters and Memories of His Life*, a collection of snippets compiled by his wife Francis and published posthumously. She recalls how after a period of serious illness "A few weeks' rest in Ireland . . . refreshed him greatly" and that "from Markree Castle, where he killed his first salmon, a long coveted experience" of his, Kingsley wrote home on 4 July 1860:

I have done the deed at last—killed a real actual live salmon, over five pounds in weight. This place [the castle] is full of glory—very lovely, and well kept up . . . But 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 there are not only many more of them than of old, but that they are happier, better, more comfortably fed 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 skins, except where tanned by exposure, are as white as ours . . . (236)

Kingsley describes himself as "haunted" by the native Irish residing in the countryside around the stately castle, and his anxiety takes rhetorical shape in his categorization of the Irish as

“white chimpanzees,” as a class of “hybrid ape-men” whose simultaneous similarity to and difference from himself and his “race” renders them unfit for inclusion among either the human or the animal kingdom.

Indeed Kingsley’s characterization, aside from confirming the accuracy of the thesis of *Apes and Angels*, seems to have found a sympathetic audience during the late Victorian period, to the remarkable extent that in 1892 the administrators of the London Zoo christened a newly-imported specimen of African chimpanzee “Paddy,” after the nickname of the Fenian caricatures of the comic weeklies (Curtis 101). A literally simian Irishman was thus put on display to incarnate the broader figural trends of British anti-Irish prejudice. The overtly *evolutionary* argument of this prejudice was that the Irish, by virtue of cultural difference and political resistance, shared a kinship with the primitive black races of which British imperialists fancied themselves the patriarchal stewards, a kinship which rendered suspect their membership among the white races residing at the top of the great chain of Darwinian being. The Tenniel cartoon “Time’s Waxworks,” from the New Year’s Eve, 1881 issue of *Punch*, emphatically asserts their evolutionary demotion in association with the dynamite campaigns of the Fenians (Curtis, *Apes* 24). Here, Father Time, as curator of a sort of evolutionary museum of wax statues, introduces Punch (the stock figure of the respectable middle-class British male) to a heavily simianized Fenian, a figure of “anarchy” preceded chronologically by what seems to be an African tribesman, complete with the “savage” regalia of headdress, spear and shield. Receding in the historical background is what seems to be an Indian Maharaja. Taken together, the simian menagerie confirms Curtis’s reading of the cartoon museum as “made up of annual imperial ‘problems’” (24). Ireland’s status as the most recent and most pronounced problem of Tenniel’s “chamber of horrors” places its subjects in equivalence with those “black” races of India and

Africa that Victorian ethnology, the epistemological handmaiden of the British Empire, defined as animalistically primitive or savage. The pioneering prejudice of Tenniel and his colleagues at *Punch* seems to have exerted a remarkable degree of transatlantic influence as well, as is evidenced by the cartoon “The King of A-Shantee,” published in the American weekly *Puck* in 1882, which depicts a simianized Paddy figure lounging outside his hut, the implication being that the Irish Celt’s impoverished culture, emblemized by his dilapidated “shanty,” renders him the evolutionary counterpart of the black African tribe of *Ashanti* (Curtis, *Apes* 63).

It is not difficult to find further instances of the simianization or Africanization of the Irish within the texts of Victorian ethnology itself. *The Races of Britain*, the 1885 study by John Beddoe, ex-president of the London Anthropological Society, subscribes to the larger cultural trend in a number of striking ways. Beddoe’s introductory remarks immediately establish Irishness as the primary racial conundrum to be resolved by his research:

It was the ancient controversy respecting the colour of the hair of the Kelts, then burning briskly enough, and even now still smouldering, that led me to begin systematic numerical observations in physical anthropology. Very little reading sufficed to show me that it was a difficult task to ascertain the complexional peculiarities of the Kelts of 2000 years ago, it was a no less puzzling one to determine those of their supposed representatives of the present day. (1)

Beddoe affirms the racial amorphousness of the Celts as the prime motivator of his anthropological research. While Beddoe goes on to observe, measure and analyze Celts of Welsh, Cornish and Scottish provenance in addition to their Irish representatives, and while Beddoe claims that “it is of little use to appeal to current opinion” to parse this indeterminacy, he soon indicates that it is Irish Celts with whom he is most preoccupied and that his conception of the Irish is significantly colored by the popular prejudice reflected in *Punch*. Where one would expect a scientific treatise such as *The Races of Britain* to attempt to observe methodological objectivity, Beddoe injects his narrative with a number of anecdotal digressions that loudly

announce his anti-Irish bias. Near the end of the introductory section, titled “On Methods,”

Beddoe recalls a recurring theme of the Irish leg of his research:

Our traveling party consisted of Dr. Barnard Davis, Dr. T. Wise, Mr. Windele, and myself. Whenever a likely little supply of natives was encountered the two archeologists got up a dispute about the relative size and shape of their own heads, which I was called in to settle with the calipers. The unsuspecting Irishman usually entered keenly into the debate, and before the little drama had been finished were eagerly betting on the sizes of their own heads, and begging to have their wagers determined in the same manner. (8)

Beddoe’s party’s “methods,” confirming Curtis’s account of the “craniological” methodological bent of late Victorian anthropology, pretend to scientific objectivity by application of the measuring device of “calipers,” one of the primary tools with which British ethnologists deployed the prejudiced evolutionary theories of continental figures like the Dutch Pieter Camper. This objectivity is demonstrably compromised through the intrusion into Beddoe’s narrative of the popular stereotype of the gambling Irishman, the carousing, fun-loving but dim-witted Celt who, though unaware of his role in the scene as an object of scientific observation, enthusiastically engages in the research party’s efforts as a newfound source of entertainment.

Beddoe’s methodological objectivity is further compromised by his central analytical formula, the “index of nigrescence.” While critics have sometimes misunderstood the etymological orientation of the word “nigrescence” in Beddoe’s study—Beddoe means not literal “Africanness,” as many readers seem to assume, but rather simple “darkness” of skin pigment, hair and eye color—there is undoubtedly an aspect to his index which participates in the widespread British cultural blackening of the Irish Celt. In the statistical tables which organize the results of his research in the British Isles, it is Ireland that demonstrates the greatest degree of “nigrescence.” Affirming the thorough dependence of Victorian ideas of race on elements of material culture, Beddoe lists the lowest “nigrescence” in Ireland as occurring in Dublin, the

capital city of the British “Pale” and of Anglicized Ireland, and goes on to list the highest degree of “nigrescence” as occurring in Galway, in the farthest reaches of Ireland’s extant native, “Celtic” cultural region, known as the “Gaeltacht.” While the Anglicized citizenry of Dublin manifest an “index” of only 14, the pristinely Celtic inhabitants of Galway display an astonishing “nigrescence” of 89.5. Again in keeping with Curtis’s findings, Beddoe utilizes the supplementary craniological criterion of “prognathism,” the elongation of human facial features into an ape-like semblance, as a gauge of overall “nigrescence,” and his anti-Irish proclivities unsurprisingly lead him to conclude with regard to this simian feature that “while Ireland is apparently its present centre, most of its lineaments are such as lead us to think of Africa as its possible birthplace; and it may be well, provisionally, to call it Africanoid . . .” (11).

The profound degree to which the simianization and Africanization of the Irish controlled that portion of the British anthropological *episteme* devoted to its deeply perplexing colonial neighbor is evident in the mindset of Ireland’s greatest political advocate in England, Prime Minister William Ewart Gladstone. Gladstone’s bold support for Irish Home Rule, a proposal for domestic governmental autonomy for Ireland beneath an overarching maintenance of British colonial rule, split the British Liberal party asunder in the elections of 1886, as its dissenting wing sided with the conservative Tory minority against Gladstone’s Bill, in turn ousting him as P.M. Later the same year, Gladstone published a pamphlet titled “The Irish Question” designed to vindicate his failed advocacy of Irish self-government. Amid many other rhetorical maneuvers deployed to this end, Gladstone directly invokes the Ireland-Africa analogy:

No longer is the idea of holding Ireland by attachment, instead of holding it by force, illustrated by the supposed parallel of the attempt to govern by attachment, instead of police, the criminal population of London. No more is the proposal of self-government for Ireland compared with the proposal of self-government for the Hottentots. No more is heard the loud demand for measures of repression . . . So that, while a large majority of the present House was elected to oppose the

measures of the bygone Ministry, a much less large, but still a decided majority, has bound itself not less strongly to liberal measures of self-government for Ireland. (18-9)

In spite of his ministry's electoral defeat, Gladstone affirms a general liberality in the British view of Ireland that distinguishes the contemporary political and popular-perceptual scene from the preceding era of Irish Africanization, the era in which "the proposal of self-government for Ireland [was] compared with the proposal of self-government for the Hottentots," the "negroid" peoples of southern Africa so often invoked as the epitome of apelike "savagery." Gladstone, in other words, finds it necessary to justify his political ideology by challenging the now-hegemonic Celtic-African equivalency propagated by print institutions like *Punch*, academic institutions like the Victorian Anthropological Society, and popular entertainment institutions like the London Zoo during the 1860s, 70s and 80s.

All told, the popular and academic campaign to blacken and simianize the Irish Celt in the late nineteenth century proves symptomatic of the problematic colonial and cultural status of Ireland in general, the liminality and indeterminacy, the hybrid mix of familiarity and foreignness that left Charles Kingsley "haunted" by his travels there. If the whiteness of the Irish came into question, there was never any question, however, of a complete erasure of that whiteness. Ireland's cultural commonalities with Britain, its dynamic role within the British imperial enterprise, the permeability of boundaries between the two nations and their basic similarity of pigment, all determined that Anglo-Irish colonialism continue to occupy a middle ground between fully "civilized," metropolitan status and fully "primitive," colonial status. The sheer volume and diversity of the cultural output devoted to distancing the Irish racially testifies to an anxiety that can only arise from their being too close for comfort to their British rulers. The net effect of this cultural campaign can only have been to affirm Ireland's similarity to *and*

its difference from its imperial neighbor. Phrases like “white negro” and “white chimpanzee” are fitting ethnological or anthropological encapsulations of this “mixed” colonial condition. For all their frenetic attempts to bestialize the Irish, in the last instance the British could not but scale back this blackwashing of its “partner” in Union, as Curtis himself ultimately describes in *Apes and Angels*:

If educated and responsible Victorians had formed such unfavorable impressions of Irish Celtic character, their images of Negroes and other non-white peoples were even less flattering, and Irishmen could at least console themselves with the fact that they occupied a rung on most, although not all, of the English-made ladders of racial development somewhat above their African cousins. (15)

The demonization of the Irish Celt could never be complete because his/her role in the British imperial project was indispensable. The Irish thus received the imperial consolation prize, as it were, of relative mobility, freedom and favored status compared to the entirely subordinate and “nigrescent” colonial peoples of the rest of the Empire.

This chapter represents an attempt to gauge the ramifications of the hybrid, “mixed” racial status to which the Irish were relegated as a result of their ambivalent and contradictory position within the British Empire. One further passage from Curtis begins to outline the particular aspect of this racial liminality with which my analysis of British Celticist fiction is most concerned. In a remarkable passage, Curtis describes how Irishness as a medial racial entity could help palliate the existential anxieties of the British in the newly-bestialized Darwinian era of the latter nineteenth century:

However fragmentary and tenuous the evidence may be, there are clues in both Victorian literature and caricature which indicate that those who were most disturbed by the prospect of being cousin to apes and monkeys derived some temporary relief by treating the Irish and other lesser breeds around the world as a buffer or evolutionary *cordon sanitaire* between themselves and anthropoid apes. (103)

If the definition of Irishness as a sort of evolutionary halfway house between “Negroid” savagery

and white Saxon or Teutonic civilization derived from the real social, cultural, political, economic and imperial lineaments of Ireland, it also brought an unanticipated, ancillary benefit, namely to provide a psychic “buffer or evolutionary *cordon sanitaire*” between the British and the primordial origins with which Darwin’s seismic *epistemic* shift linked them, and which they took “negroid” peoples to represent. The Irish provided the “missing link” between the British and their colonial subjects.

This function of Irishness as an imperial mediator or buffer between the British and the “primitive” or “savage” peoples of Africa, India and the Caribbean finds an aesthetic expression in the work of the authors I have listed above, all of whom deploy Celtic racial conceptions in their fiction. These British writers follow in the footsteps of Arnold’s *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, which envisions racial amalgamation between the English and Irish as a naturalizing strategy for the resolution of Anglo-Irish political tensions in the late 1860s. While Arnold defines the Celt in nearly wholesale primitive terms, a definition which then positions Anglo-Celtic hybridity as the ideal racial agency for binding Irishness to the antithetical racial element of Teutonic Englishness, these authors recognize what the career of the simianized Paddy or “Celtic Caliban” unmistakably affirms, namely, that “Irishness” as a socio-historical entity was itself functionally a hybrid compound of both Celtic and Saxon characteristics. In other words, by virtue of the many different categories of Irish liminality I have adduced, Irishness as a racial identity was itself a kind of Anglo-Celtic hybridity already. In its imperial-romantic phase, British Celticist fiction thus takes advantage of the mixed, hybrid positionality of Irishness to accomplish within a fully global imperial domain the fantastic ideological project which Arnold pursues within the circumscribed setting of the British Isles, namely to resolve cultural and political tensions between metropole and colony and secure British hegemony across that

colonial divide by envisioning a commingling of the opposed elements of colonial difference within a single racial agency. In its subsequent modernist phase, British Celticist fiction also relies on a hybrid conception of Irishness as a mediating, binding agency between civilized and primitive forces, but it does so with the antithetical purpose of short-circuiting British imperial hegemony through the embrace and imaginary inhabitation of the putatively “other” racial states of Britain’s colonized peoples. What these antithetical aesthetic moments share above and beyond their differences is a direct reliance on the widespread Victorian figuration of the Irish as metro-colonial hybrids, as subjects whose supposedly liminal racial makeup renders them an invaluable resource for the exploration of the binary, antipodal evolutionary states on both sides of the British imperial interface.

Additionally, and crucially, both phases of British Celticism also share a reliance on a notion of Celtic aesthetic capacities closely akin to that of Arnold in the *Study*. Arnold, as we have seen, defines the Celt as controlled by “sentiment,” a primordially sensitive epistemological modality which he opposes to the cold, “humdrum” rationality of the industrious Teuton. It is this preternatural epistemology that renders Celtic aesthetics a wellspring of energies capable of replenishing the desiccated ontology of British capitalist civilization, and which, when combined with the Teutonic talent for material development, enables the reformation and righting of British capitalist modernity through the installment of the utopian ontological regime of Hellenic Culture. Though the actual composition of Irish society at the time Arnold wrote displays a mixture of traditional and modern elements, elements essentialized as respectively Celtic and Saxon, Arnold’s Irishness is predominantly “primitive” by conventional anthropological measure. British Celticist fiction relies on this predominantly primitive aesthetic definition and Ireland’s liminal, hybrid civilizational makeup simultaneously. It figures its Celts as imperial

mediators between the civilized and the primitive, but it also deploys—to differing degrees, according to the ideological purposes of the authors in question—the primitivist figuration of Celtic epistemology and aesthetics as a narrative device for carrying out that act of mediation. Thus the analysis of British Celticist texts and their historical and literary implications demands simultaneous attention to how each author exploits both actual Irishness, and the liminal, pop-ethnological racial conception scaffolded by it, *and* its fantastic Arnoldian ethnological incarnation as a fetishized wellspring of “primitive,” anti-capitalist aesthetic potential. We shall see in what follows that each of the authors selected as exemplary of this minor but significant literary heritage, from Arthur Conan Doyle and Rudyard Kipling to Joseph Conrad and D.H. Lawrence, enacts an idiosyncratic and unique utilization of Irish Celtic traits toward simultaneously aesthetic and socio-political ends. Beyond the many idiosyncracies of their Celticist projects, however, there emerges a striking and revealing commonality across them, whereby the figure of the Irish Celt proves uniquely suited to engaging, negotiating and finally resolving, in the ethnological register in general and in the aesthetic register in particular, the complicated, anxiety-ridden interface of British colonial difference.

Celticism and Irish Nationalism in Conan Doyle’s *The Hound of the Baskervilles*

At the beginning of Arthur Conan Doyle’s 1903 story “The Adventure of the Empty House,” the opening tale of *The Return of Sherlock Holmes*, Watson collides unexpectedly on the streets of London with a disguised Holmes, supposedly killed by his arch-nemesis Moriarty a decade earlier, knocking loose from his seemingly resurrected friend’s arms a bundle of books, for only one of which does Watson note the title: “The Origin of Tree Worship” (451). This fictional title recalls rather directly one of the thematically central chapters of one of the canonical texts of Victorian anthropology, J.G. Frazer’s *The Golden Bough*: “The Worship of

Trees.” By alluding in such a seemingly direct way to Frazer’s *summa anthropologica*, published first in 1890 and then augmented steadily with twelve further volumes until 1915, Conan Doyle effectively clinches what was always a tacit but crucial subtext of the Holmes *oeuvre*, namely, its reliance on anthropology/ethnology as an epistemological framework for making legible the social threat of criminality in the late Victorian period. The disciplinary affiliations of “The Adventure of the Empty House” affirm directly what earlier Holmes stories assume silently, that normative Victorian society represents an ideal evolutionary stage, an ontological state requiring protection from criminal hordes whose animalistic impulses and subversive designs threaten to reverse the nation’s developmental trajectory.

Such a reversal is encapsulated neatly in the central term by which Stephen Arata focuses his exploration of the sub-discipline of *criminal anthropology* as promulgated by figures like Max Nordau and Cesare Lombroso, “degeneration.” In this tale of the second coming of late Victorian Britain’s preeminent fictional social guardian, the superhero-like detective whom Watson once dubbed the “benefactor of the race,” Conan Doyle positions Holmes as a sort of civilizational physician, preserving the pristine health of the social body from the pathogen-like dangers of “degenerate” criminality (“Red-Headed” 224). As Arata’s study of criminal-anthropological discourse at the British *fin-de-siecle* demonstrates, popular perceptions of criminal activity in wake of the Darwinian turn came to be colored by evolutionary assumptions, assumptions which linked the figure of the criminal with other developmental foils for the British like the colonial “savage” or “primitive” and his cousin, the “anthropoid ape.” By embedding the Holmes *oeuvre* within this discourse, Conan Doyle defines his detective’s professional goal as the maintenance of a kind of anthropological legality; that is, legality as defined by Holmes is a sort of evolutionary threshold beyond which British society cannot be allowed to regress. This

anthropological-legal dynamic demands intensive engagement with Britain's ethnological and evolutionary "others," those "primitive" agents and forces that must be ferreted out and cordoned off from the middle-classes to preserve them in ontological homeostasis.³⁴

Indeed, the Holmes text whose stunning popular success in 1902 seems to have provided the commercial inspiration for Holmes's resurrection, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, demonstrates a remarkably direct engagement with anthropological and colonial themes. The extensiveness and intensity of this engagement has even led some recent critics to argue that Conan Doyle's ideological allegiances in this final Holmes novel lie more with the colonial peoples and evolutionarily "primitive" forces confronted by the sleuth than with the "civilized" metropolitan social order whose greatest protector and advocate he has the reputation of being. Nils Claussen, for example, building on Arata's study of late Victorian "degeneration," argues that the novel and Holmes himself exhibit "the paradox of the detective story" genre, whereby the fictional form ostensibly devoted to rationality, order and control collapses into the binary opposites of these terms as a result of its partial reliance on a "Gothic" narrative modality (77). Claussen asserts, in other words, that these evolutionarily retrograde forces infect the detective genre ineradicably, revealing beneath its putatively "civilized" priorities a host of covert "primitive" sympathies. Catherine Wynne offers a remarkably similar analysis of *The Hound*, and of Conan Doyle's literary practice generally, in her book *Colonial Conan Doyle*, which rereads the Conan Doyle *oeuvre* as an allegorical negotiation of Anglo-Irish colonialism, a segment of the British Empire project with which Conan Doyle was persistently preoccupied because of his family's Irish background. Like Claussen, Wynne sees the novel's "Gothic loci," the desolate moor and perilous bogs with which its Dartmoor setting teems, as "viscous and unstable by nature," "untrustworthy, defiant, fickle" to the point of gesturing figurally toward

“the remains and traditions of an antique past . . . the complexities of the precarious colonial milieu” (93). According to Wynne, these loci illustrate a countercurrent beneath Conan Doyle’s Anglophilic and imperialist ideology whereby there begins to emerge a closeted Irish nationalist sympathy. Wynne extends Claussen’s analysis of the anthropological elements of *The Hound* into the specific colonial domain with which Conan Doyle’s ethnicity connected him, arguing that his adoption of a Gothicized detective genre enabled him imaginatively to identify with the “primitive,” imperially subversive force of “physical force” Irish nationalism.

Though undeniably astute in their perception of the anthropological, socio-political and aesthetic terms that *The Hound of the Baskervilles* puts in play, in my view, Claussen’s and Wynne’s analyses commit a fundamental error. Namely, by declaring that because Conan Doyle engages with colonial and primitive forces, and because that engagement radiates a high degree of anxiety, he must *identify* with such forces and express a preference for them over the normative “civilized” forces of metropolitan Britain, both critics elide the crucial difference between the novel’s *content* and its *form*. While such primitive and colonial elements preoccupy the novel throughout, they are ultimately contained within an ineluctably imperialist and civilizing formal structure. Whatever its “primitive” affiliations, the story ultimately resolves any ambivalence about metropolitan values through its hyper-rational final chapter, “A Retrospection,” which recasts the novel’s plot in the form of a strict chronological and causal chain. Given the wealth of biographical details which affirm Conan Doyle’s unequivocal, lifelong ideological loyalty to the imperial power governing his ancestral homeland, it is no surprise that the novel recontains the various subversive forces turned up by its partially “gothic” modality. Throughout his adult life Conan Doyle consistently affirmed this loyalty in relation not only to the empire in general, as he had just done just prior to the publication of *The Hound*

in two tracts vindicating British conduct in the Boer War, but also in the Anglo-Irish context specifically.³⁵ Wynne, for example, bases her argument for Doyle's Irish nationalist sympathies in part on his spirited public defense of Roger Casement, who was found guilty of conspiring to aid the 1916 Easter Rising in Dublin by recruiting Irish P.O.W.s captured by Germany in World War I to the cause. Wynne sees this defense as a biographical counterpart to Conan Doyle's supposed fictional flirtations with and subconscious endorsement of Irish independence. However, as Doyle biographer Daniel Stashower records, Doyle's defense of Casement consisted entirely of the plea that his rebellious actions indicated obvious mental derangement (324-5). For Doyle, subversion of or deviation from the British imperial mission was an act of insanity. Doyle's imperial *bona fides* cannot realistically be put into question, and thus the attempt to locate an anti-imperial ideological current in his work, however latent, is finally doomed to failure.

Like Wynne's, my reading of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* builds on Conan Doyle's relationship with Ireland as both a real political and an ethnological entity. My assessment of the novel's expression of this relationship, however, conforms more closely to the ideological priorities toward which such biographical details gesture. The novel indeed proves anxiously preoccupied with the anthropological primitive in general and with Celtic primitivity in particular, but its deployment of these forces ultimately affirms a hegemonic stance relative to both domestic and imperial British concerns. Indeed, far from emanating from a latent desire to throw off the strictures of British civilization—rationality, respectability, law, etc.—Conan Doyle's engagement with Ireland in *The Hound* demonstrates a thorough opposition to Irish nationalism and a thorough commitment to the imperial globalization of British norms and values. Indeed, I will demonstrate that it is in fact *through* the very primitive, Celtic narrative

elements that Wynne sees as counter-hegemonic that Conan Doyle effectuates the symbolic maintenance of British hegemony. Conan Doyle positions the narrative's Celtic elements as instrumental to this imperialist agenda, such that Irish Celtic primitivity becomes the vehicle through which resistance to British authority in colonial settings can be snuffed out and suppressed. In accordance with the anatomy of British Celticism I have laid out, it is this utilization of the Celtic primitive for imperialist purposes that defines *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, ultimately, as a prime specimen of imperial-romantic Celticism.

The novel begins by detailing the entry of Dr. Mortimer, a friend of the recently deceased Sir Charles Baskerville, at the Baker Street residence of Holmes and Watson, and his enlistment of Holmes's aid in the effort to unlock the mystery of Sir Charles's death. To begin acquainting Holmes with the case, Mortimer provides Holmes with the manuscript of an "old-world narrative" of "a certain legend which runs in the Baskerville family," the salient details of which are as follows: "in the time of the Great Rebellion," Lord Hugo Baskerville, "a most wild, profane, and godless man," possessed by "a certain wanton and cruel humour," "came to love . . . the daughter of a yeoman who held lands near the Baskerville estate," but, finding his overtures rebuffed by the "young maiden, being discreet and of good repute," in the throes of a "dark passion" Hugo "stole down upon the farm and carried off the maiden," who thus became his captive; during one of his inveterate bouts of drunkenness the "maiden" slipped away, and upon discovering her escape, he vowed "the he would that very night render his body and soul to the Powers of Evil if he might but overtake the wench"; after a frenzied chase "the unhappy maid" collapsed, "dead of fear and fatigue," shortly to be followed by Sir Hugo himself, above whose mutilated corpse his retainers found "a foul thing, a great, black-beast, shaped like a hound, yet larger than any hound that ever mortal eye has rested upon," a monster which "is said to have

plagued the family so sorely ever since” (581-3). Balking at the implication that this fantastic story might help illuminate Sir Charles’s death, Holmes scoffs to Mortimer that it could only hold interest to “a collector of fairy tales” (583).

Although Conan Doyle’s source for this “old world narrative” was a *Welsh* folktale, his adaptation of the legend reflects historical concerns which are more properly *Irish*.³⁶ The novel first foregrounds its Celtic ethnological orientation while Watson and Mortimer travel with Sir Charles Baskerville’s heir, Sir Henry, to the ancestral home in Devonshire, on a preliminary fact-gathering mission for Holmes, who has supposedly been detained in London by other casework. Mortimer, whose credentials as an anthropologist and “man of science” are affirmed by his having won “the Jackson prize for Comparative Pathology” and his authorship of essays titled “Some Freaks of Atavism” and “Do We Progress?,” according to the biography Watson reads aloud from the British “Medical Directory,” provides a running ethnological commentary on Sir Henry to Watson as they approach their destination. He observes, “a glance at our friend here reveals the rounded head of the Celt, which carries inside it the Celtic enthusiasm and power of attachment. Poor Sir Charles’s head was of a very rare type, half Gaelic, half Ivernian in its characteristics” (613). Evidently, the Baskerville line is a Celtic one, a blend of “Gaelic” and “Ivernian,” Hibernian or Irish, stock. Watson’s narrative corroborates Mortimer’s racial analysis in its description of Sir Henry’s reaction to the Welsh landscape surrounding Baskerville Hall:

Young Baskerville stared eagerly out of the window and cried aloud with delight as he recognized the familiar features of the Devon scenery . . . Over the green squares of the fields and the low curve of a wood rose in the distance a gray, melancholy hill, with a strange jagged summit, dim and vague in the distance like some fantastic landscape in a dream. Baskerville sat for a long time, his eyes fixed upon it, and I read upon his eager face how much it meant to him, this first sight of that strange spot where men of his blood had held sway so long and left their mark so deep . . . (613-14)

Sir Henry displays a biological attunement to the “fantastic,” dreamlike landscape of Celtic

Wales, a responsiveness whose primitive intensity Watson reads as a manifestation of “blood.” Transitivity, by virtue of his shared ancestry with Charles Baskerville, this blood is not merely generally Celtic or “Gaelic” but also, at least in part, specifically “Ivernian” or Irish.

The racial orientation of the Baskerville family helps elucidate retroactively the allegorical significance of its legend. In effect, the “old world” story of the hound serves as a thinly-veiled parable of the injustices of colonial rule. Though his kidnapping of the “maiden” presents his crime as a sexual one, the definition of the maiden as the daughter of a yeoman residing near the Baskerville estate renders this *sexual* expropriation as a fairly thinly-veiled transcoding of the *economic* violence of colonial conquest and primitive accumulation. The maiden provides a late example of one of the perennial themes of British literature in the seventeenth century, the century during which the “Great Rebellion” referred to in the “legend” occurred, namely the so-called “woman-as-land metaphor” deployed by authors like Aphra Behn in order to render anthropomorphically the territorial and geographical concerns attending first-wave European imperialism in the “New World.” Translating the family’s “legend” within the aid of this pervasive trope, Sir Hugo Baskerville’s forcible arrogation of sexual privilege with the Welsh peasant “maiden” comes to stand synecdochally for the broader *economic* injustices of imperial conquest and colonial rule. The spectral hound that plagues the succeeding generations of Baskervilles thus functions as an agent of *symbolic justice* within the story, wreaking a kind of karmic vengeance for Sir Hugo’s expropriative violence. Conan Doyle reshapes the original folktale of the Hound into an allegory of the moral depredations of British colonialism.³⁷

If this would seem to place the novel on a path toward an anti-imperialist reading such as Wynne provides, Conan Doyle quickly supplements Mortimer’s legend with conflicting information regarding the Baskerville family’s most recent representative, Sir Charles,

information which spins the novel's ideological allegiance in a decisively different direction. A newspaper report on his mysterious death depicts Sir Charles as the antithesis of his violent and exploitative ancestor:

The recent and sudden death of Sir Charles Baskerville, whose name has been mentioned as the probably Liberal candidate for Mid-Devon at the next election, has cast a gloom over the county. Though Sir Charles had resided at Baskerville Hall for a comparatively short period his amiability of character and extreme generosity had won the affection and respect of all who had been brought into contact with him. In these days of *nouveaux riches* it is refreshing to find a case where the scion of an old country family which as fallen upon evil times is able to make his own fortune and to bring it back with him to restore the fallen grandeur of his line . . . It is tow years since he took up residence at Baskerville Hall, and it is common talk how large were those schemes of reconstruction and improvement which have been interrupted by his death. Being childless, it was his openly expressed desire that the countryside should, within his own lifetime, profit by his good fortune . . . (583)

Clearly then, Sir Charles's treatment of the neighboring tenants sets him apart from the practices of tyrannical landlords like Sir Hugo. While the report describes that Sir Charles accumulated his fortune in "South African speculation," affirming his own credentials as a colonial exploiter, it is clear that Conan Doyle intends to distance him from the symbolic implications of the legend of the hound within the province of his domestic authority (583). Sir Charles's benevolent "schemes of reconstruction and improvement" contrast starkly with the sexual-economic rapine of Sir Hugo, promising to redress and set aright the "fallen grandeur" of the Baskerville line.

This then raises an obvious question: how are we to understand the narrative function of the hound within the novel if it preys indifferently upon this benevolent noble, the very model of *noblesse oblige*, and his malevolent predecessor? As the novel goes on to show, rather predictably given this obvious logical inconsistency, Sir Charles's murder is not the outcome of supernatural, karmic vengeance for colonial injustice, but is rather the result of a very human and material set of motivations. The logical contradiction between the hound's allegorical function

and his present-day reign of terror against a comparatively just landlord figure paves the way for Holmes's apprehension of Stapleton, a distant Baskerville relative in disguise who has orchestrated Sir Charles's death and attempted to arrange Sir Henry's death in order to secure his own inheritance of the family estate. Stapleton, the story reveals, has taken advantage of the family legacy to create his own "spectral" hound by outfitting a mastiff with phosphorus in order to shock into cardiac arrest the notoriously hypersensitive Baskerville constitution the two men share. What begins as a parable of colonial economic injustice ends, it would seem, as a tale of garden-variety British criminality.

As Franco Moretti has noted of detective fiction with particular reference to Conan Doyle, its *modus operandi* consists of the obliteration of the past in favor of the bourgeois legalities of the present. Moretti's insight regarding one of the genre's perennial bogeys, the social climbing "upstart," has direct relevance here: "the specter of primitive accumulation materializes through him: capital as theft, and even as murder. By catching him, the detective annihilates a memory painful to his philistine audience: the original sin of nineteenth-century 'legality' . . . its infected roots in the past must be eradicated" (140). The narrative function of Stapleton, the "upstart" and would-be usurper of the Baskerville line and fortune, is then to siphon off and serve as the scapegoat for the originary violence with which that line was founded. The novel's "specter of primitive accumulation," the hound itself, provides an uncomfortable reminder of the violent origins of the British colonial order, and therefore must be purged in order for Holmes, and Conan Doyle through him, to reify contemporary British colonial capitalism. The novel thus enacts fairly neatly the strategy of containment I have outlined above, whereby subversive primitive and colonial forces, forces indexed allegorically by the hound's vengeance, ultimately realign with and help buttress Conan Doyle's staunchly

hegemonic ideological agenda.

In fact, through the machinations of “Stapleton,” the novel comes to embody a rather different historical allegory, one with colonial implications diametrically opposed to those of the Baskerville legend. The closest historical parallel within recent British colonial history for Stapleton’s “upstart” attempt to usurp his cousin’s position is the Anglo-Irish Land War of the late 1870s and early 1880s. Given the novel’s generally Celtic, and at least partially Irish, racial and geographical orientation, and given the novel’s allegorical evocation of the economic injustices of British colonial rule through the “old world narrative” of Sir Hugo, an evocation which further determines that the novel’s central symbolico-ideological problem will be to apologize for colonial injustice and reify the British imperial hierarchy, Stapleton’s subversive activities cannot but resonate with this historical context. Having affirmed Sir Charles’s benevolence as a landlord, thereby annihilating the painful memory of the violence of colonial conquest—the memory of “capital as theft, and even as murder,” in Moretti’s terms—Conan Doyle positions Stapleton’s efforts to usurp Sir Charles and, subsequently, Sir Henry, as a sort of colonial insurrection. Through his actions, in other words, Conan Doyle transforms the hound legend from an allegorical index of the injustices of colonialism to an allegorical index of the threat of colonial rebellion.

In this regard, Stapleton’s plot closely resembles the nationalist campaign of the Fenian Brotherhood and the Irish National Land League. The history of this campaign in the late seventies and early eighties displays striking parallels to Stapleton’s actions within the novel. Like Stapleton’s subversive activities, those of the Fenians and Land Leaguers took shape within a frame of protest against colonial economic injustice, and also like his, their activities occasionally consisted of assassination, both of Anglo-Irish landlords such as Lord Sydney

Leitrim, ambushed outside his “big house” in county Donegal in 1878, and of other prominent British colonial officials like Lord Frederick Cavendish and T.H. Burke, the chief secretary and undersecretary of the British administration in Ireland who were stabbed to death in Phoenix Park in Dublin in May of 1882. Finding their peaceable political petitions for “the three Fs”—fixity of tenure, freedom of sale and fairness of rents for Irish tenants on Anglo-Irish estates—the militant organizations responsible for such “outrages” took matters into their own hands, eventually persuading British parliament to pass a conciliatory Land Bill in 1882 which provided for tenant buyouts of Irish landlords and paved the way for the demise of the Ascendancy class in the late-nineteenth century.³⁸

The case of Lord Leitrim is particularly revealing with regard to *The Hound* and the historical referentiality of its legend. “One of the most notorious landlords of 19th century Ireland,” Leitrim earned his notoriety not only through a pronounced tendency to rack-renting and summary eviction, but also through his mistreatment of his female tenants. In fact, Leitrim is reputed to have “debauched a young serving girl” working on his estate who was the daughter of one of his assassins, indicating that his killing was in part retribution for his sexual license with a “maiden.” Though it is impossible to determine with certainty whether Conan Doyle’s adaptation of the original Welsh folktale borrows directly from the specific case of Lord Leitrim, the parallels are striking. In both cases, a landlord’s sexual predations of his female tenants provoke retribution in the form of his assassination, either by natural or supernatural means. The symbolic significance of the original Baskerville legend hues so closely to the historical events surrounding the career of this Anglo-Irish landlord as to render them almost indistinguishable. Conan Doyle introduces this allegory of colonial tyranny, however, only to invoke the Anglo-Irish context generally, rather than to endorse the markedly anti-colonial implications of the

Leitrim episode or of other like examples of sexual and economic injustice. While the contemporary Hound also assassinates a landlord in Sir Charles, his comparatively benevolent and magnanimous treatment of his tenants spins his assassination instead as an act of *injustice*. The idea of colonial tyranny, having been broached, must, within Conan Doyle's imperialist worldview, be immediately converted into its diametrical opposite if the Anglo-Irish order is to be legitimated by the novel's thematics. Papering over the original and ongoing violence of British colonialism in Ireland, Conan Doyle, through the figure of "Stapleton," fixes the blame firmly on the physical-force Irish nationalism of the Land League and Fenian Brotherhood. The symbolic function of the unmasking and foiling of Stapleton's criminal plot, and his subsequent disappearance in the bog-like "Grimpen Mire," is then to put down and discredit an act of colonial insurrection and thereby shore up ideologically the legitimacy of the threatened Anglo-Irish landlord class of the late Victorian period.³⁹

This subtext or symbolic undercarriage of the plot of *The Hound* corresponds quite closely to the position taken by one preeminent British commentator on matters Irish during the height of the Land War, namely Matthew Arnold. Returning for the first time since his mid-sixties lectures on Celtic Literature to the topic of British rule in Ireland, lectures in whose background the echo of Fenian dynamite was unmistakably audible, Arnold wrote a series of "Irish Essays" on the eve of the 1882 Land Bill's passage the first of which, titled "The Incompatibles," presents an assessment of the underlying motive of "physical force" Irish nationalism that is remarkably similar to the assessment implicit within the allegorical legend of the Hound. As if driven by current events to compromise his unflinching, unwavering legitimation of British rule, Arnold is now willing to grant the Irish charge that "England holds Ireland . . . by means of conquest and confiscation," though he is quick to point out that "almost

all countries have undergone conquest and confiscation; and almost all property, if we go far back enough, has its source in these violent proceedings” (8). Arnold’s analysis of the nationalist disturbance rests on his impression that the native Irish have never “prescribed” to the British colonial and capitalist order. In an ideal colonial scenario, in Arnold’s view, after the violent imposition of imperial power people “go about their daily business, gradually things settle down, there is well-being and tolerable justice, prescription arises, and nobody talks about conquest or confiscation any more” (9). Arnold’s description of “prescription” defines it as a synonym for Gramscian hegemony. Turning his gaze to the specific course of Anglo-Irish history, Arnold finds this post-conquest process of implanting “prescription” or hegemony badly wanting:

In Ireland it did not happen that people went about their daily business, that their condition improved, that things settled down, that the country became peaceful and prosperous, and that gradually all remembrance of conquest and confiscation died out. On the contrary, the conquest had again and again to be renewed; the sense of prescription, the true security of all property, never arose. The angry moment of conquest and confiscation, the ardour of revolt against them, have continued, therefore, to irritate and inflame men’s minds. They irritate and inflame them still; the present relations between landlord and tenant in Ireland offer only too much proof of it. (9)

Arnold argues that British rule in Ireland has consisted of “a system for enabling the grantees of confiscation to hold Ireland without blending with the natives or reconciling them,” and urges that “healing measures” be taken immediately in order to move beyond the violent origins that subsequent colonial policies have consistently revived (17). Arnold is even willing to offer a specific policy suggestion to the government: “what is most needed, in dealing with the land in Ireland, is to redress our injustice, and to make the Irish see that we are doing so . . . the most effective way, surely, to do this is not to confer boons on all tenants, but to execute justice on bad landlords” (23).

A reader of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* with an awareness of recent Anglo-Irish history and a familiarity with Arnold's analysis of the causes underlying the two nations' "incompatibility" is almost led to wonder whether Conan Doyle lifted the novel's plot directly from Arnold. Conan Doyle adapts the Welsh folktale of the spectral Hound to allegorize the original violence of colonial conquest. Just as Arnold desires that contemporary events in Ireland move beyond the admitted violence and injustice built into the foundation of the Anglo-Irish colonial-capitalist order, so Conan Doyle arranges the present tense of the novel's plot to legitimize the Baskerville line as a "benevolent," charitable institution. The original Hound of the legend, whose function is precisely to "execute justice on bad landlords," returns to perform the opposite function in the novel's present tense, the early 1890s, namely to embody a subversive threat to a now-benevolent landlordism. The shift between the Hound's opposed symbolic roles in the past and the present, and the broader shift between an anti-colonial and a pro-colonial set of implications in the novel overall, effectuates for Conan Doyle the fictional achievement of the "prescription" or hegemony that Arnold finds lacking in the real politics of recent Irish history. The novel's overall design, then, consists of a fantasy scenario for securing the hegemony of British rule in Ireland by first invoking and then repressing the injustices of the Anglo-Irish colonial order.⁴⁰

Thus far I have devoted my analysis to establishing the connections between the fictional world of *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and the real historical situation of Anglo-Irish colonialism in the late-nineteenth century. I have further demonstrated the persistency with which the "subversive" elements of a political and criminal nature arising within the narrative ultimately reaffirm a hegemonic ideological agenda on Conan Doyle's part with reference to this colonial context. I have yet to demonstrate, however, the manner in which the novel's

“primitive” features serve as the primary vehicle through which this hegemonic agenda is effectuated. Something more than use of an Irish historical context is necessary to define the novel as an example of British Celticism. If, as I have argued, *The Hound* represents the fictional enactment of the racial-aesthetic theories of Matthew Arnold, the novel should display a preoccupation with Celtic aesthetic modalities beyond its isolated anthropological references to the craniological features of the Baskerville family, and such modalities should somehow prove instrumental to accomplishing the macro-political designs I have laid out.

The Hound indeed evinces such an anthropological preoccupation in several related ways. In the passage already quoted above in which Dr. Mortimer describes Sir Charles’s “Celtic enthusiasm and power of attachment,” Conan Doyle indicates an unmistakable familiarity with Arnold’s *Study*, which, as we have seen, defines Celtic “sentiment” according to emotional passion and perceptual sensitivity. This mercurial biology and magically susceptible epistemology in turn undoubtedly informs Sir Charles’s death by cardiac arrest in a state of constitutional shock precipitated by his glimpsing Stapleton’s sham Hound crossing the moor. Where the Celtic racial substratum of the novel surfaces most markedly, however, is in the investigative methodology of Sherlock Holmes himself. Holmes, I will argue in what follows, is himself a perfect specimen of Anglo-Celtic hybridity as imagined by Arnold and as inhabited experientially by many Irish subjects throughout the late nineteenth century, and in his approach to the Baskerville case he demonstrates unmistakably the deployment of “primitive” Celtic epistemological resources for colonially hegemonic ends. In *The Hound* it is Holmes, in short, who serves the primary vehicle for Conan Doyle’s pitch-perfect brand of imperial-romantic Celticism.

Coextensive with the historical and generic reassessments of the Conan Doyle oeuvre

outlined above with reference to the work of critics such as Nils Claussen and Catherine Wynne, recent years have also witnessed a radical reassessment of the significance of Sherlock Holmes. Joseph McLaughlin, for example, in his book *Writing the Urban Jungle*, argues that Holmes's symbolic role in Conan Doyle's fiction is to negotiate the various exotic and colonial forces present in London by the end of the nineteenth century, and to take on and purge the contamination entailed in these forces as a sort of fictional savior for the anxiously xenophobic British middle classes. McLaughlin's reading pivots off of an astute reading of the famous "seven per-cent solution" scene which opens *The Sign of Four*, with which illustrates Holmes's position a self-sacrificing guardian of the nation's racial and civilizational purity. In this reading, Holmes's cocaine injections represent in miniature his willing, heroic immersion in a dangerous foreign milieu from which respectable Victorians must be shielded. Jesse Oak Taylor-Ide has offered a similar reinterpretation of Holmes, arguing that his investigative methodology "represents a marriage of distinctly oppositional epistemological frameworks—the reason and science associated with British masculinity on the one hand, and the intuitive, the irrational associated with the foreign and feminine on the other" (55-6). Like McLaughlin's, Taylor-Ide's understanding of Holmes characterizes him as a sort of sentinel tending the border between metropolitan and colonial worlds forced into uncomfortable proximity by British imperial expansion, and like McLaughlin, Taylor-Ide sees Holmes's activities while prowling this border as rendering him a liminal, compound figure, a mixed character composed of both domestic and foreign elements. For both critics, Holmes becomes a sort of human contact zone between the opposed geographical zones of metropole and colony—and between the opposed ontological regimes of "civilized" and "primitive" with which contemporary anthropology/ethnology associated them.

My reading of Holmes overlaps with McLaughlin's and Taylor-Ide's in several ways, but is also distinct from theirs in that it views Holmes's liminality as specifically Anglo-Celtic. Furthermore, my understanding of Holmes relies more directly on Victorian anthropology as the disciplinary and discursive framework from which the binaries on which both critics' accounts rely—domestic/foreign, familiar/exotic, metropolitan/colonial, civilized/primitive—derived their specific contemporary definition and significance. Neither critic, in my opinion, adequately pinpoints the precise anthropological nature of the aesthetic modality which Conan Doyle deploys in his rendering of Holmes's investigative techniques. Taylor-Ide, for example, commits an error by defining Holmes as a sort of "priest" or "shaman" performing religious rites in order to attain the insight required to unlock the confounding criminal conspiracies with which he is confronted. Such a characterization misrecognizes the precise anthropological orientation of Holmes's methods. Within the classificatory system devised by J.G. Frazer in *The Golden Bough*, the anthropological work to which Conan Doyle alludes directly in the work published immediately after *The Hound*, "The Adventure of the Empty House," Holmes's methodology would not be considered *religious*, but rather *magical*. Frazer, famously, divides humanity's epistemological evolution into three sequential phases, magic, religion and science, and defines the progress of the species according to its ascent from the first, most "primitive" phase to the last, most "civilized" one. To define Holmes's methods as merely "religious" is to mistake the proportion of those methods that Conan Doyle configures as fully anthropologically "primitive."

Holmes's investigative techniques in *The Hound of the Baskervilles* are best described as a kind of "sympathetic magic," in Frazer's terms, an especially "primitive" brand of magic which corresponds perfectly with the epistemology underlying Celtic aesthetics as defined by Arnold. Frazer divides "sympathetic" magic into two subvarieties, "homeopathic" and "contagious"

magic, and summarizes their common characteristic as follows:

Both trains of thought are in fact extremely simple and elementary. It could hardly be otherwise, since they are familiar . . . to the crude intelligence not only of the savage, but of ignorant and dull-witted people everywhere. Both branches of magic, the homeopathic and the contagious, may conveniently be apprehended under the general name of Sympathetic Magic, since both assume that *things act on each other at a distance through a secret sympathy*, the impulse being transmitted from one to the other by means of what we may conceive as a kind of invisible ether, not unlike that which is postulated by modern science for a precisely similar purpose, namely, to explain how things can physically affect each other through a space which appears to be empty. (14, emphasis added.)

Frazer's anatomy of magic defines it as a sort of *manipulative mimesis*, whereby, obeying the law of "like produces like," "things act on each other at a distance through a secret sympathy" (13). The "sympathetic magician" performs imitative gestures and incantations which enable him to control distant objects or forces by miming their makeup and activity. This, I would argue, is the specific anthropological definition that informs Holmes's investigative methodology in *The Hound*.

In one early scene prior to the novel's shift of setting to the Welsh moor, Holmes performs a particularly "magical" act of preparation for his later, more direct investigation of the case, one which demonstrates its "sympathetic" characteristics unmistakably and thereby distinguishes his methods from the comparatively evolved epistemology of religion. Returning from the social club to which has repaired in order to give Holmes the privacy needed to process the facts of the case presented by Mortimer, Watson finds their lodgings altered radically:

My first impression as I opened the door was that a fire had broken out, for the room was so filled with smoke that the light of the lamp upon the table was blurred by it. As I entered, however, my fears were set at rest, for it was the acrid fumes of strong, course tobacco which took me by the throat and set me coughing. I had a vision of Holmes in his dressing-gown coiled up in an armchair with his black clay pipe between his lips. (592)

After Watson has located the real Holmes in the midst of this "vision" and ventilated the

apartment's "poisonous atmosphere," Holmes explains that in Watson's absence he has actually "been to Devonshire," a physically impossible feat given that absence's brevity (592-3). When Watson concludes that Holmes must have traveled "in spirit" rather than body, Holmes replies:

Exactly. My body has remained in this armchair and has, I regret to observe, consumed in my absence two large pots of coffee and an incredible amount of tobacco. After you left I sent down to Stamford's for the Ordnance map of this portion of the moor, and my spirit has hovered over it all day. (593)

This description unmistakably figures Holmes's methodology as a kind of "sympathetic magic." In order to bring his mind into epistemological alignment with the geography of Devonshire, Holmes acquires a mimetic representation of the region, the Ordnance map, and transports his spirit to the real Devonshire through the "invisible ether" between with the aid of that representation. Through the map, in other words, Holmes gains an impossibly "sympathetic" access to the distant region it depicts, in effect teleporting to Devonshire in order to acquaint his mind with it firsthand. Holmes reinforces the sympathetic-magical orientation of his investigative epistemology when he apologizes to Watson about the room's condition: "it is a singular thing, but I find that a concentrated atmosphere helps a concentration of thought" (593). For Holmes, as with Frazer's "dull-witted" "savage," like produces like: in the effort to bring his "spirit" into mimetic conformity with the geography surrounding Baskerville Hall, Holmes finds it necessary to immerse himself physically in a "concentrated" atmosphere; his methods thus display a double "sympathy," first between his mind and the room's atmosphere, the former of which gains in concentration in direct proportion to that of the latter, and second, between his newly-"concentrated" mind and the distant moor, with which he is now familiar to a degree only possible through some non-rational means.

Later developments further elaborate this "magical" methodological theme and also demonstrate its specifically *Celtic* anthropological filiations. With Holmes still ostensibly

delayed in London, Watson compiles several “reports” in order to keep him abreast of the case’s development. In one of these, Watson digresses into a description of one of the more peculiar features of the Devon landscape:

When you are once out upon its bosom you have left all traces of modern England behind you, but, on the other hand, you are conscious everywhere of the homes and work of a prehistoric people. On all sides of you as you walk are the houses of these forgotten folk . . . The strange thing is that they should have lived so thickly on what must have been most unfruitful soil. I am no antiquarian, but I could imagine that they were some unwarlike and harried race who were forced to accept that which none other would occupy. (629)

Watson’s speculations about this “unwarlike and harried” race evoke the epigraph to Matthew Arnold’s *Study*: “they went forth to the war, but they always fell” (1). Unsited to the conflict of a barbaric age, Arnold’s Celts, though certainly more fiery than those of Watson’s speculative description, were similarly “harried” by the British and “forced to accept” a fate “which non other would occupy.” Having already identified the generally Celtic and specifically Irish affiliations of the novel’s setting and contemporary inhabitants, Watson’s historical musings serve to clinch this Celtic racial theme as the predominant anthropological strand of the novel. It is significant, then, that Holmes, who, it is eventually revealed, has been residing on the moor in secret, displays a remarkable affinity for its Celtic environs. Before he has revealed his presence, Watson catches sight of Holmes during a nighttime expedition with Sir Henry to apprehend Selden, an escaped criminal whom Mrs. Barrymore, a member of the Baskerville Hall staff, has been supplying with clothes and food unbeknownst to her master:

The moon was low upon the right, and the jagged pinnacle of a granite tor stood up against the lower curve of its silver disc. There, outlined as black as an ebony statue on that shining background, I saw the figure of a man upon the tor . . . As far as I could judge, the figure was that of a tall, thin man. He stood with his legs a little separated, his arms folded, his head bowed, as if he were brooding over that enormous wilderness of peat and granite which lay before him. He might have been the very spirit of that terrible place. (645)

For Holmes to have become “the very spirit of that terrible place,” Celtic Devonshire, as a result of his magical investigative methodology, demonstrates a preternatural affinity on his part for its “dreamlike” environs. Later, when Watson finally discovers the identity of “the man upon the tor,” he learns that Holmes has been residing in one of the abandoned stone domiciles of the ancient Celts. Holmes, it seems, has developed his “sympathy” with the Celtic setting so fully as to have become kindred to the “savage,” harried race.

The net weight of these examples is to ground Holmes’s “magical” methods throughout the novel as ineluctably tied to its Celtic context. Mortimer specifies the key characteristics of Arnold’s Celtic “sentiment,” “enthusiasm” and the “power of attachment,” as dramatically pronounced in his deceased friend, Sir Charles, and Conan Doyle indicates by the violence of his responsiveness to the “scenery” of Devonshire Sir Henry’s own possession of these “sentimental” characteristics. Holmes’s success in breaking the case relies on this same “power of attachment,” the perceptual hypersensitivity which, for Arnold, renders Celtic aesthetics a kind of “magic” capable of conveying the “weird power and fairy charm” of nature with unparalleled directness and mimetic fidelity. Holmes’s methodology consists, in effect, of a magical perceptual affinity for the “weird,” enigmatic features of this Celtic region, a “sympathetic” epistemology capable of perfect alignment with its nebulous essence. As I shall also argue, in his efforts to describe Holmes’s Celtic epistemological methods, Conan Doyle in turn renders such moments within his narrative as I have quoted as exercises in *Celticist aesthetics*. Celtic epistemological and aesthetic modalities prove indispensable not only to Holmes’s investigative techniques but also to Conan Doyle’s authorial agenda.

We can now bring together the socio-political and anthropological arguments advanced thus far. *The Hound of the Baskervilles* is an exercise in the symbolic legitimation of British

colonialism in Ireland. In the effort to accomplish this symbolic and ideological purpose, however, Conan Doyle infuses its narrative apparatus with a Celtic element, as if Celtic perceptual modalities are indispensable to negotiating the interface of Anglo-Irish colonial difference and to banishing its tensions and conflicts in the effort to reify British imperial hegemony, what Arnold calls “prescription.” In other words, British epistemological modalities are insufficient to the maintenance of British rule in a context striated by ethnological difference. Holmes thereby comes to adopt the very racial characteristics of which Conan Doyle would seem to desire the eradication, rendering his detective methods, and the novel’s overall form, contradictorily “primitive” in defiance of its “civilized” socio-political priorities. The novel symbolically accomplishes the delegitimation and elimination of Irish political resistance to British rule, but Irish difference persists, as if sublimated, in the novel’s overall aesthetic structure by virtue of Holmes’s “sympathetic” epistemology. Conan Doyle finds, seemingly, that it is only by partially *inhabiting* a Celtic ontological modality that the threat of Celtic difference can be effectively *engaged* and ultimately eradicated, leaving the required *means* of his imperialist fictional project at cross purposes with its desired *ends*.

The novel thus displays a conspicuous *hybridity* at the level of Holmes as a character and at the level of narrative form, as critical perspectives like McLaughlin’s have recently suggested. What has not been noted, however, is the extent to which *The Hound of the Baskervilles* presents hybridity not simply as an aesthetic or methodological resource for the suppression of colonial resistance, but also as a *biological* necessity for the prosecution of this counterrevolutionary agenda. The ethnological theme introduced by Dr. Mortimer’s anthropological commentaries in the novel’s first several chapters rests on a markedly *determinist* set of racial assumptions. Sir Henry’s Celtic constitution leads inevitably to “sentimental” displays of passion and

“attachment,” just as Sir Charles’s “sentimental” proclivities played a primary causal role in his untimely demise. Like Arnold before him, Conan Doyle thus positions Celtic affinities as outgrowths of biology. Such determinist assumptions raise, and immediately answer, the question of how Holmes himself could attain such a remarkable degree of facility with the “magical” epistemological modalities of the Celt. It would seem, in other words, that Holmes, in order to inhabit such Celtic modalities, would need to bear a Celtic element within his own biological makeup. Indeed, the reader is provided the basis for such a conclusion in the novel’s first chapter, when, just after Watson’s directory has attested to Dr. Mortimer’s anthropological expertise, the “man of science” subjects Holmes himself to craniological analysis:

You interest me very much, Mr. Holmes. I had hardly expected to see so dolichocephalic a skull or such well-marked supra-orbital development . . . A cast of your skull, sir, until the original is available, would be an ornament to any anthropological museum. It is not my intention to be fulsome, but I confess that I covet your skull. (578-9)

Mortimer, it would seem, while he shows an easy dexterity and efficiency in distinguishing “the skull of a negro from that of an Esquimau,” in expounding “the comparative anatomy of the Bushman and the Hottentot,” and in remarking on the Celtic descent of the Baskerville line, finds himself stumped by anthropological specimen that is Sherlock Holmes (597, 586). Holmes’s extraordinarily “dolichocephalic” and “supra-orbital”ly developed skull, by virtue of its uniqueness, belongs on display in a museum. There is no position for his enigmatic or anomalous physiognomy on Mortimer’s anthropological bugboard.

Conan Doyle thus suggests that Holmes’s unique investigative talents derive from a unique and mysterious biological makeup. Nowhere in the novel does Mortimer specify the racial affiliations betokened by Holmes’s cranial topography, and the reader is thus left to devise some means of inferring those affiliations from Holmes’s activities, using the determinist

ethnological principle operative elsewhere in the novel as a guide. According to this principle, we may already deduce that part of Holmes's biology must necessarily be *Celtic*, given the "sympathetic magic" and "sentimental" epistemological characteristics involved in his methodology and his deep affinity with the Welsh landscape of Devonshire, an affinity so pronounced that Watson mistakes him for its "spirit" or *genius loci* in the passage quoted above. While reliant on Celtic modalities, however, Holmes's methods are also unmistakably *rational*, and it is toward "civilized" rather than "primitive" ends that his casework ultimately moves. In the scene which depicts Holmes's "magical" preliminary investigation of Devonshire, Holmes accomplishes his "sympathetic" vision of its layout with the aid of a preeminently rational tool, the "Ordnance map." Holmes's Celtic epistemology, it seems, requires some sort of rational catalyst in order to transmit this vision through the "ether" between London and Wales. Furthermore, within the novel's socio-political allegory, the map on its own terms performs an irresistibly *Anglicizing* function. As Stiofan O Cadhla documents in the book *Civilizing Ireland*, "ordnance maps" were devised by the British as an aid for the imperial administration in Ireland during the mid-nineteenth century period which saw the initial stirrings of the nationalist resistance which later culminated in the Fenian and Land League campaigns of the 1860s, 70s and 80s. Holmes's reliance on such a map aligns with his and the novel's counterrevolutionary agenda, even as his manner of using it bespeaks a reliance on the very Irish racial difference that agenda would erase. His methods, finally, subordinate "magical" to "rational" epistemological priorities, as it is the latter which can fulfill the imperial globalization of British civilization desired by his creator. With Holmes, Celtic "sentiment" becomes the indispensable instrument for the maintenance of a Foucaultian imperial panopticism.⁴¹

Holmes himself provides a formula for the kind of *hybrid* epistemology required for the

engagement, and subsequent eradication, of colonial difference when he refers to his methodological formula as “the scientific use of the imagination” (598). A better encapsulation of the “mixed” procedures deployed by Holmes during the Baskerville case would be difficult to conceive. This formula provides the best available means of deducing from his actions and talents Holmes’s racial constitution. In addition to his Celtic biological features, those which supply Holmes with his magically adept “imagination,” Holmes must also possess features which enable his equally adept “scientific” analyses. We have, in fact, already witnessed the operations of such a “scientific” racial component in the previous chapter of this study, where Matthew Arnold’s anatomy of Celtic and Teutonic peoples hinges on the binary opposition between respectively magical and rational or “scientific” epistemologies. By infusing Holmes, the “benefactor of the race,” with a “scientific” epistemological bent to match his “magical” abilities, Conan Doyle implicitly defines his biology as a mingling of preeminently Celtic and Teutonic characteristics. Holmes, in short, is an *Anglo-Celtic hybrid*, an epistemological adept whose imperial practices manifest the flexible racial compound that Arnold dubs “the composite English genius.” Just as Arnold envisions a hybrid Englishness whose internal hierarchical organization models the political organization of his ideal United Kingdom, so Holmes’s biology contains both Celtic and Teutonic elements arranged in commodiously imperialist proportions. Subordinating the former racial resources to the latter in his investigative practice, Holmes puts Celtic “imagination” to Teutonic, “scientific” use. Holmes’s description of his methodology replicates perfectly the ideal epistemological modality of Arnold’s racial paragon, the Hellene: *imaginative reason*. Holmes, in other words, both in his investigative techniques and in the biological organization of which those techniques are implicitly an extension, is the exact

fictional embodiment of Arnold's ethnological project, fusing the Celt's "magical" epistemology and "primitive" *ontology* with the Teuton's "scientific" epistemology and "civilized" ontology.

It would seem, finally, that Conan Doyle is only able to imagine the kind of imperial agent required to resolve the contemporary Anglo-Irish colonial dilemma, an agent capable of confronting and *inhabiting* Irish racial difference for the purpose of enabling its eradication, as an Anglo-Celtic biological hybrid, as a figure whose genetic configuration corresponds mimetically to the racial and political hierarchies of the contemporary United Kingdom.

Conan Doyle *Redux*: Celtic Capacities and Prehistoric Primitivity *The Lost World*

In Conan Doyle's *A Study in Scarlet*, the novel which first introduced British readers to the detective who would become their greatest fictional benefactor, Holmes, returning from a London performance of classical violinist "Norman Neruda," expounds to Watson an anthropological theory of musical affect. Watson-as-narrator reports the conversation as follows:

"It was magnificent," he said, as he took his seat. "Do you remember what Darwin says about music? He claims that the power of producing and appreciating it existed among the human race long before the power of speech was arrived at. Perhaps that is why we are so subtly influenced by it. There are vague memories in our souls of those misty centuries when the world was in its childhood."

"That's rather a broad idea," I remarked.

"One's ideas must be as broad as Nature if they are to interpret Nature," he answered. (33)

The conversation renders in miniature the epistemological gulf between the two characters, and between Holmes and the middle-class British public more generally. As ever, Watson's performs dutifully his narrative function of grounding and stabilizing Holmes's frequently exotic and bizarre behaviors and ideas. Here, Holmes espouses a Darwinian theory of listener response, according to which music's "subtle influence" reactivates "vague memories" lodged deep within the human unconscious of the "misty centuries when the world was in its childhood." Watson

noticeably recoils, rejecting the notion as “rather a broad idea.” As the fictional representative of the hyper-civilized British middle-classes, he displays a predictable resistance to what is essentially a *primitivist* theory of the human response to music, a theory whose bestializing implications his normative outlook cannot help but repress. Holmes, finding himself challenged by Watson’s rationalist insistence on specificity and precision, counters that the universe is too vast to admit of strict rational accounting, and instead demands an epistemology that mimetically adapts itself to the universe’s sublime scale.

I would argue that the epistemological principle Holmes’s espouses in this scene is one which the ethological and socio-historical entity known as Irishness is uniquely equipped to fulfill. “One’s ideas must be as broad as Nature if they are to interpret Nature”: only the figure of the Celt possesses the epistemological resources needed to perceive the universe as an undifferentiated totality, the “sentimental” capacity for mimetically receiving Nature’s “weird power” by way of “sympathetic magic.” Additionally, only the *Irish* Celt specifically resides in a position to assimilate to consciousness the entire spectrum of evolutionary differentiation in the contemporary human world, as only this Celt inhabits a vantage point on the boundary between the “Manichean” racial and socio-political dualities of the British Empire. The ethno-historical entity of *fin-de-siecle* Irishness thus presented an author like Conan Doyle with a uniquely suitable combination of aesthetic and socio-political raw materials, the shaping of which enabled him both to *render* colonial-cum-evolutionary difference in all its ontological fullness and to *negotiate* such difference toward the maintenance of British imperial hegemony. Inhabiting the liminal region between the binary terms of the imperial interface, the Irish Celt’s flexible positionality and capacious epistemology allow him to take in, Janus-like, both the worlds of the colonizer and the colonized at once. In turn, the figure of the Irish Celt therefore proves

uniquely advantageous for the *aesthetic* exploration of the most pressing imperial concerns of the late Victorian period.

Before moving to analyze that other founding father of British imperial romantic Celticism, Rudyard Kipling, I would like to illustrate further Conan Doyle's particular conception of Irishness by examining briefly another novel that also spotlights this ethnological figure, the 1916 "science fiction" text *The Lost World*. The manner in which the novel positions this figure is, in my reading, highly symptomatic of British Celticism at large. Analyzing its Celticist fictional practices will therefore accomplish some of the initial interpretive labors required by Kipling's own Celticist *magnum opus*, *Kim*. The Celtic orientation of *The Lost World* is more purely Irish than that of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, which, as we saw in the previous section, presents a Celtic thematics that is simultaneously Irish and Welsh in provenance. Its aesthetic immersion in the Celt's "magical" epistemology is also more direct than that of the *Hound*, which only fleetingly permits the Celtic perceptual modalities of Holmes to commandeer its narrative apparatus. In contrast to this sparing Celtic perspectival orientation, the entirety of *The Lost World* proceeds from the vantage of an Irish narrator named Malone. Malone's vocation, as a journalist for a publication known simply as "The Gazette," earns him a place as an observing witness on an expedition to South America led by Professor Challenger, the controversial and eccentric British "naturalist" who throws down the gauntlet before his scientific colleagues by claiming to have encountered documentary evidence of the survival of prehistoric life forms during a previous journey to the continent. As the novel unfolds, it quickly becomes clear that its design centers on the same evolutionary polarity between "civilized" and "primitive" forces with which Conan Doyle displayed so thorough a preoccupation in *The Hound*. Indeed, the novel's plot, which begins in "civilized" Britain, migrates to a nightmarishly

“primitive” and atavistic “lost world” in South America, and concludes with the shocking intrusion of a pterodactyl in the London lecture hall where Challenger presents his findings to an incredulous audience, could be described as a literalized episode of the return of the evolutionary repressed of the British middle class *weltanschauung*. It is a plot whose extreme evolutionary and ontological polarities an Irish Celt is uniquely equipped to narrate.

One episode in particular highlights the centrality of Irish Celticness to the novel’s aesthetic project. Finding themselves stranded in the dangerous “lost world” they have named “Maple White Land,” after the deceased American explorer whose journal first alerted Challenger to its existence, the party of main characters, fearing a fate similar to that of White at the hands of the region’s predatory natural forces, rack their brains for an escape plan. Challenger, however, refuses to consider leaving before obtaining the empirical evidence needed to corroborate his claims of an extant prehistoricness, and the group thus shifts its mental efforts to devising a means of obtaining such evidence to appease the cantankerous professor. Challenger is willing to begin the exodus as long as the group “are able to take back with [them] something in the nature of a chart,” but this, given the density of the jungle by which they are surrounded, seems unlikely, until, in a flash of “inspiration,” Malone alights on a plan of ascending a nearby tree to obtain a panoramic glimpse of the landscape of “Maple White Land,” after which, he suggests, the group can then construct such a “chart” according to his observations (134). Before reporting his findings, Malone takes a moment to present the reader with his credentials as a climber of trees, stating, “Now, ever since I ran wild as a lad in Ireland I have been a bold and skilled tree-climber. My comrades might be supreme among the rocks, but I knew that I would be supreme among those branches” (134). During his ascent of the “enormous gnarled gingko tree,” a remarkable incident ensues:

There was some thick, bush-like clump which seemed to be a parasite upon a branch up which I was swarming. I leaned my head around it in order to see what was beyond, and I nearly fell out of the tree in my surprise and horror at what I saw . . . A face was gazing into mine—at the distance of only a foot or two. The creature that owned it had been crouching behind the parasite, and had looked round it at the same time that I did. It was a human face—or at least it was far more human than any monkey’s that I have ever seen. It was long, whitish, and blotched with pimples, the nose flattened, and the lower jaw projecting, with a bristle of coarse whiskers around the chin. The eyes, which were under thick and heavy brows, were bestial and ferocious, and as it opened its mouth to snarl . . . I observed that it had curved, sharp canine teeth . . . Then, as quick as a flash, came an expression of overpowering fear. There was a crash of broken boughs as it dove wildly through the tangle of green. I caught a glimpse of a hairy body like that of a reddish pig, and then it was gone amid a swirl of leaves and branches. (135-6).

Though “shocked at the sudden and strange appearance of this ape-man,” Malone determines to carry out his mission and remains in order to examine the “strange country” from his bird’s-eye vantage (136). Once he has fully absorbed its sights, Malone descends to loud acclaim, boasting to the reader, “for once I was the hero of the expedition” (137).

Before settling in by the fireside to compose his “Rough Chart of Maple White Land” under Challenger’s supervision, Malone informs them of his encounter with “the ape man among the branches” (137). He tells them that for some time he has had a foreboding sense of “something malevolent watching us,” and in response to this seeming confirmation of his impression, Challenger offers an ethnological explanation for why Malone, alone among the party, would be the one to have sensed the concealed ape-man’s proximity: Malone is “the one among us who is endowed with that Celtic temperament which would make him sensitive to such impressions” (137). In Challenger’s estimation, Malone, as a Celt, possesses a kind of extra-sensory perceptual ability, leading Professor Summerlee, his skeptical naturalist colleague, to scoff at the suggestion as an endorsement of the scientifically discredited “theory of telepathy” (137). After declining to pursue the debate on telepathy further, Challenger goes on to throw in

Summerlee's face the unmistakable divergence of Malone's observations from established scientific fact:

In South America there are, if my memory serves me . . . some thirty-six species of monkey, but the anthropoid ape is unknown. It is clear, however, that he exists in this country, and that he is not the hairy gorilla-like variety, which is never seen out of Africa or the East . . . The question we have to face is, whether he approximates more closely to the ape or the man. In the latter case, he may well approximate to what the vulgar have called the 'missing link.' (138)

Thus, "through the intelligence and activity of Mr. Malone," the party have not only secured a "chart" of the "lost world" to substantiate their experience but have also discovered an entirely new species of "anthropoid ape" on a continent previously considered barren of such primates.

The meaning of this extraordinary episode is unmistakable. Malone's "Celtic temperament" is perfectly suited to perceiving the chaotic, primitive nature of the "lost world," to the point that he even senses, by way of what can only be "sympathetic magic," the presence of creatures invisible to the naked eye. Malone's "telepathy" also positions him as the ideal cartographer of Maple White Land, as if the rationalist or scientific bent of Challenger and Summerlee, and the quintessentially Teutonic makeup of the party's leader, Lord John Roxton, would be inadequate to the task of taking in its nebulous and primordial characteristics. Beyond depicting Malone's identity as generally and advantageously Celtic, however, Conan Doyle also endows his narrator with ethnological affiliations that are specifically Irish. In addition to his preternatural Celtic sensitivity, it is also Malone's Irishness that alerts him to the presence of the arboreal ape-man. The tableau of their mirror-like mutual stare implies an evolutionary identity between this "anthropoid ape" and the Irishman, an equivalence that unmistakably recalls the illustrations of late nineteenth-century British comic weeklies like those I have analyzed above. Cartoons like "Time's Waxworks" and "A King of A-Shantee," or ones like the 1876 illustration in the American *Harper's Weekly* titled "The Ignorant Vote: Honors Are Easy," depicting an

ape-like caricature of an African-American opposite from and balanced with an equally ape-like Paddy on a scale measuring the threat of their political enfranchisement, reflect the popular British tendency to depict the Irish as “simian” and “Africanoid,” as just the sort of “anthropoid apes” that Challenger describes (Curtis, *Apes* 60). The symmetrical gazes of the South American ape-man and Malone present just this evolutionary equivalence and imply that the narrator’s greater affinity for the “lost world” results from his primitive Irishness. The popular Victorian prejudice which defined the Irish as a sort of “white chimpanzee” overtly informs Conan Doyle’s depiction of the prehistoric primate, with its “long, whitish” face, its “flattened” nose and its “projecting” lower jaw. Malone-as-Paddy is the close kindred of this “proganathous” ape, and his “heroism” in the scene hinges on his uniquely Irish Celtic biology.

Conan Doyle further implies that the novel’s aesthetic medium as a whole is texturally Celtic. The literalized psychological dynamic of its plot, whereby the shifts from civilized Britain to primitive South America and back enact a return of the evolutionary repressed of the British middle classes, relies directly on Malone’s Irish Celtic epistemology for its very *transmission*. This reliance is emphatically emblemized by the name of the ship in which the party crosses the Atlantic: “Ivernia.” This archaic version of “Hibernia,” or Ireland, leads the reader to conclude that in order for the primitive, indeed primordial, experiences of the novel’s main characters to be conveyed to its hyper-civilized British readers, an Irish Celtic intermediary is indispensable. In other words, Irishness serves in the novel as a sort of epistemological translating apparatus for the conveyance of exotic and foreign experiences into the familiar terms of domestic British society. It is as if the passage from the “civilized” ontology of the metropole to the “primitive” ontology of the “lost world” cannot occur unless routed through the liminal contact zone of Ireland. Professor Challenger himself suggests as much in response to one of

Malone's other "inspiration"-like suggestions for navigating the perils of "Maple White Land": "Our young friend makes up for many obvious mental lacunae by some measure of primitive common sense" (133). Though Challenger's literal meaning is that Malone's Celtic mind is useful in spite of *its own* lacunae, the novel as a whole suggests that Malone's primitive epistemology is an ideal resource for transcending the peculiar lacunae of the minds *of the British*, foremost among these blindspots or gaps being the insurmountable epistemological distance between their "civilized" ontology and the "primitive" ontology of prehistoric South America. The Irish texture of Malone's narration in effect fills this epistemological and ontological gap for Conan Doyle's British readers, enabling the transmission of "primitive" experience to a "civilized" audience in all its otherwise-alien fullness.

The Celt as Colonial Agent in Kipling's *Kim*

In his utilization of Irishness as both an ethnological and socio-historical entity for the prosecution of a tenaciously imperialist geopolitical agenda around the turn of the twentieth century, Conan Doyle was not alone. In her recent book *Detecting the Nation*, Caroline Reitz argues that the imperialist thrust of Conan Doyle's literary project is mirrored in the work of his equally popular British contemporary, Rudyard Kipling. Reitz's intervention consists of tracing the ideological parallels between the two writers across the boundary separating the genres in which they most often worked, detective and "adventure," or imperial romance, fiction. While what Reitz calls "traditional criticism" views these media as distinct from one another because of their divergent realms of geographical address, the zone of concern for detective fiction typically being domestic Britain and that of imperial romance being Britain's colonial possessions, Reitz views the two as allied, symmetrical halves of the British imperial project. Though one cannot help but feel that Reitz's elaborate argument for generic continuity between detective and

adventure fiction could have been more efficiently conducted by way of a simple close reading of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, a “detective” novel that is simultaneously, by virtue of its exotic Celtic colonial setting, an example of imperial romance, there is no denying the accuracy of Reitz’s conclusion that the two authors and their staple genres functioned as interlocking cogs in the machinery of British imperialism. In my view, however, the extent and depth of this generic and ideological alliance cannot be adequately gauged without attending to their common deployment of Irishness as a resource for the pursuit of their fictional goals. Indeed, the precise configuration of Conan Doyle’s and Kipling’s common imperial outlook cannot be sketched absent an awareness of this rather striking commonality.

As we shall see in what follows, *Kim* (1901), Kipling’s greatest fictional achievement, evinces a conception of Irishness remarkably similar to that of Conan Doyle’s, a conception whereby this unique racial identity becomes an indispensable imaginative resource for the maintenance of British imperial rule in one of its most turbulent and vexed colonial possessions, India. An examination of *Kim*’s Irish elements proves valuable not only in that it enables a thorough reassessment of the internal dynamics of Kipling’s canonical text but also in that it extends our examination of Anglo-Celtic dialectic in a productive and illuminating new direction. Namely, in addition to replicating the same fundamental ethnological, socio-historical and aesthetic concerns presented by Matthew Arnold and Arthur Conan Doyle, concerns more or less limited to the geographical context of British “domestic colonialism” in Ireland, *Kim* demonstrates the application of Celticist aesthetic theories and Anglo-Celtic hybridity to a full-fledged imperial situation. Where Arnold’s criticism and Conan Doyle’s *The Hound of the Baskervilles* attempt to work through the implications of the aesthetic and socio-political aspects of the Anglo-Celt within his/her own native setting, the United Kingdom, Kipling’s novel

envisions the deployment of Anglo-Celtic resources in the colonial context of India, an imperial possession which is more properly representative, as an “administrative colony,” of the governmental and logistical challenges of the Empire at large. With *The Lost World*, we have approached in asymptotic fashion the ethnological, socio-political and aesthetic issues controlling *Kim*, but Conan Doyle’s “science fiction,” though preoccupied by evolutionary terms with direct relevance to any analysis of British imperialism, demonstrates the operation of these terms in the fantasy setting of a prehistoric South America. Devoting his attention to the real colonial setting of India, Kipling, I will argue, achieved the fullest realization of the hegemonic potential of Anglo-Celtic ethnological and aesthetic modalities ever to emerge from the imperial romance phase of British Celticism.

In recent years numerous critics have attempted to unlock the mystery of why Kipling chose to make the novel’s protagonist Irish. However, most have limited their readings of the significance of Kim’s Irishness solely to political considerations, so that, in the most common interpretive scenario, Kim’s transformation from faux Indian native to British imperialist *par excellence* serves to model the imperial assimilation of two recalcitrant colonial populations, the Irish and the Indian, simultaneously. Through *Kim*, in this reading, Kipling is able to kill two birds with one imperialist stone, resolving at a single stroke two of the Empire’s most vexing administrative problems.⁴² Drawing on a broader movement among historians and literary critics to place Ireland and India in comparative relationship on the basis of their common incorporation within and resistance to the British Empire, this critical approach has effectively elucidated the novel’s pan-colonial ideological agenda.⁴³ However, the comparative methodology on which this otherwise-productive reading of Kim’s Irishness relies inevitably tends toward eliding the *differential* operations of British imperialism in these two colonial settings. The uniquely

“mixed” character of Ireland’s role within the Empire thus evaporates through a reductive equivalence with India, with the result that this approach remains blind to a crucial area of the novel’s complexity. To map in full its racial, colonial and aesthetic concerns, knowledge of *both* the commonalities *and* differences between India and Ireland is absolutely essential.

Alone among the critical studies to date, Nessa Cronin’s essay “Monstrous Hybridity: Kim of the Eye-Rishti and the Survey of India” embraces the nuance of Ireland’s “mixed” colonial experience as an analytical resource for illuminating the intricacies of *Kim*’s imperialist designs. Building on such information about the role of the Irish in prosecuting Britain’s broader imperial goals as I have already adumbrated, Cronin undertakes a more properly Irish analysis of Kim as the fictional counterpart of those real Irish who composed forty-eight percent of the British army in Bengal from 1825 to 1850, who composed fifteen percent of the Indian Civil Service in the 1880s and in the same decade served twice as Viceroy, who in the 1890s served as governors of seven of India’s eight administrative provinces, and who helped suppress Indian nationalist resistance throughout the period from the Sepoy Mutiny of 1857 to the so-called “Amritsar Massacre” of 1919.⁴⁴ Cronin correctly reads Ireland’s mixed or liminal colonial position as central to Kim’s adept negotiation of the hierarchy of British India, a hierarchy whose partitions and cultural aporia demand the kind of colonial flexibility such as only an Irish subject can provide.

Obviously then, Cronin’s reading aligns in significant ways with my own analysis of Irishness as a socio-historical entity. Indeed, Cronin takes my own reading of the novel a good part of the way toward its destination, and I must concur at the most basic level with her findings regarding the specifically Irish derivation of Kim’s remarkable imperial flexibility. In the end, however, I find Cronin’s account of the novel wanting in at least two crucial respects. First,

though she perceives the value of Irishness as a kind of liminal category to Kipling's imperialist project, Cronin concludes that Kipling views Kim's hybridity as too "monstrous" an ethnological modality to be maintained beneath his overarching aim of securing British imperial hegemony. Erroneously, in my view, Cronin sees Kipling as ultimately foreclosing on Kim's hybrid position as an ideologically inadmissible region of cultural overlap between British colonizer and Indian colonized, such that "the binaries of sahib and native are reasserted and thus maintained" by novel's end (137). Second, Cronin's understanding of Irishness as a racial category is based solely on inferential deduction from the "semi-colonial" position of the Irish, and reflects little if any awareness of the ethnological definition of the Irish in the work of Matthew Arnold and in Victorian anthropology more broadly. As I have demonstrated, however, during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, Irishness was both an ethnologically codified and a socio-historically routed entity. A reading of Kim's Irishness which displays no awareness of *both* domains of British popular perception is only partially equipped to track its operations and complications. Indeed, the ethnological definition of the Celt is far more closely related to the domain of the *aesthetic* than is the socio-political definition of the Irish, and Cronin's reading of *Kim* thus cannot but remain blind to the deep significance of Irishness to the novel's *form*, over and above its content. As I will argue in what follows, Kipling, like Conan Doyle, devises a partially Celticized aesthetic medium in order to effectuate the fictional encapsulation of the tensions and problems arising at the interface of British colonial rule. At the level of form, the novel thus gestures toward the larger socio-political objection I would lodge against Cronin with reference to *Kim*, namely that his Irish liminality and hybridity, far from "monstrous" or incommensurable to Kipling's imperialist project, proves to be the most valuable resource of which that project can avail itself. The Anglo-Celtic hybridity of *Kim*, finally, proves the only practical

means Kipling can envisage for holding together the magnetically opposed elements of Anglo-Indian colonial difference, just as this same hybridity provides the only possible *aesthetic* means of unifying a *narrative* of such difference.

Kipling provides ample indications that Kim's Irishness is *ethnologically*, not just *socio-politically*, oriented. The novel as a whole makes plain its immersion in the discipline of anthropology and further demonstrates the thorough interpenetration of this discipline with imperial power. The British Secret Service into whose ranks Colonel Creighton drafts Kim pursues its agenda under the guise of "The Ethnological Survey," and Creighton seems to value his avocation as a field researcher for the British Royal Society as much as he does his service to the Empire. In addition to this glaring testament to the interdependency of power and anthropological knowledge in this colonial setting, Kipling clearly indicates that Kim's privileged position in the Survey/Service derives from his Irishness. Though the novel features no expert in craniology to match Dr. Mortimer of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, a comment on Kim's cranial features by Father Victor, the Catholic chaplain of the Irish Regiment whose arrival is foretold by the talismanic "prophecy" inherited by Kim from his deceased father, directly recalls the ethnological terms of Mortimer's diagnosis of the Celtic heritage of Sir Henry Baskerville. Just before Creighton intervenes and alters Kim's future irrevocably, Victor, finding Kim's cagy self-possession amid his rapidly changing circumstances intriguing, tells him, "I'd give a month's pay to find what's goin' on in that little round head of yours" (153). Victor's brief description unmistakably alludes to "the rounded head" of Mortimer's Celt, one of the many pseudo-scientific anthropological data by which real ethnologists like John Beddoe fortified their case for Ireland's racial difference from England throughout the late nineteenth century. Kim is not simply an *Irish* character, but is also, crucially, a *Celtic* one.

The ethnological talents of the Celt provide the basis for Kim's preternatural adaptivity to native India, providing a fully *biological* connectivity with its "primitive" colonial setting to supplement the "semi-colonial" socio-political associations of his Irishness. Before his Anglicization at St. Xavier's and his initiation into the "Great Game" of British-Russian imperial competition have transformed his worldview, Kipling quite straightforwardly depicts Kim's epistemology as a kind of "sympathetic magic." Just before he begins training under Lurgan Sahib, the master of espionage through whose tutelage all agents of the "Game" must pass, Kim encounters him for the first time: "A black-bearded man, with a green shade over his eyes, sat at a table, and, one by one, with short, white hands, picked up globules of light from a tray before him, threaded them on a glancing silken string, and hummed to himself the while" (197). Kim's inability to parse rationally the visual data presented him by Lurgan's necklace of light render his impression of it entirely imitative or "sympathetic," and his keen sensitivity and "power of attachment" to the illusion invoke the "sentiment" of Arnold's Celt. Kipling's description of Kim's fitful first night at Lurgan's house further attests to this "magical" epistemology:

It was no cheerful night; the room being overfull of voices and music. Kim was waked twice by someone calling his name. The second time he set out in search, and ended by bruising his nose against a box that certainly spoke with a human tongue but in no sort of human accent . . . the trumpet box was pouring out a string of the most elaborate abuse that even Kim had ever heard, in a high uninterested voice, that for a moment lifted the short hairs of his neck . . . 'Chup! [Be still]' he cried . . . 'Chup—or I break your head' . . . The box took no heed. Kim wrenched at the tin trumpet and something lifted with a click . . . If there were a devil inside . . . he would clean that *shaitan*. He slipped off his jacket, and plunged it into the box's mouth . . . Kim finished his slumbers with a serene mind. (198-9)

Kim's understanding of the phonograph is presented as comically primitive. Kim can only interpret the motive principle behind this technology as a kind of *animism*, whereby its mechanical structure becomes inhabited by a "devil" or "shaitan" Kim must battle and silence to

recover his peace of mind. Kim's initial epistemology thus unmistakably belongs to the "primitive" domain as demarcated by Victorian anthropology, where evolutionarily unsophisticated peoples relate to the world according to a "magical" interpretive modality.

The famous scene in which Lurgan brings Kim's initially primitive epistemology into alignment with the "civilized" protocols of the British further demonstrates the presence of the Celtic element in his makeup. As the final test of his training, Lurgan subjects Kim once more to perceptual disorientation through his illusory manipulation of light, this time reflected on the surface of a jar of water. "Fifteen feet off" from Kim, Kipling describes, Lurgan "laid one hand on the jar," and "next instant, it stood at Kim's elbow," causing Kim to exclaim, "That is magic!" (201-2). Lurgan urges Kim to replicate his strange feat, but he proves unable and the jar crashes to the ground. Lurgan then intensifies the "magical" test by attempting to hypnotize Kim into accepting further distortions of physical reality, which this time take the form of the jar's seeming self-reconstitution:

Lurgan Sahib laid one hand gently on the nape of his neck, stroked it twice or thrice, and whispered: 'Look! It shall come together again, piece by piece' . . . To save his life, Kim could not have turned his head. The light touch held him as in a vice, and his blood tingled pleasantly through him. There was one large piece where there had been three, and above them in shadowy outline of the entire vessel. He could see the veranda through it, but it was thickening and darkening with each beat of his pulse. Yet the jar . . . had been smashed before his eyes . . . So far Kim had been thinking in Hindi, but a tremor came on him, and with an effort like that of a swimmer before sharks, who hurls himself half out of the water, his mind leaped up from a darkness that was swallowing it and took refuge in—the multiplication table in English! . . . the jar had been smashed—yess, smashed—not the native word, he would not think of that—but smashed—into fifty pieces, and twice three was six, and thrice three was nine, and four times three was twelve. He clung desperately to the repetition. The shadow-outline of the jar cleared like a mist after rubbing eyes. (201-2)

A better illustration of Kim's transition from an epistemology of "sympathetic magic" to one of rationality would be difficult to devise. Kim initially accepts the physical impossibility with

which his perceptions are confronted, but suddenly becomes seized with a “tremor” hurtling his mind toward “refuge” in that adamantine bulwark of Teutonic rationality, “the multiplication table in English.” Kim transforms from “sympathetic” attachment to Lurgan’s display to *antipathetic detachment*, and following this wrenching, seizure-like epistemological shift he efficiently masters the data before him by mathematical tally. The “mist” of “primitive” epistemology falls from his eyes.

Though innumerable critics have commented on this scene, none has noticed the extent to which Kim’s transformation is couched in *physiological* terms. Kipling is careful to specify Kim’s responsiveness to Lurgan’s magic as localized in his *blood*, which “tingle[s] pleasantly” in sympathetic acceptance of the jar’s apparent reassembly. By doing so, Kipling gestures toward a specifically *Celtic* epistemological affinity between the Irish Kim and Lurgan’s “magic.” It is the Celtic ethnological orientation of the “round headed” Kim which makes Kim susceptible to being “swallow”ed in mental “darkness.” This description of primitive epistemology as an *absence of light* is doubly significant, in that throughout the novel, whenever Kim’s British handlers observe him becoming too fully native, they express a fear that he is “leagued with all the Powers of Darkness,” in the words of Father Victor (135). “Darkness,” in other words, in addition to the obvious religious or metaphysical meaning intended by the priest, is both an epistemological state and a *racial* one, and there is a palpable risk that the Celtic Kim, through the vehicle of his “primitive” evolutionary affinity with India, will somehow be absorbed into its “dark” population irretrievably.

The muslim “horse dealer” Mahbub Ali even goes so far as to describe Kim’s dexterity amid India’s natives in terms of the popular caricature of the Irish as “white chimpanzees.” “A monkey does not fall among trees,” he tells Creighton in order to quell his anxieties when the

newly-discovered Kim has vanished into the populace of Lucknow (176). Through Ali, Kipling draws on the popular mythology of the Irish as “anthropoid apes” in order to throw Kim’s colonial adaptivity into ethnological relief. Kim is able to meet the “black” Indian native on equal terms, exchanging gaze for gaze in a manner which recalls Malone’s tree-climbing escapade in *The Lost World*. As a “Celtic Caliban” or “white negro,” Kim is perfectly positioned to integrate into and blend with native India, and this partial racial commonality underwrites Creighton’s immediate, keen interest in his imperial potential. Creighton’s eagerness to draft Kim into the British Secret Service, however, depends not merely on the “nigrescent” associations of Irishness as affirmed by Kim, but also on its white associations. It is the combination of the two components of Irishness, white and “negro,” that enables Kim to become “the first that ever saved himself” from the epistemological darkness of Lurgan Sahib (203).

Later in Kim’s training, Kipling contrasts Kim’s facility with the final, most crucial resource of operatives in the “Great Game,” *disguise*, with the fumbling attempts of Lurgan’s other pupil, an Indian native, thereby further affirming Kim’s Irishness as the source of his unique imperial potential: “The Hindu child played this game clumsily. That little mind . . . could not temper itself to enter into another’s soul; but a demon in Kim woke up and sang with joy as he put on the changing dresses, and changing speech and gesture therewith” (207). It is as if the “Hindu child” is present merely to provide readers with an ethnological contrast to highlight the indispensability of Kim’s Irishness to imperial service. The fluidity and changeability of Kim’s identity is so pronounced that he is able to “enter into another’s soul,” as if he is a “demon” taking possession of it. The “magical” register of this description reinforces the novel’s “primitive” epistemological theme, enlisting Celtic “sentiment” as the very medium through which Kim’s Irish liminality takes effect. Like the Irish “*pukka* devils” whose coming

was foretold by his father's "prophecy," Kim is a kind of devil or "imp," as his mentor, Teshoo Llama, repeatedly calls him, adapting his being to both sides of the Anglo-Indian colonial interface. As Kim tells the Llama, and as his later success in the "Game" testifies, he "can change swiftly" (139). After witnessing the diverse identities donned by Kim throughout the novel, a reader of *Kim* with an awareness of Celtic mythology is led to wonder whether Kipling's description of the Irish as "pukka devils" does not allude to that shapeshifting, mischievous Irish god, the Pooka.

Kim's Irishness is thus complexly overdetermined by both ethnological and socio-historical factors. His adaptability to the "darkness" of India results doubly from his "primitive" Celtic epistemology, the "sympathetic magic" of which draws him into the whirlpool of its evolutionary backwardness, and from the "negro" half of his colonially "mixed" or hybrid Irishness. Likewise, Kim's facility with disguise is presented as a kind of Celtic "sympathetic magic" through which he is able to bring his being into mimetic conformity with that of native Indian and "sahib" alike. Where the biology of native Indian subjects like Lurgan Sahib's "Hindu boy," though also "primitive" and "magical" in epistemological orientation, confronts an internal limit to its "sympathetic" adaptability, Kim's Irish biology, a hybrid compound of "black" and "white" elements, is saddled with no such limitation, and thus enables him to exploit his extraordinary mimetic capacities to their fullest. Kim's fluidity, in other words, derives simultaneously from a Celtic epistemology defined in Arnoldian terms and from an Irish socio-historical positionality situated on the boundary between British colonizer and Indian colonized. Every movement of Kim's within the "Great Game" partakes of both aspects of Irishness, ethnological and socio-political, at one and the same time.

It is worth noting the extent to which Kim's fictional identity converges with that of his

contemporary, Sherlock Holmes. Like Holmes, Kim presents an example of Anglo-Celtic hybridity, and like Holmes—and Arnold’s “composite English genius” before him—Kim models in his own biology the composition of the British imperial hierarchy, effectively subordinating his “primitive” to his “civilized” aspect. Of the many parallels between Holmes and Kim as allied fictional agents of British imperialism, it is perhaps their relationship to *cartography* that is most striking and that best indexes their common origins in the tenets of Victorian anthropology. As we saw in the previous section, Holmes, prior to his physical journey to Devonshire, undertakes a spiritual reconnaissance mission of sorts with the aid of a British “ordnance map.” Holmes, in effect, utilizes Celtic “magic” to inhabit Celtic Wales through this document, thereby modeling in the domain of epistemology the deployment of “primitive” means toward “civilized” ends. Kim’s own mapmaking activities for the British “Ethnological Survey” manifest an identical epistemological configuration. Colonel Creighton’s description to Kim of the mental habits required of a successful “chain man” for the Survey presents imperial cartography as a labor for which his Celtic epistemology will be ideally suited: “thou must learn how to make pictures of roads and mountains and rivers—to carry these pictures in thine eye till a suitable time comes to set them upon paper” (166). No ethnological figure could be better equipped for this “sympathetic” or mimetic task than the Celt, whose “sentimental” talents enable the rendering of nature’s sublime immensity in all its “weird power and fairy charm.” In this endeavor Kim, like Holmes, will utilize “primitive” epistemological resources to advance the “civilizing” mission of the British Empire.

The novel’s aesthetic form manifests an identical division of labor between “primitive” and “civilized” elements to that entailed in Kim’s imperial service. By way of free and indirect discourse, in scenes such as I have quoted above the novel presents external events from Kim’s

own internal perspective. As a consequence of this narrative strategy, during those moments in which Kim inhabits a “magical” epistemology, the novel itself comes temporarily to inhabit a primitive perceptual modality. We have witnessed several examples of this transfer of Kim’s primitive mental processes to Kipling’s narrative form, such as when Kim enters the house of Lurgan Sahib and sees him juggling “globules of light,” or when Kim temporarily falls prey to his illusory manipulation of the broken jar. At these moments, the reader through Kim is also plunged into irrationality and “darkness,” bereft of the necessary descriptive data to organize Lurgan’s activities by logic or natural law. The novel, in other words, structures itself according to an epistemology of “sympathetic magic,” and the reader’s gaze merges with Kim’s “primitive” mentality. Kipling’s ideological priorities demand, however, that such instances of the eclipse of rationality by “sentiment” remain relatively scarce. Predictably, *Kim*’s overall form enacts the hierarchical subordination of the latter modality to the former, just as Kim’s training for the “Great Game” demands the subordination of his “negro” to his “white” characteristics. It is utterly appropriate, in this regard, that just after Kim has completed his dizzying apprenticeship, the novel suddenly and jarringly shifts into a new generic mode to relate the remainder of Kim’s British schooling:

The record of the boy’s education interests few save his parents, and, as you know, Kim was an orphan. It is written in the books of St. Xavier’s at Partibus that a report of Kim’s progress was forwarded at the end of each term to Colonel Creighton and to Father Victor . . . It is further recorded in the same books that he showed a great aptitude for mathematical studies as well as map-making, and carried away a prize. (212)

This is *history*—not as a temporal construct but as a genre of writing. Kipling claims to cite an official “record” of Kim’s “progress” in “the books of St. Xavier’s at Partibus,” as if some external, corroborative source is required as documentary proof of Kim’s timely progression through the remainder of his education. The “primitive” disorder of the novel’s medium during

Kim's training in espionage becomes eclipsed by the orderly, causal arrangement of historical chronicle, and in place of Kim's primitive subjectivity Kipling substitutes the objective, omniscient narration of an institutional record.

At the level of form, then, *Kim* displays the same evolutionary split between primitive and civilized components that Kim manifests as a character, and also displays the same hierarchical arrangement of these modalities that Kim himself comes to embody by subordinating his "magical" biological resources to "civilized" imperial ends. Given the *articulation* of these two levels of Kipling's narrative, character and form, through the free and indirect discourse focalized through Kim, it would be reasonable to expect that the novel's resolution might most appropriately take the form of a coalescence of the two beneath the "civilizing" logic of Kipling's imperialist agenda. Such a merger is precisely what occurs during the well-known passage in which the circuitous process of Kim's Anglicization reaches fulfillment:

"I am Kim. I am Kim. And what is Kim?" His soul repeated it again and again . . . He did not want to cry . . . but of a sudden easy, stupid tears trickled down his nose and with an almost audible click he felt the wheels of his being lock up anew on the world without. Things that rode meaningless on the eyeball an instant before slid into their proper proportion. Roads were meant to be walked upon, houses to be lived in, cattle to be driven, fields to be tilled, and men and women to be talked to. They were all real and true—solidly planted upon his feet—perfectly comprehensible—clay of his clay, more or less. (331)

No longer is Kim "leagued with the Powers of Darkness" as he had been before his discovery by the British army. Now, having passed through the crucible of both the "Great Game" and British education, Kim views the world with eyes cleared of the "mist" of "magical" epistemology. Meaninglessness becomes meaning, and formlessness comes into "proper proportion." "Solidly planted on his feet" and with his face turned toward a "perfectly comprehensible" world, Kim's

very biology melds with British-administered reality as colonially-occupied India becomes “clay of his clay.”

The specific criteria by which Kim defines “real and true” India are also noteworthy, and enable us to return to what has been, up to this point, a muted subtext to this chapter’s examination of British Celticism. Namely, Kim’s revised vision of India parses the nation according to *economic* utility. “Roads were meant to be walked upon, houses to be lived in, cattle to be driven, fields to be tilled”: India’s proper proportions obey the logic of capitalist development. Cattle, the sacred animal of the Hindu native population whose treatment has played such a prominent role in India’s turbulent colonial history, will no longer roam free but will be herded and driven toward an instrumental fate.⁴⁵ The destiny of India’s fields is “to be tilled,” in accordance with one of the founding principles of early modern British capitalism and imperialism, the Lockean doctrine of “improvement,” according to which land undeveloped is land forfeited.⁴⁶ The proper “proportion” of social life is middle-class British domesticity—“houses to be lived in.” One is reminded of the passage from Matthew Arnold’s *On the Study of Celtic Literature* describing Teutonic preeminence in “the field of plain sense, of direct practical utility,” where the enterprising, industrious, “steady-going Saxon temperament” produces all the amenities of modern civilization, “doors that open, windows that shut, locks that turn, razors that shave, coats that wear, watches that go, and a thousand more such good things” (92-3). Kim, it would seem, has become something of a Philistine.

Ignoring the sage lessons of his mentor Teshoo Llama to spurn “Maya,” the illusory “wheel” of human desire, Kim’s mobile, changeable being, echoing his seizure-like awakening from “primitive” epistemology under the guidance of Lurgan Sahib, “lock[s] up anew on the world without” in perfect fulfillment of the materialist proclivities of his “white,” Saxon genetic

component. This is not to suggest, however, that Kim's other racial element, the "negro" component which enables him to integrate with native India, falls away at novel's end. Kim's exceptional value to the British imperial enterprise in south Asia derives from his ethnological flexibility as an Irish Celt, as a compound of both "civilized" and "primitive" characteristics who can serve as a go-between, a mediator and translator coordinating hierarchical relations between British colonizer and Indian colonized. It is Kim's Irishness that makes him, in the words of Zohreh Sullivan, "a type of super colonialist, simultaneously of the people and yet above them" (176). If *Kim* finishes on a "white" note, therefore, this is not to be taken as a racial homogenization of its protagonist. Kipling must find a way to clinch the novel's imperialist ideology and establish once and for all that Kim's loyalties are to the occupying power, but his service to that power must, inferentially, persist in the same "mixed" or liminal racial modality as heretofore.

Critics such as Cronin who see Kim as donning a full, homogeneous "sahib" identity at novel's end thus are guilty, in my view, of a misunderstanding of its ideological design. As I have already summarized above, Cronin sees Kim's Irishness as representing a kind of "monstrous hybridity," the destabilizing implications of which Kipling entertains but at the final moment cannot bear. Cronin is not alone in the assessment that Kim's "hybridity" is a source of unbearable, unsustainable anxiety for Kipling. In a perceptive reading of the novel in his very influential book *Out of Place*, Ian Baucom advances nearly the same argument as Cronin, though without her recognition of his Irishness as integral to Kim's mixed identity. Baucom sees Kim as embodying a "dizzying and unnamable excess" overflowing the brim of Kipling's imperialist fantasy, such that his colonial versatility "implies that the empire, advertised as a factory for the production of English identity, can sustain itself only through a commitment to tropicalization,

that the immense project of imperial subject fashioning . . . can succeed only by producing individuals who are stupefied, hybridized, and schizophrenic” (99). Baucom’s “hybridized” Kim is an unplanned, “monstrous” progeny, a Frankensteinian creation arising from the splitting of Kipling’s imperialist design along the axis of Anglo-Indian difference. Though Baucom differs from Cronin in that he sees the novel as finally unable to relieve this anxiety, he shares with her an interpretation of Kim’s hybridity as an unbearable site of colonial immixture which Kipling would like to repress.

This misstep entailed in this reading is straightforwardly demonstrable through recovery of the referent of the phrase which serves as the keystone of both critics’ accounts, “monstrous hybridism.” This phrase occurs only once in *Kim* and does not, in fact, refer to the title character at all. Instead, the “hybridism” in question is that of a native Indian agent for the British Secret Service, Hurree Babu. Kipling unmistakably presents the ill-fitting hodgepodge of Hurree’s partially native, partially Anglicized identity as an abomination, and does so appropriately, given the anthropological context my reading has adduced, according to his inability to surmount the “primitive,” “magical” epistemological habits of his native culture. Hurree serves as a parody of scientific rationality, proclaiming himself a “good enough Herbert Spencerian” to recognize the fundamentally illusory character of displays like those of Lurgan Sahib (272). Spencer, an anthropological contemporary of Darwin, Arnold, Beddoe and Frazer whose work asserted a thoroughly materialist understanding of the universe, serves as the ironic touchstone for Hurree, who, in spite of repeated protestations to the contrary, continues to believe in magic and the supernatural even after his initiation into the “Great Game.” In one of the novel’s other “magical” scenes, in which the mysterious Indian sorceress the “Huneefa” helps whiten Kim’s skin prior to his first mission, Mahbub Ali, sensing Hurree’s discomfort in proximity to her

occult incantations, urges him not to be afraid. The Babu responds with Spencerian bluster, but Kipling quickly undercuts his self-possession with scathing omniscient metacommentary: “‘How am I to fear the absolutely non-existent?’ said Hurree Babu, talking English to reassure himself. It is an awful thing still to dread the magic that you contemptuously investigate—to collect folklore for the Royal Society with a lively belief in all Powers of Darkness” (228). Hurree’s words proclaim him a rationalist, a proper devotee of his anthropological idol whose only response to the illusory operations of “magic” is contempt, but his emotional “dread” manifests a profound belief in its reality. While fancying himself an amateur field researcher for the British Royal Society, Hurree, “with a lively belief in all Powers of Darkness,” does not realize that he is himself a specimen of the class of human that is the Society’s primary object of study. His awkward, “schizophrenic” marriage of primitive and civilized epistemologies makes Hurree the novel’s central illustration of “the monstrous hybridism of East and West” (288).

As we have already witnessed, however, Kim experiences no such difficulty in adapting to the epistemological demands of Anglicization and thereby overcoming his own immersion in the “Powers of Darkness.” Kim’s “hybridism” is set apart by Kipling from that of the Babu as the proper fulfillment of ethnological mixture. The blend of “primitive” and “civilized” elements which is monstrous and dissonant in Hurree is instead equilibrated and harmonious in Kim. This contrast then produces a final, unmistakable affirmation of Irish hybridity as the preferred modality of British imperialism in India. Irishness provides the interpretive key to the novel’s imperial design in both its socio-political and aesthetic dimensions. As the case of Hurree demonstrates, the native Indian racial constitution is magnetically resistant to rationalization. There is some irresolvable and *essential* resistance of “primitive” Indianness to Britain’s assimilative mission, and, by implication, there must also be an obverse resistance in “civilized”

Britishness to full, seamless integration with India's native population. Given this markedly *determinist* ethnological framework, only Irishness, as a "mixed," liminal, hybrid compound of both sets of evolutionary characteristics, can mediate between these stark polarities and hold together the fabric of the Anglo-Indian imperial enterprise. Irishness is the suture or glue binding together the entirety of Britain's imperial mission; without its mediating capabilities, colonizer and colonized would remain entirely opaque and irresolvably antagonistic to one another. Likewise, only an Irish character can bind together a narrative devoted to chronicling the differential epistemology of the imperial ethnological interface, because only such a character is flexibly equipped to inhabit or "possess," demon-like, both "magical" and rational modalities at once. This racial logic implies, in effect, that without the translating apparatus that is Irishness, it would be impossible to fashion an aesthetic modality capable of accurately rendering both sides of this interface. An Irishness so conceived provides what Thomas Richards calls a "utopian epistemology," a comprehensive perceptual modality with the potential to render global difference *in toto*, and Kipling's totalizing socio-political purposes in the novel make Irishness not only a logical, but an irresistible, aesthetic choice (44). In short, without Irish hybridity, there could be no *Kim*.

"East is east, and west is west, and never the twain shall meet," runs what is perhaps the most famous line of poetry that Kipling ever penned. Critics like Cronin and Baucom, along with such canonical readers of *Kim* as Edward Said and Abdul Janmohamed, have taken this as an indication of the fundamentally "Manichean" or binary nature of Kipling's imperial outlook.⁴⁷ In the case of Hurree Babu, that motley of "eastern" and "western" elements, this proves emphatically to be the case. As Hurree himself unwittingly affirms with reference to this geographical dichotomy, "You cannot occupy two places in space simultaneously. That is

axiomatic” (299). In the case of *Kim*, however, such “Manichean” oppositions equally emphatically fail to hold up. *Kim*’s every action and every thought throw into stark relief the major blindspot of Hurree’s “axiom” and Kipling’s poem: Irishness. Ireland’s countless “hybrid” features in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries—its “semi-colonial” political status, its partially native, partially Anglicized culture, and the perceived racial hybridity which crystallizes ethnologically these liminal socio-historical characteristics—meant that the island was neither “east” nor “west,” but was located somewhere in between. Kipling’s brilliantly imaginative solution for negotiating and resolving the “Manichean” divide between the British and their Indian colonial subjects was to conscript a fictional Irishman to the cause. It would seem, ultimately, that taking up and bearing “the white man’s burden,” in another of Kipling’s infamous poetic descriptions, is a geopolitical and aesthetic labor that only a “white negro” is capable of performing.⁴⁸

Chapter 3: Counter-Hegemonic Hybridity: British Modernist Celticism in Fiction

In the preceding chapter, we observed how two of the best known practitioners of British imperial romance, Conan Doyle and Kipling, deploy the ethnological resources of the Irish Celt in their common effort to render aesthetically an imperialist resolution to the anxieties and difficulties arising at the interface of colonial difference. Both authors, Conan Doyle with reference to Ireland and Kipling with reference to India, envision the “mixed,” liminal capacities of an Anglo-Celtic hybrid as the only practical socio-political and aesthetic route for negotiating such difference for hegemonic purposes. In *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Sherlock Holmes’s investigative labors display a hierarchically arranged combination of both Celtic and Saxon epistemological modalities, and it is this combinatory epistemology which enables him in sequence to engage and comprehend Irish colonial difference and subjugate it to the legality and rationality of British civilization. Likewise, in *Kim* the title character manifests an alternation between Celtic, “primitive” and “civilized” Saxon epistemologies in his endeavor to shore up the hegemony of the British Empire in India. In both cases, Anglo-Celtic hybridity serves as the medium for both the maintenance of British rule over its recalcitrant colonial possessions and for the aesthetic rendering or encapsulation of the totality of ethnological difference operative in those possessions. Through this hybridity then, Conan Doyle and Kipling forge a highly imaginative and ingenious solution to the problem of what Alberto Memmi calls “the always unstable equilibrium of colonization,” that is, the ineluctably antagonistic and antipathetic nature of the colonial situation which, by its own irresistible momentum, would seem to tend toward the eventual dissolution and disestablishment of imperial rule (79). Anglo-Celtic hybridity, hierarchically proportioned, functions as a differential resource for the imaginary negotiation and alleviation of the tensions which, in real historical terms, have indeed proven as irresolvable as

Memmi describes. It serves as the mediating agent by which the volatile elements of “Manichean” British colonialism can be brought into equilibrium.

In the subsequent phase of British fiction which I have called modernist Celticism, the mediating function of Anglo-Celtic hybridity remains, for the most part, a constant. However, British modernist authors commission the figure the Anglo-Celt for a very different socio-political and aesthetic service. For these writers, the hybridity which had been instrumental to the hegemonic agenda of their imperialist predecessors, and which had provided a commodious means for the homogenization of the globe beneath British civilizational norms, instead becomes a means of overturning British imperial hegemony and its attendant norms. At the most basic level, British modernist Celticism seeks to invert the evolutionary hierarchy controlling the ideology of imperial romance, instead imagining an ascendancy of “primitive” ontological modalities as a route for the replenishment and recalibration of the desiccated ontology of an overly “civilized” Britain. British modernist Celticism thus aligns with previous accounts of the ideological agenda modernist “primitivism” by critics such as Michael Bell and Michael North, but it advances such accounts in a productive new direction by uncovering the significant role of Anglo-Celtic hybridity in the articulation of this agenda by at least two canonical “primitivist” modernists, Joseph Conrad and D.H. Lawrence.

The Nigger of the “Narcissus” and the Beginnings of British Modernist Celticism

The first text which, in my view, provides such an articulation is Conrad’s *The Nigger of the “Narcissus”*. On a superficial level, the novel’s “primitivism” seems to entail the encounter by a group of mainly British, entirely European seamen with the black West Indian James Wait, who represents an alien, exotic presence disrupting the equilibrium of their white worldview. A number of early passages uphold this interpretation, beginning with the scene depicting James’s

arrival on board the “Narcissus,” in which his cry of “Wait,” intended merely to announce his belated presence at the ship’s roll-call, is received as an act of insubordination, as a command to its indignant captain to delay the embarkation he has just ordered. An ambiguity thus radiates from the very name of the title character which positions him as an outsider beyond the pale of the ship’s normative protocols. The crew’s response to Wait once in view, encapsulated by the infamous passage describing Wait’s face as the “misshapen,” “brutal,” “repulsive mask of a nigger’s soul,” seems equally indicative of this straightforward white/black, familiar/strange primitivist dynamic, as does the crew’s initial interpretation of Wait’s inactivity during the first phase of their journey from India back to England, an interpretation which relies fairly transparently on the stereotype of the lazy, shiftless black (11). The entirety of the novel, according to this approach, becomes a sort of laboratory experiment probing the tensions and anxieties of white/black interracial contact aboard a British ship, in the same way that Conrad’s more famous work, *Heart of Darkness*, probes these tensions in the deep interior of the Belgian Congo.

This reading, however, accounts for only a small percentage of the novel’s concerns, “primitivist” or otherwise. Somewhere toward the middle, *The Nigger of the “Narcissus”* transforms from a straightforward racial contact or conflict story into something significantly more complex. This transformation can be illuminated by analogy with Slavoj Žižek’s influential discussion of anti-Semitism in *The Sublime Object of Ideology*. According to Žižek, anti-Semitism provides a paradigm for the ideological labor performed by all racism. Žižek’s anti-Semite, when presented with experiential data indicating that his perceptions of the Jew as a social subversive are baseless, will inevitably rework such data to serve as evidence for the *reinforcement* of those perceptions rather than their modification or repudiation. The tenacity

with which the anti-Semite clings to his racism indicates the fully *ontological* significance which the figure of the Jew assumes in his worldview. The Jew, in effect, for Žizek becomes the index of the “traumatic kernel” of human mortality, such that he functions as a screen for the projection of death itself as the cardinal threat to the “jouissance” of human existence. In short, the ideology of anti-Semitism—indeed all ideologies, racist or otherwise—performs a psychic labor seeking the expulsion or exorcism of ontological negativity, enabling the non-traumatic, pleasurable perceptual organization of human experience. Žizek’s theory of ideology and its “sublime object” presents a fully *primitivist* theory of human psychology, whereby the dense intricacies of human experience are finally reducible to the common animal truth of immanent mortality.⁴⁹

Conrad’s presentation of white racism in *The Nigger of the “Narcissus”* manifests a strikingly similar set of concerns, all of which cluster around the novel’s central question, namely, whether James Wait is genuinely, mortally ill or merely “shamming sick” in order to shirk his responsibilities. This is the interpretive knot with which the white crew of the “Narcissus” are presented, and in response to which they display variously antipathetic and sympathetic readings of their West Indian shipmate. At the beginning of novel, there is almost universal consensus that Wait is indeed “shamming,” a consensus which reflects a widespread embrace of the racial stereotype of the lazy black. By novel’s end, however, following the unassailable fact of Wait’s death, a diametrically opposite consensus emerges whereby the antipathies of racial difference are surmounted in favor of a sympathetic avowal of common humanity. Conrad deftly modulates the crew’s initially racist reading of Wait’s illness into a revised reading affirming a super-racial ontological common denominator, and through the overlay of these two interpretations he gestures toward their fundamental interdependence. In

other words, the novel presents racism, in Zizekian fashion, as a cipher for the more fundamental ontological problem of human mortality. As I will demonstrate in what follows, Conrad affords the ethnological resources of Irishness a unique place in the working out of this tortuous process of ideological transformation.

Soon after his entry on board the “Narcissus,” Wait comes to embody a stubborn interpretive dilemma for the ship’s crew by virtue of his frequent proclamations of mortal illness. While they cannot shake the suspicion that Wait’s condition as an imposture, an alibi for a stereotypically black indolence, the crew find themselves equally unable to commit to a posture of disbelief. By virtue of his enigmatic ontological status, Wait’s presence comes to dominate the ship:

He fascinated us. He would never let doubt die. He overshadowed the ship. Invulnerable in his promise of speedy corruption he trampled our self-respect; he demonstrated to us daily our want of moral courage; he tainted our lives. Had we been a miserable gang of wretched immortals, unhallowed alike by hope and fear, he could not have lorded it over us with a more pitiless assertion of his sublime privilege. (29)

Wait’s indeterminacy is the source of an overawing fascination, a preoccupying “doubt” that becomes the source of a “taint” mysteriously influencing the crew’s “self-respect” and sense of “moral courage.” The challenge to their “self-respect” derives from the possibility that Wait is “shamming” and thereby discrediting the universal validity of the crew’s work ethic. Wait’s “promise of speedy corruption” leaves him invulnerable, but may be a dupe devised to excuse a congenital racial laziness, and the inability his fellows feel to challenge the truth of the assertion which, if honest, validates the “sublime privilege” he has attained, paralyzes their collective psyche in a state of uncertainty, unable to pursue their suspicion of racial subterfuge. Wait’s proximity to death constitutes a “monstrous friendship” conferring basic human rights before whose assertion the crew feel themselves powerless; in the narrator’s words, his ontological

“privilege” anoints him as “a sick tyrant overawing a crowd of abject but untrustworthy slaves” (21-22). Serving Wait in his makeshift infirmary “with rage, and humility, as though we had been the base courtiers of a hated prince,” the sailors find themselves maddeningly trapped in a state of “moral” ambivalence, powerless alike to shed or to assuage their racist impulses (27).

As they are not a “gang” of “immortals” and are therefore thoroughly caught up in emotions of “hope and fear,” Wait’s “sublime” condition represents an unbearable reminder of their mortality; in Zizekian terms, Wait is nothing other than the “symptom” of the tenuousness of their worldview, a presence signifying the untenability of the “jouissance” of their existence. Through his increased physical deterioration as the novel proceeds, Wait sheds some of his racial significance for the crew and comes more and more to embody mortality itself. During the near-shipwreck episode of chapter three, in which the “Narcissus” sustains massive structural damage in a violent squall and teeters on the brink of capsize, the crew focalize their racist presuppositions, their fear of death and their hope of survival simultaneously in the effort to rescue “Jimmy” from his cabin. The narrator’s description of the rescue scene manifests the powerful ambivalence the crew feels toward their “hated prince,” and demonstrates the transition between their initial ethnological interpretation and eventual ontological interpretation of him:

. . . though at the time we hated him more than ever—more than anything under heaven—we did not want to lose him. We had so far saved him; and it had become a personal matter between us and the sea. We meant to stick to him . . . We could not get rid of the monstrous suspicion that this astounding black man was shamming sick, had been malingering heartlessly in the face of our toil, of our scorn, of our patience . . . in the face of death. Our vague and imperfect morality rose with disgust at his unmanly lie . . . we hated him because of the suspicion; we hated him because of the doubt. We could not scorn him safely—neither could we pity him without risk to our dignity . . . The secret and ardent desire of our hearts was the desire to beat him up viciously with our fists about the head; and we handled him as tenderly as though he had been made of glass. (44-45)

The passage describes a moment of psychic transformation: the crew “hate” Wait “more than

ever” because of the “monstrous suspicion” of his “malingering,” of a congenital, “unmanly” indolence which threatens to show up the baselessness of their ethic of noble “toil,” but they have come to invest deeply in his survival and resolve to “stick to him” because the ontological risk of death’s arrival exceeds the “moral” one of racial subterfuge. The crew’s moral code has been thrown into critical relief by death’s proximity and now appears “vague and imperfect.” They reside in a liminal psychic state, clinging to their former racist reading of Wait but coming to avow an altogether different belief in his significance.

When the immanence of his demise becomes apparent to everyone except himself, Wait’s significance becomes entirely localized in his common humanity rather than his racial difference. The narrator’s chronicle of this transformative moment, where the crew have finally accepted the fact that Wait now denies, is remarkable, and worth quoting at length for its powerful description of his influence on the ship’s collective psyche:

Falsehood triumphed. It triumphed through doubt, through stupidity, through pity, through sentimentalism . . . Jimmy’s steadfastness to his untruthful attitude in the face of the inevitable truth had the proportions of a colossal enigma—of a manifestation grand and incomprehensible that at times inspired a wondering awe . . . The latent egoism of tenderness to suffering, appeared in the developing anxiety not to see him die. His obstinate non-recognition of the only certitude whose approach we could watch from day to day was as disquieting as the failure of some law of nature. He was so utterly wrong about himself that one could not but suspect him of having access to some source of supernatural knowledge. He was absurd to the point of inspiration . . . he seemed to shout his denials from beyond the awful border. He was becoming immaterial, like an apparition . . . He was demoralizing. Through him we were becoming highly humanized, tender, complex, excessively decadent: we understood the subtlety of his fear, sympathized with all his repulsions, shrinkings, evasions, delusions—as though we had been over-civilized and rotten, and without any knowledge of the meaning of life. We had the air of being initiated in some infamous mysteries. (85)

A better description of Wait’s status as the “symptom” of the ship’s ideology or worldview could scarcely be conceived. Jimmy’s “obstinate non-recognition” of the fact whose “certitude” he had formerly broadcast so brazenly makes him “absurd to the point of inspiration,” heartening the

crew against the universal fact of human mortality through the psychic mechanism of a “latent egoism.” Formerly simple and unsophisticated in their interpretations of Wait and, through him, the universe, they now find themselves becoming “humanized,” “tender” and “complex,” by virtue of their sympathetic identification with his plight. Presaging Marlow’s awakening to the nihilistic “reality” of the cosmos as the Congolese jungle breaks down his ideological and existential fortifications in *Heart of Darkness*, Wait’s impending fate represents a fully primitive anthropological fact exploding and “demoralizing” the ship’s normative outlook. Wait, at this moment, is no longer the racially-defined subject named in the novel’s title, but embodies a fully cosmic, metaphysical meaning, and his deterioration “initiates” the crew into a “disquieting” familiarity with “infamous mysteries.”

The extent to which Wait has come to represent universal ontological concerns beyond the racial ones initially routed through him is reflected in the narrator’s comment that “doubt survived Jimmy” (96). The incertitude which had formerly been trained on the possibility of racial subterfuge is now a disembodied, non-racial, psychological posture toward the universe’s inhumanity. “Jimmy’s death, after all, came as a tremendous surprise,” the narrator recalls, explaining, “We did not know how much faith we had put in his delusions . . . his death, like the death of an old belief, shook the foundations of our society. A common bond was gone; the strong, effective and respectable bond of a sentimental lie” (96). Wait’s death has the status of a religious event, shaking the very “foundations” of the ship’s “society” by removing the “common bond” of a “sentimental lie.” As long as Wait survived, death had seemed a fallible power; now, its “certitude” is unassailable. His ultimate transcendence of race is evident in the scene of his burial at sea, where he rests “under the folds of the Union Jack,” seemingly

incorporated into the British “society” which formerly excluded him by way of the “common bond” of human mortality (98).

Further evidence of Wait’s finally assuming a *super-racial* significance, an anthropologically universal rather than ethnologically specific meaning, emerges in the actions of one of the novel’s other central characters, the lower-class, cockney agitator, “Donkin.” For much of the novel Donkin serves as the crew’s chief interpreter, manipulating the thoughts and actions of the “society” through his Iago-like readings of Wait’s inactivity. As the narrator describes it, “Donkin officiated” in the quasi-religious observances of the crew outside of Wait’s cabin, which “had, in the night, the brilliance of a silver shrine where a black idol, reclining stiffly under a blanket, blinked its weary eyes and received our homage” (64). Donkin’s “officiating” manifests the same interpretive transformation which I have documented thus far in the account of the novel’s narrator. Soon after their departure from Bombay, Donkin begins himself to take on associations of “unmanly” indolence similar to those applied to Wait. The narrator pummels Donkin’s “inefficient carcass” with disdainful remarks on his “talents for shirking work,” on his very existence as a testament “to the eternal fitness of lies and impudence,” and on his misfit position on board the “Narcissus” as “the man who curses the sea while others work . . . offspring of the ignoble freedom of the slums full of disdain and hate for the austere servitude of the sea” (5-6). Donkin’s “ignoble” indolence, thinly disguised beneath quasi-Marxist protestations of his “rights,” positions him as the ideal arbiter of the initial racist interpretation of Wait’s illness (6). The narrative presents Donkin’s as the privileged and most influential reading of Wait’s inactivity: “Donkin grinned venomously . . . told Jimmy that he was a ‘black fraud’; hinted to us that we were an imbecile lot, daily taken in by a vulgar nigger” (25). With a venomous grin, Donkin pours poison into the ears of the ship’s crew, whom he herds

toward a stereotypically racist response to Wait as a “black fraud” by playing upon their “morality” and “self-respect” with the possibility of being “taken in by a vulgar nigger.” The crew’s psychic unrest is precipitated in large measure by his Iago-like persuasions.

Eventually, however, Donkin adopts the opposed interpretation of Wait’s condition as genuinely, mortally ill. Wait’s illness, and the conviction of his common humanity which attends it, become the basis for the culmination of Donkin’s agitating activities as he leads a labor strike against the ship’s captain, Allistoun. When Wait has begun to adopt a posture of denial about his condition and asks to return to work, Allistoun, still clinging to the ship’s initial reading of Wait’s infirmity as an imposture, declares that he must remain confined to his cabin as punishment for his “shamming.” The narrator renders the crew’s response in collective dialogue, with only Donkin’s initial reaction being attributed to a specific character:

“D’ye mean to say, sir,” he asked, ominously, “that a sick chap ain’t allowed to get well in this ere hooker? . . . Are we bloomin’ masheens?,” inquired Donkin . . . “Soon show ‘em we ain’t boys . . .”—“the man’s a man, if he is black”—“We ain’t goin’ to work this bloomin’ ship shorthanded if Snowball’s all right . . .”—“He says he is.”—“Well then, strike, boys strike!” (74)

Donkin’s former agitations relied on the same interpretation of Wait’s actions as his current ones now decry. His call for a strike defines it as a symbolic protest against Allistoun’s denial of Wait’s common humanity. Donkin is now the ringleader of a collective perspective diametrically opposed to the racism of the beginning of the voyage, a transformed perspective motivated by a super-racial ideological conviction: “the man’s a man, if he is black.”

Donkin’s transformation models the general transformation in the collective ideological service for which Wait is utilized from the beginning to the end of the novel. It is not, however, Donkin’s *perspective* which is the privileged one in the *aesthetic transmission* of this transformative process of Wait’s from a limited ethnological to a universal anthropological

significance. Instead, I would argue, the privileged perspective among the diverse cast of the novel's characters is that of its lone Irish figure, nicknamed "Belfast." Through Belfast, I would suggest, Conrad indicates that it is via the epistemological resources of Irishness that Wait's universal significance can most fully be deciphered and relayed to the reader. Conrad's characterization of Belfast relies directly on the popular British conception of the Irish as "sentimental," as possessing, in the words of Matthew Arnold, "an organization quick to feel impressions, and feeling them very strongly," "keenly sensitive to joy and sorrow," "quickly and nearly conscious of all impressions," and given to "passionate, penetrating melancholy" (*On the Study* 84). Belfast's early responses to Wait in fact hew quite closely to a specific post-Arnoldian Irish stereotype described by L.P. Curtis, Jr. in his study of Victorian comic weeklies, the "melancholic" Celt. According to Curtis, this figure combined the "melancholy" or "emotional instability" of Arnold's "sentimental" Celt with a more dangerous and volatile racial element inferred by the British in their response to the Fenian and Land League resistances of the 1860s, 70s and 80s, a "choleric" element which predisposed the Celt toward violent, disruptive behavior.⁵⁰ As the novel's narrator describes, Belfast's reactions to Wait's illness swing wildly from passionate sympathy to violent resentment, from "melancholy" to "choleric" emotional states. As he records, "emotional little Belfast was for ever on the verge of assault or on the verge of tears" (23). At one moment, "illogical little Belfast reproached our nigger with great fury," and then, almost immediately afterward, "he looked round at us from Jimmy's bedside, his comical mouth twitching, with tearful eyes" (24). Belfast thus becomes the privileged index or gauge of the intense ambivalence of the ship's collective psyche, lurching from extreme, pitiful identification with Wait to an equally extreme and unsympathetic disparagement of him.

Appropriately, given the stereotypic “sentiment” of this “comic,” “illogical,” “emotional” Irishman, Belfast is described as an early and passionate convert to the belief in Wait’s ability to elude death, to the quasi-religious faith which is dubbed, not insignificantly, a “sentimental lie” in the passage already quoted above. At the point when the majority of the ship begin to arrive at their own sympathetic identification with Wait, the narrator recalls,

It was at this time that Belfast’s devotion—and also his pugnacity—secured universal respect. He spent every moment of his spare time in Jimmy’s cabin. He tended to him, talked to him . . . But outside he was irritable, explosive as gunpowder, somber, suspicious, and never more brutal than when most sorrowful. With him it was a tear and a blow: a tear for Jimmy, a blow for any one who did not seem to take a scrupulously orthodox view of Jimmy’s case. (86)

Here, not only does Belfast’s “view of Jimmy’s case” earn “universal respect” for its prescience; his “view,” and his passionate advocacy for it, are unmistakably fueled by the ethnological organization of the “melancholic” Irish Celt, whose violent emotional vacillations could hardly be more neatly encapsulated than with the phrase “a tear and a blow.” Whereas his earlier “sentimental” posture shifted suddenly from sympathy to antipathy toward Wait himself, here, in keeping with the novel’s overall transformation from a racial to a universal humanist theme, Belfast’s reconfigured posture shifts equally suddenly from sympathy for Wait to antipathy toward those who doubt his infirmity. Belfast’s “sentiment,” his preternaturally sensitive Celtic epistemology, renders him the privileged perspective from which to register the “sublime” dimensions of Wait’s condition. Following Wait’s death it is, implicitly, Belfast’s exceptional sympathy for and connection with Wait that enables him, in the scene describing his anxiety-ridden burial at sea, to coax his corpse over the bow of the ship where all others have failed.

Conrad further indicates the privileged status of Belfast’s quintessentially Irish epistemology in relaying the novel’s meaning in its final scene, depicting the breakup of the ship’s crew following their disembarkation in London. This scene provides a remarkable and

definitive answer to the question which naturally arises at this point of my analysis, namely, if Belfast's is the privileged *aesthetic* perspective within the novel, why is he not its narrator? In other words, if it is an Irish epistemology which is best equipped ethnologically to transmit Conrad's tale of human mortality, why is the novel's only Irish character not the one to whom he delegates the narrative labor? The beginnings of an answer are already provided by the powerful prescience Conrad attributes to Belfast's interpretive approach to Wait, an approach which the entire cast of characters adopts by novel's end. Belfast's is the paradigm of the ultimate perceptual posture of the rest of the crew of the "Narcissus," and of the novel itself. The narrator, indeed, simply replicates in more dense descriptive language the same interpretive stages through which his account presents Belfast as passing. The validity of this reading, according to which Belfast is effectively a model for the narrator and for the novel's overall aesthetic medium, is precisely what the novel's strange final scene seems to have been fashioned to suggest. As readers of *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* routinely remark, at this point of the novel, the nameless narrator transforms dramatically and unexpectedly. For the entirety of the novel to this point, he has functioned as a disembodied representation of the crew as a whole, as a collective "I" rather than as an actual character caught up like the others in the action of the plot. In this scene, however, the narrator suddenly materializes as a concrete, fully individuated, walking, talking avatar. It is within this newly-embodied form that the narrator, declining to accompany a small contingent of the crew to the "Black Horse" pub for a farewell drink, describes,

I came upon Belfast. He caught my arm with tremendous enthusiasm.—'I couldn't go wi' 'em,' he stammered, indicating by a nod our noisy crowd, that drifted slowly along the other sidewalk. 'When I think of Jimmy . . . Poor Jim! When I think of him I have no heart for drink. You were his chum, too . . . but I pulled him out . . . didn't I? Short wool he had . . . Yes . . . He wouldn't go . . . He wouldn't go for nobody.' He burst into tears. 'I never touched him—never—

never!' he sobbed. 'He went for me like . . . like . . . a lamb.' (106)

Belfast's appeal to the narrator as a fellow "chum" of Wait's defines the narrator retroactively as sharing his "sentimental" view of Wait's case. Belfast's "melancholy" attachment to Wait leaves him with no heart for a celebratory drink, and by inference, the narrator's own refusal to accompany the "noisy crowd" results from his own psychic sensitivity to the profound experience of Wait's demise. It is as if Conrad felt the need to secure the link between Belfast's dramatic, violent responsiveness to Wait's "case" and the novel's aesthetic frame, and thus conceived the otherwise peculiar descent of its narrator from the predominantly elevated, abstract, collective vantage of the novel to the level of its other characters.

In the end then, *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* is indeed about race, but not in the sense that most readers suspect.⁵¹ We have seen the deft, subtle, *dialectical* manner in which Conrad modulates the initially ethnological significance of Wait as a black West Indian amid an all-white, mostly British crew into a non-racial, universal anthropological significance, a thematic transformation which, implicitly recognizing the symptomatic operations of racist ideology, subtly relocates the psychic structures erected by that ideology in the "primitive," sublime domain of human mortality. Indeed, it is this sublation of the novel's initial black/white racial dynamic beneath a larger one centered on human fellowship and commonality in existential "hope and fear" which enables us to account for the otherwise curiously universal, humanist tenor of the famous "Preface" to the novel, where Conrad lays out his artistic program by contrasting it with the methodologies of "the thinker" and "the scientist." The essay is worth quoting at length as a distillation of the novel's aesthetic design:

Impressed by the aspect of the world the thinker plunges into ideas, the scientist into facts . . . It is otherwise with the artist . . . the artist appeals to that part of our being which is not dependent on wisdom, to that in us which is a gift and not for acquisition—and, therefore, more permanently enduring. He speaks to our

capacity for delight and wonder, to the sense of mystery surrounding our lives; to our sense of pity, and beauty, and pain; to the latent feeling of fellowship with all creation; and to the subtle but invincible conviction of solidarity that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts; to that solidarity in dreams, in joy, in sorrow, in aspirations, in illusions, in hope, in fear, which holds men to each other, which binds together all humanity—the dead to the living, and the living to the unborn . . . My task which I am trying to achieve is, by the power of the written word, to make you hear, to make you feel—it is, before all, to make you see! That—and no more, and it is everything! If I succeed, you shall find there according to your deserts: encouragement, consolation, fear, charm—all you demand; and, perhaps, also that glimpse of truth for which you have forgotten to ask . . . In a single minded attempt of that kind, if one be deserving and fortunate, one may perchance attain to such clearness of sincerity that at last the presented vision of regret or pity, of terror or mirth, shall awaken in the hearts of the beholders that feeling of unavoidable solidarity; of the solidarity in mysterious origin, in toil, in joy, in hope, in uncertain fate—which binds men to each other and all mankind to the visible world. (145-7)

The key word of this long, eloquent, moving passage is easy to identify: “solidarity.” It is this term that provides the most direct link between the “Preface” and the novel, and which corroborates my reading of the latter as concerned to move beyond themes of limited racial orientation to broader ones of universal import. It is toward a feeling of “solidarity,” toward a “latent feeling of fellowship with all creation . . . that knits together the loneliness of innumerable hearts” and that “binds together all humanity—the dead to the living, the living to the dead,” that the crew of the “Narcissus” move by virtue of their gradual identification with Wait’s mortality. This sense of “solidarity” with reference to the common, primitive denominator of human existence, death, is, unmistakably, “that truth” for which Conrad anticipates his readers having “forgotten to ask.”

If this reading has established that Conrad finally negates and transcends a certain set of racial themes, those with which the novel’s title and its initial concerns would suggest it is most preoccupied, it has also established that a rather different set of racial themes persists at its conclusion, namely those associated with the unique ethnological entity of Irishness. Indeed, as I

have tried to demonstrate, it is this racial identity, and not the black identity of the novel's title character, that controls the aesthetic agenda of *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* down to its very narrative medium, and that equips Conrad with the epistemological resources needed to accomplish his central artistic purpose: "by the power of the written word . . . to make you *see*." What critics such as Patrick Brantlinger and Fredric Jameson have called Conrad's "impressionism," that is, his aesthetic rendering of the phenomenological intensity of human perception and experience, becomes legible as derived directly from an Arnoldian conception of Celtic "sentiment."⁵² In search of an epistemological apparatus capable of transmitting his "vision" of that "solidarity" which "binds men to each other and all mankind to the visible world," Conrad, like Arnold, Conan Doyle and Kipling before him, settles on the ethnological makeup of the Irish Celt as ideal. Conceiving of his project as distinct from that of the "scientist" who, "impressed" by its "aspect," settles on a rational epistemology of "facts" as his medium of interaction with "the world," Conrad, likewise impressed by the world's appearance, seeks out instead the "primitive," "magical" epistemology of the Celt, that which, in Arnold's account, made him recoil from "the despotism of fact," as the preferred medium for his aesthetic purposes. The Irish Belfast, and with him the novel's narrator, gain "sublime" access to that most "primitive" fact of the human universe, death, by virtue of the "sympathetic magic" of Celtic "sentiment," and through them, Conrad hopes, the reader him/herself will gain a like access and will, through the deft epistemological mechanism that is the novel itself, have instilled in him/her, subtly but invincibly, the universal ethic posture known, simply, as "solidarity."

Recovery of the centrality of Irishness to the formal design of the *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* thus produces a revised understanding not only of its aesthetic construction but also

of its socio-political implications. Criticism of the novel to date remains bound by the assumption that its narrator's effusive encomia on "the austere servitude of the sea" are to be taken as straightforward professions of a conservative political ideology on the part of his creator. In the more extreme versions of this reading, Conrad is viewed as sanctioning the savage anti-black racism of Old Singleton, whose resistance to the crew's "sentimental" investment in Wait defines that investment as a racial subversion of the seafaring capitalist work ethic Singleton epitomizes. Wait's malingering imposture, Donkin's mutinous agitations, Belfast's devotion to Wait's failing body—all these deviations from the ship's normative economic-cum-racial protocols would thus represent, in effect, Conradian *bêtes noires*, ideological straw men communicating negatively a full-throated endorsement of these protocols. The novel's famous description, at journey's end, of the British Isle as "the great flagship of the race," a "guardian of priceless traditions" "carrying the burden of millions of lives" and "freighted with dross and with jewels, with gold and with steel," would seem to clinch this reading by fusing an exclusive Britishness to the mercantile spoils and industrial products of imperial capitalism.

However, the dialectical process in which Irishness emerges as the aesthetic conduit for assertion of a universal, anthropological "solidarity" generates a leveled racial schema wherein the crew's former ideology, however emphatically it might be reasserted at novel's end, can no longer appear tenable. If the *narrator of The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* prefers to reoccupy the shelter of a worldview in which stereotypes of blackness justify British imperialism, *Conrad* has demonstrated the perishability of such a worldview in situations of intensified intersubjective, interethnic contact. It is the *modernist* aesthetic practice Conrad fashions in the novel, not simply a "primitivist" practice, but a "magical" one for which the ethnological entity of the

“sentimental” Celt provides the epistemological model, which produces this irreversible political insight. Once the reader has passed through the crucible of Conrad’s “magical” modernism, he/she cannot but perceive, along with the narrator upon his arrival on the decks of the “great flagship” of England, in the deeply intertwined, mutually reinforcing economic, imperial and racial lineaments of British capitalist modernity, a “vision of disaster . . . animated by a mysterious and unholy spell.”

Celticism and Pan-Aboriginal Vitalism in D.H. Lawrence’s Primitivist Fiction

The Nigger of the ‘Narcissus’ marks a breakthrough in the history of British Celticism, a breakthrough which announces a marked departure from both the aesthetic and socio-political priorities of imperial romance fiction like that of Conan Doyle and Kipling toward a new set of priorities of *modernist* orientation. As I have demonstrated, British imperial-romantic Celticism, in the effort to prosecute a geopolitical agenda that is avowedly and unwaveringly imperialist, avails itself of the unique ethnological resources of the Irish Celt as a means of negotiating and resolving the broader tensions of colonial difference. Authors like Conan Doyle and Kipling resourcefully exploit both the colonial liminality and “magical” epistemology of this figure to mediate between the Manichean polarities of the British imperial enterprise. Celticist fiction in its imperial romantic guise traffics in and flirts with, but does not ultimately embrace, the “primitive” biology of the Irish Celt, instead subordinating his characteristics to the “civilized” canons of British civilization, central among these being rationality, law and capitalist modernization. Thus did we witness Sherlock Holmes utilizing Celtic “sentiment” to gain access to and ultimately suppress Irish colonial difference within the allegorical framework of *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, and thus did we witness the title character of *Kim* utilizing an identical set of ethnological capacities to infiltrate, expose and undermine the subversive

elements of “black,” native India. In both instances, the ethnological makeup of the so-called “white negro,” the Irish Celt, becomes instrumental to the pursuit of a hegemonic geopolitical agenda, an agenda otherwise frustrated and rebuffed by the barrier of a doggedly *determinist* ethnological difference dividing “civilized” Britain from its “primitive” colonial possessions.

The socio-political agenda of British *modernist* Celticism as illustrated by the case of James Wait manifests a very different conception of these evolutionary terms. Where his predecessors borrowed from the putative epistemological makeup of the Celt only to ensure the suppression of colonial “primitivity,” Conrad deploys Celtic “sentiment” instead to embrace and submit to the primitive in all its sublime immensity. Conrad presents racial difference initially as controlled by the same evolutionary prejudices as Conan Doyle, Kipling and their Victorian anthropological allies, but then overrides such determinist preconceptions in favor of a universal, “primitive” equality between all subjects regardless of race. If racial prejudice is merely a screen for the deeper anxieties attending human mortality, as the crew of the “Narcissus” suggests through their tortuous and changeable perceptions of James Wait, then the British worldview of which it is such a defining characteristic is shown up as hollow and illusory. Modernist Celticism, fully inhabiting and submitting to the “primitive,” gestures toward a set of socio-political allegiances diametrically opposed to those of imperial romance, and, by inhabiting willingly the ontological modality suppressed by its predecessor, forges a far more radical aesthetic than its conservative forebear could ever have tolerated.

Of course, a rather glaring contradiction persists beneath Conrad’s universalist message. Though the determinist racial theme attached to James Wait ultimately evaporates, Conrad continues to rely on a determinist definition of Celtic “sentiment” in fashioning the novel’s aesthetic medium. Thus, while his goal is to level the racial hierarchy of the British Empire onto

a common ontological plane, the aesthetic means of communicating this goal remain caught within the assumptions Conrad would override. *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* effectively bears out the forecast of the foregoing chapter on Matthew Arnold's Celticism. There, I referred to Friedrich Nietzsche's *The Birth of Tragedy* as providing a model for the thoroughgoing inversion of aesthetic and socio-political terms entailed in the transition from a romantic to a modernist Celticism. Just as Nietzsche conceives of human history as vacillating between "primitive" and "civilized" ontological polarities, polarities designated respectively as "Dionysian" and "Apollonian," and just as he advises a revival of "Dionysian" aesthetic and civilizational modalities in order to replenish the desiccated ontology of an overly-Apollonian, European modernity, so Arnold, I argued, defines British history according to the "primitive" and "civilized" agencies of the Celtic and the Teutonic and urges a more intensive cultivation of the former as a means of restoring the stalled ontological trajectory of the latter, conceived along restrictively rational and capitalist lines. By abandoning his previous endorsement of a Celticized ontology in *Culture and Anarchy* and replacing the figure of the Celt with that of the Hellene as his racial paragon, Arnold, I claimed, restricted the radical potential of his aesthetic doctrines, reigning in what would effectively be, like Nietzsche's, *modernist* literary priorities within a conservative socio-political program. Arnold's criticism, subordinating "primitive" Celtic modalities to "civilized," Teutonic ones, presages the ethnological underpinnings of later Celticist figures such as Conan Doyle and Kipling, who likewise commission the figure of the Celt toward thoroughly conservative, hegemonic, imperialist goals. What a fully realized modernist Celticism such as Conrad's accomplishes, however, is simultaneously the *perpetuation* of the basic ethnological terms of Victorian anthropology and the *inversion* of their previous hierarchical arrangement. Though his aesthetic program rests on the same

anthropological foundation as theirs, Conrad's conscripts the Celt for a mission to *overthrow* the aesthetic and socio-political norms of imperial romance.⁵³

In short then, modernist British Celticism manipulates a common set of ethnological raw materials toward an ideological agenda diametrically opposed to that of British imperial romance. Here, the "magical" resources of the Celt are the vehicle for a counter-hegemonic rather than a hegemonic socio-political impulse and for a fully primitivist aesthetic agenda. To illustrate further this significant shift in the history of British Celticism, and to extend further the examination of this history's broader implications, it is worthwhile to adduce the example of another of the nation's most renowned "primitivist" authors, D.H. Lawrence. In his work of the mid-1920s, Lawrence resurrects in earnest the venerable figure of the Irish Celt, a figure who, aside from a few aberrant cameo appearances in the work of leading British modernists like Wyndham Lewis and T.S. Eliot,⁵⁴ had lain more or less dormant since *The Nigger of the "Narcissus."* More fully and perhaps more self-consciously than Conrad, Lawrence, chiefly in texts such as *Fantasia of the Unconscious*, *St. Mawr* and *The Plumed Serpent*, presses the Celt into a fictional service that seeks to overthrow wholesale the aesthetic and socio-political norms of the late Victorian, high imperial moment. Indeed, Lawrence's Celticism, I shall argue, forms something of a logical endpoint to the diverse, tortuous explorations by British authors of the Celt's fictional potential, building on their collective work express a new perspective on this potential never before in evidence in British Celticism in either of its two phases: disenchantment. As I shall demonstrate, Lawrence's mid-twenties works, especially *The Plumed Serpent*, represent both an extension of the imaginative project of British Celticism and its discontinuation, both an additional instance of the urge toward Celtic otherness on the part of British writers and the *coup-de-grace* to that urge's historical viability. Though Lawrence in

many ways hungers for a primitive otherness accessible through fictional manipulation of the ethnology of the Celt, his work ultimately announces the foreclosure of such access before the ongoing march of capitalist modernity. Implicitly declaring the oscillation of the opposed ethnological and civilizational terms of the Anglo-Celtic dialectic to be resolved in favor of its English component, Lawrence brings full circle the exploration of British Celticism that began with Matthew Arnold .

Lawrence's "primitivist" phase of the 1920s has been well remarked in the work of such prominent critics as Marianna Torgovnick, Michael Bell and Harold Booth. Among most exponents of Lawrence's project there is a rough consensus concerning its basic ideological contours. In the main, readers identify an urge to embrace the ontological modalities of races or peoples who have occupied subordinate positions in the imperial networks of modern European nations like Britain and Spain. Lawrence's "primitivist" art takes refuge in these others of European modernity and makes the resuscitation of their ancient lifeworlds its foremost objective. The description of one of his most recent interlocutors, Andrzej Gasiorek, provides a succinct encapsulation of the thrust of Lawrence's efforts during this phase of his career:

Lawrence turned for his vision of cultural rebirth to what he saw as the intuitive, animist view of life expressed in other cultures . . . which he counterposed to the sterile, mechanical view of life that supposedly characterized white civilization; colonialism was associated primarily [for Lawrence] with a conflict between opposed modes of consciousness, a position that utilized 'primitivism' by locating a lost authenticity in the 'being' of nonwhite peoples" (93).

Lawrence's primitivism endeavors to reinhabit the putatively "intuitive, animist" ontology of traditional practices eclipsed by the "sterile, mechanical view of life" which characterizes modernity. Clearly, from Gasiorek's description, this project relies not only on colonialism/imperialism as a tangible geopolitical fact but also on anthropology, which I have described throughout this study as the sort of disciplinary handmaiden or accomplice of

European power in the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. As is evident in the tone of the passage, this reliance on Lawrence's part has produced something of a critical ambivalence. Like Grasiorek, Torgovnick and Booth can be adduced as instances of the tendency simultaneously to laud Lawrence's anti-colonialist, counter-hegemonic socio-political agenda and to decry his dependence on the discredited, prejudiced assumptions of anthropology, which in many ways reproduce the Manichean racial and political divisions whose invidious historical influence he would seek to reverse.⁵⁵

My concern here is less with probing the contradictions in Lawrence's "primitivist" project than with recovering an area of complexity in this project that accounts such as Grasiorek's tend toward eliding. Namely, by reducing the racial terms of Lawrence's primitivism to a simple binary schema, wherein the "sterile, mechanical" ontology of modernity becomes strictly a "white" affair and the "intuitive, animist" ontology with which Lawrence would combat modernity a "nonwhite" one, such readings occlude consideration of the sort of "mixed," liminal identity considerations as are raised by "anomalous" cases like that of Ireland. As we have seen thus far, the attribution of an "animist" epistemology, and a concomitantly instinctive ontology, to "nonwhite" peoples alone ignores the large segment of British anthropology devoted to defining the Celts, an ineluctably "white" racial group, along just these "primitive" lines. Lawrence, indeed, did not himself conceive of the division between the "civilized" ontology of modernity and the "primitive" ontology of traditional or indigenous cultures along these Manichean racial lines, as is immediately evident in one of the oft-cited passages from *Fantasia of the Unconscious* which outlines his view of humanity's historical development:

The great pagan world which preceded our own era once, had a vast and perhaps perfect science of its own, a science in terms of life . . . this great science . . . once

was universal, established all over the then-existing globe . . . Asia, Polynesia, America, Atlantis and Europe . . . In that world men lived and taught and knew, and were in one complete correspondence over all the earth . . . the interchange was complete, and knowledge, science was universal over the earth, cosmopolitan as it is today . . . Then came the melting of the glaciers, and the world flood. The refugees from the drowned continents fled . . . some degenerated naturally into cave men . . . some retained their marvelous innate beauty and life-perfection . . . some wandered savage in Africa, and some, like Druids or Etruscans or Chaldeans or Amerindians or Chinese, refused to forget, but taught the old wisdom, only in its half-forgotten, symbolic forms. More or less forgotten, as knowledge: remembered as ritual, gesture and myth-story . . . And so, the intense potency of symbols is part at least memory . . . And so it is that these myths now begin to hypnotize us again . . . (13)

This passage outlines what I would call a *pan-aboriginal theory of human vitalism*, wherein it is not only “nonwhite” peoples such as “Amerindians” who once possessed an idealized “primitive” knowledge, what Lawrence terms “science in terms of life,” but also peoples such as “Druids” who would fall on the “white” side of the Manichean racial divide of European imperialism. To superimpose such a binary conception on Lawrence’s work is to commit a fundamental misreading of his primitivist project, which, though it undoubtedly displays some aspects of simple white/black race prejudice—for example, Lawrence seems to exclude Africa from his pantheon of ancient “pagan” peoples—is a bit more “cosmopolitan” in its anthropological distribution of cultural value.

Like the work of the anthropologist on whom Lawrence relied most during his primitivist phase, George Frazer, Lawrence conceived of the ancient world as almost undifferentiatedly “primitive,” and within the above schema, it is thus both nonwhite and white peoples who once possessed what he calls “the old vision” (*Fantasia* 15-16). Lawrence’s race theories align only imperfectly with the geographical layout of contemporary European imperialism, however indebted his conception of “civilized” and “primitive” ontological modalities is to the existence of that diffuse institution. It is the “white” groups that he admits into his pantheon of aboriginal

civilizations which therefore, in my view, present the greatest interpretive challenge for readers of his mid-twenties texts. It is these groups, in particular those Celtic groups of which the Druids, masters of “the old wisdom” and “old vision,” were the forebears, that most frustrate the binary analytical logic of standard postcolonial theoretical approaches to his work, as it is these which, though unmistakably possessed of some vestigial “primitive” characteristics, had been incorporated into the “civilized” ontology of European modernity by the time of Lawrence’s writing. The “revival” or “rebirth” of the ancient “science of life” toward which he worked could thus be expected to be preoccupied significantly with the status and fate of this uniquely “mixed” or liminal racial group. In what follows I will attempt to track, using his mid-twenties fiction as a guide, the manner in which Lawrence seems to have conceived of this exceptional or anomalous group, the Celts, and their potential role in his primitive revival.

That Lawrence included the “white” Celts in his theory of a pan-aboriginal vitalism is immediately evident from a reading of the novel which first put into practice the historical vision described in *Fantasia of the Unconscious* and other, contemporaneous prose writings like the essay “Pan in America,” namely *St. Mawr*. The explosive animal vitality of the eponymous thoroughbred stallion catalyzes its “primitivist” plot, consisting of the confused, ultimately failed search of its protagonist, Lou, for a geographical setting where “the fallen Pan” glimpsed through *St. Mawr* can be coaxed back to life (85). Lou’s quest, like that of Lawrence himself, terminates in the American Southwest, the home of the appropriately named Phoenix, a Native American veteran of World War I employed as a valet by her mother, Rachel Witt. In his servitude to the white, American shrew, Phoenix evinces “all the race misery of the dispossessed Indian,” indexing in occulted, compromised form the pan-aboriginal vitalism Lawrence would resurrect from the ashbin of modernity (55). Alongside Phoenix, Lawrence supplies one further

representative for his view of an adulterated vitalism in St. Mawr's groom, "the little aboriginal Lewis," a Welshman who, like Phoenix, is subjected to the domineering, oppressive attentions of Mrs. Witt. In Lewis, as in the ancestral Celtic site known as "The Devil's Chair" which Lou, her mother and their retinue tour prior to her departure for North America, "the spirit of aboriginal England still lingers, the old savage England" which preceded the advent of capitalist modernity (93). The "last blood" of the primitive, Celtic island "flows still in a few Englishmen, Welshmen, Cornishmen" like Lewis, those who retain vestiges of "the old vision" and thus serve as the domestic British counterparts to other semi-primitives like Phoenix scattered across the globe (93). The juxtaposition of the Welsh Lewis with the Native American Phoenix gestures unmistakably toward the theory of pan-aboriginal vitalism worked out more explicitly in Lawrence's prose, confirming that theory's applicability to "white" as well as "non-white" races.

Though *St. Mawr's* Celtic primitivism is specifically Welsh, not Irish, in orientation, Lawrence's fleshing out of Lewis's racial "vision" is unmistakably indebted to the tenets of the Celtic Revival or Renaissance in Ireland. This is not the place to begin addressing the details of this complicated cultural movement, which will provide much of the subject matter for this study's subsequent chapters. For now, the naked assertion of deep commonality between the Revival and Lewis's "aboriginal" mythology will have to serve. This Celtic mythology emerges in a conversation between Lewis and Mrs. Witt, who corners him in order to satisfy her curiosity about the very reserved, somehow exotic man. Lewis begins explaining himself in relation to the landscape of Wales, with which he feels a preternatural connection, to the point that he even owns to a belief in the sentience of trees, with whom he claims to have amicable relations. After Mrs. Witt responds by dismissing this as "an old superstition," Lewis elaborates on his arboreal anthropomorphism by recourse to those staple figures of Celtic mythology, the fairies:

They say the ash-trees don't like people. When the other people were most in the country—I mean like what they call fairies, that have all gone now—they liked ash-trees best. And you know the little green things with little small nuts in them . . . they're the seeds—the other people used to catch them and eat them before they fell to the ground. And that made the people so they could hear the trees living and feeling things . . . I always ate them, when I was little . . . I wasn't frightened of ash-trees, like most of the others. And I wasn't frightened of the moon. If you didn't go near the fire all day, and if you didn't eat any cooked food . . . and then went without any clothes on, in the full moon, then you could see the people in the moon, and go with them. They never have fire, and they never speak, and their bodies are clear almost like jelly. They die in a minute if there's a bit of fire near them. But they know more than we. Because unless fire touches them, they never die. They see people live and they see people perish, and they say . . . what do people matter? If you want to matter, you must become a moon-boy . . . Because at full moon you can join the moon people, and go through the air and pass any cool places, pass through rocks and through the trunks of trees . . . (128)

Lewis's impassioned belief in Welsh fairies and the possibility of human ascendance to their ethereal domain mark his worldview as a specimen of the "old vision" described in *Fantasia of the Unconscious*. As in the "science in terms of life" sketched there, Lewis's Celtic primitivism consists of a kind of vitalism, a conception of nature as bountiful, fecund and potentially symbiotic with humanity. Lewis's is a quintessentially Celtic epistemology, a kind of indigenous "sympathetic magic," in Frazer's terms, by which, through mimicry of the intermediary entities of the fairies, a Celtic indigene may himself metamorphose into one of nature's attendant spirits. As with Arnold's Celt, Lewis's transformed humans gain a privileged awareness of nature to match the supernatural awareness of the fairies, who "know more than we." To all of this Mrs. Witt responds, unfazed, "But you don't believe it? It is only childishness, after all," and Lewis, as a compromised aboriginal primitive, finds himself compelled to assent to her incredulous dismissal: "No," he said . . . 'I know I shan't make anything but a fool of myself, with that talk. But all sorts of things go through our heads, and some seem to linger, and some don't . . . Myself, I don't want to have in my mind the things

other people have in their minds . . . It's childish nonsense, I know. But it suits me. Better than other people's stuff" (129-30).

Through the compromised, adulterated, deracinated "vision" of the Celtic Lewis, *St. Mawr* demonstrates the fate to which the modern world has subjected the pan-aboriginal vitalism of the ancient world. Lawrence's historical philosophy positions his "primitivist" aesthetic as a contribution to the revival of the "science in terms of life" which he saw linking the indigenous peoples of pre-modern times, and which he implicitly understood to be the impulse behind the contemporary Revival of Ireland which informs the "vision" of the novel's Celtic representative. It is significant that Lewis, rather than Phoenix, would be the mouthpiece for the deracinated state of primitive "science" in the contemporary world, in that in real, historical terms Celtic peoples like the Welsh and Irish would have been integrated more fully into the modern civilizational modalities of Europe than would other races such as the Native American. Lawrence's choice to privilege Lewis as the voice of the fraught, schizoid state of aboriginal peoples caught up in a rationalist modernity has, in other words, sound historical warrant, and we might expect Celtic peoples to be particularly revealing test cases for the viability of Lawrence's revivalist aesthetic campaign. Indeed, it is the Celtic races which most consistently fill this role in Lawrence's mid-twenties fiction, from *St. Mawr* to short stories like "The Princess," to the text which in many ways represents the culmination of Lawrence's "primitivist" aesthetic and which occupies the position of *magnum opus* in this phase of his career, *The Plumed Serpent*.

The critical discourse on *The Plumed Serpent* provides the most pronounced example of the mistaken tendency to partition Lawrence's primitivism according to the binary white/non-white, a binary which, as we have already seen in the case of *St. Mawr*, breaks down when confronted with the unique contemporary circumstances of the Celtic races. Even more so than

in *St. Mawr*, the racial concerns of *The Plumed Serpent* present a Celtic people, in this case the Irish, as the privileged example of the liminal, hybrid ontology of the modernized aborigine. Within the context established thus far in this chapter, it is appropriate that Lawrence would settle on a specifically *Irish* Celt as representative of this hybrid condition, given the numerous historical categories in which the Irish occupied a “mixed” position in the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. Without an awareness of the unique concerns presented by Irishness, critical accounts of the novel’s primitivism have almost uniformly imposed a Manichean schema on *The Plumed Serpent*, with the result that the racial complexity built into its protagonist’s Irish identity is written entirely out of existence. The following passages, the first from Andrzej Grasiorek, the second from Howard Booth, instantiate the widespread critical tendency toward a reductively binary reading of the novel’s racial design, and toward a simplistic identification of its Irish heroine, Kate Leslie, with a generalized whiteness the preoccupation with which, it is asserted, short-circuits Lawrence’s progressive urge toward identification with the others of postcolonial Mexico:

Despite his attempt at imaginative identification with Mexico’s postrevolutionary plight, Lawrence focuses above all on educating his white protagonist . . . *Her* crisis is *England’s* crisis: the lost truths of an intuitionist understanding of life are required to overturn a mechanistic understanding of the world. (103, emphasis in original)

In the effort to envisage a society that moves past the effect of Spanish culture on Mexico . . . the novel can be termed ‘post-colonial.’ However, the depiction is of a post-coloniality written by a Western subject, and focalized through the eyes of the European character, Kate . . . This post-coloniality is not for the colonized—their *post*-colonial experience is now being colonized by a Western author—but for the needs of a threatened European. (213)

Both critics’ accounts clearly empty out the specific contents of Kate’s Irish identity in order to render her as a cipher for an abstract “white,” “European,” “Western” one. Grasiorek’s description even goes so far as to equate Kate with the English, thus eliding the crucial historical

differences between her country of origin and that of Lawrence. The compound fact that Kate hails from Ireland, that Ireland was itself a colony of England, and that her identity is thus overdetermined by historical circumstances in many respects similar to those of the novel's Mexican others, entirely escapes attention in such readings. This interpretive misstep is all the more remarkable, and all the more grievous, given the novel's persistent, direct invocation of the tumultuous context of contemporary Ireland, specifically the "troubles" of the Anglo-Irish War of 1919-22 and the Irish Civil War of 1922-23, an anti-colonial series of struggles in which Kate's husband, James Joachim Leslie, is described as having fought and died. Lawrence is very clearly concerned to define Kate's Irish experience as a colonial/post-colonial one, and any critical analysis that collapses her identity into a general imperialistic whiteness is thus guilty of a rather flagrant disregard for the complexity of the novel's design.

This is not to argue that Irishness in *The Plumed Serpent* is fully equated with Mexicanness, as there are crucial respects in which the juxtaposition of the two races/nations serves to highlight their differences rather than their similarities. However, Lawrence gestures toward a profound commonality between Ireland and Mexico even beyond their contemporary political context, a commonality consisting of a shared descent from the pantheon of "primitive" races practicing the pan-aboriginal vitalism that is his civilizational ideal. As an Irishwoman, Kate Leslie stands for the same vestigial Celtic primitivity as the Welsh Morgan Lewis incarnates in *St. Mawr*, and the purpose of her immersion in the revived primitive culture of Mexico serves much the same purpose as Lewis's juxtaposition with the Native American Phoenix, namely to outline the contours of an extant pan-aboriginal vitality among "non-white" and "white" peoples alike. It is in this racial sense as well as the postcolonial political one described above that Kate's experience in the country confirms the assessment of the Oxford-

educated leader of the revived religion of Quetzalcoatl, Don Ramon Carrasco, that “Mexico is another Ireland” (69).

The Plumed Serpent is chock-full of descriptions which position Kate as the representative of an essential Irishness. Early on, Lawrence’s repeatedly specifies Kate’s more prominent personality traits as racially Irish. Kate displays an “Irish contempt” for and “Irish malice” toward the populace of Mexico City prior to her journey to Ramon’s country stronghold at Lake Sayula, and Lawrence supplies vague references to her “Irish mind” to explain her repulsion at cultural practices such as the bullfight (7, 14). At the “Tea-Party in Tlacolula” where she first meets Don Ramon, Kate’s detachment is attributed, equally vaguely, to her being “too Irish, too wise” to be wholeheartedly “in” society (37). Soon, however, as Kate becomes initiated into the revivalist movement of Don Ramon and his first lieutenant, Don Cipriano, these rather superficial behavioral attributions are abandoned in favor of a more fully developed primitivist definition of Irishness. As she is introduced to the mysteries of Ramon’s neo-paganism, Kate’s being responds to its lack of logical coherence; she reflects, “All a confusion of contradictory gleams of meaning, Quetzalcoatl. But why not? Her Irish spirit was weary to death of definite meanings, of a God of one fixed import” (54). From this point on, Kate’s embrace of Ramon’s movement reflects the answering call of her chthonic Irishness to its fully realized Mexicanness in fulfillment of Lawrence’s pan-aboriginal primitivist vision.

Lawrence even goes so far as to invoke Celtic ethnology directly in his depiction of Kate. On the night of her fortieth birthday, Kate agrees to attend a dinner party at Don Ramon’s house with her two American companions, Owen and Villers. Before the group departs, she emerges from her Mexico City hotel room dressed in a manner that calls up associations with one of the foundational figures of British Celticism:

She . . . came down in a simple gown with a black velvet top and a loose skirt of delicate brocaded chiffon, of a glimmering green and yellow and black. She also wore a long string of jade and crystal. It was a gift she had, of looking like an Ossianic goddess, a certain feminine strength and softness glowing in the very material of her dress. (56)

Kate's "gift" is to resemble an "Ossianic goddess," a female version of the ancient Celtic hero Ossian, who occupied the center of the first major wave of British Celticism in the eighteenth century, catalyzed by the fabricated epic *Fingal* (1763), falsely billed by its author, the Scottish James McPherson, as a translation of the hero's own Gaelic writings, and who also occupied a prominent position in the early work of W.B. Yeats, a contemporary of Lawrence and the foremost figure of the *fin-de-siecle* Irish Celtic Revival. Ossian or Oisín in Celtic mythology was the son of Finn MacCoul, the leader of the Fianna or Fenians, an ancient, demi-godly Irish race which defended the island from Norse invasion in the third century C.E. The modern Celticist lineage that began with these fraudulent "translations" and reached its culmination in Revivalist Ireland defined this warrior bard as in many ways the quintessential Celtic, and specifically Irish, figure, a mythological personification of the primordial essence of the island. For Lawrence to invoke this ethnological heritage in his portrayal of Kate Lawrence paints her as a contemporary representative of this same Irish essence.⁵⁶

Several other aspects of the above passage are revealing with regard to Kate's significance within the novel's "primitivist" design. Most revealing is Lawrence's emphasis on Kate's *femininity*, the "feminine strength and softness glowing" from her clothing and general deportment. Among the other landmark texts of the British Celticist heritage inaugurated by McPherson's *Fingal* is that with which this study's previous chapter was concerned, namely Matthew Arnold's *On the Study of Celtic Literature*. Indeed, the epigraph to that work is taken directly by Arnold from McPherson's sham epic: "they went forth to war, but they always fell"

(*On the Study* 1). By characterizing Kate's "Ossianic" Irishness as radiating femininity, Lawrence draws on the Arnoldian (also Renanian) definition of the Celts as "an essentially feminine race." Lawrence further accentuates the presence of this gendered Arnoldian conception of the Celts at the conclusion of the same chapter that describes Kate's goddess-like descent from her hotel room. After arriving at Ramon's house, Kate meets the man who is to become her lover and husband later in the novel, Don Cipriano, the Mexican general who commands the military arm of Ramon's movement. Cipriano experiences something like love at first sight as Kate describes to him the death of her husband in the Irish war of independence, and Lawrence subtly implies that his overpowering attraction to her stems from the divine, elemental femininity of her Irishness:

He looked at her soft, wet hands over her face, and at the one big emerald on her finger, in a sort of wonder. The wonder, the mystery, the magic that used to flow over him as a boy and a youth, when he kneeled before the babyish figure of the Santa Maria de la Soledad, flooded him again. He was in the presence of the goddess, white-handed, mysterious, gleaming with a moon-like power and the intense potency of grief. (67)

The intense feeling of "wonder," "mystery" and "magic" that floods through Cipriano and convinces him he is in "the presence of the goddess" can only take its charge from a Celtic source. Kate "gleam[s]" with a "moon-like power" that recalls "the people in the moon," the fairy gods of Morgan Lewis's Celtic mythology in *St. Mawr*, and the "one big emerald on her finger" curbs Kate's Celtic associations in a decidedly Irish direction. Kate becomes a *genius loci* of Ireland, the "emerald isle," in Cipriano's "wonder"ing eyes, an essentially feminine, divine descendent of the legendary Fianna.

Ultimately, this feminine, Irish essence secures Kate a place in the triad of divinities in whom Don Ramon seeks to incarnate in human form his primitivist religion of Quetzalcoatl. Though the symbolic meaning of this religion is undoubtedly convoluted and incompletely

schematized, it is clear that Lawrence wished it to embody an idealized, dialectical union of opposed ontological states, and that the primary of these oppositions is one of *gender*. The misogynistic rituals orchestrated by Lawrence through Don Ramon all entail the ceremonial melding of stereotypical gender roles enacted by the Indian peasants who compose the main body of Ramon's followers. Above these masses, Lawrence positions Don Cipriano and Kate along with Ramon in a trinity symbolizing an essential masculinity, an essential femininity and their overcoming or transcendence in dialectical union. Don Cipriano is positioned as the avatar of cosmic masculinity in numerous free and indirect passages in which Kate senses innately his raw, phallic power. It is this essential, unbridled maleness that eventually persuades her to marry him and assume her place in the pantheon of Ramon's religion:

The great part of his nature was just inert and heavy, unresponsive, limited as a snake or a lizard is limited. But within his own heavy, dark range he had a curious power . . . he emitted, the dark, heavy vibration of his blood, which cast a spell over her . . . The mystery of the primeval world! . . . She knew now what was the black, glinting look in Cipriano's eyes. She could understand marrying him, now . . . Once you entered his mystery the scale of all things changed, and he became a living male power . . . the power was limitless . . . a face like Cipriano's is the face at once of a god and a devil, the undying Pan's face . . . As he sat in silence, casting the old, twilit Pan-power over her, she felt herself submitting, succumbing . . . It was the ancient phallic mystery, the ancient god-devil of the male Pan . . . He had the old gift of demon-power . . . Ah! What a marriage! How terrible! And how complete! (308)

Apotheosized as the god Huitzilopochtli, Cipriano incarnates the phallic potency of "the male Pan," and Kate is drawn irresistibly to the divine "mystery" of his "limitless," "living male power." Kate's "submitting" and "succumbing" to the "dark, heavy vibration of his blood" so swiftly and completely indexes the essential female power residing within her as the representative of the Celtic race. Like her husband James Joachim, the Irish nationalist martyr, before her, Kate, by succumbing to Cipriano's black, phallic maleness, realizes her destiny as one of what the narrative later calls "the white, self-sacrificing gods," a description which

highlights once more Lawrence's dependence on a specifically Arnoldian Celticism, according to which, in representative source texts like McPherson's *Fingal*, the Celts "went forth to war, but . . . always fell" (386). Kate's essential, feminine subjection to the essential, masculine mastery of Cipriano/Huitzilopchtli will secure the dialectical union of the twin gender principles governing the universe, uniting the male with the female Pan and restoring the sundered vitality of Lawrence's pan-aboriginal ontology.

Lawrence affirms the Celtic symbolism at work in Kate's union with Cipriano in later scenes depicting the preparations for and ceremony of their marriage. Both Cipriano and Don Ramon envision her undergoing an apotheosis identical to theirs, whereby she will transform into the goddess "Malintzi" and assume her place alongside Cipriano as Huitzilopochtli and Ramon as Quetzalcoatl, the god of the "Morning Star" who represents the Hegelian *aufhebung* of Kate's essential femaleness and Cipriano's essential maleness. Kate's ascent to the pantheon of Ramon's religion has been foreshadowed already in the scene which first alerts the reader to her Celtic associations, as she descends the hotel staircase draped in "a loose skirt of delicate brocaded chiffon, of a glimmering green and yellow and black," a description which symbolically imbricates the green of Ireland with the yellow and black associated with Mexico throughout the novel. Lawrence gradually heightens the verdure of Kate's dress and accoutrements as her marriage draws nearer, outfitting her with a now-ubiquitous "soft velour hat of jade green" in addition to the green of her chiffon skirt, her "long string of jade and crystal" and her emerald ring (319). Cipriano envisions Kate bedecked in green for their marriage ceremony: "you, too, shall come, in a green dress they shall weave you, with blue flowers at the seam, and on your head the new moon of flowers" (321). As preparations begin

for the ceremony, Kate tries on for Cipriano her Indian-made Celtic wedding gown, tailored according to his specifications and executed to his great satisfaction:

. . . she put on another of the slips with the inverted blue flowers, that had been laid on the bed for her, and over that dress of green, hand-woven wool, made of two pieces joined openly together down the sides, showing a bit of white, full underdress, and fastened on the left shoulder . . . It was strange and primitive, but beautiful. She pushed her feet into the plaited green huaraches . . . “So!” said Cipriano, coming forward. “The bride of Huitzilopochtli, like a green morning.” (329)

Thus equipped for their union, Kate is now no longer Kate but “green robed Malintzi,” a fully realized Ossianic goddess (383). Initiated into the mysteries of Ramon’s “primitive, but beautiful” cosmic “vision,” and into the mystery of her own chthonic, untapped Celtic divinity, Kate takes her place at Cipriano’s side atop the altar of the church of Quetzalcoatl:

They sat side by side, his hand holding her hand, in complete silence, looking down the dark church. He had placed tufts of greenish flowers, like thin, greenish lilac, above her chair, and their perfume was like a dream, strong, overpoweringly sweet on the darkness . . . As she sat in that darkened church in the intense perfume of flowers, in the seat of Malintzi, watching the bud of her life united with his . . . and feeling his dark hand softly holding her own, with the soft, deep Indian heat, she felt her own childhood coming back on her . . . like a girl in her first adolescence . . . she was the goddess bride, Malintzi of the green dress. (392)

The “tufts of greenish flowers” and the “dream”-like “perfume” of the “greenish lilac” which adorn her chair combine with her gown to clinch the Celtic symbolism undergirding her essentially feminine godhead as the unadulterated, girlishly pure “bud of her life” melds ceremonially with Cipriano’s “dark,” “living male power.”

Kate and Cipriano’s union is freighted with further symbolic associations as well. Both characters represent the incarnation of heavenly bodies in addition to their cosmic gender roles, as Kate’s Celtic essence becomes the moon, again recalling the Welsh primitivism of *St. Mawr*, to Cipriano’s sun, his elemental, “deep Indian heat.” Don Ramon as Quetzalcoatl, the Morning Star, occupies the apex of the celestial trinity, the *logos* sublating both in dialectical unity.

Together, the three characters gesture toward a slightly modified version of the “old vision” driving Lawrence’s earlier writings, *Fantasia of the Unconscious* and *St. Mawr*. The pan-aboriginal vitalism sketched there undergoes a slight retooling in *The Plumed Serpent*, whereby Lawrence assigns gender roles to its constituent races, the Celtic and Indian, now recoded as essentially, cosmically feminine and masculine. This newly-gendered vision brings forth the realization of Lawrence’s primitivist project, as together Kate, Cipriano and Ramon form a sort of congress or summit gathering of the world’s aboriginal races. Each of them proves his/her worthiness of inclusion amid *The Plumed Serpent*’s canon of racial representatives, the primitive elect whom Don Ramon has earlier dubbed “the natural aristocrats of the world.” Don Ramon’s description to Don Cipriano of this global racial fraternity, adumbrating the constituent races that would cooperate in reviving the ancient “science in terms of life,” is worth quoting to give finality to the novel’s pan-aboriginal mythology:

Only the Natural Aristocrats can rise above their nation; and even they do not rise beyond their race. Only the Natural Aristocrats of the World can be international, or cosmopolitan, or cosmic. It has always been so. The peoples are [not] capable of it . . . So if I want Mexicans to learn the name of Quetzalcoatl, it is because I want them to speak with the tongues of their own blood. I wish the Teutonic world would once more think in terms of Thor and Wotan, and the tree Igdrasil. And I wish the Druidic world would see, honestly, that in the mistletoe is their mystery, and that they themselves are the Tuatha de Danaan, alive, but submerged. And a new Hermes should come back to the Mediterranean, and a new Astaroth to Tunis; and Mithras again to Persia, and Brahma unbroken to India; and the oldest of dragons to China . . . I tell you, Cipriano, then the earth might rejoice, when the First Lords of the West met the First Lords of the South and East, in the Valley of the Soul. (246-7)

Lawrence through Ramon presents a vision of a cosmopolitan, transnational conclave of “natural aristocrats” whose grounding in their separate nations’ ancient mythologies provides the foundation for a replenished global ontology in the future. These uniquely talented masters of the universe, plenipotentiaries of the Mexican, Teutonic, Celtic, Mediterranean, Persian, Indian

and Chinese races, will look to their indigenous roots in order to move beyond them, and, while never entirely transcending their specific racial origins, will cooperate to channel and direct the vital resources of the earth, and the cosmos itself, toward the incarnation of a utopian epoch.

Ethnological Irishness in *The Plumed Serpent* is then merely one primitive agency among a global network of equivalent racial entities. Though peculiarly feminine, Kate's Celtic Irishness places her on ostensibly equal footing with the masculine, Indian Mexicanness of Don Cipriano, and their coupling models the kind of trans-aboriginal synergy that Don Ramon's "natural aristocracy" would produce. However, the fulfillment forecast by Don Ramon's vision, and by Lawrence's *Fantasia* before him, is only temporarily realized within the novel. This utopian future is imperiled by the global dominance of a machine-like, artificial modernity in the present, a modernity that Lawrence ultimately suggests is all too powerful and too firmly entrenched to be successfully counteracted by, or even successfully subordinated to, a revived primitive ontology. Lawrence's mid-twenties fiction persistently returns to the compromised vitality of humanity amid the rigid, mechanized civilizational modalities of the modern, European world. Characters such as Clifford Chatterley, maimed into impotence by World War I and confined, cyborg-like, to a motorized wheelchair, or like the shell-shocked Phoenix from *St. Mawr*, symbolize the monstrous human subjection to the abstract, automatic imperatives of a cold, unfeeling modernity, a state of affairs the protagonist of the latter work refers to simply as "the evil" (*St. Mawr* 99). For Lou, as, seemingly, for Lawrence, the epicenter of this "evil" historical regime is contemporary England, which, in the former's words, is "not real . . . except poisonously" (154). This assessment echoes unmistakably the refrain of perhaps the most famous "primitivist" text to emerge from early twenties England, T.S. Eliot's "The Waste Land," where the metropolises of modernity, from London to Jerusalem and Alexandria, are all "unreal"

by virtue of their abandonment of vital, aboriginal life forms. Like Eliot, Lawrence bemoans a world populated by what Kate Leslie calls “mechanical cog-wheel people,” people who have become lifeless automata under the influence of modernity’s relentless, rationalizing developmental logic (101).

St. Mawr and *The Plumed Serpent* suggest that, in spite of their undifferentiated inclusion among the pantheon of the primitive races of the ancient world, the Celts, for Lawrence, occupy a special, exemplary place amid the world’s compromised modern ontology. It is not difficult to imagine Lawrence’s readers associating the details of the Celtic mythology of Morgan Lewis, central among them the vulnerability of the “old people,” the fairies, to *fire* above all other elements, with the still-very recent events of World War I. The fairies, who “die in a minute if there’s a bit of fire near them,” “have all gone now,” he tells Mrs. Witt, and it is no stretch to think that Lawrence implies a connection between their extinction and the apocalyptic conflagration of the first truly modern war scorching the face of Europe in the preceding decade. As the mythological representatives of an indigenous, Celtic England and Ireland, their disappearance powerfully symbolizes the peculiarly heightened, intensified, “poisonous” version of capitalist modernity operative in England in the early twentieth century. As for *The Plumed Serpent*, its presentation of this same theme is a bit different, but its meaning, communicated through the vehicle of its one Celtic character, Kate Leslie, is identical. After seemingly consummating her union with Don Cipriano in their marriage ceremony and the subsequent rites of Ramon’s religion of Quetzalcoatl, Kate finds herself gradually but irresistibly pulling away from immersion in the movement and the neo-aboriginal culture of postcolonial Mexico. After weeks of fraught vacillation and ambivalence toward the world to which she had previously felt so magnetically drawn, Kate resolves to leave Mexico and return home, and, in her recoil from

the pan-aboriginal movement of Don Ramon, the symbolic orientation of her Irishness shifts significantly. Where her enthusiastic participation in Ramon's "science in terms of life" had once affirmed the presence in her of a full-fledged Celtic primitivity, Kate's detachment from this revived Pan aligns her instead with the makeup that other Celtic figure whose remarkable career this study has also traced, the mixed, liminal, hybrid figure of the Irish "white negro."

Quite early in their relationship, Don Cipriano senses an inability in Kate to assimilate fully to the beliefs and practices of the religion of Quetzalcoatl, and his interaction with her during the novel's first half is colored by his impression that her British background will stunt the realization of her primitive, Celtic potential. An early reflection of Kate's on the simultaneous desirability and unattainability of full immersion in neo-primitive Mexico presages one of Cipriano's more pointed interrogations of Kate's earnestness:

Here and here alone, it seemed to her, life burned with a deep new fire. The rest of life seemed wan, bleached, and sterile. The pallid wanness and weariness of her world! . . . surely this was a new kindling of mankind! . . . She knew it was so. Yet she preferred to be on the fringe, sufficiently out of contact. She could not bear to come into actual contact. (119)

When Cipriano later repeats, verbatim, the wording used to encapsulate Kate's hesitancy in this passage, it becomes clear that she is somehow out of kilter with this "new kindling of mankind." Sensing her distaste for the Indian peasants participating in the movement, Cipriano asks her, "You don't like brown-skinned people?" to which Kate replies, "I think it is beautiful to look at," she said. "But"—with a faint shudder—"I am glad I am white" (187). This striking admission leads Cipriano to press her further with the question, "You feel there could be no contact?" to which she responds, "Yes! . . . I mean that" (187). As in her internal reflections above, Kate here denies the possibility of real "contact" between herself and any aboriginal Mexican, founding her belief on what she sees as a magnetic repulsion between "brown-skinned"

and “white” peoples. Eventually, conversations such as these partially convince Cipriano that Kate is correct in denying the potential for interracial “contact” between them. However, he explains the cause of Kate’s distance from Ramon’s movement and its members in very different terms than those offered by her prejudiced racial theory. He accuses her, ““you can only think American thoughts . . . From your education, you have only American thoughts, U.S.A. thoughts, to think with . . . You think like a modern woman, because you belong to the Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic world” (204). Kate’s removed, insulated posture in Mexico derives in Cipriano’s view not from an inherent racial antipathy, as she believes, but rather from an artificial perceptual construct instilled in her by her “American education” and British background. Kate’s prejudices manifest the specific deficiencies of “the Anglo-Saxon or Teutonic world.”

Kate’s early feelings of distance from and superiority to the “brown-skinned” culture of Ramon’s revival thus further emphasize that the barriers preventing the global fruition of Lawrence’s pan-aboriginal vitalism are British, and even *Teutonic*, in origin. Kate is at this point herself one of the “mechanical cog-wheel people” whose artificial, rationalist worldview and ontology she comes to decry as the novel moves forward, one of the modernized automata whose geopolitical hegemony poisons the world and spreads a fully metaphysical “evil” among its peoples. Lawrence eventually demonstrates the falsity of Kate’s views through her full integration into Ramon’s movement, an integration punctuated by her sexual coupling with and marriage to Cipriano and her apotheosis as one of its gods. Kate’s preconceptions about her “white” racial essence are revealed to be entirely wrongheaded, and her “white” racial orientation as a Celt becomes the direct route of access through she achieves full ontological “contact” with “brown-skinned” Mexico. Given that Ramon’s “Natural Aristocracy of the

World” seems to reserve a place for a Teutonic delegate, Lawrence’s racial schema is a bit contradictory on the nature of the “Teutonic” influence under whose sway Kate has fallen, but, whether essential or artificial, it is an Anglo-Saxon source from which Kate culls her mistaken conception of both her own essential being and that of the Mexican other. Kate is burdened with “Teutonic” mental habits which breed race prejudice, and it is the Anglo dimension of her hybrid Irishness that she must cast off in order to bring her Celtic potential to fruition and qualify herself for inclusion in the natural aristocracy’s ranks.

Kate seems to transcend her “mechanical,” Teutonic conditioning by assuming a position in the pantheon of Quetzalcoatl. However, the conclusion of *The Plumed Serpent* emphatically reverses the progress Kate has made and restores to her the same wrongheaded preconceptions with which she began. Though she still acknowledges the ontological truth behind Ramon’s movement, and though she cannot deny the presence in herself of the same primitive ontological potential as Ramon and Cipriano will continue to cultivate, Kate finally determines to leave Mexico and her new husband to return to Europe:

Kate was more Irish than anything, and the almost deathly mysticism of the aboriginal Celtic or Iberian people lay at the bottom of her soul. It was a residue of memory, something that lives on from the pre-Flood world, and cannot be killed. Something older, and more everlastingly potent, than our would-be fair-and-square world . . . She knew more or less what Ramon was trying to effect: this fusion! . . . It was the leap of the old, antediluvian blood-male in unison with her. And for this, without her knowing, her innermost blood had been thudding all the time . . . Ireland would not and could not forget that other old, dark, sumptuous living. The Tuatha De Danaan might be under the western sea. But they are under the living blood, too, never quite to be silenced. Now they have come forth again, to a new connection. And the scientific, fair-and-square Europe has to mate once more with the old giants . . . But meanwhile, a strange, almost torn nausea would come over Kate, and she felt she must go away, to spare herself. . . She hesitated. She knew she must go back to Europe, to England and Ireland, very soon. The necessity was imperative. The inner nausea, was becoming too much to bear. She felt she could not stand it. (414-19)

Nearly the entirety of Kate's thought process here concerns the essential, Celtic primitivity she knows to reside "at the bottom of her soul," the "something that lives on from the pre-Flood world" that is "more everlastingly potent" than the artificial modalities of the modern, Teutonic, "fair and square world" and that has begun to reemerge in contemporary, Revivalist Ireland, and yet she cannot convince herself to obey this instinct of her "innermost blood," that which tells her, as she looks into the eyes of the Mexican peasants she disdains, "*Blood is one blood. We are all of one blood-stream . . . In the blood, you and I are undifferentiated*" (416). She is seized with "a strange, almost torn nausea" and a panicked urge to "spare herself" from the recognition and development of her primitive commonality with all the aboriginal races of the earth and must return "to Europe, to England and Ireland" as soon as possible to recover her equilibrium.

That Kate's being "more Irish than anything" is so heavily emphasized by Lawrence at the moment in which she ultimately abandons her personal primitivist project is of profound significance. The quintessentiality of Kate's Irishness derives not only the primitive ethnological essence residing "under" her "living blood" as an inheritance from the mythological Tuatha De Danaan, but also from the feeling of "nausea" and of being "torn" which drives her to seek refuge once more in the artificial, "fair and square world" of Europe. Kate's is not simply an *ethnological* Irishness, in other words, but is also a properly *socio-historical* Irishness, an Irishness whose presence in the novel earns *The Plumed Serpent* a place not simply within the Arnoldian Celticist tradition on which it so obviously draws but also within the literary heritage of the hybrid figure of the Anglo-Celt. Indeed, Kate's transformations demonstrate the sequential eclipse, first, of the latter kind of Irishness by the former, as Kate accesses her primitive Celticness and throws off her "Teutonic" conditioning, and then, second, of the former kind of Irishness by the latter, as Kate abandons her primitive Celtic self and returns to England

and Ireland once more. Kate's thought processes just prior to her departure demonstrate the full extent to which she remains moored in the "mechanical" world of the Teutonic, as she reflects,

Christmas was coming! . . . Christmas! Holly-berries! England! Presents! Food—If she hurried, she could be in England for Christmas. It felt so safe so familiar, so normal, the thought of Christmas at home, in England . . . And all the exciting things she could tell to the people at home! And all the exciting gossip she could hear! (430)

Kate's overwhelming excitement at the prospect of the trappings of an English Christmas, the "holly-berries," "presents" and "food," and at the prospect of the "exciting gossip" she will share and hear, reflect a profound, thorough existential enmeshment with the civilizational forms of the Teutonic world, a world whose superficiality she thinks of as "safe, "familiar" and "normal." Kate has retreated completely from the self-awareness gained through her involvement in Don Ramon's primitivist movement, and now looks nothing at all like the previous, divine version of herself, the "Ossianic goddess" who was called "Malintzi." Challenged by Don Ramon's wife Teresa regarding the shallowness and materialism inherent in her stated reasons for returning to England, Kate "petulantly" defends herself by expressing a desire "To get back to simple life. To see the 'buses rolling on the mud in Piccadilly, on Christmas Eve, and the wet pavements crowded with people under the brilliant shops!" (430-1). Lawrence's realignment of Kate's Irish being with the Teutonic or Anglo-Saxon world could hardly be more loudly announced than by this exclamatory urge to join "the pavements crowded with people under the brilliant shops." In response to Teresa's incredulous response, "Is that life, to you?," Kate unhesitatingly replies, "Yes!" (431). Kate's Irishness, once so near to fulfilling its Celtic ethnological potential, remains debilitatingly compromised by unbreakable ties to the socio-historical modalities of British capitalist modernity.

In many ways, this reading bears out the assessment of one of the most astute critics of Lawrence's "primitivism," Michael Bell, that *The Plumed Serpent* is "a peculiarly complex and illuminating failure" (D.H. 165). In Bell's terms, the novel falls short of fulfilling the "holistic metaphysic" that was Lawrence's philosophical ideal and to which he dedicated the entirety of his literary career, in that it is unable to achieve what earlier texts such as *The Rainbow* and *Women in Love* achieve so completely, namely "to make that metaphysic the dynamic principle of his narrative language" (166). Bell argues that "*The Plumed Serpent* is an attempt to recover a holistic narrative vision by rhetorical force," and that "the effect is [of this attempt] is to create a conflict between the intending vision and the means of realization," such that the novel ultimately displays a dissonance between its content and its form, between the primitivist vision that anchors its design and the aesthetic texture in which that design is rendered, which fails to radiate the "metaphysical" aura it is so busy describing (166). Bell's sense that the novel's aesthetic diverges from the core ideological message it communicates is undeniably accurate. However, my reading suggests that, in another sense, the flat, sterile aesthetic of the novel, the "programmatically" narrative style which leads Bell to argue that it "has got its mythopoeic religion 'in the head'" as opposed to metaphorically more genuine regions such as the heart or soul, is in fact perfectly suited to its subject matter (206). *The Plumed Serpent* documents the failed primitivist transformation of an Irish Celt too entrenched in the rationalist, capitalist modalities of Teutonic modernity to bring to fruition the vital, "holistic" potential of her primitive being. Given this insight, an insight which can only be achieved through a thorough awareness of the complicated concerns attending Irishness as a socio-historical entity, Lawrence's "programmatically" aesthetic should, in fact, instead be seen as a near perfect formal rendering of the compromised primitive ontology the novel chronicles. If Kate Leslie proves incapable of

fully casting off the “Anglo-Saxon” mental habits that have been imbued in her as an Irish subject in order to inhabit the more vibrant, fecund ontological state lying dormant in her Celtic makeup, then it is entirely appropriate that the novel’s narrative would limit access to this state to the hyper-conscious, non-instinctual region of “the head.” In other words, because its protagonist remains trapped in the “mechanical” world whose inauthenticity she once fled, it is only fitting that the novel’s aesthetic transmits an equally mechanical, inauthentic and compromised experience to its readers.

The Anglo-Celtic Dialectic in British Fiction

Throughout the readings conducted in this and the preceding chapter, two unifying themes have emerged. The first of these concerns the depiction or configuration of Irishness as a racial entity. Each author, from Conan Doyle to Kipling, to Conrad and Lawrence, has deployed two very specific conceptions of Irishness, the first of which is *ethnological* in orientation, and is derived mainly from the foundational Celticist doctrines of Matthew Arnold’s *On the Study of Celtic Literature*, and the second of which is *socio-historical* in orientation and is derived, in the first place, from the material makeup of actually existing Irishness in the late-nineteenth and early-twentieth centuries, and in the second place from those popular British institutions and texts which depicted the Irish as a kind of “white chimpanzee” or “white negro” in reflection of the mixed, liminal character of that material makeup. The second theme has run along a parallel course to that of the first. Namely, each of these writers has been seen to deploy these two conceptions of Irishness toward the accomplishment of two interrelated tasks, the first of which is *aesthetic* and the second of which is *socio-political*. Each text explicated here, in other words, has utilized Irishness in a manner which simultaneously structures the fabric of its representation of its subject and also structures the ideological vision that fabric functions to communicate in

relation to that subject. In spite of the often divergent, idiosyncratic projects embodied in these works of British Celticism, a remarkable cohesiveness and consistency has obtained throughout with regard to both themes of this tradition from its imperial-romantic to its modernist phase.

The Plumed Serpent brings full circle this study's examination of the literary heritage of British Celticism, and does so through its particular accentuation of these themes. Something of a brief recapitulation is needed to situate the manner in which the novel serves as the culmination of British Celticism as a literary heritage. In the first major text adduced here as an instance of this tradition, *The Hound of the Baskervilles*, Conan Doyle inflects his plot with the presence of Irishness both as an ethnological and a socio-historical entity. The former configuration informs both the volatile, threatening otherness of the Welsh landscape of Dartmoor, which stands as a sort of cipher for the larger concerns of Irish nationalism to be negotiated in the allegorical register, and the character of Holmes, who himself takes on its Celtic characteristics in addition to his predominant Saxon ones, and in doing so comes to embody the sort of Anglo-Celtic hybridity which defines Irishness socio-historically. The novel's aesthetic texture is likewise partially Celtic and part Saxon, and reflects proportionally the same subordination of the former racial agency to the latter that Holmes's investigative actions seek to effectuate in the socio-political domain by allegorically putting down the threat of Irish nationalist insurrection. In the text that is most closely allied with *The Hound* as another example of imperial-romantic Celticism, Kipling's *Kim*, the novel's protagonist likewise displays both an ethnologically- and a socio-historically oriented Irishness, and it is the compound operation of both of these which enables the Celtic Kim to negotiate so successfully the divided, Manichean interface of the British Empire in India. *Kim*, in accordance with the imperial-romantic generic construction it shares with *The Hound*, displays a hierarchical proportion of "primitive" and "civilized"

aesthetic components nearly identical to Conan Doyle's novel, and utilizes this mixed, hybrid aesthetic to communicate a socio-political agenda which mirrors this hierarchy, an agenda whereby the unique epistemological resources and liminal colonial positionality of the Irish Kim become the chief tools required to maintain the tenuous, delicate machinery of the British empire in India.

The founding text of British modernist Celticism, *The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* in its own accentuation of these two themes affirms the diametrically opposed aims of this phase of the tradition from its imperial-romantic predecessor. In Conrad's novel, the Celtic "sentiment" of the Irish Belfast serves as an ethnological and aesthetic vehicle for accessing and embracing the "primitive" truth of human solidarity-in-death that is made visible by the tribulations of the Black Caribbean James Wait, a truth whose fullness can only be grasped by giving the "primitive," "magical" epistemology of the Celt free rein and whose import is effectively the overthrow of the normative socio-political ideology of late-Victorian imperialism. *The Nigger of the "Narcissus"* utilizes Irishness to transmit to its readers the undiluted experience of this "primitive," super-racial truth, exploding at a stroke both the staid aesthetic protocols of imperial romance and the hegemonic imperial agenda attending the genre, an agenda which, by relying on the assertion of absolute, essential racial difference between white and black subjects, can no longer appear tenable by novel's end. That an Irish subject would serve as the mediator between these imperial racial polarities, and as the translator of the universal "truth" demonstrating their bedrock "primitive" commonality, ultimately places Conrad's Belfast securely within the mixed, liminal domain of socio-historical Irishness, if a bit less directly than his hybrid, Anglo-Celtic forebears, Sherlock Holmes and Kim.

The Plumed Serpent likewise deploys both an ethnological and a socio-historical Irishness toward aesthetic and socio-political purposes which, like Conrad's, are respectively modernist and anti-imperialist. As successfully as any of his three British Celticist predecessors, Lawrence's novel coordinates these dimensions in a tightly interwoven fabric. Kate Leslie is ethnologically Celtic, and therefore serves as the potential vehicle for an aesthetic of modernist orientation and as the potential vehicle of an anti-imperial, anti-racist ideology. This ideology becomes realizable through the cultivation of her ethnological Irishness, a primitive essence which, similar to *The Nigger of the "Narcissus,"* will, it is hoped, unite with that of the world's other races on an undifferentiated ontological plane. Kate's socio-historical Irishness, however, stunts the development of her Celtic potential both in its aesthetic and socio-political aspects, such that, through the collapse of her Celtic half into its Teutonic counterpart, Kate reinstalls her prejudiced notions of insurmountable racial difference and ensures in the same motion the persistence in the novel of a rational, orderly, decidedly unprimitive narrative modality. *The Plumed Serpent* functions as a dialectical extension of the concerns of *both* its imperial romantic forebears, *The Hound of the Baskervilles* and *Kim*, and its modernist forerunner by announcing in sequence, first, the desirability of a primitivist project with decisively modernist and anti-imperialist priorities, and, second, that project's failure amid a geopolitical state of affairs, that of British capitalist modernity, which ensures the maintenance of the civilizational dominants of the imperial-romantic moment. The Teutonic, imperial modernity that Conan Doyle and Kipling promote and celebrate is precisely what Lawrence, like Conrad before him, most decries and laments, but in spite of their utterly opposed aesthetic and socio-political priorities, Lawrence demonstrates a confidence in the continued global dominance of this "evil" regime to equal that of its most staunch advocates.

As we shall see in the chapters to follow, Lawrence, by attempting to envision the successful cultivation of a “primitive” Celtic ethnology devised to supplant the rigid modalities of a modernity specifically defined as Teutonic, presages in a complicated and revealing manner the fundamental aims and tenets of the cultural program to which *The Plumed Serpent* so frequently alludes, the Celtic Revival. As we shall also see, however, by inflecting this vision with a decidedly pessimistic accent relative to its actual historical viability, Lawrence’s work ultimately most presages not the Celtic Revival proper but rather the disillusioned, ironical posture toward its historical agenda that characterizes the subsequent literary moment I will call Irish Late Modernism. And as this preview of subsequent chapters from the context of Lawrence’s aesthetic project indicates, the Celtic Revival, and the moment of Irish Late Modernism that follows, will represent not so much a separate object of analysis from British Celticism as further negotiations of the same historical agon with which it has been concerned in this chapter and the last, that which I have referred to throughout as the Anglo-Celtic dialectic.

Chapter 4:
“A Nation of Imitators”: The Anti-Capitalism of the Celtic Revival, 1885-1910

Thus far this study has tracked the discourse of Celticism in texts of British provenance. Beginning with the theories of Matthew Arnold and ending with the primitivist aesthetic of D.H. Lawrence, the preceding chapters have sought especially to demonstrate the ways in which this discourse has been engaged with the pressures attending British capitalist modernity during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries. For the figures in question, the discourse of Celticism provides an imaginative space for the pursuit of varied, even diametrically opposed ideological agendas in relation to this civilizational modality. Whether attempting the recalibration of its rigid ontology, the expansion of its hegemony across the British Empire, or the total overthrow of that hegemony, each writer has affirmed the intimacy of Celticism, not just as an ethnological theory but as an aesthetic practice, with British capitalism, and the utility of the former to the effort to negotiate the socio-historical consequences of the latter. From its Arnoldian inception to its Lawrencian terminus, British Celticism seeks consistently to generate “formal solutions to unresolvable social contradictions” vis-a-vis the specific “contradictions” attending British capitalism at the height of its global ascendancy (79).

British Celticism presents a complex example of Jameson’s famous maxim in that it confronts the complex intersection not only of aesthetic theory with capitalist development but of both these with the dynamics of British imperialism. From the Fenian backdrop of Arnold’s seminal *Study*, to the allegorical Land Wars of Conan Doyle’s *Hound*, to the Indian imperialism of Kipling’s *Kim*, to the interstitial racial filiations of Conrad’s Belfast and the Celtic Revival of Lawrence’s *St. Mawr* and *The Plumed Serpent*, the practice of British Celticism is never far removed from the real political concerns of Anglo-Irish colonialism. The unique configuration of this British imperial site grounds its participants’ individual aesthetic agendas in an even more

intricate set of socio-historical concerns, whereby the “mixed” colonial legacy of Ireland equips them with the flexible mental resources required for the interrogation of otherwise-stark binaries such as reason/magic, civilized/primitive and black/white, each of which indexes a historical trajectory in direct alignment with capitalist rationalization. The hybrid “semicolonial” or “metrocolonial” specificities of contemporary Ireland determine, and indeed make possible, the strikingly innovative aesthetic “solutions” these authors devise in response to the multifaceted problem of British capitalist modernity.

The unique colonial makeup of Ireland becomes even more central to the analysis of Celticism as this study moves on from its long and varied British history to examine its deployment in Ireland itself during the Celtic Revival proper. If Ireland’s hybrid makeup, its fusion of the elements of metropole and colony, outfits British Celticist authors with the tools for envisioning the fictional working-through of the Manichean polarities of the imperial enterprise, for nationalist writers attempting to define their Irishness during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries this marriage of antithetical elements instead becomes a dilemma and a practical problem. As we shall see in what follows, one of the primary forms in which Irish cultural nationalism posed this problem follows from the central tension built into Celticism from its Arnoldian foundation, namely the tension between capitalism and the aesthetic. When Arnold codified this opposition as the manifestation of an essential racial difference between Teuton and Celt, he inaugurated a dialectical chain reaction in which both British Celticist writers and their Irish nationalist counterparts became inescapably linked. Against his own hegemonic intentions, Arnold also produced a conception of the Celt as disruptive of and resistant to the modernizing energies of British capital that carried with it a radical political and aesthetic potential. In the hands of British Celticists such as D.H. Lawrence, this latent potential

became the basis of a modernist mythopoesis and primitivist socio-historical vision very much at odds with the ideological purposes of the discourse's original coinage. It is within this same anti-capitalist space that turn-of-the-century Irish Celticism performs its labors.

In chapter one, I examined the foundations of Arnold's Celticism in the economic history of Ireland during the mid-nineteenth century, arguing that the antinomy between the Celtic "sentiment" and the "industry" required for capitalist productivity had its basis in events like the Great Famine which seemed to British political economists to demonstrate the Celt's economic haplessness and, concomitantly, the essentially Teutonic or Saxon character of capital. The decades following this catastrophic rupture of Ireland's Gaelic civilization witnessed the island's accelerated incorporation into the material structures and cultural mores of England, such that by the time of the Celtic Revival, despite the efforts of resistance movements such as the Land League to the establishment of what Arnold called "prescription"—the specifically economic face of British colonial hegemony—the nation, in particular that portion designated as "The Pale," had become indistinguishable in many ways from the economic lifeworld of the metropole. Especially in the city of Dublin, the geographical epicenter of the Revival, daily life—with the important exception of the frenetic industrial activity prevalent in its British counterparts—had melded with that of England so fully as to render the city simply another node in the domestic British marketplace.⁵⁷ In many ways, therefore, the Celticist anti-capitalism of the Revival came to be directed against not simply the looming, external presence of the Empire but also against internal cultural practices generated by these decades of assimilative pressure.

This chapter identifies three central strains in the Revivalist effort toward anti-capitalist decolonization and traces their development during the height of the movement's power in the period stretching from roughly 1885 to 1910. The first such strain consists of an emergent

discourse characterizing British capitalism in general as a racially alien force adulterating the nation's Celtic essence. This dual anti-imperial and anti-capitalist identification, I will argue, functioned as one of the most pervasive ideological elements of the Revival and in many ways transcended the diverse agendas cohabitating under the tent of Irish cultural nationalism. The second domain to be addressed subtends the first and consists of the splintering of this anti-capitalist consensus along the fault line between the movement's two main constituencies: middle-class Catholic nationalism and the (mostly Protestant) nationalism of the so-called "Literary Revival." As I will show, these two factions, while meeting amicably on the common ground of general opposition to British capitalism, split irreconcilably over the question of the specific substance of this opposition, with the Catholic faction defining its anti-capitalism in *moral* terms and the Literary faction defining its anti-capitalism in the terminology *high Culture*. I will demonstrate that the splintering of the anti-capitalism of the Revival was most evident in the domain of *consumption*, particularly in relation to the imported commodities of British popular culture, in opposition to whose contaminating influence these factions expressed radically divergent notions of Ireland's ethnic identity. I will in turn argue that the commodity critique of the Revival became the privileged staging ground for a Gramscian "war of position" between Catholic and Literary nationalists for the allegiance of the Irish public to their competing ethnic visions. I will devote special attention to the ideological agenda underlying the commodity critique of the "Literary Revival," because it is this agenda that most directly informs the literary works to be discussed in the next chapter of this study. The chapter will then conclude with a discussion of the widespread effort during the Revival period to construct a Celticized Irish economic sphere—that is, a modernizing national economy stripped of Teutonic influence and imbued instead with characteristics viewed as inherently Celtic. As we will

ultimately see in the Chapter 6, this practical strain of Revivalist anti-capitalism presages the later efforts of the postcolonial State to fashion an economy in keeping with the nation's putative Celtic identity. In the meantime, however, we must begin tracing the heritage that will be seen to issue both in the literature of the movement itself and in the literature and politics of post-independence Ireland with the anti-capitalism of the Celtic Revival.

“Sitting on the Last Verge”: Revivalist Anti-Capitalism

It is a commonplace in Irish Studies to characterize the Revival as defining itself in opposition to British “materialism,” “commerce,” “capital,” or some other term designating the economic forces encroaching on turn-of-the-century Ireland from England, and as motivated by the desire to purge the nation of this particularly potent force of cultural Anglicization.⁵⁸ In spite of the ubiquity of this narrative, however, little sustained energy has been devoted to interrogating the precise configuration of the movement's anti-capitalist dimension. Indeed, it seems as if its obvious prominence in the writings of its central figures has produced the impression that it is in effect self-explanatory, that the antagonism of the Revival to British capital is both unmistakable and straightforward. In what follows, I hope to illustrate that the discourse surrounding this Revivalist ideological mainstay is internally complex and fissured to a degree that warrants closer examination. Among the main recurring themes of the *general* anti-capitalist aspect of this discourse—as opposed to the specifically commodity-centered aspect that will preoccupy the chapter's next section—are: the claim that British capitalism exerts a blighting influence on the national landscape; the claim that it exerts a similar influence on the national language; the claim that in both of these, Irish land and the Irish language, resides a Celtic essence that must be preserved by stemming the tide of such influence; the claim that British capitalism is itself the product of Saxon or Teutonic racial proclivities inherently

antagonistic to their Irish counterparts; the Arnoldian claim that the Celtic national essence, though impotent in the domain of capitalism, is correspondingly potent the domain of the *aesthetic*; and the claim that British capitalism, in spite of its pretensions to universal anthropological warrant, is merely an overgrown, aberrant particular obscuring a truly universal, aesthetically-charged *primitive* ontology of which the Irish Celt is the paradigmatic example. Each of these “themes” of the discourse of Revivalist anti-capitalism is pervasive in the texts of turn-of-the-century Irish cultural nationalism.

We may begin cataloguing the Revival’s anti-capitalism on the factionally neutral ground of the Language Movement, with the words of the leading exponent and co-founder of the Gaelic League, Douglas Hyde.⁵⁹ In an 1886 essay titled simply “A Plea for the Irish Language,” seven years prior to the organization’s founding, Hyde openly defines what would become its mission, “to arrest the [Irish] language in its downward path,” in anti-capitalist terms, and further defines capitalism itself as racially Saxon. Anticipating in his audience a “materialistic *cui bono*” in response to his “plea,” Hyde declares: “I must candidly and honestly confess, that what I advocate brings with it no substantial or material advantages at all. It will make neither money nor help to make money; but I hope that this confession will not put us out of court with an Irish audience, as I know it would an Anglo-Saxon one” (75). The revival of Gaelic is to be pursued in a fundamentally non-capitalist domain, and capitalism’s “*cui bono*” is defined as a quintessentially Teutonic preoccupation. “Englishmen have very noble and excellent qualities which I should like to see imitated here,” Hyde continues, “but I should not like to imitate them in everything. I like our own habits and character better, they are more consonant with my nature; I like our own turn of thought, our own characteristics, and above all I like our own language and do not wish to see the effacing hand of cosmopolitanism prevail against it” (75-6).

The Celtic “turn of thought” and “characteristics” of which Gaelic is the concentrated sediment may accommodate the imitation of certain English “qualities,” but the monetary obsession of the Saxon is not one of them. Something in Hyde’s Irish “nature” is not “consonant” with this “cosmopolitan” epistemological modality.⁶⁰

Hyde goes on to provide a fuller definition of Gaelic as the repository of Irish characteristics that emanate from the national landscape and carry a powerful aesthetic charge, characteristics whose anti-capitalist essence he asserts in no uncertain terms:

The language of the Gael is the language best suited to his surroundings. It corresponds best to his topography, his nomenclature and his organs of speech, and the use of it guarantees the resemblance of his own weird and beautiful traditions . . . Every hill, every *lios*, ever crag and gnarled tree and lonely valley has its own strange and graceful legend attached to it, the product of the Hibernian Celt in its truest and purest type, not to be improved upon by change, and of infinite worth in molding the race type, of immeasurable value in forming its character . . . I believe for example that the character of the people has deteriorated in the east . . . where Irish died out a generation or two ago. There Dermot . . . is unknown, Finn MacCool is barely remembered . . . Ossian is never heard of, the ancient memories have ceased to cling to the various objects of nature; the halo of romance, the exquisite and dreamy film which hangs over the Mayo mountains has been blown away by the brutal blast of the most realistic materialism, and people when they gather into one another’s houses in the evening . . . can talk of nothing but the latest scandal or the price Tim Rooney got for his calf . . . (77-78)

Gaelic thus reflects mimetically the peculiar features of Irish “topography,” its “*lios*” or fairy mounds, its “crag”s, “gnarled tree”s and “lonely valley”s, both at the basic level of “nomenclature” and at the more advanced linguistic level of “legend,” here emblemized by the myths of Dermot, Finn MacCool and Ossian. The “immeasurable value” of the language is defined in a distinctly Arnoldian aesthetic vein, as “weird and beautiful,” “strange and graceful,” and as bearing the “halo of romance.” This aestheticized essence, the “exquisite and dreamy film” that clings to Gaelic, withers before a “brutal blast of the most realistic materialism” exhaled by the occupying Saxon power. As a result of the historical adulteration of the language,

the archetypal Irishman—“Tim Rooney”—is no longer “the Hibernian Celt in its truest and purest type,” but instead a petty, gossiping, money-grubbing, pseudo-Teuton. Recollection of the centrality of the Lockean term “improvement,” designating the process by which the development of land through human labor generates the right to ownership thereof, to the history of British colonialism in Ireland and elsewhere, lends historical context to Hyde’s insistence that the Celt, his language and his geographical environs are “not to be improved upon by change,” and powerfully amplifies the anti-capitalist bent of his Revivalist program.⁶¹

The text of Hyde’s which occupies perhaps the central position among accounts of the Revival’s cultural nationalist ideology, “The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland,” also couches the campaign to extricate Ireland from English influence in anti-capitalist terms and in terms which equate capitalism with Saxon racial proclivities. Just before the peroration of this seminal lecture before the National Literary Society in November of 1892, a lecture whose popular acclaim would help to spur the foundation of the League during the following year, Hyde proposes a thought experiment to convey his admonition against the de-nationalizing influence of British capitalism to his listeners:

To say that Ireland has not prospered under English rule is simply a truism; all the world admits it, England does not deny it. But the English retort is ready. You have not prospered, they say, because you would not settle down contentedly . . . Let us suppose for a moment—which is possible—that there were to arise a series of Cromwells in England for the space of one hundred years, able administrators of the empire, careful rulers of Ireland, developing to the utmost our national resources, whilst they unremittingly stamped out every spark of national feeling, making Ireland a land of wealth and factories, whilst they extinguished every thought and every idea that was Irish, and left us, at last, after a hundred years of good government, fat, wealthy and populous, but with all our characteristics gone, with every external that at present differentiates us from the English lost or dropped . . . the fact that we were not of Saxon origin dropped out of sight and memory . . . How many Irishmen are there who would purchase material prosperity at such a price? It is exactly such a question as this and the answer to it that shows the difference between the English and the Irish race. Nine Englishmen out of ten would jump to make the exchange, and I as firmly believe

that nine Irishmen out of ten would indignantly refuse it” (154-5).

Hyde delivers a frightening, dystopian vision of the total imposition on Ireland of the “improvement” process, a vision in which, by Cromwellian fiat, the “utmost” development of the nation’s “resources” proceeds hand-in-hand with the “unremitting” “stamp[ing] out of every spark of national feeling” and the “extinguish”ment of “every thought and idea that was Irish” in its people. This nightmarish Ireland is “a land of wealth and factories,” where the hereditarily Celtic people of the nation, now “fat, wealthy and populous,” have become indistinguishable from their imperial occupiers, “the fact that [they] were not of Saxon origin dropped out of sight and memory.” Luckily, however, Hyde comforts his listeners, “the difference between the English and the Irish race” determines that while nine of ten Englishmen would enthusiastically embrace such a fate, as many Irish would “indignantly refuse it.”⁶²

Taken together, Hyde’s writings of late 1880s and early 1890s propose an Ireland Gaelic speaking, of Celtic “character,” enduringly laden with aestheticized ecological and ethnological features, and united in opposition to an inherently Saxon capitalist modernity. It is this economic regime that drives the effacement and eventual extinction of the three wellsprings of this “character,” the land, the corresponding “nature” of its native inhabitants, and the language which concentrates these two and serves as a secondary impulse toward their efflorescence. The fundamentally Arnoldian terms of Hyde’s analysis and prescriptions are unmistakable: as in Arnold’s *Study*, Teutonic “industry” mars and “blight”s the beauty of this “romantic,” Celtic milieu, and it is necessary to uproot this economic order to ensure the survival of those “magic” features that Arnold defined as “sentimental.” In fact, though Hyde never indicates that he has Arnold directly in mind, later in the same lecture he utilizes this very term to describe the source from which nationalist resistance must arise, stating, “When the picture of complete

Anglicization is drawn for [us] in all its nakedness *Irish sentimentality* becomes suddenly a power and refuses to surrender its birthright” (155, emphasis added). Irish antagonism to the capitalist reification of the nation’s racial identity, its “birthright,” is sentimental, deriving from a “power”ful “attachment,” to recall another keyword in Arnold’s anatomy of this Celtic ethnological compound, to its native environment and traditions. It is because this “sentimentality” has not been active enough in combating the British capitalist occupation that, in the words of another of Hyde’s writings, “one of the quickest, most sensitive, and most artistic races on earth are now only distinguished for their hideousness” (“Some Words” 153).

For those familiar with the scholarly literature on the Revival, it will be obvious that this outline of Hyde’s Language program borders on the racial ideology underpinning the notorious “Celtic Note,” the ethnological ideal advanced mainly by Literary Revivalists such as W. B. Yeats. This should not be surprising, considering that Hyde was deeply aligned with the Literary Revival (delivering his seminal lecture at one of its most prominent institutional nodes, the National Literary Society, giving the first performance of his Gaelic-Language play *Casadh an tSugain* at another, the Irish Literary Theater, and becoming a vice president of its successor institution, the National Theater of Ireland (or Abbey)).⁶³ However, it is important to recall that Hyde’s particular brand of Revivalism received the enthusiastic endorsement of the most venomous critic of the “Celtic Note,” D.P. Moran. Moran’s endorsement of Hyde’s nationalist program derives from a number of convergences between Hyde’s program and his, the most obvious being their common emphasis on the preservation of Gaelic as the carrier of essential Irishness (although, like Hyde, Moran accepts the practical reality that as a result of its centuries of Anglicization only a bi-lingual Ireland is possible for the foreseeable future).⁶⁴ However, Moran’s accord with Hyde can also be explained with reference to a less obvious and less

remarked convergence between them, namely their definition of this essential Irishness as antagonistic to British capitalism.

Moran's conception of the relationship between Irishness and economics is more complex than Hyde's, as we shall see in the final section of this chapter, where the focus will be the effort during the Revival period to fashion a distinctly Irish economic sphere. However, in the series of essays published in the *New Ireland Review* between 1898 and 1900 with which Moran launched his "Irish Ireland" program, essays which would issue in turn in the creation of its print organ, *The Leader*, in 1900, one discovers that this program contains a marked anti-capitalist component. Indeed, the essay titled "The Future of the Irish Nation," which alongside the more famous "The Battle of Two Civilizations" may be taken as Moran's manifesto, defines the deracination of Ireland's indigenous essence as primarily driven by capitalism:

I have attempted to show that economic forces make for the obliteration of the Irish nation. The question which every Irishman should think out for himself is whether it is better to allow economic tendency to work its way free from all sentimental obstructions, or whether he will elect to attempt to stem the tide and endeavor to fight on for the realization of the dream of Ireland a Nation . History satisfies us that when Irishmen have a good definite statement to stick to they can put their backs against the wall and defy a material world in arms. Economic force and ruthless oppression combined could not rob the Catholic Irish of the religion which they believe to be a right, and these forces, were they combined again, cannot kill the Irish nation if the Irish nation makes up its mind to live. (23)

As with Hyde, "economic forces" emanating from England are responsible for "the obliteration of the Irish nation" and only a "sentimental" opposition to this "economic tendency" will "stem the tide" of Anglicization and enable "the realization of the dream of Ireland a Nation." Just as the Irish once succeeded in fending off the imperial and capitalist assault on Catholicism, so they must now set their face against this dual political and economic siege on that portion of the nation's Gaelic essence that is not accounted for by religion.

Elsewhere, in the essay titled "Is the Irish Nation Dying?," Moran, in search of a remnant

of original Gaelic stock from which the nation might be coaxed back to life, continues to portray the economic adulteration of this stock in Hyde-like terms:

The tendencies of the people, at the present time are not altogether inspiring. The ignorant peasants are the most interesting portion of the population. In them are yet to be seen, undeveloped and clouded perhaps, the marks of the Gaelic race. An impassable gulf separates them from any type to be met with in England. They still possess the unspoiled raw material for the making of a vigorous and a real Irish character. The moment we mount up the social scale, the prospect is less pleasing. Teach the peasant to read and write in English, put a black coat on him and let him earn his living in some 'genteel' fashion, and what does he become? Well—they call him Irish. (4)

The “ignorant peasants,” presumably of the extant Gaeltacht of the west of Ireland, who retain, “undeveloped and unclouded . . . the marks of the Gaelic race,” will provide the “raw material” for the “vigorous and real Irish character” of the future. Moran defines these “peasants” as “separate[d]” by an “impassable gulf” from “any type to be met with in England,” thereby situating his analysis in the same *essentialist* vein in which Hyde defines Celt and capitalism as magnetic opposites. Moran contradicts this essentialism by describing the contemporary “Irish,” who would presumably bear within them the same “raw material” as their “ignorant” cousins, as having crossed this “impassable” gulf through the adoption of the English language, British fashion and British materialism. However, even in this contradictory modulation of the passage’s essentialism, British capitalism is characterized as antithetical to Irishness.

Moran’s pro-industrial views prevent him from defining economic development *as such* as incompatible with Irishness, but he is clearly working within an essentialist framework that borders on defining capitalism as inherently Teutonic or Saxon. In the essay “The Pale and the Gael,” Moran provides a powerful iteration of this staple nationalist claim in the form of a brief sketch of the history of Irish Anglicization:

When we went under the rule of England’s mind and traditions . . . we had to take her standards as part of the bargain; and wealth . . . is her great standard. Poverty

is a holy thing . . . but Irish poverty, butted at and kicked by the English wealth, Irish weakness insulted and trodden on every day of the year by English power, can make no stand since Ireland has accepted English wealth and power as her standards. Ireland develops under these circumstances in keeping with her lowly material lot. Even Irishmen capable of great spirit get embarrassed and cringe in the company of English wealthy middle-class . . . as if an ancestral line of grim, hard-suffering Irish peasants who sacrificed everything at one time to their principles and traditions was not better than that of a line of sleek, trimming, bread-and-butter Saxon bourgeois, who would have swallowed the devil any day sooner than lose a customer. (51)

The adoption of British materialism and the “standard” of “wealth” has driven Ireland down an errant historical path, and its people are now both subservient to and imitative of the “bread-and-butter Saxon bourgeois” who would sacrifice anything “sooner than lose a customer.” The Irish must cling to their “principles and traditions,” in particular here the Catholic tradition indexed in the invocation of “the devil,” and throw off the artificial “develop”ment of Saxon wealth.

Moran’s vision of Irish self-betrayal through the embrace of British capital also informs his most famous writing, “The Battle of Two Civilizations,” where he castigates the Ireland of Grattan’s Parliament for initiating the “West Briton”izing of the nation in language that affirms the essentialist framework of his “Philosophy of Irish Ireland.” This essay, which famously argues that the Irish people, while decrying British rule, have enthusiastically embraced cultural Anglicization, defines this contradictory behavior as a betrayal of the nation’s racial essence:

What potential genius that contradiction has choked, what dishonesties and tragedies, above all what comedies, it has been responsible for . . . *The Irish all this time, as they are at the present day, were absolutely different from the English. The genius of each nation was distinct.* To English ideals we did not respond; English Literature did not kindle our minds . . . There is something, be it instinct or the living sub-conscious tradition of an almost dead civilization, that says to nearly every Irish heart—‘Thou shalt be Irish: thou shalt not be English.’ (97, emphasis added)

The Irish and English people are here characterized as “absolutely different” from one another, and the “genius of each nation” is described as “distinct” and incompatible. England’s “wealth,”

as the primary manifestation of its “genius,” is implicitly a racially foreign, Saxon “standard” from which the Irish must detach in order to revive their Gaelic essence.

Given his merciless lambasting of the Literary Revival’s “Celtic Note,” which he famously calls “one of the most glaring frauds the credulous Irish people ever swallowed,” it is surprising to find Moran relying elsewhere on some of the same Celticist ideals as Hyde in order to give further definition to his anti-capitalist stance (“The Future” 22). Indeed, it is not simply that Moran ignores or forgives these ideological positions in his endorsement of Hyde and the League, but rather that “Irish Ireland” seems unable to articulate a nationalist vision without drawing on them to some degree. It is not at all infrequent, in fact, that Moran, when enumerating the characteristics of the Gaelic “genius,” deploys the same Arnoldian terminology he elsewhere leverages toward discrediting Literary Revivalist Celticism. In “Is the Irish Nation Dying,” he points to qualities such as “native charm,” “good nature” and even “romance,” each of which is a staple of the dubious “Note,” as inherent in the Gaelic personality (5-7). This tendency comes dramatically to the fore in a remarkable passage in “The Future of the Irish Nation” where, *en route* to exhorting his readers that economic development as indispensable to building up Ireland’s “character,” he remarks:

I suppose the Gael is a sensuous creature, liking music, rhetoric and day-dreams, and hating realities when they wear a dour and threatening look. We are the most fitted people in the world for living in a fool’s paradise. No man of any sense would dream that this peculiarity of the Gael can be eradicated. No Irishman would wish it to be so. In many of its manifestations this characteristic of the Gael is his greatest charm. His optimism and hope spring from it; his good humor flows from it; his happiness and content, amid surroundings that would be intolerable to a more matter-of-fact nature, depend upon it. We can’t have our cake and eat it. And as we all are proud of the glamour and light-heartedness that are part of our national disposition, we must not grumble too much at the disadvantages which they carry in their train. But when these characteristics are indulged to such an extent as to threaten our very existence as a nation, it is time to call a halt and examine whither we are drifting . . . Even if the Anglo-Saxon race . . . stopped where it is we could not keep on our present way without disaster

. . . we must either stand up to it . . . or else get trodden on and swallowed up . . .
(12)

The Arnoldian tenor of Moran's advocacy for a native economic movement that will "stand up" to the dominance of the "Anglo-Saxon race," with its emphasis on the "sensuous"ness, "daydream"ing, "glamour and light-heartedness" of the Gaelic "national disposition," is unmistakable. It would appear also that Moran accepts the Arnoldian premise that the Gael or, more appropriately, the *Celt*, revolts against the "despotism of fact," while a "more matter-of-fact nature" such as the Saxon's is better suited to economic productivity or "industry." Ultimately, aside from the insistence that he cannot live without the sustenance of Catholicism, there seems little to separate Moran's Gael from the Literary Revival's Celt, either in the characteristics that define his essential Irishness or in the conception of those characteristics as inherently opposed to Teutonic capitalism.

As we shall see in the next section of this chapter, it is precisely the additional insistence on Catholicism that distinguishes Moran's ethnic vision from that of the Literary Revivalist "Celtic Note." For the moment, however, it is only important to observe that Moran's "Irish Ireland" program, in spite of its insistence on retraining the nation for economic productivity, finds it somehow necessary to invoke the anti-capitalist premises of Arnoldian Celticism. It would seem to be incumbent even on a brand of nationalism which seeks to instill in the Irish populace the habits of "industry" to characterize Irishness as "sentimental." It is as if it is impossible to envision a distinctive cultural identity for Ireland without defining the nation's ethnicity as essentially opposed to British capitalism. Moran thus insists that "no Irishman would wish" for the "eradication" of the Celt's anti-capitalist characteristics, even as urges his readers to begin undertaking this very eradication.

This anti-capitalist ethnological premise becomes even more prominent in the writings of

nationalists far better known than either Moran or Hyde for sounding the Arnoldian “Celtic Note.” The first noteworthy figure in this regard is AE (George Russell), the mystic, poet and playwright who would also become a leading member of the “Co-Operative” economic movement of Sir Horace Plunkett. In the well-known essay “Nationality and Imperialism,” AE leverages the anti-capitalist resources of Arnold’s Celt as a means of refuting the popular nationalist political position—a position notably adopted by Moran—that Ireland’s prosperity would be best secured through continued participation in the British Empire.⁶⁵ Against this Gladstonian notion, AE warns that the economic benefits of such participation will be vastly outweighed by its detrimental influence on the nation’s Celtic characteristics:

To me the imperial ideal seems to threaten the destruction of that national being which has been growing through centuries, and I ask myself, What can it profit my race if it gain the empire of the world and yet lose its own soul . . . and this to be lost simply that we may help to build up a sordid trade federation between England and her Colonies? Was our divine origin for this end? . . . There is a reservoir of spiritual life in the land, but it is hardly strong enough to repel English materialism . . . and shall it be triumphant when we have given over our hopes of a separate national existence, and merged our dreams and longings with a nation which has become a byword for materialism? . . . We ask the liberty of shaping the social order in Ireland to reflect our own ideals, and to embody that national soul which has been slowly incarnating in our race from its cloudy dawn. The twentieth century may carry us far from Finn and Oscar . . . but I hope it will not carry us into the contented acceptance of the deadness, the dullness, the commonplace of English national sentiment, or what idealism remains in us, bequeathed from the past, range itself willingly under a banner which is regarded chiefly as a commercial asset by the most famous exponent of the imperial idea. (16-18)

AE justifies his rejection of the continued imperial alliance entailed in “Home Rule” by asserting the equivalence of the British Empire and “materialism.” Consorting with such a materialist force, he argues, would drain the remaining contents of the “reservoir of spiritual life” that contains “the national being.” Severance of this imperial link will secure the “liberty” needed for “shaping the social order in Ireland to reflect [its] own ideals,” among which, just prior to this

passage, he lists “the music of an eternal joy, the sentiment of an inexorable justice, the melting power of beauty in sorrow [and] the wisdom of age” (16). The “enduring qualities” that define the Irish as “idealist” in contrast to the “materialism,” “deadness” and “dullness” of the thoroughly commercial “English national sentiment” (16) provide an unmistakable echo of the opposition in Arnold’s *Study* between an aestheticized, “melancholy” Celt—one “keenly sensitive” to “the melting power of beauty in sorrow”—and “the gross and creeping Saxon whom he despises” (Arnold, *On* 84, 88).

A similar racial typology informs the essay “Literature and the Irish Language” by George Moore, the novelist, playwright and founding member of the Irish Literary Theatre. Delivered as a lecture to a gathering of the Theatre’s supporters in February of 1900 and subsequently printed in the *New Ireland Review*, the essay argues for the Gaelic translation of the English-language works of fellow Literary Revivalists such as Edward Martyn, Lady Gregory and W.B. Yeats, rather than the original production of plays in Gaelic, which he judges too artistically immature a medium to facilitate the nation’s cultural development. In spite of this criticism Moore insists, “We must return to the language . . . it is a mysterious inheritance, in which resides the soul of the Irish people. It is through language that a tradition of thought is preserved, and so it may be said that the language is the soul of the race” (47). Gaelic houses the essence of the race, whatever its expressive underdevelopment, and like Hyde and Moran, Moore distinguishes its merits from the Saxon realm of economic utility: “We want our language; we desire it with our whole heart and soul. Our desire may be foolish, unpractical, unwise, according to the lights of the English race at the present moment; but our desire is our desire, our folly is our own, and if we wish to start ill equipped in the business race of the world . . . shall we be gainsaid like children?” (47). Also like Hyde and Moran, Moore accepts as inevitable a

practical compromise between Gaelic and English, stating, “. . . our desire is to make Ireland a bi-lingual country—to use English as a universal language, and to save our own as a medium for some future literature” (47). English must remain in use to enable Ireland to participate in “the business race of the world,” while Gaelic will be gradually rehabilitated for the production of “some future literature” more expressive of “the soul of the race.”

Moore goes on to define the Irish “soul” as the last bastion of a once-universal, aestheticized primitivism that has been all but entirely eclipsed by the spread of British capital:

The art world which was an antiquity . . . and of which some traces linger down to the present day, is passing away, and the commercial world which has begun is the worst form of barbarism which has yet been seen. Those who believe that dreams, beauty, and divine ecstasy are essential must pray that all the empires may perish and the world will be given back to the small peasant states, whose seas and forests and mountains shall create national aspirations and new gods . . . The commercial platitude which has risen up in England, which is extending over the whole world, is horrible to contemplate. Its flag, which Mr. Rhodes has declared to be ‘the most valuable commercial asset in the world,’ is everywhere. England has imposed her idea upon all nations, and to girdle the world with Brixton seems to be her ultimate destiny. And we, sitting on the last verge, see into the universal suburb, in which a lean man with glasses on his nose and a black bag in his hand is always running after his bus. (50-1)

Moore thus places the homologous Arnoldian antimonies beauty/capital, Celt/Teuton within a larger narrative which positions the latter terms as unnatural historical upstarts usurping the natural ubiquity of the former. The “dreams, beauty and divine ecstasy” which once emanated from the earth’s varied topography, its “seas and forests and mountains,” thereby “creat[ing] national aspirations” and national “gods,” remain active in turn-of-the-century Ireland, but it resides “on the last verge” between these “essential” values and “the universal suburb” of the British Empire. Like AE, who names him “the most famous exponent of the imperial idea,” Moore points to the definition by the arch-imperialist Cecil Rhodes of the Union Jack as a “the most valuable commercial asset in world” as proof that Ireland’s continued obeisance to this

emblem will mean the total eclipse by capital of the nation's Celtic traits.

In addition to the pervasive Celticist "themes" of locating the nation's racial essence in the Irish landscape, of identifying the Irish language as the mimetic reflection of both of these, and of defining of this essence and its geographical and linguistic wellsprings as sources of a "Romantic" beauty marred by capitalism, in the above passage we also encounter the final Revivalist theme described at the outset of this section: the assertion that it is not capitalist modernity but rather a pre-modern primitivity that is the natural modality of all human societies. In this theme, we witness an attempt to reposition Irish "sentiment" not as a deviation from the human norm, but *as* this norm. Revivalist Celticism thus sanctions its anti-capitalist efforts by drawing on the historicist framework developed by Victorian anthropologists such as E.B. Tylor, Andrew Lang, James Frazer, and Matthew Arnold himself, which defined the sort of "magical" practices explored in Chapters 2 and 3 as universal at an early stage of human history. But where this framework assigns an ascending scale of value to the historical supersession of "magical" ways by "religious" and, eventually, "rational" ones, in a Nietzschean "transvaluation of values," the Revival turns this scale on its head to define the nation's "primitive" traditions as the source its civilizational greatness.⁶⁶

This historical narrative of the eclipse of an idealized, universal primitivity by a civilizing, rationalizing capitalist modernity is graphically rendered in the following passage from AE's *Co-Operation and Nationality*:

When steam first began to puff and wheels to go round at so many revolutions per minute, the wild child humanity, who had hitherto developed his civilization in picturesque unconsciousness of where he was going, and without any set plan, was caught and put in harness. What are called business habits were invented to make the life of man run in harmony with the steam engine, and his movements rival the train in punctuality. The factory system was invented and was an instantaneous success. Men were clothed with cheapness and uniformity. Their minds grew numerously alike, cheap and uniform also. They were at their desks

at nine o'clock, or at their looms at six. They adjusted themselves to the punctual wheels. The rapid piston acted as pacemaker, and in England, which started first on the modern race for wealth, it was an enormous advantage to have tireless machines or superhuman activity to make the pace, and nerve men, women, and children to the fullest activity possible. Business methods had a long start in England, and irregularity and want of uniformity became after a while such exceptions that they were regarded as deadly sins . . . Only the most machine-like race could win custom. After a while every country felt it had to be drilled or become extinct. Some made themselves into machines to enter the English market, some to preserve their own markets. Even the indolent oriental is getting keyed up, and in another fifty years the Bedouin of the desert will be at his desk and the wild horseman of Tartary will be oiling his engines. (16)

Industrial capitalism, with steam power as its engine and England as its prototype, captures, “put[s] in harness” and transforms into a “machine” “the wild child humanity,” supplanting his intuitive, unselfconscious and picturesque civilization with the “uniformity” of “business habits” and “wealth.” The British, “the most machine-like race,” “win custom” and global hegemony, forcing all other races, down to the “Bedouin of the desert” and the “wild horseman of Tartary,” “to be drilled or become extinct.” Luckily for the nation’s present-tense inhabitants, however, AE goes on to note that “In Ireland the wild child humanity came under this discipline very slowly. He was in love with old fashions . . . with Gaelic tradition” (16). The Irish specimen of the “child humanity,” the universal primitive, remains partly immersed in “wild” ways by virtue of his adherence to “Gaelic tradition,” and thus staves off the suffocation of his Celtic characteristics by the “cheap”ness and “uniform”ity of British capital.⁶⁷

This universalizing anthropological frame enables us to comprehend the ethnological appeal of the text which, perhaps more than any other, exemplifies the Revival’s rootedness in a specifically Arnoldian Celticism, “The Celtic Element in Literature” by William Butler Yeats. This 1897 essay begins by proposing to distinguish the Celt’s truly essential characteristics from those described by Arnold in his *Study* and by his predecessor Ernest Renan in *The Poetry of the Celtic Races*. Once the moment arrives to make explicit the qualities Yeats views as inherently

and distinctively Celtic, however, he offers very few innovations and ends up affirming the very same traits that define Arnold's Celt, from "worship" of the "beauty" and "abundance of nature" to "unearthly ecstasy" and "imaginative passion" (175, 178). Indeed, Yeats fundamentally accepts what is perhaps the key term of Arnoldian "sentiment": "natural magic." Yeats makes only a slight adjustment to this Arnoldian concept, stating, "I do not think he understood our 'natural magic' is but the ancient religion of the world" (176). He then proceeds to reposition Arnold's Celticism within the same universal primitivist framework invoked by Moore and AE:

Once every people in the world believed that trees were divine, and could take a human or grotesque shape and dance among the shadows; and that deer, and ravens and foxes, and wolves and bears . . . almost all things under the sun and moon . . . were not less divine and changeable. They saw in the rainbow the still bent bow of a god thrown down in his negligence . . . while they dreamed of so great a mystery in little things they believed the waving of a hand, or of a sacred bough, enough to tremble far-off hearts, or hood the moon with darkness. All old literatures are full of these and like imaginations, and all the poets of races who have not lost this way of looking at things could have said of themselves . . . 'I have learned my songs from the music of many birds, and from the music of many waters.' (174-5)

The mention here of the power of a "sacred bough" to "tremble far-off hearts" or shroud "the moon with darkness" alludes unmistakably to James Frazer's compendium of Victorian anthropology, *The Golden Bough*. Though the "natural magic" of Yeats's Celt differs from Arnold's very little in terms of definitional substance, by arguing for the universal presence of this "old way" among the world's ancient peoples Yeats inverts the prevailing valuation of this "primitive" ontology alongside its "civilized" modern successor. He reworks the particularized, imperially *instrumental* definition of the Celt fashioned by Arnold into a universalizing, anti-imperial resource, all while simultaneously retaining its basic ethnological content.⁶⁸

Yeats's reliance on a set of Arnoldian ethnological premises despite his protestation to the contrary is clearly visible in an earlier essay titled "Nationality and Literature," delivered as a

lecture to the National Literary Society on May 19, 1893. This text in turn makes explicit what remains implicit in “The Celtic Element in Literature,” namely that Yeats’s Celticism, like that of Hyde, Moran, Moore and AE, defines itself in direct opposition to British capitalism. Yeats begins the lecture by announcing this dichotomy unequivocally:

I am going to talk a little philosophy. If I were addressing an English audience I would not venture to even use the word philosophy, for it is only the Celt who cares much for ideas which have no immediate practical bearing. At least Matthew Arnold has said so, and I think he is right, for the flood-gates of materialism are only half-open amongst us as yet here in Ireland; perhaps the new age may close them before the tide is quite upon us. Remembering those but half-open gates, I venture into criticism of the fundamentals of literature, and into the discussion of things which, I am proud to say, have never made two blades of grass grow where one did before, or in any other fashion served the material needs of the race. (268)

As with Hyde, Moore, AE and even, to a lesser extent, Moran, Yeats conceives of the Celt as exterior to the domain of the “practical” considerations and “material needs.” The Celt is both that which must be preserved from engulfment before the “flood-gates of materialism” and that which will enable this preservation through the elaboration in literary form of his racially chthonic “philosophy.”

The *Samhain* writings of the early 1900s, in which Yeats propagandizes for and reflects on the cultural gains made by both the Irish Literary and National Theaters, continue to affirm his reliance on the Arnoldian oppositions beauty/capital and Celt/Teuton. Yeats repeatedly emphasizes that the Theater movement, in its endeavor to catalyze the Revival of a Celtic ontology, must repudiate the financial *raison d’etre* of its competitor, the commercialized theater of England. The following passages, the first, from 1901, proposing the formation of a “joint stock company” to fund the production of both Irish plays and foreign “masterpieces,” and the second, from 1904, lamenting the lack of aesthetic “imagination” in the “modern theatre,” demonstrate Yeats’s conception of Teutonic capitals as antagonistic to Irishness:

It would perform plays in Irish and English, and also . . . the masterpieces of the world, making a point of performing Spanish, and Scandinavian, and French, and perhaps Greek masterpieces rather more than Shakespeare, for Shakespeare is seen, not well done indeed . . . in the theatre of commerce. It would do its best to give Ireland a hardy and shapely national character by opening the doors to the four winds of the world, instead of leaving the door that is towards the east wind open alone. Certainly, the national character, *which is so essentially different from the English* that Spanish and French influences may well be most healthy, is at present like one of those miserable thorn-bushes by the sea that are all twisted to one side by some prevailing wind. (76, emphasis added)

Our modern theatre, with the seats always growing more expensive, and its dramatic art drifting always from the living impulse of life . . . no longer gives pleasure to any imaginative mind. It is easy for us to hate England in this country, and we give that hatred something of nobility if we turn it now and again into hatred of the vulgarity of commercial syndicates, of all that commercial finish and pseudo-art she has done so much to cherish. (129)

The first passage declares that an “essential” difference separates the Irish and English “national character[s],” and even takes the essentialist basis of its rejection of the English “theatre of commerce” so far as to discourage the performance of Shakespeare, the paragon of English aesthetic achievement, because his work has been tainted by commerce. The “prevailing wind” of British capital has also blighted Ireland’s own aesthetic development, leaving it a “miserable thorn bush . . . all twisted to one side” and in need of “hardy and shapely” engraftment from non-commercial sources. The second passage makes even more explicit the withering of aesthetic vitality before British capitalism, and urges Yeats’s readers to take on the “nobility” of a “hatred” for “the vulgarity” of England’s “commercial syndicates” and the “pseudo-art” they have bred in both nations.

Yeats also deploys the Revivalist themes of locating Ireland’s indigenous Celtic essence in the Gaelic language and the national landscape as vehicles for his anti-capitalist agenda. Though he is personally committed to producing an Irish literature in the English language, in the first quotation above Yeats explicitly reserves a place within the Theater Movement for plays

in Gaelic. In his “Postscript” to Lady Gregory’s 1901 collection of essays *Ideals in Ireland*, Yeats indicates that this provision has more than a tokenist basis by defining the language as a potent anti-capitalist resource:

I think that our Irish movements have always interested me in part because I see in them the quarrel of two traditions of life, one old and noble, one new and ignoble, one undying because it satisfies our conscience though it seem dying, and one about to die because it is hateful to our conscience though it seem triumphant throughout the world. In Ireland, where the Gaelic tongue is still spoken, and to some little extent where it is not, the people live according to a tradition of life that existed before commercialism, and the vulgarity founded upon it; and we who would keep the Gaelic tongue and Gaelic memories and Gaelic habits of mind would keep them, as I think, that we may some day spread a tradition of life that makes neither great wealth nor great poverty, that makes all arts a natural expression of life, that permits even common men to understand good art and high thinking, and to have the fine manners these things can give. (105)

Yeats defines “the Gaelic tongue,” and the “Gaelic memories” and “Gaelic habits of mind” it concentrates, as an anchor for the “old and noble,” “undying” “tradition of life” with which Ireland will oppose the “commercialism” and “vulgarity” of England.

Yeats’s iteration of the Revivalist theme of locating Celtic “sentiment” in the geography of Ireland shows an even more pronounced anti-capitalist orientation. In the *Memoirs* which formed the first draft of his *Autobiography*, Yeats recalls staying with Douglas Hyde at Frenchpark in County Roscommon in April of 1895, and reflects on the aesthetic inspiration he derived from the landscape there:

On a visit to Dr Hyde I had seen the Castle Rock, as it was called, in Lough Key. There is a small island entirely covered by what was still a habitable and empty castle . . . All around were wooded and hilly shores, a place of great beauty. I believed the castle could be hired for little money, and had long been dreaming of making it an Irish Eleusis or Samothrace. An obsession more constant than anything but my love itself was the need of mystical rites—a ritual system of evocation and meditation—to reunite the perception of the spirit, of the divine, with natural beauty. I believed that instead of thinking of Judea as holy we should [think] our own land holy, and most holy where most beautiful. *Commerce and manufacture had made the world ugly*; the death of pagan nature-worship had robbed visible beauty of its inviolable sanctity . . . I meant to initiate young men

and women in this worship . . . (123-4, emphasis added)

The panorama of Castle Rock inspires a “love” that gives rise to a utopian vision of the reestablishment in Ireland of a “pagan nature-worship” whose “mystical rites” will “reunite the perception of the spirit, of the divine, with natural beauty.” Uprooting the capitalist forces that have invaded the nation will be integral to restoring the “inviolable sanctity” of its “visible beauty,” as it is these forces, “commerce and manufacture,” that have “made the world ugly.” The “ritual system” of Yeats’s primitivist art will battle British capitalism for possession of the Irish landscape, and on the outcome of this battle depends the ontological fate of its inhabitants.

Yeats also took pains to link his anti-capitalist aesthetic “system” with the extant “primitive” practices of the Irish people themselves in such works as *Fairy and Folk Tales of the Irish Peasantry* (1888), *Irish Fairy Tales* (1892) and *The Celtic Twilight* (1893). As in “The Celtic Element in Literature” however, the Celtic qualities portrayed in these texts are mostly cordoned off from the capitalist forces whose advance necessitates their recovery.⁶⁹ In the Revivalist text which is most famous for directly chronicling Ireland’s extant Gaelic civilization, however, the dissonance between Celt and capital plays a far more visible role. The 1907 publication of J.M. Synge’s *The Aran Islands* represents the fulfillment of the popular Revivalist trend of identifying the nation’s essence with this far western locale. Reading Synge’s account of his travels there between 1898 and 1901, however, one is struck not only by the attempt to affirm this identification and but also by the short-circuiting of this attempt amid the encroaching forces of capitalist modernization. Just as *The Aran Islands* was taken by many of its readers to represent the empirical corroboration of Revivalist Celticism, then, so it may serve as an empirical corroboration of this chapter’s claim that the movement’s cultural nationalist vision emerged through opposition to British capitalism.⁷⁰

Among the many “primitive,” pre-modern characteristics Synge attributes to the inhabitants of Aran, from the lack of female “conventionality,” to the hatred of English Law, to the lack of a distinction between the natural and supernatural and the lack of a “modern” sense of temporality, those that relate to *production* are perhaps most telling of the Celtic characteristics the text seeks to highlight. The following passages, containing, respectively, a description of the common objects of everyday island life and a description of the practice of “thatching” the roofs of the islanders’ cottages, depict in an overtly idealized and aestheticized terms the native mode of production that is being eclipsed by British capital:

Every article on these islands has an almost personal character, which gives this simple life, where all art is unknown, something of the artistic beauty of medieval life. The curaghs and spinning-wheels, the tiny wooden barrels that are still much used in the place of earthenware, the homemade cradles, churns, and baskets, are all full of individuality, and being made from materials that are common here, yet to some extent peculiar to the island, they seem to exist as a natural link between the people and the worlds that is about them. (13-14)

Like all work that is done in common on the island, the thatching is regarded as a sort of festival. From the moment a roof is taken in hand there is a whirl of laughter and talk till it is ended; and, as the man whose house is being covered is a host instead of an employer, he lays himself out to please the men who work with him . . . It is likely that much of the intelligence and charm of these people is due to the absence of any division of labour, and to the correspondingly wide development of each individual, whose varied knowledge and skill necessitates a considerable activity of mind. Each man can speak two languages. He is a skilled fisherman, and can manage a curagh with extraordinary nerve and dexterity. He can farm simply, burn kelp, cut out pampooties, mend nets, build and thatch a house, and make a cradle or a coffin. His work changes with the seasons in a way that keeps him free from the dullness that comes to people who have always the same occupation. The danger of life on the sea gives him the alertness of a primitive hunter, and the long nights he spends fishing in his curagh bring him some of the emotions that are thought peculiar to men who have lived with the arts. (83-4)

The common articles of the island radiate “the artistic beauty of medieval life,” “are full of individuality,” and represent “a natural link between the people and the world that is about them.” Art *per se*, as a distinct sphere of human activity, has not yet come into existence here

because “beauty” remains immanent to the lifeworld of the Aran Gael. The “division of labor” that has precipitated the reification of human endeavors and the ontological “dullness” this process instills provide the backdrop against which this “wide development of each individual” becomes both legible and *beautiful*. Labor in the islands, free from the repressive-productive dynamic of industrial capitalism, is “a sort of festival,” rife with “laughter” and “charm,” and in the more perilous activity of fishing is generative of *sublime* “emotions that are thought peculiar to men who have lived with the arts.”

For the “primitive” island Gael, life itself is art. Already, however, the shadow of British capital begins to fall over Synge’s encomium in the form of the “employer,” whose historical ascendancy threatens to sever their “natural link” with their environment. Indeed, Synge deliberately maintains his readers’ awareness of the ever-nearer proximity of capitalism to this last bastion of Gaelic civilization.⁷¹ Synge does so not simply by invoking it as a frame of differential reference for the islanders’ ideal characteristics but also by closing each Part of *The Aran Islands* with an ominous reminder of its westward expansion. Just prior to the letter from one of his “island friends” that concludes Part I, Synge describes the nostalgic longing for islands that has set in upon his return to the modernized world of the Irish mainland:

I have come out of an hotel full of tourists and commercial travelers, to stroll along the edge of Galway Bay, and look out in the direction of the islands. The sort of yearning I feel toward those lonely rocks is indescribably acute. This town, that is usually so full of wild human interest, seems in my present mood a tawdry medley of all that is crudest in modern life. The nullity of the rich and the squalor of the poor give me the same pang of wondering disgust; yet the islands are fading already and I can hardly realize that the smell of the seaweed and the drone of the Atlantic are still moving around them. (56)

Gazing back across the Bay—presumably from Galway City—Synge “yearn”s for the idyllic world of Aran and contrasts it with the Anglicized world of “tourists and commercial travelers,” which “seems . . . a tawdry medley of all that is crudest in modern life.” “The islands are fading

already,” he laments, gesturing ominously toward the process of capitalist modernization that is rapidly engulfing their traditional ways.

Hereafter even greater emphasis accrues to the contrast between this vestigial lifeworld and that of the mainland, such that one finds passages like the following from Part II increasingly haunting Synge’s narrative. From the vantage of Inishmore, the northernmost island that has been most fully transformed by British influence, Synge looks to the relatively untouched island of Inishmaan with a longing equal to that with which he formerly looked to the whole of Aran from the mainland:

I am in the north island again, looking out with a singular sensation to the cliffs across the sound. It is hard to believe that those hovels I can just see in the south are filled with people whose lives have the strange quality that is found in the oldest poetry and legend. Compared with them the falling off that has come with the increased prosperity of this island is full of discouragement. The charm which the people over there share with the birds and the flowers has been replaced here by the anxiety of men who are eager for gain. The eyes and expression are different, though the faces are the same, and even the children here seem to have an indefinable modern quality that is absent from the men of Inishmaan. (69)

Through their “increased prosperity,” the inhabitants of Inishmore have lost the “strange quality” that in those of Inishmaan still evokes “poetry and legend,” and it has been “replaced” with “the anxiety of men who are eager for gain.” Capitalism has extinguished the “charm” they once “share[d] with the birds and the flowers,” so that their “eyes and expressions are different,” giving off the dull luster of the reified “modern” subject. A brief quotation from the first of Synge’s Aran notebooks forecasts the eventual engulfment of the Inishmaan Gael as well by this dehumanizing process: “The thought that this island will gradually yield to the ruthlessness of ‘progress’ is as the certainty that decaying age is moving always nearer the cheeks it is your exstacy to kiss. How much of Ireland was formerly like this and how much of Ireland is today Anglicized and civilized and brutalized?” (qtd. in Robinson, xliii).

Within the specific historical context of *The Aran Islands*, the agency most responsible for the Anglicizing, civilizing and brutalizing process Synge so reviles is the Congested Districts Board, set up in 1891 by Arthur Balfour, Chief Secretary for Ireland and later British Prime Minister. Particularly in those western regions least altered by British capital, the Board fostered, among other changes, the modernization of Irish agriculture and of the nation's fishing industry.⁷² Many of the adulterating processes Synge chronicles in the book were precipitated by this imperial economic organ. Synge goes beyond simply noting the abstract societal impact of these processes on Aran, however; in the effort to secure his readers' sympathetic identification with its people, he gives *The Aran Islands* a protagonist of sorts, and models in his personal history the islanders' loss of primitive "charm" and vitality. Through Michael, the Inishmaan boy who taught him Irish during his first visit there, Synge devises a miniature *Bildungsroman* of sorts in order to convey the "brutalizing" impact of British capitalism on Ireland's Gaelic essence. Synge both opens and closes Part II with descriptions of visits to Michael, who since Synge's first trip has "left the islands to earn his living on the mainland" in Galway (59). The opening description affirms the resilience of his Gaelic "charm" beneath the pressures of his new employment, but the closing passage begins to reveal the contaminating effect of Michael's participation in capitalism:

I met Michael wandering down to meet me . . . He seemed to have grown a powerful man since I had seen him, and was now dressed in the heavy brown flannels of the Connaught labourer . . . Meeting him here a little beyond the threshold of my hotel I was singularly struck with the refinement of his nature, which has hardly been influence by his new life . . . (59)

. . . I went down towards the quay to look for Michael. As I turned into the narrow street where he lodges, some one seemed to be following me in the shadow, and when I stopped to find the number of his house I heard the 'Failte' (Welcome) of Inishmaan pronounced close to me. It was Michael . . . We turned back together and walked about the town till he had to go to his lodgings. He was still just the same, with all his old simplicity and shrewdness; but the work he

does here does not agree with him, and he is not contented. (74)

Already in the second passage, Michael has begun to lose his “content”ment as a result of his labors in Connaught, which Synge senses “does not agree with him.” The ominous portent of this alteration in the personality of this “simple” yet “refine[d]” islander at the conclusion of Part II is quickly confirmed for the reader at the beginning of Part III, which opens by quoting a letter Synge has received from Michael:

“My Dear Friend—I hope you are in good health since I have heard from you before, its many a time I do think of you since it was not forgetting you I was for the future. I was at home in the beginning of March for a fortnight and was very bad with the Influence, but I took good care of myself. I am getting good wages from the first of this year, and I am afraid I won’t be able to stand with it . . . I am working in a saw-mills and getting the money for the wood and keeping an account of it . . . I hope we might meet again in good and pleasant health . . . I am your friend in Galway.” (77)

Just prior to their encounter with its jarring data, Synge’s punctuates the significance of Michael’s letter by warning his readers, “It is in English” (77). Michael’s contamination with the “Influence” of English culture is all but complete. His formerly resilient personality is withering beneath the demands of industrial labor in a “saw mills,” and he fears he “won’t be able to stand with it” much longer. Michael’s *bildung* thus serves as a potent illustration for Synge’s narrative of the eclipse of Gaelic “charm” by British capital.

Synge’s figuration of an essential Irishness threatened by British capitalist modernity, though undoubtedly complicated by realistic elements that trouble the halcyon tenor of the “Celtic Note” of Yeats, replicates each of the hegemonic “themes” that define the Revival’s cultural nationalist agenda. The Irishness of the islanders is anchored in both the Gaelic language and the geography of Aran, and as a result of the “natural link” they maintain to these, their lives evoke comparisons to the aestheticized, universally primitive lifeworld of “the oldest poetry and legend.” Synge’s figuration of this extant Gaelic civilization draws deeply from the

Arnoldian wellspring of Revivalist Celticism, in which ethnological frame the encroachment of British capitalism on native Irish “charm” becomes both legible and execrable. Synge’s researches further the anti-capitalist agenda of Irish cultural nationalism, providing it with both empirical corroboration and a concomitant amplification of its pressing urgency. Perhaps more than any other Revivalist text, *The Aran Islands* sounds the clarion call for Irish resistance to the reifying, de-nationalizing influence of British capitalism.

“Outward and Inner Things”: The Commodity Critique of the Celtic Revival

By the time of the long-delayed publication of *The Aran Islands* in 1907, however, the anti-capitalist consensus of the Celtic Revival had already begun to fracture along the fault line between the movement’s Catholic and Literary constituencies. This section will trace the evolution of this schism by examining the dimension of Revivalist anti-capitalism that addressed the consumption by Irish men and women of the commodities of British popular culture. I will demonstrate that while both Catholic and Literary nationalists opposed such consumption as productive of Anglicization, their articulation of this opposition reflected radically divergent ideological visions for Ireland’s post-British future. The commodity critique of the Revival thus reveals a full-blown Gramscian “war of position” ongoing between these factions for the “spontaneous consent” of the Irish populace, a hegemonic struggle which, in turn, enables us to identify the discourse of Revivalist anti-capitalism as one of the primary vehicles through which the tensions that would define revolutionary and postcolonial Irish society began to entrench themselves (Gramsci 12).

I have already alluded to the fundamental difference separating the commodity critique of Catholic nationalism from that of the Literary Revival, namely that the former defines its opposition to the British popular cultural products that had become so ubiquitous in Ireland by

the late nineteenth century in predominantly *moral* terms, while the latter couches its objection to these products in the terminology of *high Culture*. I will attempt to show that this conflict of “Irish Ireland versus Anglo-Irish Ireland,” to use F.S.L. Lyons’ phrase for the factional split I have outlined, turns on fundamentally antithetical conceptions of Irish human nature.⁷³

Specifically, Catholic nationalism, premised on both Catholic doctrine and on the mores of the peasant social institution known as “familism,” promulgates a restrictive, repressive ideology of Irishness that defines the consumption of British popular culture as a kind of licentiousness or moral incontinence, while Literary nationalism, premised primarily on the principles of European humanism, promulgates an expansive, vitalist ideology of Irishness that defines such consumption as a kind of ontological desiccation or impoverishment. “Irish Ireland” sees the consumption of British commodities as spurring a *centrifugal* dissolution of the national being, while “Anglo-Irish Ireland” sees it as spurring a *centripetal* concentration thereof. I will also argue that as a result of its dependence on humanist premises, the commodity critique of the Literary Revival aligns the movement with two of the most potent anti-capitalist discourses of the later nineteenth and early twentieth centuries, the economic discourse of Marxism and the aesthetic discourse of Modernism. I hope to suggest, in other words, that in spite of its ultimate defeat in this Irish nationalist “war of position,” the commodity critique of the Literary Revival constitutes a more sophisticated and more efficacious response to capitalist reification than that of its Catholic opponent.

We begin with the latter faction, and with a certain sociological disagreement that has emerged in recent years over the origins of the ideology of *fin-de-siecle* Catholic nationalism. One prominent narrative in Irish Studies interprets the *moral* tenor of the movement as arising out of an attempt to project a purified image of the nation to the imperial metropole, an image

which, by conforming to the mores of Victorian respectability, would help to secure British sanction for Irish independence. This characterization emerges in works such as P.J. Matthews's *Revival* and Joe Cleary's *Outrageous Fortune*, where, to quote the former, Catholic nationalism undertakes "to refute the imperial conception of Irish culture by idealizing it and exaggerating its inherent morality" (45).⁷⁴ The flaw in this picture lies in its attribution of Catholic nationalism's *modus operandi* entirely to an imitation of the norms of the imperial power rather than to norms immanent to Irish Catholic culture itself. As we shall later see, this picture uncritically accepts the analysis of one of the Catholic nationalism's most biased critics, W.B. Yeats, who refused to identify in its ideological makeup any indigenous Irish dimension. But while there is certainly an aspect of Catholic nationalism that was self-consciously directed toward the Victorian gaze, a much more persuasive account of its motivations is offered by studies such as David Cairns' and Shaun Richards' *Writing Ireland* that view the movement as organically linked to traditional peasant institutions such as "familism" and the Catholic Church itself. Because the majority of the rank and file constituency of Catholic nationalism in urban centers like Dublin had only recently emigrated from the countryside (often as a result of the Famine), Catholic culture in these locales still adhered to the restrictive moral codes instilled by these rural institutions. The moral emphasis of Catholic nationalism, in particular its obsession with *sexual* morality, must be read within this sociological framework as well as within the imperial framework that has predominated in recent studies of the Revival.⁷⁵

This preoccupation with sexual morality came to the fore in such watershed historical events as the Kitty O'Shea controversy, the adulterous affair that spelled the political demise of Charles Stewart Parnell, the so-called "Mahaffey/Atkinson Affair," which pitted Trinity College dons John Pentland Mahaffy and Robert Atkinson with the Irish Catholic Primate and Cardinal

Michael Logue against defenders of Gaelic such as Douglas Hyde over the question of the language's reputed "indecent" and "immorality," and in the later controversies surrounding Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen* and Synge's *The Shadow of the Glen* and *The Playboy of the Western World*.⁷⁶ Nowhere, however, is the Catholic nationalist emphasis on sexual morals more prominent than in its critique of the commodities of British popular culture. Examples of this particular anti-imperial tack date from the very beginning of the Revival period. In an 1884 article in *The Nation*, Archbishop Croke, an outspoken supporter of both the Land League and the Gaelic Athletic Association, provides one of the earliest examples of the moral critique of British products, warning that "England's accents, the vicious literature, her music, her dances, and her manifold mannerisms . . . [are] not racy of the soil, but rather alien, on the contrary to it, as are for the most part, the men and women who first imported and still continue to patronize them" (qtd. in Lloyd, "Counterparts," 139). Croke's definition of British literature as "vicious" paints this litany of popular cultural commodities from England with the brush of sexual immorality, and implies that their consumption by Irish "men and women" who have "imported" or simply "patronize[d] them" constitutes a licentiousness tantamount to a national betrayal. Sexual vice is English, but this racially "alien," "contrary" force can be communicated to Irish bodies through such products. From his position in the vanguard of Irish nationalism, Croke thus promulgates a conception of Irishness defined by sexual continence and opposed to a salacious British commodity culture. It is through such direct clerical interventions as Croke's, as well as through the preconditioned receptivity to such interventions among Ireland's Catholic middle classes, that a sexualized anti-capitalist discourse idealizing the interlocking values of "purity, piety and simplicity," in the well-known phrase of Sir Charles Gavin Duffy, strove for hegemony within Irish cultural nationalism (12).⁷⁷

Many of the figures introduced in the previous section also invoke this discourse while elaborating their opposition to British commodities, none more so than D.P. Moran. We have already begun to trace the integral relationship between Moran's Catholicism and his anti-capitalism in his vehement castigation of the "Saxon bourgeois" who would "swallow the devil" rather than "lose a customer." Moran's deployment of Catholicism extends from his opposition to British capitalism as a whole to criticism of the very same commodities pinpointed by Archbishop Croke, in particular that which, in the "Statement of Principles" that opens the first number of *The Leader*, he calls "British gutter literature" (116). Such a description, by equating such literature with filth, already reflects the reliance of Moran's critique on the same sexual morality as Croke deploys, where the Irish consumption of British commodities spreads a "vicious," tainting influence throughout the nation.

A more extended description of the salacious, de-nationalizing effect of consuming the "gutter literature" of England occurs in "The Battle of Two Civilizations." In the midst of exposing the "fraud" of Anglo-Irish literature, which, as we have already seen, he views as a surreptitious vehicle of Anglicization, Moran transitions to a denunciation of this vicious commodity:

Thought was necessarily absent from all this literature . . . Criticism had died, and this sort of thing . . . was allowed to swell like soap bubbles all over the land. Then the great rise of cheap periodicals came about in England, and the market in Ireland was flooded with them. Ireland being a poor country, the cheapest of periodicals only is within the popular resources, and it soon became evident that a great evil was threatening us, and that Ireland was largely feeding on a questionable type of British reading matter. And the commandment—"Thou shalt be Irish"—was all the while troubling Irish hearts" (102).

Here the "rise of cheap periodicals" spreads to the Irish market, "flood"ing its consumers with the "evil" of "a questionable type of British reading matter." If there be any doubt as to the moral inflection on the word "questionable," such doubt is dispelled by the overwhelmingly

religious terms that provide its ideological context, where not only are British periodicals a metaphysical “evil,” but to consume them is to violate a national “commandment” to “be Irish.” Such consumption is sinful, and in “troubling Irish hearts,” breeds an unmistakably Catholic guilt. When we recall that *soap* was one of the most ubiquitous of Britain’s mass-produced commodities during this period, a vision emerges—an inadvertently ironic one, given soap’s utility for maintaining bodily cleanliness—of the engulfment of the Irish “populace” by a “soap bubble”-capped “flood” of Anglicizing commercial immorality.

Moran’s praise for the Gaelic League is replete with similar descriptions of British commodities, whose immoral tide he views the League as devoted to stemming. In “The Gaelic Revival,” he calls the League’s efforts in resuscitating the language as “an opportunity of vast moment, a good deed shining in a naughty world,” and goes on to define the “genius” of the League as “another name for the moral essence of the Irish nation” (75, 86). Moran goes on to construct a portrait of the current state of the Irish populace as fallen from moral grace through the consumption of British products:

All we can be sure of is that the Gaelic League has . . . a motley gathering to work upon. Observe it in the music halls inanelly yelling at low jokes and indecent songs; watch it coming from a patriotic meeting roaring ‘The Boys of Wexford’ . . . see it in petticoats in its thousands filing into the circulating libraries and the penny novelette shops for reams of twaddle about Guy and Belinda; listen to it in the literary clubs discussing . . . the ideas of English literary men, and never for a moment becoming conscious that God gave it, too, a head which He intended it to use in some original and independent manner. Watch the motley throng wherever you go, the eyes of its members turned anywhere in the world but on their own country. How can any one conclude that it can ever be licked into Irish shape? It is, indeed, a blessed dispensation that faith can move mountains. (80)

The “motley gathering” that for Moran stands synecdochally for the nation as a whole displays a perfunctory patriotism by “roaring” the 1798 ballad “The Boys of Wexford,” but, in characteristic Moranian fashion, this behavior is ironically juxtaposed with their indulgence in

the “low jokes and indecent songs” of the London-based “music halls.” Again then, Moran pits fidelity to Ireland against the consumption of sexually immoral British commodities. This tendency is also evident in the “thousands” of “petticoats” flocking to the “circulating libraries” and “penny novelette shops” to read “twaddle about Guy and Belinda,” a description that intensifies the immoral associations of such commodities by invoking the staple Catholic nationalist ideal of the chaste female. The sexual continence of Irish women is threatened by salacious literature from England. As in the previous indictment of “cheap periodicals,” the consumption of such “gutter” literature and of British popular music violates God’s plan for an “independent” Ireland. Only a redoubled “faith” in his “blessed dispensation” holds out hope that it this “motley,” morally loose populace “can be licked into Irish shape.”

Moran’s had substantive warrant for nominating the League as the standard bearer of Catholic morality. The League’s efforts had significant allies in clerics like Father O’Growney and Father O’Hickey, and, as F.S.L. Lyons records in *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland*, its co-founder, Eoin MacNeill, “was in no doubt that the true religion and the native language were deeply interfused,” so much so that he declared, “When we learn to speak Irish, we soon find that it is what we may call essential Irish to acknowledge God, His presence, and His help, even in our most trivial conversation” (80). For MacNeill, Gaelic and Catholicism were co-extensive “essential Irish” characteristics. Lyons also quotes the League’s other co-founder, Douglas Hyde, as calling “the Irish Gael” as “pious by nature” (80). In Hyde, however, Moran’s claim of League sanction for his Catholic nationalist program encounters an obstacle. For though Hyde’s work is in many ways responsible for the critique of British commodities as a source of national adulteration, Hyde’s objection to these commodities is based not on religious premises, but rather on premises derived from the “Celtic Note” of the Literary Revival, premises that align

much more closely with *humanist* principles than Catholic ones. Moran's definition of the League as "the moral essence of the Irish nation" thus represents at least a partial misrepresentation of its founding rationale.

Though Hyde does occasionally invoke Catholic ideals such as "piety" in his definitions of essential Irishness, his criticism of British commodities demonstrates the far deeper alignment of his nationalist ideals with the "Celtic Note" of the Literary Revival. Again here, it is "The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland" that best instantiates these ideals. Like Croke and Moran, Hyde places special emphasis on two commodities in particular, English music-hall songs and sensational literature, as eroding Ireland's Celtic essence, but Hyde also lists other commodities such as English dress, sports and "fashion" as significant sources of such erosion:

Our music . . . has become Anglicized to an alarming extent . . . If Ireland loses her music she loses what is, after her Gaelic language and literature, her most valuable and characteristic possession. And she is rapidly losing it. A few years ago all our traveling fiddlers and pipers could play the old airs which were then constantly called for . . . which have for so many centuries entranced the Gael. But now English music-hall ballads and Scotch songs have gained an enormous place . . . It is difficult to find a remedy for this . . . I must be content with hoping that the revival of our Irish music may go hand in hand with the revival of Irish ideas and Celtic modes of thought which our Society is seeking to bring about. (167-8)

. . . perhaps the principal point of all . . . is the necessity for encouraging the use of Anglo-Irish literature instead of English books, especially instead of English periodicals. We must set our face sternly against penny dreadfuls, shilling shockers, and . . . the garbage of vulgar English weeklies like *Bow Bells* and *The Police Intelligence* . . . In a word, we must strive to cultivate everything that is most racial, most smacking of the soil, most Gaelic, most Irish, because . . . this island *is* and will *ever* remain Celtic to the core . . . On racial lines, then, we shall best develop, following the bent of our own nature; and, in order to do this, we must create a strong feeling against West-Britonism, for it . . . will overwhelm us like a flood, and we shall find ourselves toiling painfully behind the English at each step following the same fashions, only six months behind the English race; reading the same books, only months behind them; taking up the same fads, after they have become stale there, following them in our dress, literature, music, games, and ideas . . . We will become, what, I fear, we are largely at present, a nation of imitators . . . I would earnestly appeal to every one . . . who wishes to

see the Irish nation produce its best . . . to set his face against this constant running to England for our books, literature, music, games, fashions, and ideas. I appeal to every one whatever his politics . . . to do his best to help the Irish race to develop in the future upon Irish lines, even at the risk of encouraging national aspirations, because upon Irish lines alone can the Irish race once more become what it was of yore—one of the most original, artistic, literary, and charming peoples of Europe. (169-170)

In the first passage, Ireland's native music occupies the third position in Hyde's triad of the nation's "most valuable and characteristic possession[s]" alongside its "Gaelic language and literature," and it is "English music-hall ballads and Scotch songs" that threaten these possessions and the "Irish ideas and Celtic modes of thought" of which they are the source. In the second, these musical commodities become one link in a chain of similarly Anglicizing products, a chain that includes "dress" and "games" but reserves a privileged place for "literature," the "penny dreadfuls," "shilling shockers," and "vulgar English weeklies" that occupy the front rank of the commercial forces that threaten Ireland's Celtic "core."

Hyde's classification of such literature as "garbage" comes close to striking the moral key of Croke and Moran's Catholic nationalism, where such "cheap" publications hold a symbolic place in the "gutter" of national life. It should be immediately evident after reading these two passages, however, that Hyde relies far more heavily on the national ideal of the "Celtic Note" in defining the essential "core" characteristics that are threatened by such commodities. Particularly at the conclusion of "Necessity," where he defines the essence of "the Irish race" as "original, artistic, literary and charming," Hyde's deployment of the watchwords of Arnodian "sentiment" is unmistakable. In this regard, it is not the word "garbage" that signals the fundamental basis of the essay's conception of the threat entailed in British commodities but the word "vulgar." Though this adjective could no doubt be assimilated into the sexualized moral discourse of Catholic nationalism, Hyde applies the term in a manner that figures it not as

eroding sexual continence, but rather artistic creativity. Here then, we begin to witness the dichotomy between the *ontological* trajectories of Catholic and Literary Revivalist nationalism that I adumbrated at the outset of this section. Where a Catholic nationalism such as Croke's identifies in the consumption of such commodities a licentious loosening of the strictures of sexual morality—a simultaneous dissolution of “purity” and “piety”—Hyde identifies in them the desiccation of a naturally fecund and creative Irish being. If for Catholic nationalism British commodities impel the national being in a *centrifugal*, expansive direction, for the nationalism of the Literary Revival, they impel it in a *centripetal*, contractive one.

As I also indicated at the outset of this section, this emphasis on the artistic exfoliation of “Celtic modes of thought” aligns the commodity critique of the Literary Revival with the heritage of the European humanist tradition, which, from its Greco-Roman inception, to its rediscovery during the Renaissance, its consolidation during the Enlightenment and its recalibration in Romanticism, promoted the creative cultivation of human species potential. For the Literary Revival to define the consumption of British commodities as producing an impoverishment of Irish ontology further allies the movement with the specifically economic humanism of Karl Marx. As discussed in Chapter 1, especially in early texts such as the *Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844*, Marx expounds an “anthropological” conception of human species being as the basis for his critique of the “alienation” or “estrangement” of capitalist labor. This conception converges unmistakably with the Celticist definition of Irishness underlying such passages as Hyde's above. Like Marx, who conceives of the species as bearing a utopian “sensuous potentiality,” the Literary Revival conceives of “Irish human nature” as bearing a potential whose creative development should be the founding principle of national life. Such a conception is implicit in the reliance of the movement's “Celtic

Note” on the work of Matthew Arnold, which, in texts such as the *Study and Culture and Anarchy*, I have read as proffering a humanist critique of English “wealth” that is mostly consonant with Marx’s. The Celticism of the Literary Revival, resting on this humanist foundation, aestheticizes Irishness as the site of a residual “charm” and ontological plenitude that capitalist development threatens with extinction.

This humanist critique of capital motivates the Literary Revival’s identification of British commodities as productive of Irish “vulgarity.” The deployment of this term signals the movement’s investment in the ideology of high Culture as a bulwark against the onslaught of capitalist reification. As with so many instances of this subspecies of European humanism, Literary Revivalist nationalism figures the domain of *the aesthetic* as both a model for and a stimulus to the ideal development of human life—as, in other words, the privileged vehicle of the “study of perfection.”⁷⁸ This dimension of the Revival will come more directly to the fore of my analysis in the Chapter 5, where I will probe the multifaceted literary *modernism* devised by its aesthetic practitioners in order to negotiate the socio-historical pressures of anti-capitalist decolonization. At this point, however, the commodity critique of the Literary Revival which so crucially underpins Irish modernism requires both further substantiation on its own terms and further elaboration vis-a-vis that of its Catholic nationalist competitor. Both purposes can be served by examining the particularly caustic criticism directed by Literary Revivalists against two primary social nodes of the Irish consumption of British commodities: the rural Irish town and the Dublin theater.

In the fifth chapter of *Co-Operation and Nationality*, A.E. outlines the “new social order” the creation of which he understands as the purpose of Sir Horace Plunkett’s Irish Agricultural Organization Society. The specific components of the “rural civilization” fostered by the IAOS

will form part of the subject of this chapter's final section, where the focus shifts to the attempted Celticization of the Irish economy during the Revival period. More pertinent to the anatomy of the Literary Revival's commodity critique are A.E.'s descriptions of the rural cultural characteristics he hopes to see the organization supplant. In the midst of a long harangue on the "little country towns" of the middle and west of Ireland, towns he despises as "social parasites" that "produce nothing" and therefore subsist on a diet of resources, economic and otherwise, imported both from other Irish locales and from England, A.E. identifies the most representative case-in-point of their cultural stagnation in the consumption of British literary "garbage":

Here and there you will find a yellow assortment of ancient penny novelettes or song-books in a window . . . or a row of sensational tales in gaudy colours . . . and a few sixpenny reprints. It this business of reading is to be catered for it ought to be done well. Better the ignorance of great literature—which left the Gaelic poets centuries ago to their own resources, their own traditions and folk tales, out of which came songs as natural and sweet as the songs of the birds—than these dust heaps of cheap prints, without high purpose, and glimmering all over with the phosphorescence of mental decay . . . Towns ought to be conductors, catching the lightnings of the human mind and distributing them all around their area. The Irish country towns only develop mental bogs about them. (43)

The bookstore of the country town, whose inventory consists of a shabby "assortment" of imported "penny novelettes" and "sensational tales," forms the lowest depth of the "mental bog" the "rural civilization" of the future must drain. AE's objection to these "cheap prints," which lack "high purpose" and "glitter" with "the phosphorescence of mental decay," echoes a similar objection made ten years earlier in his "Nationality and Imperialism," where "Police gazettes," "penny novels" and "hideous comic journals" spread among Irish consumers an English "vulgarity of mind," in that both utilize high Cultural terminology to convey the national threat entailed in their consumption (19). In place of the "lightnings of the human mind" that once coursed through the literature of Gaelic Ireland, endowing its civilization with "high purpose," these English commodities stimulate only vulgarity and "mental decay."

AE's inclusion of "song-books" among the rural Irish town's array of decadent goods, and his juxtaposition of their commercialized airs to the "sweet" and "natural" songs of "the Gaelic poets," similarly recall the earlier text's lament that where "the music of fairy" once "enchanted the elder generations" of Ireland, only "the songs of the London music halls" can now be heard (19-20). Again, we find British literature and British music singled out as the most powerful engines of the historical transformation of Irish beauty into English vulgarity. This same pair of commodities preoccupies an even more viscerally contemptuous passage on the "mental decay" of rural Irish towns by Yeats in the *Samhain* of 1906, subtitled "Literature and the Living Voice." Yeats begins the essay by describing his recent pilgrimage to the village of Killeenan in County Galway "to do honour to the memory of Raftery," the "blind Gaelic poet who died a little before the Famine," in a commemorative ceremony put on by the "townspeople" there. He then goes on to contrast the enriching experience of this event with the impoverished cultural milieu of Galway City, through which he passed en route back to Dublin:

A few days after, I was in the town of Galway, and saw there, as I had often seen in other country towns, some young men marching down the middle of a street singing an already outworn London music-hall song, that filled the memory, long after they had gone by, with a rhythm as pronounced and as impersonal as the noise of a machine. In the shop-windows there were, I knew, the signs of a life very unlike that I had seen at Killaneen: halfpenny comic papers and story papers, sixpenny reprints of popular novels, and, with the exception of a dusty Dumas or Scott strayed thither, one knew not how, and one or two little books of Irish ballads, nothing that one calls literature, nothing that would interest a few thousands who alone out of many millions have what we call culture. A few miles had divided the sixteenth century, with its equality of culture, of good taste, from the twentieth . . . One saw the difference in the clothes of the people of the town and of the village, for as the Emerald Tablet says, outward and inner things answer to one another. The village men wore their bawneens, their white flannel jackets; they had clothes that had a little memory of clothes that had once been adapted to their calling by centuries of continual slight changes. They were sometimes well dressed, for they suggested nothing but themselves . . . But in the town nobody was well dressed; for in modern life, only a few people—some few thousands—set the fashion . . . and as for the rest, they must go shabby . . . It is some comparison, like this that I have made, which has been the origin, as I think,

of most attempts to revive some old language in which the general business of the world is no longer transacted. (204)

The journey from Killaneen to Galway takes Yeats through a time warp, an impossibly rapid temporal shift from the Gaelic Ireland of the sixteenth century to the Anglicized Ireland of the twentieth. The “equality of culture” and “good taste” possessed by the Killaneen villagers have been driven out of the inhabitants of Galway by “halfpenny comic papers,” “sixpenny reprints of popular novels” and, especially, by “outworn London music hall song[s]” which, like poetry from an Orwellian “versificator,” fill Yeats’s mind “with a rhythm as pronounced and as impersonal as the noise of a machine,” as if their mass-produced texture transmits somatically the deadening repetition of the British factory. The contrast between the organic high Culture of the “village” and the mechanical vulgarity of the “town” is particularly noteworthy at the level of “fashion”: where the clothing of the former locale carries “a little memory” of “centuries” of indigenous labor, an organic *use value*, the “modern” English dress of the latter has no memory and bears only a reified *exchange value*.

Yeats’s anthropological theory, culled from “the Emerald Tablet,” that “outward and inner things answer to one another,” makes explicit the central premise of the Literary Revival’s commodity critique. Irish ontology has been desiccated in such locales as the “country towns” through the consumption of British products, whose “vulgarity” and lack of “culture” instills in Celtic minds once radiant with beauty and “high purpose” a symmetrically “low” and base disposition. This theory is also implicit in the movement’s critique of another central site of Irish access to British popular culture, the Dublin theater. In the above passages by Hyde, AE and Yeats, with their castigation of the debased fare of the “London music hall,” we have already encountered the primary *bête noire* of the Revival’s dramatic propaganda, the popular genre of British “musical comedy.” This genre had become dominant in both England and Ireland by the

time of the Revival's first stirrings in the mid 1880s, and in subsequent years, as the Irish Literary and National Theaters began to take shape as competitor organizations, "musical comedy" became one of the main targets of the Literary Revival's high Cultural critique of British commodities.

The February 1900 edition of *Beltaine*, "The Organ of the Irish Literary Theatre" edited by W.B. Yeats, provides a pristine specimen of the Theater Movement's propaganda vis-a-vis British "musical comedy." Published just after the Literary Theater's first year, the number contains essays by George Moore, Edward Martyn, Alice Milligan and Lady Gregory, as well as three contributions by Yeats himself, all of which are self-congratulatory encomia on its success in reviving the long-dormant Irish faculty of aesthetic appreciation. Moore's essay, "Is the Theatre a Place of Amusement?," is particularly revealing of the Theater Movement's self-conception in relation to its British competitor. The question of its title, Moore explains, arose from his dismayed realization that while a recent London production of Ibsen's *Hedda Gabler* "did not pay its expenses," "a play called *The Dancing Girl*, which interested no one, drew large audiences" and "made money" (7). Moore draws from this perplexing mismatch between artistic quality and commercial success the following lesson: "People seek amusement, not pleasure, in a theatre. To obtain pleasure in a theatre, a man must rouse himself out of the lethargy of real life; his intelligence must awake, and the power to rouse oneself from the lethargy of real life is becoming rarer in the playgoer and more distasteful to him" (7-8). Thus, though "every one left the theatre saying "it was a stupid, silly play,"" *The Dancing Girl*, by disdain to "rouse" its London viewers from their "lethargy," achieved commercial success while the more challenging drama of Ibsen foundered (7). Artistic and commercial value are, in Moore's analysis, oil and water in the London theatrical market: "only with musical comedy," though "there is probably

nothing in life so low as a musical comedy,” “can 1500 people avid for amusement be amused nightly” (9-10). Moore’s description of the Literary Theatre’s *raison d’être*, to “make Dublin an intellectual center” by rejecting the “low” and frivolous “external life” favored by musical comedy and cultivating the “inner life” and “spiritual” values that define great art, positions this debased British commodity as its antithesis and defines the fate of Irish theatrical public as dependent on its eradication (8).

Martyn’s brief essay in the same number, titled simply “A Comparison between Irish and English Theatrical Audiences,” goes so far as to pronounce the Literary Theater already victorious in this battle for the cultural fate of the theatergoing populace of Dublin. Martyn depicts the Theater as providing an indigenous, Celtic version of the universal aesthetic value Moore locates in Ibsen, exulting:

One of the most hopeful signs of the intellectual life of modern Ireland is a steadily growing belief that England, despite her parade of wealth and commerce, is . . . little better than a half-civilized country. The belief has not been arrived at because the lower orders in England are admittedly brutish and ignorant, but because . . . we can discover the same qualities in various forms in the various classes which compose her nationhood . . . But turning to Ireland what do we see? Instead of a vast cosmopolitanism and vulgarity, there is an idealism founded upon the ancient ideals of the land. There is . . . a great intellectual awakening in Ireland, and . . . a curiosity and appreciation for the best. This has come about naturally . . . in spite of the efforts of certain persons and institutions whose aim seems to be to create in Ireland a sort of shabby England. Some have sought to introduce the shoddy literature and drama, others the decadent profligacy of morals so much in vogue in English society. Their labours have borne no fruit. Ireland is virgin soil, yielding endless inspiration to the artist; and her people, uncontaminated by false ideals, are ready to receive the new art. (11-12)

By resuscitating “the ancient ideals of the land,” the Literary Theater has catalyzed a “great intellectual awakening” and stemmed the tide of “shoddy literature and drama” through which “certain persons and institutions” have attempted “to create in Ireland a sort of shabby England.” The Irish public now disdains the “wealth and commerce” of England, which has made its people

“brutish and ignorant,” and shows instead a newfound “curiosity and appreciation for the best” in their theatrical consumption: “Dublin audiences have awakened to the insipidity of the modern English theatre. When the big successes are brought over, the audience comes away wondering how the Londoners could have made it such a success” (12-13). In Martyn’s estimation, after just one year of existence, the Literary Theater’s high Cultural mission has been accomplished.

For the cultural nationalism of the Literary Revival then, both cultural sites, the “country town” and the Dublin theater, become prime targets as a result of their immersion in the “vulgar” commodity culture of the metropole. British literary, theatrical, sartorial and other commodities threaten the resurrection of those “ancient ideals” of Gaelic Ireland which will form the indigenous basis for the nation’s embodiment of European humanist values, and their eradication is therefore indispensable to this “high purpose.” Having thus outlined the ideological makeup of the Literary Revival’s commodity critique, however, we must return to the question of its hegemonic struggle with Catholic Nationalism, a struggle deliberately elided in such optimistic prognoses as Martyn’s above. As a result of the fundamental divergence between the moral and high Cultural registers of their respective critiques, the alliance between Catholic nationalism and that of the Literary Revival against the commodities of British popular culture was highly unstable. Each faction of the Revival ultimately became forced to fight its anti-capitalist battle on two cultural fronts, on one of which loomed the imperial enemy, and on the other its domestic competitor for the “consent” of the Irish people.

Inevitably perhaps, given the Irish public’s religious disposition, it was Catholic nationalism that emerged victorious from this domestic “war of position.” One further dimension of the commodity critique of the Revival remains to be described, however, and by examining this dimension, we can observe this process of hegemonic consolidation at work.

This dimension consists of the remarkably development whereby each faction of Revivalist nationalism began attempting to persuade the Irish public that its opponent *was itself a component* within the imperial economic system. In other words, in addition to advancing their divergent critiques of British commodities on their own terms, Catholic and Literary Revivalist nationalists attempted to secure the consent of the Irish populace by defining their competitors *as such commodities*. The victory of the Catholic faction of the Revival over its Literary opponent depended in no small measure on its success in this area.

Nowhere is this tendency more pronounced than in the controversy over the play which, as the first production of the Irish Literary Theatre, most calls into question the rosy picture of its public reception presented by the contributors of the February 1900 *Beltaine*, W.B. Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen*. The story of the popular backlash led by the prominent Catholic nationalist F. Hugh O'Donnell over the play's depiction of Irish peasants selling their souls to demon merchants from the "East" is well known. O'Donnell's broadside pamphlet "Souls for Gold: A Pseudo Celtic Drama in Dublin," invokes the staple Catholic nationalist virtues of "purity" and "piety" to accuse Yeats of "the baseness which is utterly alien to all our national traditions, the barter of Faith for Gold" (Gregory 260). O'Donnell's indictment of Yeats for deviating from these Catholic qualities was effective enough to win the support of Cardinal Logue who, without having read the play, remarked in the *Daily Nation* in May of 1899 that "an Irish Catholic audience which could patiently sit out such a play must have sadly degenerated, both in religion and patriotism" (qtd. in Cairns and Richards 72). O'Donnell's campaign against Yeats succeeded by defining in his work as a source of an immoral influence identical to that located by Catholic nationalism in the "vicious literature" of England.⁷⁹

Indeed, a crucial component of O'Donnell's attack on the play involves the attempt to

define *The Countess Cathleen* explicitly as a British commodity. In 1904, five years after the original controversy, O'Donnell published a follow-up to "Souls for Gold" titled "The Stage Irishman of the Pseudo-Celtic Drama." The text consists of two essays, the first titled "Mr. W.B. Yeats's Offensiveness on Irish Religion," and the second "Mr. Stephen Gwynn's Indictment of Yeatsite Drama and Celticism in 1901." The first is mostly a reprise of the attack of "Souls for Gold," but the subject of the second, the recent about-face of the Irish journalist and author Stephen Gwynn from criticism of "Yeatsite Drama and Celticism" to endorsement of them, introduces this new component. In the brief introduction to the volume, after stating that his surprise at "Mr. Gwynn's sudden paroxysm of enthusiasm" for Yeats's work provided the direct stimulus for reviving his campaign against it, O'Donnell quickly dismisses Gwynn's significance as an Irish man of letters and moves on to direct criticism of Yeats himself:

I have neither the time nor inclination to observe the printed output of one in a hundred of that new generation which, like Mr. Stephen Gwynn, had hardly quitted its baby petticoats long after I had taken my Master's degree and had been elected a parliamentary representative of my nation . . . I have a good deal more knowledge of Mr. W.B. Yeats. He is nearer my contemporaries . . . Besides, Mr. Yeats is a much better advertised as well as more distinguished person than Mr. Stephen Gwynn. He takes care of that. The rapt gaze and ethereal contemplations of the Mystic Minor Poet are quite compatible with sound commercial principles. But that is Mr. Yeats's affair. Why should he hide his light? I should not have troubled even about his combination of Professor of Extreme Nationalism and Dramatic Entertainer to Dublin Castle . . . Unfortunately Mr. W.B. Yeats has not been content with expressing his own visions . . . some impish fate drew him to select his innocence of Irish history and letters as the special sphere of his advertisements. He sought to make the legends of the Gael . . . the vehicles, or the pretexts, of the most un-Gaelic and un-Irish conceptions it is possible to conceive. (8-9)

This grandstanding passage overtly defines Yeats's drama as a British commodity, as the product of an "Entertainer to Dublin Castle," the seat of the British imperial administration in Ireland, whose libelous "Stage Irishman," though it has achieved success as a result of its plentiful "advertisement" to the Irish public, is the surreptitious "vehicle" of imperial dispossession.

O'Donnell strengthens the objections of "Souls for Gold" by figuring Yeats's work as fully "compatible with sound commercial principles," thereby bringing his established line of defamation against "the Mystic Minor Poet" the into even greater alignment with the commodity critique of Catholic nationalism. Yeats's particular brand of Literary Revivalist Celticism becomes just that, a commercial *brand* bearing the stamp of an immoral British capitalism.

In his criticism after *The Countess Cathleen* controversy, we find Yeats attempting to rationalize the play's failure by adopting the tactic of the "Mad Rogue," as he would come to call O'Donnell, and identifying the ideological configuration of Catholic Nationalism as a "Castle" commodity (*Memoirs* 120). Understanding Yeats's portrayal of his Catholic foe necessitates further elaboration of the qualities he defines as inherently English. We have already seen that Yeats views England as driven toward "materialism" by its Teutonic ethnological stock. In addition to its proclivity to capitalist development, however, in another characteristically Arnoldian move, Yeats also defines the repressive morality of the Victorian period as an inherently English characteristic. Both attributions are evident in the 1902 essay "Edmund Spenser." Speculating about how one of the poet's disciples, "come alive again" and abroad in present-day England, would respond to its precipitous fall from the cultural greatness of the "Merry England" of the sixteenth century, Yeats writes:

If he came to England he would find nothing there but the Puritan and the merchant—those enemies he had feared and hated . . . and he would weep perhaps . . . feeling the pressure of habits of emotion, and of an order of life, which were conscious . . . of a quarrel to the death with that new Anglo-Saxon nation . . . [which] was to overthrow their beautiful haughty imagination and their manners, full of abandon and willfulness, and to set in their stead earnestness and logic and the timidity and reserve of the counting house. (364-5)

The fallen culture of modern England is the product of the repressive efforts of "the Puritan and the merchant," whose "earnestness," "logic," "timidity and reserve" inhere in the practices of the

“counting house,” a commercial site that synecdochally represents the “new Anglo-Saxon nation.” Puritanism and capitalism go hand in hand as forces cooperating in the ontological impoverishment of modern England.

It is just these two agencies that Yeats identifies at work in Catholic nationalism’s negative response to his work. Particularly in the *Samhain* writings, Yeats defines the Catholic middle classes as the puppet of English economic and moral influence. In a 1903 essay titled “Moral and Immoral Plays” Yeats, describing a “Connacht Bishop” who “told his people . . . that they ‘should never read stories about the degrading passion of love,’” argues that the priest’s “puritanism is but an English cuckoo” (113). In Yeats’s mind, the defining virtues of Catholic nationalism, “purity” and “piety,” values that drive its critique both of sensational “stories” like those the Bishop describes and of his own work, are not indigenous to Ireland but instead British imports. The 1908 *Samhain* essay “First Principles” makes this claim even more pointedly when Yeats reflects directly on the public backlash against the Theater Movement, which has been compounded in the years since the performance of *The Countess Cathleen* by the controversies over J.M. Synge’s *The Shadow of the Glen* and *The Playboy of the Western World*. He declares,

. . . the attacks which have followed us from the beginning . . . have arisen out of conceptions of life which, unknown to the journalists who have made them, are essentially English . . . These patriots, with an heretical preference for faith over works . . . continually attack in the interest of some point of view popularized by Macaulay and his contemporaries, or of some reflection from English novelists . . . English provincialism shouts through the lips of Irish patriots . . . and they, with the confidence of all who speak the opinions of others, labour to thwart everybody who would dig a well for Irish water to bubble in. (232-3)

The “puritan” recoil of Catholic Ireland from the high Cultural efforts of the Irish Literary and National Theaters arises from its absorption of “English provincialism,” and in that this ventriloquism of “essentially English” values is partly a “reflection” of the influence of “English novelists,” the passage becomes legible as an attempt to define this response as the result of

British popular cultural commodification. Catholic Ireland's "heretical preference for faith over works," for morality over artistic achievement, is merely a thinly-veiled incarnation of British capitalist vulgarity.

The *Samhain* writings also take pains to identify the sway of "the merchant" over the sentiments of the Dublin theatrical public. The 1904 essay "The Dramatic Movement," which provides a behind-the-scenes glimpse of the legal negotiations that secured the royal patent for the Abbey Theater, argues that Irish Catholic "puritanism" functions as an instrument for maintaining the commercial dominance of British musical comedy. Yeats describes,

. . . we had hoped to have a patent as little restricted as that of the Gaiety or the Theatre Royal. We were, however, vigorously opposed by these theaters and by the Queen's Theatre, and the Solicitor-General, to meet them half-way, has restricted our patent to plays written by Irishmen or on Irish subjects or to foreign masterpieces . . . This has been done to make our competition against the existing theaters as unimportant as possible . . . (130)

Yeats goes on to cite certain "moral" objections made by the "legal representatives" of the existing theaters, one of whom "wanted to know if a play of mind which attacked the institution of marriage had not been performed . . . recently" (130), as evidence that the prudery of the Dublin Theater establishment is merely a ploy for preserving their exclusive right to the profits of British Musical Comedy: "Our opponents, having thus protested against our morals, went home with the fees of Musical Comedy in their pockets" (130). The "puritanism" of existing Theaters like the Gaiety, the Theatre Royal and the Queen's Theater is both a screen behind which Irish cultural institutions are bought and paid for by British capitalism and a barrier to the formation of new institutions seeking to challenge this state of affairs.

The exchange of money depicted above provides an instance of what Yeats would come to call the "system of bribery" by which, he believed, Irish moneyed interests, in particular those of "Unionist Ireland," kept open the "flood gates" of British commodity culture, thus

contributing to the vulgarization of the nation's middle-class Catholic consumers. In his

Memoirs Yeats provides a description that helps to elucidate his understanding of this "system":

I had a blind anger against Unionist Ireland. They had opposed to our movement their mere weight and indifference . . . They had done this not in the interest . . . of Shakespeare and Milton, but of those third-rate English novelists who were almost their only reading. What was happening in literature, I repeated again and again, was happening through the whole life of the country. An imitation of the habits of thought, the character, the manners, the opinions . . . of an alien people was preventing the national character from taking its own natural form, and this imitation was spread by what I call a system of bribery. Appointments, success of all kinds, came only to these; the springs of national life ran dry. (84)

The "Unionist" Irish upper classes are the hinge of the system through which British economic interests remain the controlling influence in Irish cultural life. Through their "bribery" by British capitalism, an inverted meritocracy arises wherein only those who adhere to and disseminate among the Irish populace the "alien" "habits of thought," "character," "manners" and "opinions" of "third-rate English novelists" ascend to the upper ranks of the national hierarchy. The materialism of "the merchant," routed through the vulgar, "low" commodities of British literary "garbage" and musical comedy and secured through the apostate labors of "Unionist Ireland," is, like the repressive morality of "the puritan," "an English cuckoo."

Like O'Donnell then, Yeats leverages the tools available to him within the hegemonic discourse of Revivalist anti-capitalism to define his nationalist opponents as being in traitorous alignment with British economic forces. Because both factions of the Revival are committed to a position of general opposition to British capitalism, they come to couch their objections to one another's divergent national ideals in the terms this established discourse. Refracted through the bifocal lens of the Celtic Revival, nationalist anti-capitalism vis-a-vis the imported commodities of British popular culture becomes the medium for articulating the competing factional ideals of the movement's Catholic and Literary constituencies. Thus, for O'Donnell, "the Yeatsite drama"

becomes a “Castle” commodity furthering the nation’s dispossession by a British capitalist system figured as licentious, immoral and ontologically expansive, while for Yeats it is O’Donnell’s indictment of his work that bespeaks Ireland’s commodification and dispossession by a British capitalism instead figured as repressive, vulgar and ontologically contractive.

The commodity critique of the Celtic Revival can thus be seen as a powerful conduit for both the general nationalist antagonism to British capitalism and for the factional infighting through which Irish nationalism would precipitate the foundational ideals of the postcolonial State. That this nationalist “war of position” would issue in the establishment of some form of Catholic nationalism as hegemonic was more or less preordained by the organic linkage between this faction’s ideals and those of Ireland’s middle-class Catholic population. The Literary Revival’s attempt to secure this population’s “spontaneous consent” for its high Cultural anti-capitalism was confronted with the impossible task of fundamentally reshaping its deeply-ingrained traditional beliefs, and thus, in spite of its more expansive and libertory ideological vision, it ultimately failed. However, even as the Literary Revival’s efforts in the domain of consumption began to founder, another attempt to extricate Irish culture from capitalist reification had already begun to emerge in the domain of production, where a number of important movements sought to reshape the nation’s economy in accordance with the humanistic ideals of Literary Revivalist Celticism.

Transvaluing the *Damnosa Hereditas*: The Celticization of the Irish Economy

In his essay “Counterparts: *Dubliners*, Masculinity and Temperance Nationalism,” David Lloyd draws a crucial distinction between those imperial binary oppositions whose simple inversion could empower Irish nationalism toward cultural independence and those from which, by virtue of their deep alignment with the imperatives of European modernity, nationalists could deviate

only at the peril of the legitimacy of their normalizing political agenda. Thus, for example, if the embrace of those “primitive” qualities attributed to the Irish by England enabled nationalists—as we have begun to see—to conceive of powerful aesthetic alternatives to the “civilized,” staid forms of the metropole, the embrace of an imperial stereotype such as drunkenness, for example, could hardly form the basis for a claim to national independence. For such resistant binary oppositions as drunkenness/sobriety, no Nietzschean “transvaluation of values” of the kind I have outlined above is possible because their negative pole is too radically incompatible with the accepted criteria of modern European subjectivity and statehood. Therefore, relative to such binaries, Irish nationalism was forced to play the game, as it were, by house rules.⁸⁰ Something of this intrinsic resistance inevitably confronted the Irish nationalist embrace of “primitive” social ideals (as in Yeats’s Gaelic seventeenth century) as alternatives to the capitalist modernity of England: in a world dominated increasingly by capitalism, a complete rejection of capitalist imperatives could only disable the effort to develop a viable independent Irish society. Thus most nationalists who became engaged in the Irish economy at the practical level during the Revival period attempted to spur some form of capitalist development as a necessary component of the nation’s wellbeing. Even here, however, in the domain of practical economics, we shall see that the Celticist ideals which so powerfully facilitated Literary Revivalist nationalism’s articulation of an alternative cultural vision came to play a significant role. This section argues that by attempting to Celticize the Irish economy, the Revival attempted simultaneously to preserve the “primitive” cultural forms on which this alternative vision depended and to satisfy the normative, “civilized” economic dictates of European modernity.

This Celticizing of the Irish economy begins to come into view in the “Irish manufactures” (or “native manufactures”) campaign spearheaded by *The Leader* of D.P. Moran

and *The United Irishman* of Arthur Griffith around the turn of the century. Moran's statement of purpose in the first number of the former publication in 1901, which I have already quoted in the context of the Revivalist opposition to "British gutter literature," gestures toward the "racy" affiliations of his ideal Irish economy. Complaining that Ireland has become "a dumping-ground for English and Scotch commercial enterprise," Moran promises to devote a significant portion of *The Leader's* space to promoting this particularization of the capitalist universal: "We will never cease driving home the necessity for economic development if this country is to be regenerated, and we will support every effort no matter from what quarter it comes that helps on the material prosperity of Ireland without militating against her distinct nationality" (117). Read alongside Moran's lament in "The Battle of Two Civilizations" that "Ireland, because she has lost her heart, imports today what on sound economic principles she could produce herself," one receives the impression that such "Irish manufactures" will spur the nation's economy not only in the direction of simple independence from British capitalism but also on a "distinct"ly *Irish* trajectory. Though Moran is quite vague about the distinctive features of his ideal Irish economy, we can assume that they would somehow reflect (and somehow repress the contradictions of) his characteristic mix of Catholic and Arnoldian Celticisms.

The "Hungarian Example" on which Griffith built his Sinn Fein movement contains elements that gesture toward a similar racialization of the national economy. The 1904 pamphlet "The Resurrection of Hungary," with which Griffith launched Sinn Fein, presents its economic component from within the British ethnological framework that defines capitalism as inherently Anglo-Saxon. The Magyar of Hungary, Griffith describes, in his fight against the Teutonic Austrian Empire, confronted many of the same economic stereotypes as the Irish Celt confronts in his conflict with England:

. . . forty years ago the Austrian Press and the Austrian statesmen assured the world, as the English Press and the English statesmen assure it now about Ireland—that the people of Hungary were a very interesting people, brave enough and with some rude notion of the arts, but fickle, inconstant, lacking in application—in a word, devoid of the great Teutonic virtues of sobriety, patience and industry. Hungary has shown the world how Austria lied. In Ireland, Irishmen have been found to believe the libel and to agree with England, that fine fellows though we are in many ways, we lack the staying power of the Saxon . . . Hungary believed in itself and relied on itself, Ireland did neither, and of the two nations both seemingly helpless and utterly crushed in 1849—the one that believed in itself has since become a great nation among the nations of the world—the one that sought succour from its masters is, perhaps, to-day the most miserable and most forgotten in Europe. (78)

Ireland must follow the model of Hungarian nationalism by repudiating the economic slander of Teutonic stereotypes with its own native “sobriety, patience and industry.” This will only be possible, Griffith argues, by withdrawing Irish M.P.s from Westminster and assembling a “Council of Three Hundred” Irish representatives in Dublin to superintend “a system for the Protection of Irish manufactures” from British competition (94). Though Griffith’s plan would seem to propose the Irish adoption of “Teutonic virtues,” he would insist elsewhere that his “Sinn Fein Policy” sought to make Ireland “a distinct nation,” a statement which, given the ethnological milieu of the Revival period and the above passage’s clear immersion therein, could only be interpreted as recommending some sort of Celticization of these normative qualities.⁸¹

Other prominent venues such as the *Shan Van Vocht* of Alice Milligan, *An Claidheamh Soluis*, the organ of the Gaelic League,⁸² and *The Irish Homestead*,⁸³ the publication of the IAOS, also participated in the “Irish Manufactures” campaign and promoted the Celticization of the Irish economy. Milligan, for example, in an editorial titled “Industrial Ireland” in the November 7 1898 edition of *Shan Van Vocht*, insists on her Irish readers “preferring Irish manufactures to all others” in order to promote the nation’s development of “thrift, industry and

improvement,” and then goes on to issue a warning to whatever English readers she may be addressing:

For the tourist who goes through the country proclaiming that things are done differently in England, we have neither patience nor toleration. Visitors who come to Western Ireland should recognize frankly that they are coming to a country very different from that of the Sassenach, and that it is in studying these differences, not denouncing them, the benefit of travelling there lies. (206-7)

As a result of such exhortations as Milligan’s to foster an industrial economy founded on “differences” from “the Sassenach,” the student of the Revival encounters economic developments as the following, taken from Hugh Oram’s history of Irish advertising, *The Advertising Book*:

In 1905, the Dundalk family firm of Carroll’s bought its first cigarette making machine. The first cigarettes launched by Carroll’s were called “Anti-Combine,” a reference to the monopoly held in the Irish market until then by the big English companies such as Players and Wills. Then in April, 1906, Carroll’s launched its next brand, “Emerald Gem,” which were sold in packets of ten for 3d. (29)

Clearly, Carroll’s foray into the tobacco industry constitutes an attempt to capitalize not only on the general anti-English posture of the Irish manufactures movement but also on its deployment of Celticist themes, here emblemized in the name of its second brand, “Emerald Gem.”

Through such efforts as this one, the movement sought to effectuate both a de-Anglicization of the Irish economy and its Celticization. There is, of course, something exploitative and tokenistic in Carroll’s deployment of traditional Irish symbols to increase cigarette sales. But even the possibility of such opportunism reflects the extent to which the Celticization of the economy had become an ideological priority in Ireland by the company’s founding in 1905.

If the promotional efforts of the “Irish manufactures” campaign such as those of Moran, Griffith and Milligan display an obvious, and perhaps necessary, vagueness about their plan for Celticizing such historically-loaded “Teutonic” characteristics as “industry” and “improvement,”

elsewhere during the Revival there would emerge a more precise definition of how a distinctively Celtic economic system could be constituted. Sir Horace Plunkett's Irish Agricultural Organization Society is one noteworthy venue through which a more positive definition of Celtic economic characteristics began to take shape. Founded in 1894 as a species of "Constructive Unionism," to use F.S.L. Lyon's phrase for those pro-Union activists who in spite of their opposition to independence worked to foster Irish economic development, by the autumn of 1903, according to Plunkett's *Ireland in the New Century*, "considerably over eight hundred societies had been established," of which "360 were dairy, and 140 agricultural societies, nearly 200 agricultural banks, 50 home industries societies, 40 poultry societies . . . [and] 40 others with miscellaneous subjects" (192).⁸⁴ While reading this text, which is both a summation of the Society's efforts during its first decade and a statement of its ideological motives, the Unionist and generally Anglicizing intent underlying such material advances as these becomes clear. Plunkett considers himself to be addressing a mainly British readership, and promises that the book will contribute to rectifying the root problem underlying Ireland's lack of material prosperity under British rule, "the failure of the English to see into the Irish mind" (13). He declares his "strong conviction" that "the Irish people" will one day be able to "contribute a factor of vital importance to the life of the British Empire" once the "problem" of "the Irish mind" has been unlocked, and urges his readers that "the solution of this problem is to be found in the strengthening of the Irish character" (70, 59). When Plunkett gives concrete definition to the means for bringing about this "strengthening" and states that they lie first and foremost in "the development of a commercial morality, without which there can be no commercial success," it seems clear that he is advocating for the assimilation of Irish mores to

British economic norms, and that his Society's endeavors would leave little room for national distinctiveness (18-19).

However, Plunkett elsewhere warns his readers that the Irish economy of the future "will have to accord with national sentiment and be distinctively Irish" (41). It is in the fleshing-out of Irish "national sentiment" and the particularizing force it exerts on the universal "commercial morality" of British political economy that *Ireland in the New Century* indicates the contribution of the IAOS toward the Celticization of Irish economics. The following passage outlines the distinctively Celtic characteristics of the economy of Plunkett's new Irish century:

The problem of mind and character with which we had to deal in Ireland presented this central and somewhat discouraging fact. In practical life the Irish had failed where the English had succeeded, and this was attributed to the lack of certain English qualities which have been undoubtedly essential to success in commerce and industry from the days of the industrial revolution . . . It was the individualism of the English economic system during this period which made these qualities indispensable. The lack of these qualities in Irishmen to-day may be admitted, and the cause of the deficiency has been adequately explained. But those who regard the Irish situation as industrially hopeless probably ignore the fact that there are other qualities, of great and growing importance under modern economic conditions, which can be developed by Irishmen and may form the basis of an industrial system. I refer to the range of qualities which come into play rather in association than in the individual, and to which the term "associative" is applied. So that although much disparaging criticism of the Irish character is based upon the survival in the Celt of the tribal instincts, it is gratifying to show that from the practical English point of view, our preference for thinking and working in groups may not be altogether a *damnosa hereditas*. If, owing to our deficiency in the individualistic qualities of the English, we cannot at this stage hope to produce many types of the 'economic man' of the economists, we think we see our way to provide, as a substitute, the economic association. (166-7)

Plunkett's efforts in instilling in the Irish those "English qualities" that have produced "success in commerce and industry" for the British have encountered a stubborn practical obstacle, one which determines that the Irishman will never successfully be molded into the *homo economicus* of Adam Smith. This obstacle consists in "the survival in the Celt of the tribal instincts" of pre-

imperial Ireland, instincts which “come into play rather in association than in the individual” and recommend that a “substitute” be devised for the universal maxims of political economy that will accord better with this atavistic “national sentiment.” Adapting his mission of economic regeneration to the Celtic ethnological raw materials of the Irish population, Plunkett submits to his readers that a compromise system, “the economic association,” provides the only practical route for accomplishing this goal.

If Plunkett is too committed to the Unionist Party line to call such an association by its proper name, his partner in “co-operation,” AE, in his book *The National Being*, displays no such compunction. Thus where Plunkett speaks merely of “developing the industrial qualities of the Celt on associative lines” (170-1), AE refers to the IAOS as “the pivot round which Ireland has begun to swing back to its traditional and natural communism” (20). For AE, it is full-blown *communism* that best describes the economic system implicit in the characteristics of the Irish Celt. The introduction of this term into the discussion of the Revivalist attempt to fashion a distinctively Celtic economic sphere brings immediately to mind the nationalist figure most responsible for coining the notion of a “Celtic communism,” the founder of the Irish Socialist Republican Party, James Connolly. Two texts of Connolly’s in particular, the pamphlet “Erin’s Hope: The End and the Means,” and the canonical *Shan Van Vocht* essay “Socialism and Nationalism,” both published in 1897, propound a theory of an economic system commensurate to Irish nationalism’s Celtic ideals which would nonetheless help spur the modernization of Irish society. A passage from the former text explaining the origins of the “Irish question” begins to outline this theory:

The Irish question has, in fact, a much deeper source than a mere difference of opinion on forms of government. Its real origin and inner meaning lay in the circumstances that the two opposing nations held fundamentally different ideas upon the vital question of property in land. Recent scientific research by such

eminent sociologists as Letourneau, Lewis Morgan, Sir Henry Maine, and others, has amply demonstrated the fact that common ownership of land formed the basis of primitive society in almost every country. But, whereas, in the majority of countries now called civilized, such primitive Communism had almost entirely disappeared before the dawn of history and had at no time acquired a higher status than that conferred by the social sanction of unlettered and uneducated tribes, in Ireland the system formed part of the well defined social organizations of a nation of scholars and students, recognized by Chief and Tanist, Brehon and Bard, as the inspiring principle of their collective life. (6)

Building on such British anthropological texts as Lewis Morgan's *Ancient Society*—as well as on such Young Ireland precursors as Thomas Davis's "Udalism and Feudalism"—Connolly explains Anglo-Irish conflict as produced by "the fundamentally different ideas" of land distribution between England and Ireland, with the former preferring a "feudal" organization founded on private property and the latter preferring a communist organization founded upon "collective," "common ownership." Against the impression derived from anthropology of the "primitive" state of development in pre-modern communist societies, Connolly defines the communism of the Irish Celt as "civilized" to a high, near-Utopian degree.

This Celticist economic theory informs the far more famous passage in "Socialism and Nationalism" where Connolly warns his readers that mere political separation from England will not suffice for the generation of a truly independent Irish society:

The socialist who would destroy, root and branch, the whole brutally materialistic system of civilization, which like the English language we have adopted as our own, is, I hold, a far more deadly foe to English rule and tutelage, than the superficial thinker who imagines it possible to reconcile Irish freedom with those insidious but disastrous forms of economic subjection—landlord tyranny, capitalist fraud and unclean usury . . . If you remove the English army to-morrow and hoist the green flag over Dublin Castle, unless you set about the organization of the Socialist Republic your efforts would be in vain. England would still rule you. She would rule you through her capitalists, through her landlords, through her financiers, through the whole array of commercial and individualist institutions she has planted in the country and watered with the tears of our mothers and the blood of our martyrs. England would still rule you to your ruin . . . Nationalism without Socialism—without a reorganization of society on the basis

of a broader and more developed form of that common property which underlay the social structure of ancient Erin—is only national recreancy. (25)

This canonical nationalist passage warns that English rule consists far more in Ireland's immersion in British capitalism than it does in its political subordination to England. Abolishing the Union without abolishing the “array of commercial and individualist institutions” that put tissue on this governmental skeleton will mean not independence but “national recreancy.” Only by making the nation a “Socialist Republic” and by modeling this republic on “that common property which underlay the social structure of ancient Erin” can Ireland truly de-Anglicize itself. A Celticization of the economy is the linchpin of true Irish nationalism, and Connolly's efforts both in the ISRP and, later, the Irish Transport and General Workers Union and Irish Labour Party spring from this central motivation.⁸⁵

David Lloyd has recently reinterpreted Connolly's “Celtic Communism” within the framework of Dipesh Chakrabarty's theory of “the two histories of capital,” which views the colonial expansion of European capitalism as precipitating a schism between the pre-capitalist social practices adaptable to its imperatives and those which, being either resistant to or simply untranslatable by them, required elimination for these imperatives to achieve global totality. Modifying the categorical terms of Marx's *Theories of Surplus Value*, Chakrabarty designates the first set of practices “History 1” and the second “History 2,” according to their respective ability and inability to “contribute to the self-reproduction of capital” (63-4). Lloyd's reading of Connolly's Celticist economic theories identifies in them an attempt to radicalize the recalcitrant, capital-resistant elements of the indigenous “History 2” of Ireland, whereby the vestigial elements of “ancient Erin,” through their very inassimilability to the “iron logic” of capitalist modernity, provide the inspiration and material basis for the nation's “alternative future” (“Rethinking” 126). Connolly's innovations are thus themselves recuperable for Lloyd within

the contemporary postcolonial theoretical project of “mapping the interface between colonial modernity and the counter-modern formations that emerge in relation to it” (126).

Lloyd’s concept of a “relation”al rejection of capitalist modernity enables us to interpret Connolly’s “Celtic communism” as refusing the choice between the disabling terms of the imperial economic binary I have formulated dually as primitive/civilized and sentiment/industry. More than a simple “transvaluation” of economic primitivity, the notion of a Celtic “alternative modernity” existing differentially alongside that of metropolitan England envisions a middle way between the Scylla and Charybdis of either adopting capitalist norms wholesale or embracing the doomed historical choice of rejecting economic modernization outright. Connolly’s Celticized Irish economy thus represents an ingenious and visionary historical formula for breaking out of this particularly snarled facet of what I have called “the Anglo-Celtic Dialectic.” By embracing and radicalizing the civilizational implications of Revivalist Celticism, Connolly’s communism moves beyond the limitations of either the “Irish manufactures” movement, which is often unable to commit to substantive modifications of the industrial capitalist model of England beyond a few tokenist adjustments, or the “co-operative movement” of Sir Horace Plunkett’s IAOS, which, in spite of the obvious correspondences between its “economic associations” and Connolly’s socialism, figures such associations as simply a reluctant compromise between an unremittingly British ideal and the perceived economic backwardness of the rural Irish populace.

It is important to note, however, that Connolly’s communism is but the most radical, practical incarnation of the widespread nationalist efforts during the Revival period to define a Celticized Irishness against the “alien,” “Teutonic” system of British capitalism. The work of such other figures as Douglas Hyde, D.P. Moran, W.B. Yeats, AE and J.M. Synge provides the

context necessary to trace the cultural filiations of Connolly's "national Marxism," and if their ideas for disentangling Ireland from colonialism and capitalism are less sophisticated and less fully formulated than his (with the possible exception of AE), his theories would scarcely have become possible outside of the intellectual atmosphere their work helped to produce. Indeed, it would not be overly hyperbolic to identify in the less self-consciously economic endeavors of the Gaelic League or the Theater Movement a similar attempt to reactivate the indigenous Irish elements of Chakrabarty's "History 2," and to leverage such residual characteristics toward the production of an "alternative modernity." Especially through such efforts as these, in fact, efforts founded on the ontologically libertory, humanist ethnological vision of its Literary participants, the anti-capitalist decolonization movement that was the Celtic Revival would seem to suggest just such a reading.

Chapter 5
“In front of the cracked looking-glass”: Anti-Capitalism and Celticist Aesthetics in the Irish Literary Revival, 1894-1916

Over the last several decades, an account of the Celtic Revival has developed which defines the movement's racial ideals as a naïve, knee-jerk response to British colonial stereotypes. According to this account, the Revival, in particular that faction of the Revival devoted to cultivating the so-called “Celtic Note,” played directly into the hands of the imperial enemy through its enthusiastic ideological embrace of anti-modern characteristics such as irrationality, ungovernability and economic ineptitude, thus disabling the national endeavor to articulate a libertory decolonizing and post-colonial social vision at the very moment of its birth. In its attempt to “transvalue” stereotypes into positive anti-imperial ideals, this account runs, leading Irish nationalists failed to foresee, first, the debilitating practical consequences of endorsing such historically retrograde characteristics, and, second, that to essentialize such characteristics would encourage their reification, rigidification and conversion into mere dogma by the Irish nationalist public. Where a proper decolonizing dialectic would travel beyond such a negative ideological maneuver to a more positive stage of self-determination, Revivalist Celticism froze Irish nationalism in its reactionary phase, thus ensuring that its agenda would remain caught within the foundational logic of British imperialism. Henceforward, Irish cultural politics was merely a grim parody of the proper (Fanonian) post-colonial liberation story, a parody whose implacable momentum would eventually issue in the repressive nationalist orthodoxy of the independent Irish State.

In spite of recent attempts to complicate this narrative, it remains one of the most popular accounts within Irish Studies of turn-of-the-century Irish nationalism. As we have already begun to witness, however, this narrative constitutes a drastic oversimplification, even a caricature, of

the cultural-political trajectory of the Revival. If in schematic, theoretical terms the embrace of existing racial stereotypes would seem to carry the inevitable consequence of imperial instrumentalization, in actuality the nationalist embrace of Celticist ideals was, in many ways, legitimately progressive. Particularly in the case of the stereotype of the Irish Celt as resistant to capitalism, the embrace of an imperial stereotype during the Revival was oftentimes not merely a childish, knee-jerk response to an unflattering racialism, but a calculating ideological maneuver designed to mobilize the Irish populace toward genuinely progressive ends. “Literary” Revivalists such as Yeats, Synge, Martyn, Moore and AE glimpsed in the Arnoldian Celticist stereotype of Irish economic haplessness not an ideal quality to be uncritically adopted, but an ideological vehicle capable of driving the country toward the creation of an anti-capitalist civilization. The Literary Revival found this particular racial assignation appealing not merely as an identity-political lever against Irish cultural Anglicization, but also as a potential foundation on which to erect a society purged of capitalism’s ontological desiccation.

If the non-fiction prose texts which concerned us in Chapter 4 devoted themselves to making the case for pursuing a Celticist route toward anti-capitalist decolonization, the aesthetic texts which preoccupy the present chapter press this ideological project further in two interrelated ways. First, these texts attempt to provide practical envisionment of this Celticist pursuit, both in terms of probing the challenges Ireland would face in attempting to extricate itself from the grip of British capital, and also in terms of depicting the concrete makeup of the post-capitalist Irish society that would follow upon that extrication. Second, these texts attempt to effectuate the disentanglement of Irish culture from British capital *directly* by infusing the nation’s Anglicized literary marketplace with Celticist aesthetic productions. This chapter will proceed by anatomizing these interdependent efforts in sequence, beginning with texts such as

Edward Martyn's *The Heather Field and Maeve*, George Moore's *The Bending of the Bough* and George Bernard Shaw's *John Bull's Other Island* which exemplify the attempt to envision the challenges to and likely outcomes of the Revival's campaign to de-Anglicize Irish culture. It will then transition to an examination of those texts which exemplify the Revival's attempt to Celticize the Irish marketplace through, first, a reading of W.B. Yeats's *The Land of Heart's Desire*, and then, second, an analysis of the popular success achieved by the Theater Movement through Yeats's and Lady Gregory's *Cathleen ni Houlihan*. This analysis will enable an intervention in two important critical debates on the Revival, the first of which concerns its participants' "fetish" for texts depicting the "defeat" or failure of Irish nationalist endeavors, and the second of which concerns the status of the movement's literature relative to prevailing definitions of aesthetic modernism. I will argue that both debates can be productively reassessed through heightened attention to the Literary Revival's "high-cultural" deployment of the genre of "tragedy" as an aesthetic vehicle for refining and Celticizing the Anglicized taste of the Irish consumer. Having thus established the significance of *generic* considerations to any account of the Revival's cultural politics, the chapter will then provide genre-critical readings of two texts which provide particularly creative, properly modernist attempts at precipitating such a Celticization through an *immanent critique* of the aesthetic forms of British popular culture, J.M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* and James Stephens's *The Charwoman's Daughter*. The chapter then concludes by reading two of Yeats's canonical poems, "September, 1913" and "Easter, 1916," as reflecting on Ireland's transformation from immersion in the "vulgar," "comedic" ontology attending these aesthetic forms to a "tragic" realization of the Celtic ontological ideals of the Revival during the "Easter Rising." Though we will have frequent occasion to note the ideological contradictions and practical limitations of the Literary Revival's

efforts toward founding a postcolonial, post-capitalist Irish nation, by chapter's end we shall see that, far from leading the nationalist movement up a "blind alley" of colonial retrenchment, its Celticism served as the vehicle of a remarkably imaginative and innovative attempt to combat the depredations both of British imperial rule and of the reifying effects of capitalist modernity.

"The Immortal Beauty of Form": Edward Martyn's *The Heather Field* and *Maeve*

When the Irish Literary Theater debuted in May of 1899, both plays selected for its opening night featured a strong anti-capitalist thrust. The second of these, Edward Martyn's *The Heather Field*, though its economic undertones are not quite as pronounced as those of the first—Yeats's *The Countess Cathleen*—provides a suitable starting point for the analysis of the Literary Revival's aesthetic anti-capitalism. The play may be taken as exemplary of the Theater Movement's Celticism, both in terms of its definition of the "imaginative," aesthetically-generative racial characteristics of the Celt and in terms of its identification of British capitalism as the primary historical agency threatening to extinguish those characteristics. As we shall see, the play partakes fully of the widespread tendency among the Revival's capitalist critics to convey their criticism through "metonymic" rhetorical indirection. As in the non-fiction prose texts discussed in the foregoing chapter, the play carefully avoids referring to capitalism by its systemic proper name. Characteristically, it instead selects a particular aspect of capitalist modernity—in this case, rural "land reclamation"—as representative of its more general depredations, thus cannily evading a potentially politically damaging identification by the Irish Catholic Church with the international spread of Socialism/Communism. However, in spite of this rhetorical strategy, we shall see that the play's anti-capitalism is just as unequivocal as its definition of Celtic "sentiment" as a repository of civilizational values alternative to those of British capitalist modernity.

As the play begins, its protagonist, Carden Tyrell, a landowner in an unnamed locale in the West of Ireland, is preoccupied offstage, as his brother, Miles, and his neighbor and confidante, Barry Usher, discuss the dire financial straits into which his estate has recently fallen. Usher informs Miles that Carden has just applied for an additional loan from the British government to fund an ongoing project of “land reclamation” in the “heather field” abutting the estate, at which news Miles anticipates an exacerbation of the matrimonial “troubles and disputes” to which Carden has recently been subjected by his wife Grace (218). The two proceed to review the history of the unhappy Tyrell union, which both perceive as having somehow adulterated Carden’s originally “wild,” vital disposition. Usher’s narrative of this history establishes unmistakably that this “wildness” has a Celtic orientation, and that Carden’s marriage will serve as one of the primary vehicles by which the play’s anti-capitalism will begin to assert itself:

. . . he was so ideal, so imaginative, as engaging as some beautiful child who saw nothing in the real world outside his own fairy dream . . . then to see him suddenly changed, grown even prosy under the power of her influence . . . O, I foresaw all. I knew this change could not last. The old, wild nature had to break out again when the novelty was over . . . There are some dispositions too eerie, too ethereal, too untamable for good, steady, domestic cultivation, and if so domesticated they avenge themselves after a time . . . the latent, untamable nature was not to be subdued. Its first sign of revolt against suppression was when he began this vast work in the heather field. (220)

The thematic crux of the play here comes immediately into view, though its precise configuration only becomes clear as its action proceeds. Carden’s youthful temperament, so poetic, so “ideal” and “imaginative” that he lived as if “in a fairy dream,” aligns his “nature” directly with the staple characteristics of the Revivalist “Celtic Note,” while that of his wife, “prosy,” “steady,” driven to obsession over “means and position” (219), aligns hers with those characteristics identified by Revivalist Celticism as inherently English. The play seems, then, to

offer a particularly pure, Manichean iteration of the Revivalist binary of imaginative Celt / industrious Saxon.

Strangely, however, in the present context, Tyrell's "ethereal," "untameable" makeup manifests through an ineluctably material economic activity. Usher speculates that the "vast work in the heather field," which bears all the marks of capitalist "improvement," is, in fact, a sublimated, "venge"ful manifestation of his original Celtic "wild"ness. The play is thus poised to explore what, in the previous chapter, we identified as a very pressing nationalist problem: if "ethereal" Celtic human nature is routed into practical economic activity, what will result? At this early point, the prospects of an optimistic response to this question do not seem promising, as Tyrell, according to Usher, "has sunk a fortune in borrowed capital" in the project but has yet to reap any tangible return (220). As "the men he employed to root up rocks" and "the steam plows" he has rented continue to absorb this borrowed fortune, Usher admonishes Miles that while "interest is accruing" quickly at the Irish Board of Works, "the grass has not grown sufficiently" as to enable the reclaimed land to remunerate in the form of rent (220). The entire enterprise seems to Usher "rather an extravagant work," and he worries that, in addition to its budget deficit, "the soil in such places" as the heather field, being "wild and untamable," might prove inhospitable to economic improvement, and that its "old wild nature may avenge itself" upon the unfortunate entrepreneur hoping to cultivate it (220). Only the most painstaking, "generous and loving treatment" can coax such waste lands into productivity, and Usher wonders whether Tyrell wasn't "too impatient for change," whether he was "considerate enough" of the land's sensitivities, "in the accomplishment of his will" (221).

The subsequent entries of Carden and Grace complicate the initial presentation of the play's thematic crux. Immediately upon his arrival, Tyrell introduces an additional socio-

historical consideration into the proceedings. Namely, through Tyrell's first substantive dialogue, wherein he berates Usher for reducing the rent paid by tenants residing on his property, it becomes clear that both men are *Anglo-Irish landlords*. Tyrell jests, "My goodness. I suppose you will end by making the tenants a present of your property. You call me a dreamer, but it seems that I am the practical man" (221). Usher, however, retorts that it is "wiser to give a little in time, than later to have perhaps more wrung from me by the Land Commission" (221). When Tyrell rejoins that "one should never depreciate the value of one's property," it becomes clear that at least one central aspect of the play concerns the age-old Irish political debate over benevolent versus exploitative landlordism (221). The "sensitivities" of which Tyrell, according to Usher, has been insufficiently considerate, would thus seem to extend to the issue of agrarian agitation so prominent in Irish politics and culture in the latter nineteenth century. Tyrell's newest scheme, to "double the value" of his property by draining the lands adjacent to the heather field, thereby making them suitable for rental by tenant farmers, thus acquires the additional symbolic valence of Anglo-Irish exploitation (223).

Tyrell, however, the viewer soon discovers, has been driven to these exploitative measures by the civilizational pressures routed through the domestic management of his wife Grace. Her prickly demeanor and hen-pecking exchanges with Tyrell at the close of the play's first act reinforce the impression derived from Usher's and Miles's earlier discussion that Grace is a representative of hegemonic English values, cardinal among them being respectability, financial prudence and rationality. Grace's preoccupation with upholding the first term in this series generates a remarkable degree of practical acumen with regard to the second. Alarmed upon learning of his application for further loans from the Board of Works—the previous loans having, in her words, "been nothing but a gigantic loss"—she admonishes her husband, "It is

true, of course, that you have crippled your resources by mismanagement and extravagance. But, if you will now be led by me, and put this new scheme of drainage out of your head, and if we are economical for a while, the property must recover” (232). Tyrell’s response to this seemingly sound suggestion is to ejaculate, with what is clearly long pent-up frustration and resentment, “Oh, this matter-of-fact way you have of looking at things! This simple barren prose of your mind! It is that, that is driving me mad” (232). Beyond affirming their alignment with the Arnoldian binary opposition between idealist, imaginative Celt and materialist, unimaginative Saxon, the exchange thus precipitates a concomitant binary opposition which will determine much of the course of the play’s remaining action: sane/insane. Far from objecting to Tyrell’s interjection of the word “mad” into the argument, Grace is finally driven to admit to him, “I believe you to be mad” (233).

In keeping with the logic of Matthew Arnold’s Celticist theories, “extravagance” and “mismanagement” in the economic domain thus serve, to the normative, “matter of fact” Saxon mindset, to index derangement in the *epistemological* one. Given Martyn’s evocation of this logic at the conclusion of the play’s first act, it is therefore no surprise to find that in its second act, the aestheticizing mentality of the Celtic Carden Tyrell draws the regulatory attention of the medical profession. As the act begins, Grace, in conversation with her “respectable” neighbors, the Shrules, who agree that such activities as Carden is pursuing “never repay their expenditure,” lights on a stratagem that will enable her to rescue estate from financial ruin. She muses, “I don’t see why I should not commence a legal suit to deprive him of control over the property” (241, 237). Grace accordingly summons two doctors, Dowling and Roche, who, following their arrival, proceed to interrogate Tyrell regarding the practicality of his scheme. Dowling gradually leads Carden to the topic of “the possibility of its paying,” and in response to the means-ends

rationality underlying this query, he divulges in full the inspiration behind his project of land reclamation:

Of course. Wait till you see the profits I make. With these I shall extend my works; and with the further profits I shall embark on such a scale of business as in time will enable me to start a company for buying up and reclaiming or reforestation every inch of waste land in Ireland . . . With the far-reaching usefulness of my projects I must become a real benefactor to the country . . . There is something creative about it—this changing the face of the whole country! None of the humdrum, barn-door work of ordinary farming . . . When from the ideal world of my books those people forced me to such a business, I was bound to find the extreme of its idealization. (245)

Tyrell's massive plan of an infinitely profitable reclamation of Irish waste land would seem practical enough to satisfy the normative inquiries of the medical profession. There is enough protestation against "humdrum," "ordinary" labor in it, however, for Dowling and Roche to pick up the scent of abnormality, and the latter accordingly asks, with nascent incredulity, "You mean you have idealized farming, Mr. Tyrell?" (246). His affirmative response and subsequent elaboration on the "ideal" dimension of his project place him in the power of the two professionals. In addition to the practical economic aspects of his activities, Carden claims to revel in the "magic" of the "mountain breezes" in the heather field, to find in these breezes "a medium between the beauty of the past and [him]self" and to hear in them "choristers singing of youth in an eternal sunrise" (248). Carried away by thoughts of the field's aural beauty, Carden goes so far as to define the "ethereal phonograph" of the field as his true "reality," and the "humdrum" world of Grace's household merely as merely "a dream" (248). After Usher, who has grown increasingly nervous over the image his friend's "ideal" descriptions are projecting, leads Tyrell offstage, Dowling and Roche draw the inevitable conclusion that his is indeed "a case of dementia" (248).

Ussher, however, returning to the scene, leaps to his friend's defense and convinces the two professional men that the gravity of their "responsibility of certifying to madness" prevents them from condemning Tyrell, whose ideas, though admittedly "queer," he insists are "consecutive" enough to reflect an intact rational faculty (248). Furthermore, he disparages them, "It is only common-place and unimaginative people who consider the poetic and original temperament to be a mark of madness" (249). Ussher's vehemence in defense of Tyrell ultimately persuades the doctors to give Tyrell the benefit of the doubt and to forego reporting his strange thinking to a "Commission of Lunacy" (250). Act II then concludes with Barry berating Grace for her self-involvement and lack of humanity in attempting to have Tyrell stripped of his freedom and rights and to have him confined "in a madhouse" (252). Usher, it seems, is Carden's only bulwark against Grace's campaign to classify his Celtic imaginative proclivities as legally delegitimizing indicators of madness.

As Act III opens, a significant interval of time has apparently passed, as the formerly exuberant Tyrell now appears "aged and careworn" (253). Through conversation with his son Kit, the viewer learns that he has not visited the heather field for "a long time," and that his absence has been motivated by the oppressive presence of "policeman" on the estate (253). It soon becomes clear that these law enforcement officials, who "have orders never to lose sight" of Tyrell, are present to prevent him from being "shot at" by former tenants whom he has evicted for nonpayment of rent (255). Ussher again warns Tyrell against persisting in his tyrannical rack-renting, recommending he reach a "compromise" with them, but Tyrell protests, "I told these people when they struck, that I could not afford to give abatements on rents which had already been reduced so much . . . And I can less afford to give any now with pressing mortgagees who have not been paid for so long" (256). When Ussher responds that Tyrell, by

obstinately refusing the “reduce the value” of the property by lowering rents, is being “fatally unreasonable” and will likely strangle his “ethereal” constitution through congestive domestic confinement, it becomes evident that “mad” is no longer an entirely inappropriate term to apply to Tyrell’s mania for “idealizing” Ireland’s economy (257). Genuine derangement begins to manifest in Carden when he receives news from Miles, whom he has sent to Dublin to plead for an extension from the “chief mortgagee” on the estate, that his efforts have borne no fruit. Carden cries, “with a strange intensity,” “this vulture cannot touch the heather field! . . . it will save me in the end . . . that mountain is a great green field worth more than all they can seize, and it is mine, all mine!” (262). But the decisive step in Carden’s descent into madness occurs when Kit, who alone among the Tyrells still visits the heather field, informs him that the wild heather buds have reappeared there. Kit describes to Usher that upon receiving this intelligence, Tyrell instantly changed appearance and began to call him “Miles”; shortly after, Miles himself informs Usher that his brother no longer recognizes him. Fearing the worst, Barry seeks out Tyrell and discovers that this “revenge of the heather field” has precipitated a complete mental break whereby he has reverted to the world of ten years previous, in which Miles was still a child, in which he had not yet married Grace and in which Kit had yet to be born. He recalls the intervening period merely as a “dreadful dream” in which his “lot was to wander through common luxurious life,” apart from “that beauty” that is his first love (267). Usher, recognizing in Carden’s talk a clear psychotic departure from reality, concludes the play by informing Grace that her “fears have come true” (268). Carden Tyrell has been crushed between the pressures of Celtic “sentiment” and Saxon capital.

The Heather Field, then, presented a very complicated and perplexing entanglement of Irish nationalist themes to the Literary Theater’s first audience in May of 1899. The play is

thematically cohesive if interpreted either, first, as a cautionary tale of the perils of suffocating idealism and imagination with material imperatives, or, second, as the story of an Irish landlord whose exploitative practices lead to karmic vengeance by both the peasant farmer class and the land itself. One can readily imagine either interpretation appealing to popular nationalist audiences during the play's original performance, and apparently, given its favorable reception, one or both of them did. Yet the manner in which these two partial readings overlay one another and cohere into a more capacious message is a bit more difficult to determine. Perhaps the central perplexity in this regard results from Martyn's choice of making a landlord figure simultaneously the play's representative Celt. If Carden Tyrell is indeed an Anglo-Irish grandee, then the explanation for his "imaginative," "wild," beauty-infatuated "nature" may, perhaps, be explicable via the long-familiar description of the Ascendancy as becoming "more Irish than the Irish" during four centuries of British colonial occupation. In any event, it is clear that Martyn devised a character in whom are united the characteristics of both colonizer and colonized—or, rather, in whom are united an Anglo-Irish social position and a native Irish disposition. Tyrell's ideological function would seem, then, to align with the Literary Revival's persistent effort to unite native, Celtic qualities with Anglo-Irishness, and perhaps to demonstrate to the audience of the Irish Literary Theater that such a combination is, indeed, possible, the better to quell any Catholic nationalist resistance to the hegemonic designs of its almost entirely Anglo-Irish personnel.

In this reading, then, an initially Celtic Anglo-Irishman is corrupted by an Anglicizing marriage and, as an outcome of this tainting influence, is in turn driven to an equally adulterated and Anglicized expression of his Celtic idealism. Under the influence of Grace's "domestic cultivation," Tyrell's "ethereal" Celtic imagination is forced to manifest itself in stunted, twisted

fashion, and the bad landlordism to which he ultimately devolves represents an ideal/practical union in which the latter term is the dominant term. His ultimate derangement bespeaks the withering of Celtic vitality before British capital. Implicitly, the play offers a pragmatic middle way in the form of Barry Ussher's wise advice to Tyrell regarding "sensitive" treatment of the land and its people. However, so configured, the play raises the specter of Celtic economic haplessness in a not-entirely commodious fashion. Though Tyrell's ultimate mental and spiritual deformity results from his Anglicization, it nonetheless presents the play's viewers with a disastrous outcome to the attempt to fuse Celtic aesthetics and Saxon capital. *The Heather Field* seemingly opts to reprise for the Irish nationalist public the familiar Arnoldian narrative in which Celtic characteristics revolt against "the despotism of fact." In choosing to explore negatively rather than positively the practical problem of maintaining Celtic ideals while simultaneously modernizing Irish society, the play ultimately leaves its audience with little food for constructive thought.

We shall return later to the macro-level literary-historical question naturally raised by the *The Heather Field's* negative outcome, namely the question of whether the Literary Revival's Celticism, by issuing in depictions of the practical or material defeat of Celtic ideals, merely serves to reify imperial stereotypes of the Irish as congenitally hapless. For present purposes, however, our aim is merely to parse the implicit utopian ideal undergirding the play's deployment of those ideals. Toward this end, it is helpful to examine briefly another of Martyn's Revivalist texts, *Maeve*, in order to shed comparative light on the concerns raised by *The Heather Field*. Along with Alice Milligan's *The Last Feast of the Fianna*, *Maeve* opened the Literary Theater's second season in 1900. Like its predecessor, the play features a thematic crux defined by the conflict between Celt and Capital. Martyn categorized the play generically as a

“psychological drama,” a label which could just as easily have been applied to *The Heather Field*, and, like its forerunner, *Maeve* depicts the psychological struggles of a character poised between Celtic and Saxon influences. Its title character presents the viewer with much the same array of Celtic proclivities as Carden Tyrell, in particular “dreaming,” “visions” and an infatuation with the “beautiful dead people” of the Irish past (272). In *Maeve*, however, these qualities are threatened by an even more powerful capitalist presence in the form of Hugh Fitz Walter, a wealthy young Englishman whom her father, “The O’Heynes,” the hereditary prince of Burren, has arranged for her to marry. According to The O’Heynes, Hugh first arrived in Ireland after he “advertise[d] the fishing of [his] river in the papers,” a detail which gestures “metonymically” to the capitalist valences of his symbolic role in the play (274). Soon after his appearance, The O’Heynes determined to gain access to his great wealth by similarly advertising the beauty of his eligible elder daughter. He admits to longing “for the time when fortune would enable our family to resume its fitting position in the county,” thus clinching the fundamentally financial associations of the matrimonial arrangement (274). “The O’Heynes,” advertising both the land’s rivers and its hereditary princess in order to secure the patronage of a wealthy Englishman, thus represents the primary point of access to Ireland for British capital.

Two characters voice strong opposition to the marriage, which is scheduled to occur upon Hugh’s return from England, where he has been delayed by unspecified “legal matters” for two months (272). The first of these is *Maeve*’s sister Finola, who, in argument with her father, specifies her objection to the union as arising from a distaste for the crassly materialist modernity of England: “Is not the royalty of our race acknowledged? What place can we find in a grotesque world of plutocrats and shop-keeper peers? This change in our life seems unnatural to me” (277). Finola thus helps to further situate Ireland in noble, ideal contrast to the money-

grubbing, “unnatural” capitalist *raison d’etre* of England. The second character to oppose the marriage is the peasant hag Peg Inerny, a former servant to the O’Heynes manor who appears under the pretense of seeking “a last farewell” of Maeve “on the night before her wedding day” (282). Quickly, however, it becomes obvious that Peg’s motive is to prevent the union by goading Maeve with grandiloquent descriptions of the Celtic beauty that, in her view as in Finola’s, will be spoiled by the Anglicization her betrothal portends. She prods Maeve, “They told me my Princess Maeve was content to marry her young Englishman . . . He is so rich—so rich with his grand English houses and possessions . . . I was sure you cared not, Princess for the world’s riches” (282). She proceeds to coax Maeve into joining her on an evening stroll to the neighboring Clare mountains, where, she tells her, there is a “cairn” beneath which resides, intact, the aestheticized Celtic world of the Tuatha de Danaan of which she has dreamed: “Your love is dreaming among the rocks of these mountains . . . They are the pleasure haunts of many a beautiful ghost . . . Oh what a world there is beneath that cairn” (283). In this world, she continues, Maeve can live “a life among the people with beautiful looks” who are “ruled over by the great Queen Maeve,” the ancient Irish fairy queen who is her namesake (283).

Maeve soon gives in to Peg’s coaxings, and becomes convinced, along with Finola, that Hugh is merely “a bandit—a plunderer! . . . like his English predecessors who ruined every beautiful thing we ever had” (387). Her love for “the Fairy Lamp of Celtic Beauty” drives her to follow Peg, and upon her return she narrates the events which followed:

With a gesture the old woman seemed to open the cairn, and then stood transformed in a curious region of fresh green . . . crowned with a golden diadem . . . And I heard her say . . . in ancient Gaelic: ‘Last Princess of Erin, thou art a lonely dweller among strange peoples; but I the great Queen Maeve have watched thee from thy birth, for thou wert to be the vestal of our country’s last beauty.’ (289)

Peg Inerny, now revealed as the Fairy Queen herself, then displays for Maeve the newly-cold corpse of the male “beauty” who was destined to be her Celtic consort, telling her, ““Thou hast killed him by deserting thy chosen way of life; for there are no more who live in beauty”” (289). She promises, however, that if Maeve will abandon her commitment to the wealthy, English Hugh, her reward will be to reside in the “empire of the Gael” in “Tir-nan-ogue,” where “those who love beauty shall see beauty,” an “immortal beauty of form,” “form that will awaken genius” (293). Following a brief period of vacillation in conversation with Finola, Maeve succumbs to temptation, calling to her “prince of the hoar dew” from her bedroom window, upon which a spectral procession of Celtic figures appear and bear her away (291). The next morning, after those gathered for her nuptials have noted her curious absence, Finola discovers her dead.

Like *The Heather Field* then, *Maeve* presents a conflict between Celtic beauty and British capitalism which has a not entirely propitious outcome, socio-politically speaking. The endeavor to supplant capitalist norms with Celticist ones seems, for Martyn, to issue either in derangement or death. Martyn’s Celticism would seem, then, to adopt almost wholesale the Arnoldian stereotype of the “sentimental,” “melancholy” Celt, a figure whose practical ineptitudes in the domain of historical “fact” preclude the kind of practical/ideal synthesis that was the cardinal aim of the Literary Revival. One further aspect of *Maeve* complicates this defeatist picture, however, and emerges through what seems to be a veiled polemic by Martyn against Arnold’s *Study* itself. Namely, Maeve, inspired by a book written by her “uncle Brian” titled “The Influence of Greek Art on Celtic Ornament,” repeatedly insists on “the brotherhood of the Greek and Celtic races” with regard to their aesthetic ideals (275). Implicitly then, Martyn’s Celticism is responding to Arnold’s crucial distinction in *The Study of Celtic Literature* between the Celtic and Greek racial dispositions, which defines the latter as able to synthesize aesthetic imagination

and civilizational form in a manner inaccessible to the former. For Celtic art to correspond to the ideal aesthetics of the Greeks suggests that Celtic potentiality is not limited to “titanic,” unruly bursts of inspiration, but also bears within it the seeds of socio-political order. It is in this sense that Queen Maeve’s insistence on “the immortal beauty of form” as the leading characteristic of the “empire of the Gael” may be read as gesturing toward an ideal synthesis between raw aesthetic vision and disciplined artistic production, and, through these aesthetic terms, toward a utopian synthesis of Celticist aesthetics and Saxon “industry.”

“Very Solid Kind of Abstractions”: George Moore’s *The Bending of the Bough*

On 20 February 1900, the night after *Maeve*’s debut, the Irish Literary Theater’s audiences were hailed by a play featuring a far more explicit thematic exploration of the conflict between Celtic aesthetics and Saxon capital, George Moore’s *The Bending of the Bough*. The play’s treatment of this Revivalist agon transpires against the backdrop of the so-called Parnell “vacuum” within turn-of-the-century Irish nationalism—that is, the dispersion and decentralization of the political power of the Irish Parliamentary Party upon its leader’s ignominious demise amid the Kitty O’Shea controversy.⁸⁶ P.J. Matthews has recently read the play as reflecting the ensuing tectonic shift within Irish nationalism from parliamentary politics toward the more culturally-oriented strategies of the Revival, and as an endorsement by Moore of the “alternative modernization strategy” Matthews views the Revival as enacting (*Revival* 85). As we shall see, the play communicates this endorsement by rewriting the fall of Parnell as the demise of a pragmatic, efficacious Celticist nationalism beneath the assimilative cultural pressures of British capitalism. Its vision of “alternative modernization” thus constitutes a second Revivalist attempt at envisioning the cultivation of Celticist aesthetic ideals within a material world dominated by Saxon capital.

As the play begins, the audience is clued into this political and economic context through a conversation between John Cloran, the “town clerk” of “Northhaven,” and Macnee, the caretaker of its town hall, regarding the need for a “leader” capable of inspiring “unanimity” among the members of the “Corporation,” the town’s ruling body (56). Cloran suggests that Jasper Dean, a newly elected member of the Corporation who received his education in the neighboring territory of “Southhaven,” is “the very man” for the job (56). Dean soon asserts his political mettle by taking charge of the particularly pressing issue of the unpaid balance of the sale of the town’s “steamers” to Southhaven. His advocacy for a lawsuit against their “rich neighbor” for full payment galvanizes the Corporation, and freights the play’s political and economic plot with Celticist associations (59):

We are the Corporation of a northern town, situated on the western coast on the brink of a natural harbor; and, until a few years ago, we enjoyed the fruits of this good position. Our town was a most important packet station; it had full control of its own dealing with the world at large; it was independent of outside help or hindrance. But we sold our steamers to Southhaven, a large and prosperous town many miles further south, for a certain advantage, including sums of money that have been paid and a much larger sum that has not been paid. In past times . . . the mainly Celtic people of this town and countryside were oppressed, killed and pillaged by the mainly Saxon people of that more wealthy and powerful town, but this is a commercial age, and it has been found sufficient to cheat us . . . (64)

Dean thus links the play’s economic concerns with the racial binary of Celt/Saxon and suggests that the payment of Southhaven’s outstanding debt will constitute a vital step in the restoration of the past civilizational glories of the Irish race. He goes on to indicate that in the absence of legal redress for Southhaven’s economic “cheat”ing, more radical measures must be adopted to ensure the “the greater life of our race and our town,” and states that, though he has been “opposed to the restoration” of Northhaven’s maritime commerce as a result of his family’s “staunch support” for the “connection with Southhaven,” he is nonetheless “prepared to advocate the buying of new vessels and to run them in defiance of all existing agreements” (65). Dean’s bold

management of this pressing economic matter inspires a “unanimous burst of opinion” in his favor and vaults him into the role of the “leader” of the town’s civilizational aspirations.

P.J. Matthews persuasively links this final resolution of Dean’s, to restore the Northhaven economy “in defiance of all existing agreements” with Southhaven, to the Revivalist movement of “self-help,” whereby Irish nationalists disillusioned with turn-of-the-century parliamentary politics sought to skirt the morass of Home Rule and effectuate an immediate replenishment of the national life not dependent on British sanction (79-85). Within the context of the previous chapter’s survey of the Revival’s “metonymically”-configured critique of capital, Dean’s resolution also bears obvious resonance with such component segments of the “self-help” movement as the “native manufactures” movement, and, through such resonance, suggests that the play attempts to envision a fusion of Celticist ideals and economic modernization. The play affirms its commitment to a Celticization of Irish life primarily through the character of Kirwan, the nationalist philosopher who serves as Dean’s mentor. Kirwan’s castigation of Northhaven’s willing self-betrayal through assimilation to the norms of Southhaven, norms from which, according to the play’s primary apostate figure, alderman Lawrence, “all fashion, all society, all culture comes,” strikes a familiar Revivalist note: “We have exchanged our arts, our language, and our ancient aristocracy for a shoddy imitation” (62). The allusion to such seminal cultural-nationalist texts as Douglas Hyde’s “The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland,” which chastises the Irish populace for having become “a nation of imitators” of English civilization, could hardly be clearer, and the play proceeds to ground its material concerns even more firmly in Celticist ideological motivations.

The private conversation between Kirwan and Dean in Act III most fully expresses these motivations. Dean recalls to Kirwan that it was his “writings” which taught him that “none of

us can do without our country,” and Kirwan’s response intones the staple Revivalist piety of the racial significance of the land: “All begins in a sense of the boding sacredness of the land under foot . . . The landscape is the visible image of the mind of its people, created by the imaginations of the race” (76). Dean’s next contribution to this catechistic exposition of the play’s Celticist ideals is to recall that Kirwan’s teaching that “all is thought, all proceeds from thought, and all returns to thought, the world is but our thought,” to which description Kirwan adds, “And the thought of our ancestors” (76). The powerful imaginative propensity of the Arnoldian Celt thus defines the “destiny of the race” to which Dean’s political efforts will contribute (76). Dean’s description of his own political self-conception conveys in full the Celticist filiation of the play’s racial ideology:

I’m thinking that if I am to become a leader of men, and give effect to your teaching, I must believe at once in the self-sufficiency and in the destiny of our race . . . I am nothing, but I must believe in the sacredness of the land underfoot; I must see in it the birthplace of noble thought, heroism and beauty, and divine ecstasies . . . Our gods have not perished; they have but retired to the lonely hills . . . they sit there brooding over our misfortunes, waiting for us . . . (78-9)

To the “melancholy” component of the “sentiment” of the Arnoldian Celt, however—that which through historical development has reduced the Celt’s “noble thought, heroism and beauty, and divine ecstasies” to a “brooding over . . . misfortunes,” and which implicitly therefore renders Union with the more “matter-of-fact” Saxon an indispensable political necessity—Dean’s Kirwanian philosophy asserts a commitment to national autonomy and “self-sufficiency.” In place of Union with Southhaven, the pragmatic economic outlook expressed in Dean’s approach to the question of the “steamers” will contribute to the fruition of the true “spiritual destiny of the Celtic race,” namely, “union with something beyond” (79).

The conclusion of Dean’s earlier speech to the Corporation, however, foreshadows the cultural influence which ultimately short-circuits both his plan of “self-help” and the national

spiritual apotheosis dependent on it. As Dean describes with reference to Corporation's longstanding hesitancy to pursue legal remedies for Southhaven's "cheat"ing policies,

. . . this case has not been pressed because some think that if we did press it Southhaven might say, Take back your line of steamers and return those advantages and those sums of money which we have given you. Others hoped for posts in that wealthy municipality, or had vested money in its line of steamers. It has also been suggested that certain not very clearly defined social advantages which we are supposed to derive from Southhaven might be taken from us, and I have reason to believe that strong social influence has been exerted to prevent our claim from being pressed. Our women folk are particularly open to such influences . . . (64)

The particular susceptibility to capitalist Anglicization noted by Dean in the female inhabitants of Northhaven thus situates the play's *women* as the antithetical term in its Hegelian dialectic. The accuracy of Dean's diagnosis of the female gender orientation of the town's "floodgates of materialism," to recall a phrase of W.B. Yeats's from the essay "Nationality and Literature," is further attested to by its second act, in which Dean's aunts, Caroline and Arabella, converse regarding the state of political unrest in Northhaven with the wives of aldermen Leech and Pollock and with Dean's Southhaven-born fiancé, Millicent Fell, in the drawing room of the Dean household. Caroline's insistence that "a Southhaven accent is essential" to the acquisition of social graces, her further insistence that "a man" such as Dean "must look after his private interests and the interests of his family," Mrs. Leech's observation "aside to Mrs. Pollock" that Millicent's "cloak is the latest fashion. They're all wearing them at Southhaven," and a number of other indicators reinforce the association between femininity and the "strong social influence" of Saxon capitalism. Kirwan's efforts, following his and Dean's arrival in the drawing room, to correct the thoroughly materialist outlook of these Northhaven and Southhaven women, by explaining to Caroline, who insists that the Corporation's recent efforts prove that they are merely "after a sum of money," that "the sum of money is a symbol, behind [which] there is

something more, far more precious than the material prosperity that money will bring,” predictably fall on deaf ears, and, following his and Dean’s exit, they laugh scornfully over the notion of “Tir-non-og shining behind a sum of money” (72-3).

Women thus serve as the primary entry point to Northhaven for Saxon capital, and may thus be read as the linchpin of what Yeats would come to call the “system of bribery” by which the material benefits of Anglicization fuel the historical betrayal of Celtic ideals. Dean’s Aunt Caroline serves as the primary Irish female conduit for the flow of this “bribery,” as evident in her treacherous resolution to “telegraph the facts” concerning Dean’s resolution to “Mr. Hardman,” the Lord Mayor of Southhaven, at the conclusion of Act II (74). It is only, however, when Hardman’s niece, Millicent Fell, chooses to exert her influence over Dean that he becomes entangled in this “system” and begins to put his “private” interests before his “public” duty to the race. She begins to press her claim on Dean by insisting he choose between loyalty to her and loyalty to Kirwan, whom she sees as a rival for his attentions, and subsequently places this personal rivalry within the larger thematic framework of Celtic beauty/Saxon capital by alerting him to an unintended consequence of his “steamer” policy. In conversation with her uncle, who has now arrived in Northhaven to quash the political and economic disturbance of which Caroline’s telegraph message has just informed him, Millicent is reminded of her own interest in its commodious resolution. He states, “it occurs to me that a large part of your money is invested in house property in Southhaven, and the extra rate that would have to be levied to meet this claim would reduce your income considerably. You have money too invested in our line of steamers . . . No man in his senses would put himself at the head of an agitation, the first result of which would be to reduce his wife’s income” (88). Millicent’s response, “I begin to see my way. Thank you, uncle. How clever you are!” indicates her intent to leverage this financial fact as a

means of securing exclusive rights to Dean's affections (88), thus setting the stage for the resolution of the play's thematic conflict, neatly encapsulated at the conclusion of Act III by Kirwan as a struggle between "private interests" and "public duty" (89).

The play's action climaxes in Act IV in the heated argument which follows between Millicent and Jasper over this private/public conflict, at the conclusion of which Dean admits, "I am not equal to the sacrifice. I cannot forego the joy of you, Millicent" (102). Dean finally capitulates to Millicent's "bribery" in defiance of an urgent, final warning by Kirwan, who tells him, "Miss Fell is the temptation that Southhaven sent you, as she sends to each some insidious temptation. Southhaven is always beside us to tempt us in our moment of weakness. No sooner do we become united behind any man than she comes to him with her hands full of bribes" (100). The fully historic significance of Dean's individual failure is aptly described by alderman Lawrence during his conversation with Lord Mayor Hardman at the act's conclusion: "the yielding one is the hinge on which the world swings" (102). To the attentive viewer, the setting of the play's fifth and final act in the Dean drawing room announces the victory of Saxon capital before even one of its lines has been uttered, as it is this domestic setting which, throughout the play, has represented the predominance of the "private" interests incarnated in its female characters. As Dean laments, "So much good there is in me. Yes, I recognized the true, the noble, the steadfast, the holy . . . But the influence of years is not shaken off at once, and I fell back into materialism" (110). The collapse of his nationalist resolve paves the way for the political ascendancy of the cravenly pro-Saxon alderman Lawrence, who becomes the "leader of the people" in Dean's stead by virtue of accepting a "bribe" from Mayor Hardman, in the form of the construction of a "tramway" as an "equivalent" for abandoning the "steamer" campaign (112). The civilizational struggle between a Celtic beauty and Saxon capital is thus decided in

favor of the latter term, and Northhaven, in the absence of the leadership only Dean could have provided, once again makes “obeisance to the largest export trade in the world” (112-3).

Joe Valente has recently interpreted the political demise of Parnell as an outgrowth of the collapse of his exemplary embodiment of the Victorian gender norm of “manliness,” in which the traditional bestially attributes of “masculinity” were viewed as necessitating repressive, “spiritual” control in order to attain the “self-governing” ideal of British democratic citizenship, through the striking *un-self-containment* of his adulterous affair with Catherine O’ Shea (*Myth* 51-61). The reading of Moore’s *The Bending of the Bough* offered here suggests that this gender economy could be symbolically adapted to address nationalist concerns regarding capitalist Anglicization. The allegorical economic significance of Jasper Dean’s admission that he is “not equal to the sacrifice” of foregoing domestic bliss with Millicent Fell for the greater civilizational betterment of Northhaven should thus be viewed as defining Irish nationalist resistance to the temptations of British capitalism as a kind of “manly” self-containment or “checking” of passions, in Valente’s terms. Moore, by figuring capitalism as a peculiarly feminine historical agency, in effect links Revivalist anti-capitalism to this prevailing gender ideal to suggest that Ireland’s continued immersion in British capital constitutes a kind of feminizing loss of cultural self-possession. The restoration of an autonomous “self-help” economic program thus expresses the desire for a non-capitalist, Celticized civilization through the vehicle of established gender norms, and suggests that only a post-capitalist mode of Irish economic development can fulfill the “manly” dictates of independent statehood. Through such texts as Moore’s and, retrospectively, Martyn’s *The Heather Field*—in which the Celtic enterprise of Carden Tryrell collapses beneath the domestic management-style Anglicizing pressures of his wife Grace—we can thus discern that the Literary Revival mobilized a

particularly potent ideological resource against British capital in a coded appeal to normative gender ideals. In such texts, a capitalist Ireland came to be defined as a feminized Ireland, and, concomitantly, to embrace the otherwise “essentially feminine” characteristics of the Celt as a resource of “alternative modernization” came to be figured as a “manly” act. We shall see in what follows that such gendered encryptions of the dialectic of Celtic beauty and Saxon capital as Martyn and Moore mobilized became one of the primary vehicles by which the Literary Revival sought to appeal to its popular nationalist constituency.

“The Dream of a Madman”: George Bernard Shaw’s *John Bull’s Other Island*

No survey of the Celticist anti-capitalism of the Revival would be complete without a reading of George Bernard Shaw’s play *John Bull’s Other Island*. Though critics such as Declan Kiberd have rightly identified a degree of anti-Revivalist sentiment in the text, a close reading of its thematic rumination over the agon of Celt and Capital reveals that Shaw’s description of the play, in his “Preface for Politicians,” as “a patriotic contribution to the repertory of the Irish Literary Theater,” is not entirely ironic (471). If, as John Harrington claims, the play depicts some components of Irish nationalism as a “clever scam” (“Preface” xi), an assessment supported by Shaw’s own comment elsewhere in the “Preface” that the text’s political message is “uncongenial to the whole spirit of the neo-Gaelic movement” (471), it nonetheless endorses the staple “neo-Gaelic” nationalist position of opposing the depredations of British capitalism. Whatever Shaw’s antipathy toward either Revivalist nationalism’s stated ideals or their practical incarnation, by virtue of his simultaneous intimacy with Anglo-Irish cultural mixture and commitment to Fabian socialist reform, his play ultimately gestures toward a variety of anti-capitalist Irishness very much in keeping with those very ideals. At the same time, however, Shaw’s critical distance from, and far less than total investment in, the mainstream Revivalist

movement also enables him to spurn the “metonymic” tactics adopted by its other members in order to evade the clerical campaign against socialism/communism. *John Bull’s Other Island*, alone among the Revivalist texts surveyed in this chapter, expresses the socialist ideals underpinning its nationalist ideology full-throatedly and without equivocation, directly naming Capitalism as Ireland’s foremost socio-political antagonist.

As Act I opens, Tom Broadbent, who serves as the play’s avatar of British capital, engages in a comical exchange with Tim Haffigan, its representative “stage Irishman,” which suggests that this longstanding English stereotype of Irishness derives its cultural longevity from its profitability for those performing it. To Broadbent’s prototypical Saxon gaze, Haffigan’s self-commodifying racial performance bears all the marks of genuine Irishness: “I saw at once that you are a thorough Irishman, with all the faults and all the qualities of your race: rash and improvident but brave and goodnatured; not likely to succeed in business on your own account perhaps, but eloquent, humorous, a lover of freedom, and a true follower of that great Englishman Gladstone” (124). Broadbent therefore enlists Haffigan to accompany him on an upcoming business trip to Ireland in the capacity of an emissary tasked with quelling native resistance to his agenda of founding “an estate there for the Land Development Syndicate,” a “Garden City” with all the amenities of British consumer capitalism (124). Broadbent’s business partner, the Irishman Larry Doyle, quickly foils Haffigan’s attempt to fleece him, and, following Haffigan’s panicked flight from the premises, he warns Broadbent against future susceptibility to such confidence schemes as Haffigan’s stage Irishness exemplifies:

Man alive, don’t you know that all this top-of-the-morning, and broth of a boy, and more power to your elbow business is got up in England to fool you, like the Albert Hall concerts of Irish music? No Irishman ever talks like that of Ireland, or ever did, or ever will. But when a thoroughly worthless Irishman comes to England, and finds the whole place full of romantic duffers like you . . . he soon

learns the antics that take you in. He picks them up at the theatre and the music hall. (128)

At least one prominent species of Irishness in the play, then, is directly inspired by such British popular cultural commodities as the entertainment fare of the “theater and the music hall.” It is only the “romantic” English mental proclivities of Broadbent that lend this reified Irishness an ongoing currency, in both senses of the word.

When Doyle proceeds to complain that the Syndicate’s plans for developing Ireland’s economy will turn several native inhabitants of which he is fond out of house and home, Broadbent broaches the issue of Celticism proper by classing his complaint as a manifestation of “the melancholy of the Keltic race” (129, *sic*). Doyle’s heated reply to this patronizing racialization makes abundantly clear that the play’s conception of Irishness will not endorse either Matthew Arnold himself or the Arnoldianism of the Celtic Revival:

My dear Tom, you only need a touch of the Irish climate to be as big a fool as I am myself. If all my Irish blood were poured into your veins, you wouldn’t turn a hair of your constitution and character . . . No, no: the climate is different. Here, if the life is dull, you can be dull too . . . your wits can’t thicken in that soft moist air . . . in those misty rushes and brown bogs . . . You’ve no such lure in the sky, no such sadness in the evenings. Oh the dreaming! the dreaming! the torturing, heartscalding, never-satisfying dreaming, dreaming, dreaming, dreaming! . . . No debauchery that ever coarsened or brutalized an Englishman can take the worth and usefulness out of him like that dreaming. An Irishman’s imagination never lets him alone, never convinces him, never satisfies him, but it makes him that he can’t face reality nor deal with it nor handle it nor conquer it: he can only sneer at them that do . . . It’s all dreaming, all imagination. He can’t be religious . . . he can’t be intelligently political . . . If you want to interest him in Ireland you’ve got to call the unfortunate island Kathleen ni Hoolihan and pretend she’s a little old woman. It saves thinking. It saves working. It saves everything except imagination, imagination, and imagination’s such a torture you can’t bear it without whisky . . . (131)

Shaw’s Celt, then, is climatologically produced, and the facility with “dreaming” and “imagination” that this Celt displays is the outcome not of biology but rather of the “lure” of Ireland’s bogs, rushes, air and evening sky. The mistaken English notion that such cardinal

Arnoldian characteristics inhere in genetics receives a historical-materialist corrective, and the Revivalist political mythology of “Kathleen ni Hoolihan” becomes thereby merely a further manifestation of that environmentally produced “dreaming” which precludes the Celt from practical efficacy in the realm of historical “fact.” From this thinly veiled Shavian rant on the pitfalls of native Irishness, it becomes glaringly evident that the play’s vision for a regenerated Irishness will not derive from the “imaginative” faculty that holds the central place in the contemporary Revivalist canon. In spite of this broadside on Revivalism, however, Doyle closes the play’s first act with a quasi-Utopian lament which suggests that some combination of this faculty and the practical English mastery of “fact” will form the its ultimate ideal: “I wish I could find a country to live in where the facts were not brutal and the dreams not unreal” (137).

Upon their arrival in Doyle’s native Roscommon, it quickly becomes evident that a further “brutal” material influence has grafted additional characteristics onto the geographically-produced “unreality” of Irishness. Through this influence, Harrington’s assessment of the play’s depiction of nationalism as a “clever scam” receives partial validation. As with the profit motive underlying the stage Irishness of Tim Haffigan, the majority of the Irish nationalist agitation the play depicts is motivated by the economic self-interest of the Irish lower classes. One of the play’s immediate historical points of reference is the Wyndham Act of 1903, which provided for British parliamentary buyouts of the holdings of Irish landlords and their subsidized resale to former tenants. According to F.S.L Lyons, under the auspices of the Act, by 1920 “nine million acres had changed hands” from landlord to tenant, effectively alleviating the grievance that fueled the Land Wars of the later nineteenth century (*Ireland* 214). *John Bull’s Other Island*, however, diagnoses the ramifications of the Act as far from entirely progressive, and depicts the Irish tenant- farmer-turned-landowner class as merely heritors of the mantle of bourgeois money-

grubbing rather than its destructors. Irish nationalist land agitation has, in this portrait, been co-opted by the very British capitalist property system it would ostensibly abolish.

The play broaches this theme upon the arrival of an “old peasant farmer,” Matt Haffigan, at the Roscommon home of the Doyle family (157). Upon his observation that Haffigan has grown “surly and stand-off” since he last saw him, Larry’s Aunt Judy informs him, “Oh sure he’s bought his farm in the Land Purchase. He’s independent now” (157). Larry’s childhood love interest Nora explains further, “It’s made a great change, Larry. You’d hardly know the old tenants now. Youd think it was a liberty to speak to them” (156). It soon becomes clear that, far from there being “hardly any landlords left,” as Aunt Judy predicts, in Larry’s words, “on the contrary, there’ll soon be nothing else” (159). A roundtable discussion ensues between Larry, Broadbent, Haffigan, Larry’s father Corney, described as a “country land agent,” Father Dempsey, the neighborhood’s religious primate, and Barney Doran, the owner of a local mill, over the need for replacing the formerly democratizing policies of Irish nationalist members of parliament with policies instead designed to freeze the Irish class hierarchy in its current state. Haffigan voices dissatisfaction with the property redistribution ideology of Roscommon’s “present member,” complaining, “We’ve had enough of his foolish talk agen landlords,” and Corney Doyle soon follows suit, explaining,

We’re tired of him. He doesn’t know hwere to stop. Every man cant own land; and some men must own it to employ them . . . Round about here, weve got the land at last; and we want no more Government meddlin. We want a new class of man in parliament: one dhat know dhat the farmer’s the real backbone o the country, n doesnt care a snap of his fingers for the shoutn o the riff-raff in the towns, or for the foolishness of the laborers. (162-3)

The discussion quickly arrives at its practical purpose, namely to secure Larry’s commitment to campaign for the seat and usurp the overly progressive current representative. Larry’s response, however (in another thinly-veiled Shavian rant), announces his refusal of the nomination in no

uncertain terms. He accuses Haffigan of seeking to perpetuate the capitalist exploitation of which he was formerly the victim by fixing the Irish underclass, represented in the rustic, ignorant figure of “Patsy Farrell,” in a state of permanent peonage:

I tell you plump and plain, Matt, that if anybody thinks things will be any better now that the land is handed over to a lot of little men like you, without calling you to account either, they’re mistaken . . . Because it was by using Patsy’s poverty to undersell England in the markets of the world that we drove England to ruin Ireland. And she’ll ruin us again the moment we lift our heads from the dust if we trade in cheap labor, and serve us right too! If I get into parliament, I’ll try to get an Act to prevent any of you from paying Patsy less than a pound a week . . . Is Ireland never to have a chance? First she was given to the rich; and now that they have gorged on her flesh, her bones are to be flung to the poor, that can do nothing but suck the marrow out of her. (165)

Irish nationalism in this account is merely capitalism by other means, merely a ruse designed to authorize the economic ascendancy of the tenant farmer turned petty landowner. Larry therefore refuses to contribute to this ongoing process of “ruin”ation by “gorg[ing]” himself on the corpse of his country. Irish “dreaming,” it seems, has given way to capitalist scheming, solidifying the national status quo as a very “brutal” set of “facts” indeed.

Larry’s compound hatred for both his countrymen’s “dreams” and their self-interested materialism, however, drives him to endorse the candidacy of the one man most likely to perpetuate such “brutality,” Broadbent. “If we cant have men of honor own the land, lets have men of ability. If we can’t have men with ability, let us at least have men with *capital*,” he berates his auditors (165, emphasis added). Doyle’s hypocritical submission to “capital” clears the way from Broadbent’s political rise, a rise further enabled by Broadbent’s uncanny ability simultaneously to parrot the British Liberal Party line endorsing Irish self-determination through Home Rule and pursue economic ends whose accomplishment will directly militate against that political goal. Broadbent’s arch-capitalist machinations do not merely portend the steamrolling and elimination of environmentally-produced Irish Celtic qualities such as “dreaming,” however.

Through Broadbent's comically hapless courtship of Nora, the childhood flame of Larry Doyle, it becomes clear that he intends to *market* the island's Celtic characteristics as a profitable commodity. Upon his arrival at the "Round Tower" where Nora waits to be reunited with Larry, for whom, in spite of his long absence, she still carries a romantic torch, it becomes immediately evident that many of these characteristics are produced not only by the Irish environment but also by the "romantic" Saxon gaze. Within minutes of their acquaintance, Broadbent's "sentimentality" inspires a full-blown proposal of marriage: "The magic of this Irish scene, and . . . the charm of your Irish voice . . . all the harps of Ireland are in your voice . . . Will you be my wife?" (151-3). Broadbent's oppressive attentions quickly achieve their desired result, and Nora soon becomes one of the key assets in securing the endorsement of the Roscommon inhabitants for his parliamentary candidacy. Broadbent's English gaze then turns immediately from the recruitment of Nora's Irish "charm" into his economically-motivated political campaign to the future activities his victory will enable. As he walks arm in arm with Nora in the "hillside air" of Roscommon, he tells her, "Ah! I like this spot. I like this view. This would be a jolly good place for a hotel and a golf links. Friday to Tuesday, railway ticket and hotel all inclusive. I tell you, Nora, I'm going to develop this place" (193). In Broadbent's Ireland, the native "magic" of its geography, the mesmeric force which contributed powerfully to the historical predominance of unproductive, hapless "dreaming" among its inhabitants, will be converted into a tourist attraction.

Only Peter Keegan, a "mad" rogue priest outcast from the church for heresy who yet retains much of his former social eminence in Roscommon, stands between Broadbent and the realization of his capitalist designs. It is in conversation with Keegan that the full measure of Broadbent's "brutal"ity is finally revealed. Keegan has observed the subtle Machiavellianism of

Broadbent from the play's first act, and as the play's final act begins to approach its climax, the two arrive at the garden outside the Doyle home "conversing energetically" (196). Broadbent's first audible lines make clear that he has been preaching the gospel of capital to Keegan, as he states, "Nothing pays like a golfing hotel, if you hold the land instead of the shares, and if the furniture people stand in with you and if you are a good man of business" (196). Through Keegan's lamenting reply, Shaw begins to articulate the alternative, utopian Irish nationalism the play will ultimately endorse:

. . . when I come here in the evenings to meditate on my madness; to watch the shadow of the Round Tower lengthening in the sunset; to break my heart uselessly in the curtained gloaming over the dead heart and blinded soul of the island of the saints, you will comfort me with the bustle of a great hotel, and the sight of little children carrying the golf clubs of your tourists as a preparation for the life to come. (196)

Broadbent's implacable response that Keegan is "quite right," by which he means that "there's poetry in everything, even . . . in the most modern prosaic things, if you know how to extract it," portends a stillbirth for his utopian "dream," as such "poetic" nationalist sentiments are converted by the "conquering Englishman" into merely one more resource for "extract"ion (196). Broadbent goes on to utilize Keegan as a sounding board for further schemes of capitalist cooptation, telling him, "There seems to be no question now that the motor boat has come to stay. Well, look at your magnificent river there, going to waste" (196). The only real dilemma Broadbent can foresee is the decision over whether Roscommon has "an industrial future" or a "residential future" (197). When Keegan voices concern over the historical fate of Irish peasant farmers like Matt Haffigan, who has become, unbeknownst to himself, "cunningly fenced in" by the "invisible bars" of capitalist modernity, Broadbent pulls back the curtain to reveal the full, nightmarish scope of the project his "Syndicate" is pursuing:

The fact is, there are only two qualities in the world: efficiency and inefficiency, and only two sorts of people: the efficient and the inefficient . . . Our syndicate has no conscience: it has no more regard for your Haffigans and Doolans and Dorans than it has for a gang of Chinese coolies . . . In the end it will grind the nonsense out of you, and grind strength and sense into you . . . We'll take Ireland in hand, and by straightforward business habits teach it efficiency. . . I shall bring money here: I shall raise wages: I shall found public institutions: a library, Polytechnic, (undenominational, of course), a gymnasium, a cricket club, perhaps an art school. I shall make a Garden city of Roscullen. (198)

In such a dystopian Ireland, any vestige of particularity in the national culture will be subsumed beneath the reifying global trajectory of capitalist “efficiency,” and the nation’s inhabitants will have no more freedom or fulfillment than “a gang of Chinese coolies.” “Straightforward business habits” will “grind” the Irish beneath their heel, and those landmarks such as the “round tower” which distinguish the nation from its Saxon occupiers will be converted into so many profit-generating nodes on a map of tourist attractions.

In a further ironic twist, Broadbent’s soaring vision of capitalist reification partially succeeds in persuading Keegan to vote for him. Keegan’s resigned admission of the attractiveness of Broadbent’s “gospel of efficiency” seems to voice a definitive condemnation on Shaw’s part of any Irish nationalist resistance to its ascendancy: “perhaps I had better vote for an efficient devil that knows his own mind and his own business than for a foolish patriot who has no mind and no business” (199). However, Shaw concludes the play by voicing, through Keegan, a utopian alternative to this dystopian “gospel,” an alternative which unambiguously realigns the play’s ideas with many of the Celticist ideals the play has so venomously condemned. Comparing Broadbent to “the ass,” an animal he defines as “the most efficient of beasts,” Keegan presses the analogy toward a full-throated expression of nationalist anti-capitalism. Such an “ass” as Broadbent is

efficient in the service of Mammon, mighty in mischief, skilful in ruin, heroic in destruction. But he comes to browse here without knowing that the soil his hoof

touches is holy ground. Ireland, sir, for good or evil, is like no other place under heaven: and no man can touch its sod or breathe its air without becoming better or worse. It produces two kinds of men in strange perfection: saints and traitors. It is called the island of the saints; but indeed in these later years it might be more fitly called the island of traitors . . . But the day may come when these islands shall live by the quality of their men rather than by the abundance of their minerals; and then we shall see. (200)

Accused by Larry Doyle of being “sentimental about Ireland,” Keegan reveals that his religiously-inflected nationalist opposition to British capital is based not on some callow, knee-jerk response, but rather a very advanced understanding of its depredations. He stuns the two businessmen with an extremely savvy prognostication of the future of the Syndicate’s Irish scheme, a diagnosis which seems to them nothing short of an “inspiration,” in spite of its bitter tenor and prediction of ultimate failure:

When the hotel becomes insolvent, your English business habits will secure the thorough efficiency of the liquidation. You will organize the scheme efficiently; you will liquidate its second bankruptcy efficiently; you will get rid of its original shareholders efficiently, after efficiently ruining them; and you will finally profit very efficiently by getting that hotel for a few shillings on the pound. Besides these efficient operations, you will foreclose your mortgages most efficiently . . . and when this poor desolate countryside becomes a busy mint in which we shall all slave to make money for you, with our Polytechnic to teach us how to do it efficiently, and our library to fuddle the few imaginations your distilleries will spare, and our repaired Round Tower with admission sixpence, and refreshments and penny-in-the-slot mutoscopes to make it interesting, then no doubt your English and American shareholders will spend all the money we make for them very efficiently in shooting and hunting . . . in gluttony and gambling; and you will devote what they save to fresh land development schemes. For four wicked centuries the world has dreamed this foolish dream of efficiency; and the end is not yet. But the end will come. (201)

After Keegan has delivered this acute, dystopian vision of the total reification of the “holy ground” of Ireland by British capitalist development, he disgustedly departs for his customary place of “mad” meditation, the Round Tower, where, he tells them, he will bide his time, “dreaming of heaven.” Though Doyle responds by classing Keegan as merely another

ineffectual Irish dreamer, Broadbent is curious just what Keegan's "heaven" contains. Keegan obliges him with the following description:

In my dreams it is a country where the State is the Church and the Church the people: three in one and one in three. It is a commonwealth in which work is play and play is life: three in one and one in three. It is a temple in which the priest is the worshipper and the worshipper the worshipped; three in one and one in three. It is a godhead in which all life is human and all humanity divine: three in one and one in three. It is, in short, the dream of a madman. (203)

Keegan's "mad" dream envisions heaven as a commonwealth in which disparities of political, religious or economic power are no more, and where, consequently, human potentiality achieves divinity. The "priest-ridden," mutually exploitative, politically self-serving Irish depicted elsewhere in the play are then, seemingly, promised redemption by Shaw's utopian "dream." If the anti-clericalism and political cynicism of this vision would seem to violate many of the cardinal values of contemporary Irish nationalism, its economic component would seem to comport rather well with the movement's ideology, in both its Catholic and Literary incarnations. The "patriotic contribution" of *John Bull's Other Island*, for all its self-vaunted nonconformity and anti-nationalist venom, is not entirely at odds with the tenets of the "neo-Gaelic movement." Though he clearly fancied himself a rogue agent operating outside the ranks of popular nationalism, Shaw, by entering through the side door of Fabian Socialism, articulates a "patriotic" anti-capitalism consonant in many ways with that of the political rank and file he so stridently disdained.

Yeats's Early Drama, the "Fetishism of Defeat" and the (Irish) Rebirth of Celtic Tragedy

As with its predecessors in the Literary Theater's turn-of-the-century anti-capitalist campaign, however, Shaw's contribution concludes by seemingly foreclosing on the majority of this utopian potential. As Keegan moves off into the distance to resume his perch at the Round Tower, Broadbent reflects to Doyle, "He's a character: he'll be an attraction here . . . [he] raised

my tone enormously . . . He has made me feel a better man: distinctly better. I feel now as I never did before that I am right in devoting my life to the cause of Ireland. Come along and help me to choose the site for the hotel” (203). Thus, as with Carden Tyrell, Maeve and Jasper Dean, Peter Keegan succumbs to the very economic modernity he has been created to oppose. His eloquent, moving plea in favor of a utopian “commonwealth” in which “work is play and play is life,” is devoured by Broadbent’s all-consuming, all-reifying “Syndicate,” and the only enduring trace of its existence is a purely ornamental elevation in the “tone” of its activities. Shaw’s “poor, desolate countryside” will indeed become a “Garden City,” a “busy mint” that, whether its fate be “residential” or “industrial,” will serve as a hub of the “slave”-driven “efficiency” machine that is trans-Atlantic, Euro-American capital. Those “Coolies” who retain sufficient consciousness to seek respite within this post-apocalyptic world will find for their distraction a quaint, curious “madman,” meditating on the extinction of values whose names no longer have meaning, outside the refurbished Round Tower of Roscullen, “admission sixpence.”

Declan Kiberd’s condemnation of the cultural politics of *John Bull’s Other Island* in *Inventing Ireland* raises a crucial question to which any analysis of the literature of the Celtic Revival must provide an answer, a question the foregoing survey of Literary Theatrical texts has been geared in part toward raising. Kiberd complains that, for all the ingeniousness of Shaw’s dramatic exfoliation of Ireland’s condition, the play ultimately “would seem to ratify the stereotype” that any progressive nationalism of the era was set on destroying. Namely, through the “ultimate cynicism” of the play’s denouement, an outcome which suggests the perpetuation of the binary opposition between “efficient English administrator and the impractical Irish,” the play finally comes to endorse “pure Celticism” (58). “Celticism,” defined as coterminous with this defeatist “stereotype,” inevitably issues a tendency noted by numerous critics of Revivalist

aesthetics, a tendency which I will term the “fetishism of defeat.” That is, by virtue of its Arnoldian coinage in service to British imperial goals, the “sentimental”ity of the Celt would seem doomed *a priori*, by its very “melancholy” nature, to bear out the epigraph of *The Study of Celtic Literature*: “They went forth to war, but they always fell.” According to this interpretation, the Celticism of the Revival ultimately arrived at a Fanonian “blind alley” wherein, by embracing the loaded terms of a colonial stereotype, Irish nationalism merely succeeded in reproducing the definitional premises of British imperial bondage. The “melancholy” conclusions of Martyn’s *The Heather Field* and *Maeve*, Moore’s *The Bending of the Bough*, and Shaw’s *John Bull’s Other Island* would seem to recommend such a reading fairly insistently.

Throughout the foregoing survey of these dramatic texts, I have been at pains to demonstrate one of the blind spots in this analysis, namely that Celticism provided an invaluable stimulus toward anti-capitalist, utopian ideals, ideals whose decolonizing force and post-colonial viability cannot be so easily dismissed. The aestheticized land development scheme of Carden Tyrell, the genius-inspiring “form” of Maeve’s “Tir-nan-Ogue,” the pragmatic “holiness” of Jasper Dean’s leadership, the “Three-in-One” paradise of Peter Keegan—all of these ideas, with the partial exception of the latter, derive their particular content in large part from Celticist doctrine. However negatively the works in which they appear conclude, their use of Celticism is inseparable from their articulation of a decolonizing anti-capitalism, and therefore surely amounts to more than a “fetishism of defeat.” Nonetheless, in this section I would like to take seriously the charge leveled at Shaw by Kiberd and by so many Irish Studies critics at the “neo-Gaelic movement” as a whole—that Revivalist plays whose endings entail the “defeat” of their

Celtic protagonists and of the Celticist values they embody constitute an unproductive, colonially reifying “surrender to the stereotype.”

As we shall see, this charge was, in fact, leveled repeatedly during the Revival itself at its “Literary” participants, many of whose aesthetic efforts—particularly those of Yeats—were viewed as defeatist and insufficiently politically galvanizing by their Catholic Nationalist critics. The question of the political efficacy of Revivalist drama remains, in fact, one of the staple discussion topics within Irish Studies, where the demand for “positive” visions of regenerated Irish life is alive and well. Leaving aside for the moment the utopian, anti-capitalist impulse bespoken by such texts as I have adduced, I want to argue that this pragmatic demand ironically activates the very same “blind alley” consequences it would seek to prevent. The political efficacy of Revivalist Celticism is not, indeed, to be sought simply in the resolutions of the dramatic plots that serve as its vehicles of public transmission. Instead, I will argue, the greater portion of the decolonizing force of such texts resides in their attempt to challenge, complicate and supplant the popular-cultural habits of consumption, particularly habits of literary consumption, which attended Ireland’s immersion in British capitalism at the *fin-de-siecle*. It is only by considering Revivalist texts as interventions into an Irish public sphere controlled by the popular-cultural forms of British capitalism that their primary contribution to the cause of decolonization may be identified. Emphasis on this dimension of the Revivalist enterprise, I will suggest, enables, in sequence: first, a fuller recognition of the extent and composition of the Revival’s Celticist anti-capitalist efforts; second, a concomitant strengthening of the Revival’s claim to being a properly *modernist* aesthetic movement; third, enhanced insight into the socio-historical location of the fault lines separating the popular/Catholic and Literary factions of Irish

nationalism; and, fourth, a recognition of the defeat of the literary ideals of the latter by those of the former as a signpost of colonial retrenchment, rather than liberation.

I would like to conduct this interrogation of the “fetishism of defeat” in Revivalist Celticism in part through a reading of another of its prototypical works, W.B. Yeats’s *The Land of Heart’s Desire*. Though Yeats completed the play in 1894, and though it therefore antedates the foundation of the Irish Literary Theater, the Irish National Theater Society and the Abbey Theater, its particularly “pure” Celticism aligns the text with the concerns raised by the later works analyzed thus far. The play’s Celticist theme corresponds very closely to the themes of *The Heather Field* and *Maeve* in particular, and it shares with these texts a commitment to leveraging Celtic aesthetic and social ideals against an Irish status quo controlled by the influence of British capital. Additionally, however, *The Land of Heart’s Desire* defines the prevailing norms of Irish society as dually shaped not merely by British capital but also by Irish Catholicism, both of which it depicts, in keeping with the ontological anatomy of Revivalist Celticism developed in this study’s fourth chapter, as desiccating an inborn Irish Celtic vitality. The play presents an early yet pristine example of Yeats’s lifelong stand against the insidious social influence of “The Puritan and the Merchant,” to recall the terms of the 1902 essay “Edmund Spenser,” and it is in order to combat these interlocking agencies—both of which that essay defines as essentially *British*—that its Celticism begins to assert itself.

The play also presents an early instance of another of Yeats’s lifelong commitments, the commitment to the use of symbolism as a vehicle for transmitting his anti-clerical and anti-capitalist ideals to the Irish populace. The play’s two primary symbols, the “cross” and the “heart,” both serve to express resistance to the moribund repressiveness of a society controlled by the intertwined Anglicizing influences of “the Puritan and the Merchant.” Yeats’s initial

stage directions insist on there being “a crucifix on the wall” of the Bruin household, and the dialogue that follows immediately alerts the audience to the deep thematic relevance of the “cross” to the play’s development. In response to his mother Bridget’s complaint that her daughter-in-law, Mary, “because I bid her clean the pots for supper,” “took that old book down out of the thatch” of the Bruin cottage and “has been doubled over it ever since,” thus shirking her wifely labors, Shawn Bruin tells her, “Mother, you are too cross” (34). When Bridget further explains, “She would not mind the kettle, mild the cow, or even lay the knives and spread the cloth,” it becomes clear that her “cross” disposition is the result of her besetment with such domestic chores (35). The religious impulse behind such economic duties as Mary attempts to avoid soon becomes evident through the counsel provided Bridget by the “old priest” of the “Barony of Kilmacowen” in which the play is set, Father Hart. Hart assures her that Mary’s wayward behavior will dissipate with the passage of time: “I have seen some other girls/ Restless and ill at ease, but years went by,/ And they grew like their neighbors and were glad/ In minding children, working at the churn,/ And gossiping of weddings and of wakes” (36). Mary is fated, it seems, to grow as “cross” as Bridget has under the dual pressures of domestic economy and clerical surveillance.

The play’s other central symbol, the “heart,” begins to assert itself through the reading activities that keep Mary Bruin from her chores. Maurteen Bruin narrates the history of the “old book” that distracts his daughter-in-law, and therein establishes its role as the catalyst of her “heart’s desire” to escape the play’s normative regime:

My father told me my grandfather wrote it . . .
 It was little good he got out of the book,
 Because it filled his house with rambling fiddlers,
 And rambling ballad-makers and the like . . .
 Colleen, what is the wonder in that book,
 That you must leave the bread to cool? Had I

Or had my father read or written books
 There were no stockings stuffed with yellow guineas
 To come when I am dead to Shawn and you. (35)

Father Hart immediately reinforces the message contained in these lines, that engagement with such “rambling” texts detracts from the primary aim of life, the accumulation of “yellow guineas,” by chastising Mary, “You should not be filling your head with foolish dreams” (35).

He presses his surveillance further by inquiring, “What are you reading?,” and Mary’s answering description of the book’s contents unmistakably affirms its Celticist filiations. She relates “How a Princess Edain,”

A daughter of a King of Ireland, heard
 A voice singing on a May Eve like this,
 And followed, half awake and half asleep,
 Until she came into the Land of Faery,
 Where nobody gets old and godly and grave,
 Where nobody gets old and crafty and wise,
 Where nobody gets old and bitter of tongue.
 And she is still there, busied with a dance . . . (36)

In this “Land of Faery,” the “cross” influences of “grave” religion and “crafty” economic savvy are barred from etiolating human vitality, and in place of the “bitter[ness] of tongue” that is bred of these influences in Bridget Bruin, its inhabitants experience a carefree merriment. Mary’s entrancement by this “dream” overpowers the remonstrations of Father Hart, who speculates that “it was some wrecked angel . . . / Who flattered Edain’s heart with merry words,” and of Maurteen, who implores Mary to be a “good girl” and entices her obedience with reminders of the “hundred acres of good land,” the “golden guineas” the land has brought, and the “content and wisdom” such possessions bring to the Irish “heart” (38-9). She thus calls to the “Good People” of the “Land of Faery,” beseeching them,

Come, faeries, take me out of this dull house!
 Let me have all the freedom I have lost;
 Work when I will and idle when I will!

Faeries, come take me out of this dull world,
 For I would ride with you upon the wind,
 And dance upon the mountains like a flame. (39)

The slow encroachments of the cruciform pressures of economy and religion are, then, responsible for sharpening Mary's "heart's desire" into a dream of escape to a Celtic paradise in which "dull" duty gives way to "freedom" and revelry.

Before Mary's entreaty to the "Good People" is answered by the arrival of a mysterious fairy "child," Yeats suggests that there is already potential for realizing such "freedom" within the material world. Hearing Mary's lament for the "dull" life she has married into, a life she further describes as a kind of "captivity," Shawn Bruin defends himself from the charge of complicity with his parents and Father Hart in terms which gesture toward his possession of a "heart's desire" similar to hers. "Do not blame me," he soothes here, "Sit down beside me here—these are too old,/ And have forgotten they were ever young" (40). According to Yeats's stage directions, at this moment, Mary "would put her arms around him, but looks shyly at the priest and lets her arms fall" (40). Father Hart, noticing her reticence, attempts to encourage the couple's affectionate display but does so in terms which quickly reassert his oppressive influence: "My daughter, take his hand—by love alone/ God binds us to Himself and to the hearth/That shuts us from the waste beyond His peace,/ From maddening freedom and bewildering light" (40). Shawn affirms his commitment to gratifying Mary's libertory urges, assuring her, "Would that the world were mine to give it you,/ And not its quiet hearths alone, but even/ All that bewilderment of light and freedom,/ If you would have it" (40). Mary's "desire" seems to be satisfied by Shawn's loving attentions, as she tells him, "Your looks are all the candles that I need" (40). It would therefore seem that, in the absence of the domestic-economic nagging of the elder Bruin couple and Father Hart's "bind"ing reinforcement of the

duties of the “hearth,” Mary and Shawn, through their youthful vitality and passion, might achieve a level of “freedom” on earth that would eliminate the need for utopian “dream”ing.

Mary’s fate, however, has already been sealed by virtue of her appeal to the Celtic “faeries,” an appeal whose power is intensified by the play’s temporal setting on a “May eve” in which the “wrecked angels” of the Irish wood have increased sway over human affairs. There soon arrives a “child of the gentle people” whose purpose in removing Mary Bruin to the Land of Fairy gradually comes to light. In spite of her seemingly nefarious intent, the “child” succeeds in “coaxing” the most “crafty” and “godly” of the cottage’s inhabitants to surrender to her designs. Maurteen, noting the change in Bridget upon her arrival, tells her, “The mother was quite cross before you came,” and Father Hart, in spite of his earlier assurance that the crucifix on the wall “will keep all evil from the house,” soon agrees to the child’s request that he remove “that ugly thing on the black cross” from her presence (43). A heated struggle for the soul of Mary Bruin then ensues between Shawn and Father Hart and the child, in which struggle, because he has removed the crucifix, Father Hart is rendered powerless. Shawn fares far better in his efforts to “bind” Mary to the material world, in spite of the child’s “coaxing” reminder that remaining in the cottage will cause Mary to “grow like the rest;/ Bear children, cook, and bend above the churn,/ And wrangle over butter, fowl, and eggs,/ Until at last, grown old and bitter of tongue,/ You’re crouching there and shivering at the grave” (45). His appeals to her seem on the brink of succeeding, as Mary states, “I think that I would stay—and yet—and yet—,” but, finally, according to the stage directions, “Mary Bruin dies” and is transubstantiated into the realm of “faery” in the form of a “white bird” (46). The play’s conclusion bears out the prophecy contained in the song sung by the child since her arrival, as, beneath from the “cross”

pressures of economy and religion that impinge upon Mary's passionate marriage and youthful vitality, "the lonely of heart is withered away" (47).

As with the previous texts this chapter has addressed, then, *The Land of Heart's Desire* utilizes Celticist discourse as a means of throwing into relief the oppressive conditions of contemporary Irish society. Mary's Celticist "dream" is both negatively spurred by the repressive, "cross" demands placed on her Irish "heart" by capitalism and Catholicism and also positively geared toward defining the ideal social characteristics that will replace this economic-religious regime. If, then, the play concludes its exploration of Celticist alternatives to a British-derived ontological impoverishment on a defeatist note, this conclusion hardly militates against its contribution to the Revivalist effort to envision such alternatives. In spite of the salience of its utopianism, however, the play nonetheless seems to participate in the "fetishism of defeat" and, thereby, to reify the colonial stereotype of the dream-plagued, materially ineffectual Celt. As with the plays of Martyn, Moore and Shaw offered by the Irish Literary Theater years later, Yeats's pioneering Celticist drama seems, to some degree, to present a negative prognosis for the potential of Irish nationalism to manifest these alternative ideals in the domain of "fact."

To rehabilitate the Celticist drama of the Literary Revival from the charge of conforming to imperial stereotypes, something of a shift in interpretive perspective is required. This shift must consist, first and foremost, of a further historical contextualization of the seemingly pessimistic outcomes of such plays as I have catalogued here, a contextualization which returns them to the real Irish economic domain in which they directly participated. We must change the question, in other words, from "What depictions of successful Irish nationalist decolonization do these works depict?" to "What material function propitious to such decolonization might the

recurrent depiction of Celtic ‘defeat’ serve to advance?” We may begin to conduct such a shift by noting one further textual detail from *The Land of Heart’s Desire*, a detail which links the play directly with the contemporary Irish marketplace. Though Yeats’s stage directions indicate that the play is set in “a remote time” and therefore might be expected to be equally remote from concerns of contemporary commodity consumption, the play subtly gestures toward the pertinence of this anachronistic context to its interpretation. Specifically, the play identifies Mary Bruin as a consumer of *fashion*. As Bridget complains to Maurteen prior to Mary’s invocation of the fairies, “You are the fool of every pretty face,/ And I must spare and pinch that my son’s wife/ May have all kinds of ribbons for her head” (38). Lest there be any doubt concerning the importance of this seemingly minor textual detail, it reappears two further times. The first of these occurs during another chastisement of Mary by Bridget, in which she reminds her, “Before you were married you were idle and fine/ And went about with ribbons on your head;/ And now . . . / [You are] not a fitting wife for any man” (39). The second occurs after the fairy “child” has arrived and has begun to exert her charms. Maurteen, prior to the assertion of her power over Father Hart, attempts to persuade the child “Not to talk wickedly of holy things” such as the crucifix by promising to give her a gift in return (43). He coaxes her, “Here are some ribbons I bought in the town/ For my son’s wife—but she will let me give them/ To tie up that wild hair the winds have tumbled” (43). The cumulative effect of these references is to place the play’s “remote” setting “inside the pale” of contemporary Irish commodity culture and to suggest that Mary is a faithful devotee of sartorial fashion.

Immediately, the recognition of the contemporary economic concerns indexed “metonymically” in Mary’s “ribbons” begins to give sharper definition to the play’s aesthetic and ideological design. The play depicts not merely a macro-cultural conflict between the

agencies of “the Puritan and the Merchant” and the Celtic values of the title “land,” but also a micro-economic conflict between the consumption of “vulgar” popular cultural commodities and the consumption of “high culture.” Mary’s reading of the book of Celtic legends authored by Maurteen Bruin’s grandfather, a book which once drew to the Bruin cottage a collection of “rambling fiddlers” and “rambling ballad-makers,” represents the conversion of a de-nationalized “West Briton” to properly nationalist values. Underscoring this vein of significance thus complicates the play’s thematic engagement with the agon of Celt and Capital, and suggests that it is not merely in the plot-level resolution of its tensions that the reader should search for its contribution to the cause of Irish nationalism, but also in the *aesthetic tenor of that resolution*. That is, regardless of the play’s outcome, it may be viewed as contributing to de-Anglicization simply through its embodiment of the “high-cultural” aesthetic values it depicts Mary Bruin as preferring over her formerly frivolous consumer tastes.

Before advancing this argument further, it is necessary to emphasize the extent to which the texts discussed earlier in this chapter also advance this micro-economic commodity critique. In *Maeve*, for example, the heroine, though bearing none of the marks of direct immersion in British consumer culture visible in Mary Bruin, is similarly converted by a Celticist text, “The Influence of Greek Art on Celtic Ornament,” from immersion in the rapidly Anglicizing Irish area of Burren, to which her rich, British suitor has been lured by an advertisement for fishing in the O’Heynes river. In *John Bull’s Other Island*, similarly, just prior to her initial meeting of Tom Broadbent at the Roscullen Round Tower, Nora, according to the stage directions, “hums a song—not an Irish melody, but a hackneyed English drawing room ballad of the season before last” (150). Like Mary Bruin before her, Nora has become Anglicized through the consumption of British popular culture. Though she fails to break free of such influence through contact with

Celticist high culture as do Mary and Maeve, Shaw's identification of the corrosive influence of Irish consumption of British products communicates an allied intention to combat such influence through his dramatic practice. A statement of Shaw's from the "Preface for Politicians" affirms the play's intention to criticize such consumption, even as it again distances his project from that of the so-called "neo-Gaelic movement": "When I say I am an Irishman, I mean that I was born in Ireland, and that my language is the English of Swift, and not the unspeakable jargon of the mid-XIX London newspapers" (473). Like those of Yeats and Martyn, then, Shaw's "patriotic contribution" to the Literary Revival consists not simply of an attempt to envision a post-colonial, anti-capitalist Irish identity, but also of an attempt to combat British capitalist influence *directly* through an infusion of high-cultural ideals into an Irish marketplace dominated by the "unspeakable jargon" of British "literary garbage."

One further aspect of the above examples stands out in this context, namely their common identification of the *young, native Irish female consumer* as a particularly vital target of their de-Anglicizing campaign. This identification returns us to the gender considerations raised earlier by Moore's *The Bending of the Bough* and Martyn's *The Heather Field*, and recommends that a further layer of significance resides therein relative to the Revival's "metonymic" resistance to British capitalism. If those two texts imply that the Anglo-Irish female and the English female involved in Irish affairs represent nodes of access to the nation by Saxon capital through a "system of bribery," and if they in turn imply that the Irish male who submits to the domestic suasions of such females undergoes a de-nationalizing feminization, so do such examples of Revivalist commodity critique as I have outlined define the degree of capitalist Anglicization in the *native Irish female consumer* as a primary measure of national political autonomy and cultural integrity. Additionally then, the endeavor to define the attainment of

these qualities as a kind of “manly” self-possession figures the native Irish female consumer of British popular culture as a victim of *imperial sexual predation*. Contemporary nationalist ballads such as “The Lass of Aughrim,” in which a native Irish female is impregnated and abandoned by an English lord, provide a cultural context in which the emphasis on preventing such consumption becomes legible as an extension into the domain of nationalist anti-capitalism of the demand for “manly” autonomy. This emphasis figures the native Irish female consumer as the arbiter of Ireland’s fate, and, in turn, positions male Literary Revivalists such as Yeats, Martyn and Shaw who utilize this figure as her *chivalrous protectors*. The endeavor to effectuate a “high cultural” reformation of the Irish marketplace is deeply infused with an impulse toward the chivalrous protection of Irish female consumers from the contaminating influence of popular-cultural Anglicization.

How, then, did such Literary Revivalist texts as I have discussed attempt to retrain Irish consumers in general and Irish female consumers in particular through an exposure to “high-cultural” ideals, and in what way, furthermore, were such ideals coded as the vehicle for the attainment of a de-Anglicizing Celticization of Irish culture? Answering this compound question returns us to the question which we began this line of analysis, that of the “fetishism of defeat.” The first point to make in this regard is that this “fetishism” in such Revivalist dramas as I have mentioned is motivated, first and foremost, by the desire to forge a national art distinct from the perceived degradations of those most popular of contemporary dramatic genres, British “musical comedy” and melodrama. As we witnessed in the last chapter, Literary Revivalists such as Yeats, Martyn and Moore defined these degraded, formulaic, frivolous genres as the prime targets of their high-cultural agitations in such publications as *Beltaine* and *Samhain*. Having now surveyed a number of the actual literary productions of the Theater movement, we can

immediately understand that their “fetishism of defeat” comes about not as a “surrender to the stereotype” of the ineffectual Celt, but rather as a result of a *generic choice* designed to awaken the Irish populace from the “vulgar” slumbers consumption of “musical comedy” and “melodrama” has trapped them within. That is, plays such as *The Land of Heart’s Desire*, *The Heather Field* and *Maeve* conclude with “defeat” not in order to adhere to the inherited formula of Arnoldian Celticism, but because their authors perceived *tragedy* as the dramatic genre best suited to breaking the hold of British popular-cultural entertainments on the Irish consumer.

In the words of George Moore’s essay “Is the Theater a Place of Amusement?,” “To obtain pleasure in a theater, a man must rouse himself out of the lethargy of real life; his intelligence must awake, and the power to rouse oneself out of the lethargy of real life is becoming rarer in the playgoer and more distasteful to him” (7-8). Only a tragic elevation of the Irish theatrical landscape could serve to “awake” the nation’s “intelligence” and “rouse” it out of the “lethargy” of its Anglicizing commercial “life.” Much of the attraction in Celticist aesthetics for Literary Revivalists such as Moore resides in its built-in utility to such tragic elevation. In Matthew Arnold’s terms, “there is something unaccountable, defiant and titanic” to the “sentiment” of the Celt, and it is such just a “titanic” quality that has defined the genre since its Greek inception. As Yeats states in the 1904 *Samhain* essay “The Dramatic Movement,” in a properly tragic moment, “everything has been changed all of a sudden; we are caught up into another code, we are in the presence of a higher court” (154). It is just such a transformation as Yeats describes that the Literary Revival sought to generate through its exfoliation of the tragic overtones of the “melancholy,” “sentimental” Celt of Matthew Arnold.

In short, then, the Literary Revival’s “tragic” aesthetic allegiances transform our understanding of the otherwise-pessimistic conclusions of its Celticist productions and enable us

to identify their nationalist intentions in a more complex manner than the vulgar interpretive demands of the “fetishism of defeat” line of argument are capable of comprehending. The “fetishism of defeat” provides the tragic generic means to the attainment of a greater, more practical form of “success” within a frivolous entertainment-dominated Irish marketplace. Such, anyway, seems to have been the theory. This analysis of the Revival’s Celticism as motivated first and foremost by a desire to supplant the “low” literary forms of British popular culture with “high”er, more challenging aesthetic forms naturally transitions into the ongoing debate over whether the Celtic Revival was a *modernist* aesthetic movement. If the Revival’s aim was to supplant the formal simplicity and vulgarizing tendencies of “musical comedy” and “melodrama” with a more challenging and more “Titanic” art, then some *formal* innovation would seem to be required for the achievement of this aim. Absent such innovation, the movement could only succeed in reproducing to a significant degree the very British popular-cultural reading habits they sought to eradicate. To what extent, then, did the Revival’s “titanic,” tragic aesthetic ideals issue in a properly modernist—and therefore, within the context of Irish nationalism’s commodity critique, a properly de-Anglicizing—literary practice?

This question has preoccupied a number of critics working within Irish studies over the last several decades, and the majority response seems to be that, on the whole, the Revival did not represent a properly modernist aesthetic movement. Seamus Deane’s argument in *Celtic Revivals* that its foremost exemplar, Yeats, “had no idea or attitude that was not part of the late Romantic stock-in-trade,” presents an early example of this response (40). More recently, Terry Eagleton’s *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* has defined the Revival as an “archaic avant-garde” whose staple formal strategy is a “hybrid artistic form” which he dubs “non-realist representation” (305). In Eagleton’s taxonomy, in spite of the movement’s “astonishing

transgression of the frontiers between the aesthetic and the social,” a transgression which renders it aesthetic practice “avante-gardist,” Revivalist literature is, for the most part, “representational,” and is therefore to be distinguished from the “abstractions of the European avante-garde” in such movements as post-impressionism, Surrealism and Dada (305). Eagleton’s primary definition of “non-realist representation,” “art faithful to an action which is itself realistically improbable,” thus distinguishes the Revival from the pre-modernist mimeticism of “naturalism,” but also distinguishes it from properly “high modernist” texts by virtue of a traditional fidelity to clarity of description in its linguistic media (306). Such fidelity would seem to border on defining the Revival’s “modernist” innovation as one of *content* and subject matter—“realistically improbable” action—rather than of *form*. Yet more recently, Gregory Castle’s *Modernism and the Celtic Revival* has argued that, by defining itself against British anthropological definitions of the Irish Celt, the movement’s central figures authored “critical anthropological fictions” whose campaign against imperial misrepresentations of the nation created a “singularly Irish modernism” (36). Like Eagleton’s, however, Castle’s definition of the movement’s “modernism” presents its major innovations as mainly ones of content, as inhering in its effort to “redeem an indigenous Irish folk culture” with more accurate representations of native life (36). The innovation in Castle’s Revival is limited to the manner in which its texts inscribe prevailing anthropological representations of the Celt alongside such revisionist depictions, and to the ways in which they depict the workings of a fragmented modern consciousness grasping at wholeness, neither of which tendencies quite meets the definitional criteria of post-“representational,” *formal* modernism.

Finally, yet more recently, Greg Dobbins has audaciously claimed that the Revival was not a modernist movement at all. His essay “Synge and Irish modernism” instead argues that a

true Irish modernism, defined as a properly “anti-traditional aesthetic,” only emerges much later, in the works of Joyce, O’Brien and Beckett (132). Dobbins’s definition of “Irish modernism” as “a loosely defined tendency linked by a commitment to forms of cultural production distinct from those of the Revival,” declares his assessment of the movement’s pre-modernist character unequivocally (136). As in the particular case of Synge, the Revival’s “link to modernism was thematic rather than formal,” in Dobbins’s estimation (144). Dobbins’s distinction between a merely “thematic” and properly “formal,” *experimental* modernism neatly summarizes the main tendency of the works cited in the above paragraph, a tendency which consists of defining the *ideological outlook* of the Revival as more “modernist” than its *textual practices*. The Revival, according to this analysis, communicated a “modernist” sensibility to its readers and audiences by critically interrogating the twin pressures of British colonialism and modern capitalism, but it failed to transmit this critical perspective through the kind of innovative aesthetic practice required to reverse the Irish public’s “vulgar” perceptual training at the hands of these agencies. Form, in short, is perceived as not having sufficiently followed function, and Revivalist literature is, in effect, accused of having failed to disturb the “lethargic” slumbers of its consumers.

Deane’s dismissive classification of Yeats’s aesthetic as merely “late romantic” recalls this study to the crucial distinction of its first chapter, the distinction between a *romantic* and a *modernist primitivism*, and enables us to revive that chapter’s taxonomy of Celticist aesthetics as a context for elucidating the question of the Revival’s modernism. That chapter undertook a comparative analysis of the aesthetic theories of Matthew Arnold’s *The Study of Celtic Literature* and Friedrich Nietzsche’s *The Birth of Tragedy*, and suggested that these two seminal texts shared a common desire to restore the “titanic,” “Dionysian” power of primitive aesthetics to modern European societies overly influenced by the “Apollonian” “machinery” of capitalist

modernity. I argued that where Arnold, as a result of his imperialist commitments, ultimately reins in the radical impulse toward a renewed aesthetic efflorescence of the “natural magic” of Celtic “sentiment,” Nietzsche embraces much more fully the radical potential latent in the primordial “ecstasy” of the Attic Tragic chorus. In doing so, Nietzsche envisioned a “rebirth” of primitive aesthetics as a route toward the rejuvenation of an overly rational, individualist Europe, thereby prefiguring the philosophical outlook of much of early twentieth-century modernism. To define the literature of the Revival as merely “romantic” in aesthetic orientation is, therefore, to define it as ultimately committed to reproducing the same rational, orderly, repressive civilizational forms as Matthew Arnold privileged, and as therefore complicit with the reproduction of British imperial rule.

What the “tragic” conclusions of such texts as *The Heather Field*, *Maeve* and *The Land of Heart's Desire* produce, however, is a well-nigh Dionysian aesthetic effect, an explosion of reason, order and “representation”al clarity through an irruption of primordial “ecstasy.” These plays, though for the most part adherent to Eagleton’s formula of “non-realist representation,” end with depictions of madness, de-individuation and death, and thus ultimately meet the Nietzschean modernist criterion of *sublime*, as opposed to merely *beautiful*, aesthetic effects. Indeed, it would not be hyperbolic to define their conclusions as instances of what Luke Gibbons, in his reading of the political trajectory of the aesthetic ideals of Edmund Burke, calls “the colonial sublime.” Just as Gibbons’s Burke depicts the “dreadful” aesthetic effect of the sublime as inviting those exposed to it to participate in sympathetic identification with the victims of Anglo-Irish colonial terror, so the madness of Carden Tyrell and the deaths of Maeve and Mary Bruin invite the Irish consumer to participate in sympathetic identification with the Celtic victims of the ontological desiccation of British capital. Such “sublime,” “tragic”

conclusions thus transform these plays into specimens not merely of “thematic” but also of “formal” modernism by virtue of their aesthetic resistance to British capitalist rationalization.

By contrast then, the two “comedies” analyzed here, *The Bending of the Bough* and *John Bull’s Other Island*, both of which, in spite of their “thematic” convergence with Revivalist tragedy, fall short of “formal” modernist achievement by virtue of lacking such sublime effects. This contrast is easily visible through the ultimate fates of their central characters, Jasper Dean and Peter Keegan, both of whom remain trapped within a historical world dominated by British capital, in contrast to their “tragic” counterparts, who, instead, serve as the vehicles for “an irruption into the continuum of history,” in Gibbons’s terms, of a fully primordial Celtic “ecstasy” (5). On the generic choice between “comedy” and “tragedy,” then, would seem to rest the difference between a merely romantic Celticism, one which endorses the replacement of British civilizational values with Celtic ones yet adheres to a rational aesthetic formula, and a properly modernist Celticism, which, while sharing this endorsement, transmits Celtic values directly to its audience via a radical, irrational aesthetic experience. The same contrast we witnessed in the second and third chapters of this study between “British imperial-romantic Celticism” and “British modernist Celticism”—the latter of which embraces Nietzschean aesthetic effects as a vehicle for interrogating and suggesting alternatives to the ontologically reified state of capitalist modernity, while the former aids and abets such reification through its containment of primitivity within a rational aesthetic frame—may thus also be seen to obtain in the contemporaneous literature of the Celtic Revival, and it is controlled, to a significant degree, by its participants’ choice between the generic alternatives of comedy and tragedy.

The more aesthetically-minded members of the theater movement, in particular Yeats, made their stand against British popular culture based significantly on this generic choice.

Marjorie Howes's analysis of the "ritual" nature of Yeats's early drama is pertinent here in that it reveals the extent to which it was geared toward ushering in a fully modernist "rebirth of Celtic tragedy." Describing Yeats's efforts to convert the theater into a fully "magical" organ of Irish social transformation, Howes argues that the main features of Yeats's stage management during the 1890s and early 1900s—instructing the actors of the Literary and National Theaters in the use of "slow, formalized gestures" and in the utterance of dialogue in "a melodious, chant-like incantation," and arranging the sets of his plays according to a "spatial relations and contrasting color schemes" evocative of poetic rhythm and seasonal cycles—were intended, along with his adaptation of French Symbolism, to generate a "great racial gathering" through primitivist dramatic ritual (71). Yeats's preference for tragic over comedic treatment of subject matter may be viewed in this light as an equally essential component of this transformative project, such that the sublime irruption of Celtic "ecstasy" at the conclusion of works such as *The Land of Heart's Desire* becomes legible as the culminating effect of a "magical" ritual.

Though he often chose to write comedies—comedies which, as we shall soon see, do not obey the reifying guidelines of rational "representation"—Synge's best-known tragedy, *Riders to the Sea*, certainly participates in the Literary Revivalist effort to shatter the "lethargy" of the Irish theatrical public through exposure to "sublime" aesthetic effects. As demonstrated in the preceding chapter, Synge viewed life on the Aran Islands as simultaneously idyllic and gravely perilous. In his account, both of these qualities contribute to the Islander's inherently artistic characteristics, but it is the latter of the two, "the danger of life on the sea," which renders Aran life a fitting subject for tragic treatment (84). That the tragic plot of *Riders*, in which an elderly mother loses her lone remaining son to the sea that has already taken her husband and five other male children, is designed to "revive" such "primitive" emotions in its audience, is evident in

Robert Hogan and James Kilroy's account of the painstaking efforts taken by Synge to ensure that the primitive Celtic "caoine," the ritual wail of mourning uttered by the mother, be transmitted to the viewer in all its estranging power. They quote the retrospective account of George Roberts, a Dublin publisher involved with the Irish National Theater Society in the early 1900s, describing how he assisted Synge, who had become "exceedingly anxious that the 'caoine' should be as close as possible to the particular chant that is used in the islands," by locating a Galway woman residing in Dublin familiar with the traditional practice to instruct the Society's actors in the proper manner of performing it (*Laying* 115). Roberts relates that, though "the caoine was so terrible a thing she could hardly believe people would want to put it in a play," the woman nonetheless agreed to assist the theater, giving a full-fledged, Irish-language performance of the ritual to its actresses, complete with "Irish cadences and rhythm of the words, in conjunction with the clapping of hands and swaying of her body . . . a scene very terrible and yet beautiful to look upon" (*Laying* 115). "Very terrible and yet beautiful"—a more apt description of the "sublime" impact of tragedy could hardly be conceived. Executed according to native Celtic instruction, *Riders to the Sea* would, seemingly, provide a perfect vehicle for the Literary Revivalist campaign to rouse the Irish theatrical public from its British popular-cultural doldrums.

Such "ritual" tragic effects as Yeats and Synge attempted to achieve during the years just before and after 1900 surely meet even the strictest criteria of an "experimental" modernist aesthetics, and the innovative primitivism they index suggests in turn that critics dubious of the Revival's modernist credentials have had insufficient regard for the movement's *performance history*. Unfortunately for the Theater Movement, however, just such "sublime," high-artistic effects seem to have led to its eventual marginalization within the ranks of popular Irish

nationalism. The fate of the Literary Revival's modernist effort to de-Anglicize the taste of the Irish consumer is, indeed, a thoroughly ironic one, in that it was the very "vulgar" preferences that were the target of that effort which seem to have prevented it from succeeding. Hogan and Kilroy quote a series of reviews of the initial performance of *Riders* in the leading nationalist publications most hostile to the efforts of the Theater movement, among them D.P. Moran's *The Leader*, Arthur Griffith's *United Irishman*, *The Independent* and *The Freeman's Journal*. The first, offended by its prolonged presentation of the corpse of Bartley alongside the "coaine" of his aggrieved mother, simply dismisses the play's value, dubbing it "the most ghastly production . . . ever seen on stage," while *The United Irishman* opines as follows:

Mr. J.M. Synge's *Riders to the Sea* . . . was produced for the first time, and its tragic beauty powerfully affected the audience. We think, however, Mr. Synge could get his effects without the introduction of a drowned man on the stage . . . The east wind does not always blow upon the Irish soul, and there is mirth still in Erin. Up till now our stage has not been remarkable for diffusing sunshine around, and we need sunshine badly. (*Laying* 117)

Hogan and Kilroy aptly characterize this passage as advocating for "more entertaining fare" in the Irish theater, and the review's admission that the play's "tragic beauty powerfully affected the audience" seems but prefatory to the ultimate appeal for a greater degree of "mirth" and "sunshine" in the I.N.T.S.'s productions. But it is the *Independent*'s review which best conveys the extent to which the popular nationalist press's distaste for the sublime power of Synge's tragedy was based on its adherence to the "vulgar" aesthetic standards of the British "commercial theater":

There is nothing of the glorified melodrama which helps to make the popular success of other productions carried out under the auspices of the Irish National Theater Society . . . Its appeal is to a cultivated taste even more than to a dramatic instinct; its studies in melancholy have hardly the poignancy of other popular works produced in the same surroundings . . . the theme is too dreadfully doleful to please the popular taste. (116-7)

To this reviewer, Synge's tragedy is too "dreadfully doleful," too "melancholy" and too generally "cultivated" in its construction and production to appeal to an Irish "popular taste" habituated to the cruder devices of "glorified melodrama." The sentiments indexed here and in the other reviews of the popular nationalist press suggest, then, what Moran's *Leader* had already stated directly in its review of Yeats's *The Shadowy Waters* earlier in the same year, that "experiments in Drama, that have only a literary and not a dramatic justification, will in the long run only result in boring and repelling the ordinary man" (*Laying* 114).

To students of the Theater Movement, *The Independent*'s praise for "other productions carried out under [its] auspices" that better fulfill the demand for "glorified melodrama" will instantly call to mind one production in particular, namely that of Yeats and Lady Gregory's *Cathleen ni Houlihan* in 1902. This play in fact provides a fascinating case study both in the contemporary debate over where the nationalist cause was better served by "popular" or "cultivated" aesthetic works and in Yeats's particular relationship to this debate. Roy Foster's biography of Yeats argues two points regarding the play's composition both of which are directly relevant to analyzing its position in this debate. First, Foster argues that while its general plot seems to have been devised by Yeats, who claimed it came to him in a dream, the majority of its content seems to have been authored by Lady Gregory (249). Second, Foster suggests that Yeats's portion of the play was also inspired by a criticism of his earlier work issued by none other than Frank Fay, who, with his brother William, would play such a prominent role subsequently in the management of the Abbey Theater after 1904, from his current vantage as drama critic of the *United Irishman*. In Foster's account, the play's "nationalistic moral was a response to a direct challenge" from Fay regarding the lack of political efficacy of works such as *The Countess Cathleen* and *The Land of Heart's Desire*:

They do not inspire; they do not send men away filled with the desire for deeds . . . before he will be even on the road to achieving greatness as a dramatic poet, Mr. Yeats must tackle some theme of a great, lasting and living interest. In Ireland we are at present only too anxious to shun reality. Our drama ought to teach us to face it. Let Mr. Yeats give us a play in verse or prose that will rouse the sleeping land. There is a herd of Saxon and other swine fattening on us. They must be swept into the sea along with the pestilent crowd of West Britons with which we are troubled or they will sweep us there. This land is ours; but we have ceased to realize the fact. We want a drama that will make us realize it. We have closed our ears to the piercing wail that rises from the past; we want a drama that will open them, and in no uncertain words point out the reason for our failure in the past and road to success in the future. (249)

Here, then, is a contemporary complaint regarding what is easily identifiable as the Literary Revival's "fetishism of defeat," the "melancholy," tragic Celticism which in Fay's view is "only too anxious to shun reality" and to leave the Irish populace un"inspire"d with the "desire for deeds." A play which merely depicts "defeat" and which fails to depict positively the practical means for "success in the future" is, in this analysis, inadequate to the cause of nationalism, and even exacerbates Ireland's colonial domination.

The play's resounding popular success certainly bears out such assessments as Fay's and those of *The Leader*, *The Independent* and *The Freeman's Journal* regarding the greater appeal of simpler, less "cultivated" dramatic constructions for the greater Irish theater-going public. Indeed, Yeats seems to have gradually grown more and more anxious regarding the popular breakthrough the play achieved for the Theater movement, an anxiety which we may speculatively attribute to what Foster describes as the play's "straightforward, rather heavy-handed," "predictable" and "mechanical" arrangement (249). It is remarkable to trace the modulation in Yeats's feelings about the play during the several years following its first performance in St. Teresa's Hall in Dublin on 2 April, 1902. Immediately following that performance, Yeats's estimation of its public impact seems mainly positive. However, there is one very noteworthy exception to this positive impression, an exception which signals that the

public's favorable response was perhaps based on Gregory's pandering to "vulgar" popular taste. Hogan and Kilroy again cull valuable information from the recollections of George Roberts, who describes, "... the speeches of Kathleen were received with laughter by a section of the audience who apparently were so much accustomed to associate dialect with humorous characters in the Queen's Theater melodramas they saw humor where none was intended" (*Laying* 12). The popular audience of the play was, seemingly, unable to process the play's dialogue other than through the framework of melodramatic dialect comedy. Yeats himself took particular note of a related aspect of the audience response, writing to Lady Gregory immediately following its performance, "Its one defect was that the mild humor of the part before Kathleen came in kept the house in such delighted laughter, that it took them some little while to realize the tragic meaning of Kathleen's part" (*Laying* 15). Clearly here, Yeats experienced mixed feelings regarding a play which, while garnering such astonishing popular acclaim, seemed to have won such acclaim by activating the "low," "comedic" habits of the Irish consumer. In spite of the play's clear melodramatic and comedic affiliations, Yeats would soon attempt to convince himself that it belongs more properly to the genre of tragedy the better to soothe his conflicted mind. By the fifth of April, he seems to have successfully repressed his awareness of the play's less "cultivated" aesthetic elements, to the point that he could claim in another letter to Gregory, "The audience now understands Kathleen ni Houlihan and there is no difficulty in getting from humor to tragedy. There is continual applause . . ." (*Laying* 15).

Yeats's experiences throughout 1902 and 1903, however, most noteworthy among them the denunciation of Synge's *The Shadow of the Glen* by such prominent nationalists as Arthur Griffith, seem to have embittered him toward the play's popular success and to have resuscitated his early ambivalence about it. In 1904, Yeats would thus offer a conflicted defense of the play

couched in terms which attempt to distinguish it from the “vulgar” popular genres of which it partakes:

It may be said it is a political play of a propagandist kind. This I deny. I took a piece of human life, thoughts that men had felt, hopes they had died for, and I put this into what I believe to be a sincere dramatic form. I have never written a play to advocate for any kind of opinion and I think that such a play would be necessarily bad art, or at any rate a very humble kind of art. At the same time I have no right to exclude, for myself and for others, any of the passionate material of drama. (Foster 249)

Foster reads this passage as bespeaking “unease” on Yeats’s part regarding the play’s popular identification as political “propaganda,” as well as “collaboration” with Gregory by virtue of the reference to the lack of a “right” to “exclude” dramatic “material” from the work of “others.” He persists nonetheless in denying the play’s appeal to a popular nationalist “opinion,” which brand of appeal, to his view, would reduce the play to “a very humble kind of art” lacking in artistic “sincer”ity. Yeats could not conceive of a play bearing his name as achieving popular success on any but a “passionate,” “tragic,” high-cultural basis.

The standard narrative of Yeats’s evolution during the 1900s from engaged nationalism to anti-populist elitism emphasizes the three public controversies over *The Countess Cathleen*, *The Shadow of the Glen* and *The Playboy of the Western World*. I would argue, however, that given such sentiments as I have quoted here, the *positive* reception of *Cathleen ni’ Houlihan* provided nearly as great a stimulus toward this evolution as the *negative* popular receptions of these works. More than any other member of the Theater movement, Yeats’s anti-capitalist Celticism was defined by an emphasis on the high-cultural integrity of tragedy, an integrity which he viewed as indispensable to the Literary Revival’s efforts to de-Anglicize the Irish marketplace. That a play he in part authored seemed to have pandered to popular-cultural taste rather than to have contributed to a ritual cleansing of that taste was a realization he could hardly

countenance. Not only did the play's comedy- and melodrama-based public response bespeak the Theater movement's failure to effectuate such a reformation; it also indicated that even such a committed artist as he could be drawn unwittingly into the gravitational "pale" of British popular culture. Yeats's increasing emphasis, particularly in the *Samhain* writings of the mid 1900s, on the need for absolute artistic freedom and for new Irish playwrights who, in the words of the 1903 *Samhain* essay "Moral and Immoral Plays," "would above all else seek for fine things for their own sake . . . and not for its [sic] momentary use," must be interpreted as directly inspired by the undesirability of the manner of the play's achievement of popular success (123). Already at this early stage, we can see glimpses of the high-cultural elitism that would define the anti-popular nationalism of Yeats's later years.

The eventual demise of the Literary Revival's unique combination of Celticism, anti-capitalism, and modernism is attributable to no small degree to Yeats's digging in the heels of his artistic integrity following the success of *Cathleen ni Houlihan*. One can only speculate on the degree to which Yeats was responsible for stoking what Hogan and Kilroy describe as a "growing tension," from 1903 onward, "between two views of what the theater should be": "On the one hand, Yeats, Synge and the Fays, although they approved of Nationalism, thought that the theater's chief criterion should be artistic excellence. On the other hand, Maud Gonne, Maire T. Quinn, Dudley Digges and others thought that the theater should be primarily a place of patriotic propaganda" (*Laying* 48-9). However, it seems quite likely that Yeats was the guiding influence in bringing such tensions to a head during incidents such as the I.N.T.S.'s rejection in 1903 of the propagandistic play *The Saxon Shillin'* by Padraic Colum, a rejection which was, seemingly, based on an objection to its "artistic defects," and which precipitated the withdrawal from the Society of Maud Gonne and Arthur Griffith and their immediate foundation a

competitor organization, the Cumann na nGaedheal Theater Company, on more “patriotic” lines (*Laying* 49).

In any event, it is clear that by virtue of its adherence to modernist aesthetic principles as its preferred route for de-Anglicizing Irish culture, the Theater movement sowed the seeds of its popular demise. A comment from the *Freeman’s Journal* review of Padraic Colum’s play *The Land* from 9 June, 1905 serves as a fitting epitaph of the movement’s efforts: “Mr. Yeats has proved a little too abstruse, and Mr. Synge a little too bizarre to get fully down into the hearts of the people . . .” (31). It is very much worth asking, then, whether Yeats and his compatriots might not have been better served to respond to their fleeting popular success in the opposite fashion, by embracing its lesson regarding the most effective means of “get[ting] fully down into the hearts” of their Irish consumers rather than rejecting it. If “comedy” and “melodrama” had such a strong hold on those hearts, the Literary Revival would, perhaps, have been better served by utilizing these “low,” “vulgar” dramatic genres as tools capable of aiding its high-cultural, de-Anglicizing mission, rather than dismissing their utility to that enterprise out of hand. In the next two sections of this chapter, I will suggest that, if Yeats could not see his way clear to adapting his artistic mission to the pragmatic demands of the Irish literary and theatrical marketplace, at least two of the Revival’s other participants made quite remarkable attempts at doing just that.

“The Fearful Crimes of Ireland”: Commodity Critique in *The Playboy of the Western World*

Near the beginning of Act II of J.M. Synge’s *The Playboy of the Western World*, just after Pegeen Mike, having discovered her newfound beau, Christy Mahon, basking in the flattering attentions of her young female neighbors in the main room of her father’s “shebeen,” has cast out her competitors for his affections in a fit of jealous rage, she purges her irritation toward Christy by teasingly intimating that word of his parricide has reached the ears of the

authorities. She tells him, “I was down this morning looking on the papers the post-boy does have in his bag . . . For there is great news this day, Christopher Mahon” (38). Following Christy’s panicked response, “Is it news of my murder?,” Pegeen continues to needle him, “Murder, indeed . . . There was not, but a story filled half a page with the hanging of a man. Ah, that should be a fearful end, young fellow, and it worst of all for a man who destroyed his da, for the like of him would get small mercies . . .” (41). Pegeen prolongs Christy’s punishment as long possible, until, as he moves to flee the *shebeen* for higher ground, she is forced to admit her charade. She reassures him, “quite kindly at last,” “I’m after going down and reading the fearful crimes of Ireland for two weeks or three, and there wasn’t a word of your murder. They’ve likely not found the body. You’re safe so with ourselves” (42).

To date, critical accounts of *The Playboy of the Western World* have said next to nothing regarding what, aside from its obvious entanglement with Anglo-Irish colonial law, is undoubtedly the most salient sociological aspect of Pegeen’s report—namely, her engagement with the print culture of contemporary Ireland through the medium of “the papers.” As striking as the absence of discussion of this noteworthy detail among the existing critical literature is, it becomes all the more so when one recalls that contemporary Irish nationalism, the movement routinely adduced as the most significant socio-historical context for interpreting the play, identified in newspapers, and the reading practices that attended them, one of the primary engines of Irish cultural Anglicization. Critical emphasis on Synge’s dramaturgy as a kind of ethnography of Irish peasant life, as in Gregory Castle’s *Modernism and the Celtic Revival*, or on his aesthetic practice as a kind of primitivism, as in Sinead Garrigan Mattar’s *Primitivism, Science and the Irish Revival*, has perhaps obscured the extent to which the play depicts western Ireland as already immersed in the consumption practices of metropolitan Britain. Any reading

of the play which takes seriously the relevance of Irish cultural nationalism to its concerns, however, must take this immersion into account. In what follows, I will argue that our understanding of *The Playboy's* aesthetic design, from its ethnographic and primitivist implications to its postcolonial ones, is significantly enriched by doing so.⁸⁷

Such stories as Pegeen describes are almost certainly specimens of one of the prime targets of Irish nationalism's commodity critique, namely the genre of the "Police Intelligence." This genre achieved popularity in England during the 1860s through such publications as the *Illustrated Police News*, *Lloyd's Weekly Newspaper* and *Reynold's Newspaper*, and it would eventually spread to Ireland both through their circulation and through the emergence of such homegrown organs as the *Belfast News-Letter* and the Dublin-based *Freeman's Journal*. Through its obsession with law and its transgression and its eventual expansion of coverage to incorporate even minor deviations from Victorian respectability, the "Police Intelligence" was, in substance, a genre of "sensational literature," that is, printed matter which attracted a broad readership through shock value, gossip mongering and a fascination with public and domestic violence. It was, in short, an early form of *tabloid reporting*, and along with such other sub-species of the so-called "scandalous genre" of "sensation" as the "schilling shocker" and the "penny dreadful," it served to index the depravity of British culture in such seminal nationalist texts as Douglas Hyde's "The Necessity for De-Anglicizing Ireland" and D.P. Moran's "The Battle of Two Civilizations." For nationalist thinkers of all ideological stripes, the "Police Intelligence" was perceived as a contaminating form of "literary garbage" threatening to erode the Irish populace's native characteristics (170).⁸⁸

Readers of *The Playboy* whose analyses of its geographical location in the far western, rural county of Mayo emphasize issues of primitivity and pre-industrial cultural preservation

would no doubt be surprised to learn that such tabloid publications were ready to hand for its inhabitants.⁸⁹ Indeed, as we saw in the previous chapter, as the Revival progressed, such critics of Irish popular-cultural degeneration as Yeats, AE, and Synge himself would come to identify as perhaps the primary locus of Anglicization not the urban capital of Dublin, but the rural Irish town. In the words of AE's *Co-Operation and Nationality*, in the bookstores of such locales one would find an abundance of "sensational tales in gaudy colors . . . cheap prints, without high purpose, and glimmering all over with the phosphorescence of mental decay" (43). Such low-cultural fare seemed to advocates of cultural Revival a central component of the broader economic process by which, in terms borrowed from Synge's *Aran Islands* notebooks, the nation was quickly becoming "Anglicized, civilized and brutalized." Pegeen's descriptions of "a story filled half a page with the hanging of a man" and of having perused "the fearful crimes of Ireland for two weeks or three" immediately resonate with this prominent area of Irish nationalist agitprop, and suggest that the play's Mayo setting, for all its seeming pre-modernity, resides "within the Pale" of British popular culture.

Far from an isolated reference within the play, Pegeen's allusion to the "Police Intelligence" forms part of a larger network of references to the genre which, taken together, provide the thematic framework from which the play's plot dynamic derives much of its socially symbolic charge. Synge begins to indicate the pertinence of "sensational literature" to the play's interpretation almost immediately upon Christy's arrival at the Mayo "shebeen." Having deduced from his nervous inquiries about the police that Christy is on the run from the law, the pub's denizens formulate a series of guesses regarding the nature of his crime. Philly Cullen speculates that "Maybe the land was grabbed from him, and he did what any decent man would do," i.e. that Christy has become a participant in the Land Wars between the native Irish farmer

class and the Anglo-Irish landlord class (16). Having possibly caught the scent of nationalist land agitation, the shebeen's other occupants immediately wonder whether his crime was directed against "bailiffs," "agents" or "landlords" (16). Christy's response raises the issue of "sensational literature" for the first time: "Ah, not at all, I'm saying. You'd see the like of them stories on any little paper of a Munster town. But I'm not calling to mind any person, gentle, simple, judge or jury, did the like of me" (16). Christy's invocation of the "stories" of legal transgression contained in the newspapers of the rural Munster town unmistakably affirms his own familiarity with the "Police Intelligence," but it is through his listeners' reaction to this reference that Synge begins to indicate the deep significance of the genre to the play's thematic development. According to Synge's stage directions, upon Christy's implication that his crime is more serious than those typically described in Irish newspapers, his auditors "all draw near with delighted curiosity" (16). Christy, it seems, has titillated his audience by placing his crime within the framework of sensational literature. Stimulated by Christy's unwitting act of self-advertisement, his listeners' speculation about the nature of his crime escalates rapidly in imaginative fervor and transgressive severity. They guess that he must have mugged a British soldier or married three wives, or that he "went fighting for the Boers" against the British in South Africa (17). When Christy finally admits to having killed his father, the Mayoites respond with "great respect" for the even greater "daring" and "bravery" his act bespeaks, and the duration of the play consists of an exfoliation of the communal tensions routed through their frenzied idolization of him.

Synge, in short, grounds the Mayo community's fetisihizing response to Christy's parricidal act in their collective engagement with the British "literary garbage" of the rural Irish town. Unbeknownst to himself, Christy, by associating his crime with the "Police Intelligence,"

has transformed himself into something of a *tabloid celebrity*. If this description seems anachronistic—as, indeed, it must, to those readers who see only a pre-industrial primitivity in the play’s setting and *dramatis personae*—later developments make clear that celebrity is the appropriate term to apply to Christy’s newfound social eminence. By the beginning of Act II, Christy’s initial response of “surprise and triumph”—indexed in the oft-repeated exclamation “Is it me?”—to the collective admiration news of his “murder” has produced has inflated into full-blown egomania (17). “Didn’t I know I was handsome,” he wonders aloud to the mirror in the main room of the shebeen, and he goes on to declare, preeningly, “I’ll be growing fine from this day” (30). The interruption of his self-admiration by the arrival of “stranger girls” from the surrounding country then initiates a fascinating scene in which Christy’s ascent to celebrity status is on full display. It becomes immediately evident that the girls have heard the “news” of Christy’s exploit and have travelled there solely to catch a glimpse of him. While Christy conceals himself in the back room of the shebeen, they attempt to deduce as much as possible about the mystery man from the articles strewn about its main room. “Look at that,” Honor Blake directs her companions, “He’s been sleeping there in the night . . . it’ll be a hard case if he’s gone off now, the way we’ll never set our eyes on a man killed his father, and we after rising early and destroying ourselves running fast on the hill” (32). Sara Tansey’s contribution to the amateur investigation again affirms that it is the sensational reading habits of the Mayo villagers which drive their fetishization of Christy. In response to “Nelly,” who asks “Are you thinking them’s his boots?,” Sara responds, “If they are, there should be his father’s track on them. Did you never read in the papers the way murdered men do bleed and drip?” (32). The details of Sara’s description clearly allude to the shock-trolling conventions of “sensational literature,” in which stories of murder and violence came to imaginative life through graphic

descriptions of maimed, mangled, dismembered, or otherwise brutalized bodies gushing, oozing, or simply “drip”ping blood. Combined with Honor’s description of their “rising early” and “destroying [them]selves running” to see Christy, the numerous culinary gifts the girls have brought for him—eggs, cake, butter, and a “little laying pullet”—thus become legible as the offerings of a frenzied fan base eager to win the favor of their literary idol (33-34).

Pegeen’s later classification of Christy’s tale as a “gallous story” retroactively names “The Police Intelligence” as the source of its favorable reception among the Mayo villagers. Once the reader has registered the etymological linkage of this archaic adjective with its better known relative, the noun *gallows*, a series of related descriptions to “hanging” throughout the play immediately align with the genre’s law-obsessed conventions. We have already seen that Pegeen’s reading habits tend toward a fascination with capital punishment through her allusion to the “story filled half a page with the hanging of a man.” Synge indicates that Philly Cullen’s “political” outlook is likewise fascinated through his initial response to Christy’s as-yet unspecified criminality, as he speculates, “Maybe he went fighting for the Boers, the like of the man beyond, was judged to be hanged, quartered and drawn” (16-17).⁹⁰ Similarly, the stage description of Michael’s “great respect” for Christy’s parricide is accompanied by the exclamation, “That was a hanging crime, mister honey” (18). Michael even supplies his own “sensational” details in his subsequent interrogation of Christy, as he wonders, “It was a hilted knife maybe? I’m told, in the big world, it’s bloody knives they use” (18).

It is Pegeen, however, who most often secures the alignment of the play’s thematic concerns with the sensationalism of this “gallous” genre. Her disdain for *The Widow Quin*’s “murder” of her husband seems to be based primarily on its insufficiently sensational details. As she attempts to prevent Christy from developing a competing romantic interest in the Widow,

she tells him, “contemptuously,” “She hit himself with a worn pick, and the rusted poison did corrode his blood . . . That was a sneaky kind of murder did win small praise with the boys itself” (28). Pegeen’s classification of the Widow’s manslaughter as a “sneaky kind of murder” deserving only of “small praise” indicates the extent to which the Mayoites’ consumption of “The Police Intelligence” has generated a bloodthirstiness entirely severed from ethical considerations. Her leveraging of the “sensational” expectations bred by the genre as a means of discrediting the Widow also indicates that Pegeen is intuitively aware of the import of the genre to the region’s inhabitants. Her later punishment of Christy upon discovering his throng of female fans further affirms this subconscious awareness, and does so through the medium of “gallous” narrative. As she has already done in competition for Christy’s affections with the Widow Quin, she manipulates the “sensational” conventions of the genre—conventions she is fresh from sampling in the “papers the post boy does have”—in order to deter him from further involvement with them. Warning Christy that he will “be shut of jeopardy no place” if he continues to broadcast his exploit to “a pack of wild girls the like of them,” she amplifies her warning’s deterrent effect with a remarkably graphic description of the capital punishment to which their gossiping might lead: “. . . it’d make the green stones cry itself to think of you swaying and swiggling at the butt of a rope, and you with a fine, stout neck, God bless you! The way you’d be half an hour, in great anguish, getting your death” (40).

Christy’s subsequent achievement of a verbal and physical greatness recognizably aligned with Synge’s Celticist ideals thus results not simply from his serving as a fantasy outlet for the Mayoites’ imperially and religiously repressed desires, but also, in some way, from the convergence of his parricidal narrative with the conventions of the “gallous stories” of “The Police Intelligence.” It is this convergence which most immediately generates the villagers’

fetishization of him, and it is from this convergence that the dynamic by which he is buoyed by their collective desire toward ever-greater feats of aesthetic, athletic, and romantic prowess in large part originates. The commodity-mediated nature of this dynamic thus calls into question the extent to which such feats may be identified as genuinely fulfilling either Synge's Celticist ideals or the anti-imperial and anti-Catholic ideals concomitant with them. There is, seemingly, ample evidence to suggest that Christy's emergence as a sort of Celtic folk hero is genuinely libertory. Following Pegeen's equation of the vast store of "great rage" Christy's murder bespeaks with the "fine fiery" manners of "the poets," Christy's speech escalates rapidly in grammatical complexity and descriptive ornateness until it seems that he indeed embodies the wild, instinctual artistry identified by Synge in the Celt of the Aran Islands (23). Pegeen's later comment that "a fine lad" like Christy "should have [his] good share of the earth" then seems to freight his Celticization with an incipient decolonizing nationalism (26). The Widow Quin's warning to Pegeen that "there's great temptation in a many did slay his da" seems further to establish Christy's heroization as a defiance of Catholic moral prohibitions (34). Her subsequent entry of Christy, inspired by her impression of him as "a fine, gamey, treacherous lad," in the local Gaelic sporting contests of "racing, leaping, pitching, and the Lord knows what," and his thorough triumph therein, would thus seem to figure his physical prowess as a similarly subversive, "wild" Celticization (26-7). "Astride the moon" after his victories, Christy's libertory social impact seems to receive direct confirmation from the local prelate, Father Reilly, who, having just received the papal "dispensation" for the marriage of Pegeen and Shawn Keogh, tells Michael, "It's come in the nick of time . . . I'll wed them in a hurry, dreading the young gaffer who'd capsize the stars" (68). Father Reilly's diagnosis of the subversive threat embodied in the newly Celticized Christy then receives what seems to be decisive corroboration

via Michael's decision to void Pegeen's betrothal to the "puny weed" of Shawn and give his patriarchal blessing for her marriage to Christy. "A daring fellow is the jewel of the world," he beams, "and a man did split his father's middle with a single clout should have the bravery of ten, so may God and Mary and St. Patrick bless you, and increase you from this mortal day" (71). At this moment, Christy's Celtic triumph over the repressive regimes of British colonial law and Catholic morality appears complete.

Synge, however, very carefully and very clearly indicates that Christy's seeming embodiment of subversive Celtic characteristics is rendered hollow, and ultimately illusory, by virtue of its origins in the commodity-mediated desire of the Mayo inhabitants. Beginning at the conclusion of the play's first act, where Christy exclaims, "I'm thinking this night wasn't I foolish not kill my father in the years gone by," Synge figures his rise as centrally motivated by extrinsic considerations of celebrity rather than an intrinsic urge toward overcoming political and religious oppression (30). Christy, in other words, becomes increasingly invested in the "Police Intelligence"-derived idolization to which he has been subjected, to the point that his foremost desire is to maintain the celebrity status he has so pleasantly acquired. Christy in fact begins to *perform* literary celebrity around the time when the neighboring girls make their pilgrimage to the sensational shrine of the Flaherty "shebeen." After the Widow Quin has arrived to reconnoiter him, Christy furnishes her with a highly sensationalized retelling of the details of his murder. Synge's stage directions indicate the rapid escalation in dramatic flair that Christy's narrative undergoes. He begins "shy but flattered" by the Widow's interest, but soon expresses "growing satisfaction" in reprising his "gallous" feat through the relish with which he devours the "little laying pullet" given him by "Nelly" (35-6). He is described as "getting almost excited" as he acts out, playing both parts in the dialogue, his argument with his father over his

arranged marriage to the “Widow Casey,” and his excitement mounts to the point that as he delivers the story’s climax, he is “brandishing his mug” and “waving” the chicken “bone” for swaggering dramatic effect: “He gave a drive with the scythe, and I gave a lep to the east. Then I turned around with my back to the north, and I hit a blow on the ridge of his skull, laid him stretched out, and he split to the knob of his gullet” (37). The stage directions at this point state that “he raises the chicken bone to his Adam’s apple” as a culminating flourish to his tale (37). Clearly then, the rapid inflation of Christy’s personality and Celtic prowess is not, simply, an idealized model for overcoming British imperial and Irish Catholic strictures, but is, also, a *reified*, commodity-mediated performance of criminality.

Pegeen’s complaint upon her entry that Christy has “told that story six times since the dawn of day” reflects the extent to which, if he wishes to maintain his celebrity, Christy’s performance will need to escalate ever further in dramatic and sensational graphicness if he is to satisfy that foremost criterion of consumer desire, the desire for novelty (39). It is not, however, until his undead father, “Old Mahon,” has arrived and is threatening to dismantle his celebrity status that the full extent of Christy’s reification becomes apparent. During the climactic scene in which Christy, first, re-attempts to murder his father, and then, second, is captured, tortured and nearly executed by the Mayoites who formerly idolized him, Synge clearly indicates the extent to which his ascendancy has derived from his serving as a source of *entertainment*. As Christy and Old Mahon begin their physical struggle, the “crowd” that has attended Christy following his success in “the games below” transfers its spectatorship to the new, more violent “sport” their fight provides. They urge, “Keep it up, the two of you” and quickly begin to take sides in rooting for one or another of the two participants: “I’ll back the old one. Now the playboy” (75). As Christy lights on the possibility of consolidating his celebrity by completing

the act of parricide and seizes the nearby “loy,” the crowd is further described as “half frightened, half amused” by his actions, again reflecting their treatment of the struggle as sensational entertainment (74).

After Christy “runs at old Mahon” and “chases him out” of the “shebeen,” however, the stage directions indicate that the crowd receives more than it bargained for in prodding him toward murder, as “there is great noise outside, then a yell, and dead silence for a moment” (75). As Christy “comes in, half dazed” by his own violence against his father, he responds to the Widow Quin’s warning that he’ll now be “hanged, indeed” for his actions by the Mayoites themselves in a manner which reflects the extent to which his “daring” has become reified by considerations of celebrity. He tells her, “I’m thinking, from this out, Pegeen’ll be giving me praises the same as in the hours gone by,” and, upon her reiteration of the now-grave threat of the “gallows tree” and attempted abetment of his escape by shoving him through the “back door,” he protests, “Leave me go, will you? . . . for she will wed me surely, and I a proven hero in the end of all” (75-6). To Christy, as a result of the education he has undergone in the inner-workings of the commodity-mediated desire of the Mayo villagers, *mere* murder—as distinguished from the genuine act of resistance to patriarchal oppression bespoken by his initial “clout with the loy”—provides a certain route to reacquiring the accolades and material benefits of “hero”ism.

Upon their collective recognition of the “great gap between” the “gallous story” of Christy’s murder and the “dirty deed” of its reality, the Mayoites determine to save themselves from the “power of the law” by ensuring that Christy’s tale concludes with the outcome proper to an account of murder in the “Police Intelligence,” hanging. Michael Flaherty appears at the door of the shebeen along with the other “men” of the crowd “with a rope” in his hand, and with Pegeen’s assistance, “they drop the double hitch over his head” (76). “Come on to the peelers,

till they stretch you now,” Michael coaxes Christy apologetically, “If we took pity on you, the Lord God would, maybe, bring us ruin from the law to-day, so you’d best come easy, for hanging is an easy and a speedy end” (77). “Take him on from this,” Pegeen urges them, “or the lot of us will likely be put on trial for his deed to-day” (77). Horrified by her participation in this lynching, Christy exclaims, “And it’s your self will send me off, to have a horny-fingered hangman hitching his bloody slip-knots at the butt of my ear” (77). Pegeen’s response that Christy would “leave [them] to hang . . . for a saucy liar,” coupled with her subsequent torture of him, “scorch”ing his leg with a burning piece of turf, finally alert Christy to the gravity of the Mayoites purgative intentions, and he begins attempting to kick, scream and bite his way free of their collective grasp (77-78). After Old Mahon enters, alive once more and therefore proving their exertions unnecessary, Michael Flaherty voices the underlying motivation behind their attempted execution of Christy one final time: “It is the will of God that all should guard their little cabins from the treachery of law” (79).

Christy, however, has unmistakably learned the lesson Synge would have the audience learn from this “gallous story,” and quickly turns the tables on his assailants. Disdaining the Mayoites as “fools of the earth” for failing to recognize their own complicity in both his second attempted murder and his transformation into a self-serving, fame-seeking celebrity, Christy not only turns his “gallous” energies back on them, causing Shawn Keogh in particular to cower in fear at his “holy terror,” but also *narrates an alternative conclusion* to the play. Fittingly, in authoring the conclusion of his story, Christy utilizes the “sensational” resources of the “Police Intelligence.” Prior to his release from their custody, Christy composes aloud an imaginary scene in which the Mayoites ultimately regret their betrayal and consecrate him a Celtic folk hero once more:

If I can wring a neck among you, I'll have a royal judgment looking on the trembling jury in the courts of law. And won't there be crying out in Mayo, the day I'm stretched upon the rope with ladies in their silks and satins sniveling in their lacy kerchiefs, and they rhyming songs and ballads on the terror of my fate?
(78)

Christy's narrative demonstrates through its elaborate aesthetic texture what its content argues implicitly: that the Mayoites' idolization of him, though confused and reified, has "turned [him] a likely gaffer in the end of it all" (80). Christy chastises his auditors for lacking the courage to embrace the Celtic hero to whom their desire has given birth, and he does so by taunting them with the very generic conventions which gave rise to that desire. Indeed, Synge gives his full endorsement to Christy's revisionist narrative by ending the play with direct confirmation of the passage's imaginary scenario. Just as, on the imaginary "day" Christy is "stretched out with the rope," the women of Mayo "snivel . . . in their lacy kerchiefs" and compose "songs and ballads on the terror of [his] fate," so Pegeen Mike, "putting her shawl over her head and breaking out into wild lamentations," responds to Christy's self-possessed departure by "sniveling," "Oh my grief, I've lost him surely. I've lost the only Playboy of the Western World" (80). What began as a play about the radical impact of a "gallous story" on a rural Irish community primed to receive it through its ravenous consumption of the British popular-cultural genre of "The Police Intelligence" thus concludes by subordinating that genre to the aesthetic mastery of the Syngean Celtic hero.

Standard postcolonial readings of *The Playboy of the Western World*, which have emphasized its critique both of the desperation brought on rural Irish communities by British imperial rule and of the repressive, ontologically constricting mores of Irish Catholicism, are immediately complicated by the recovery of this popular-cultural subtext. In recent years, the fetishization of parricide that Christy inspires in the Mayo villagers has been taken to reflect—

just as I have taken it in part to reflect—the return of the repressed of both social systems, imperial and Catholic. In *Christy*, the reading goes, the villagers, first, locate an outlet for their morally and politically repressed desires, and then, second, following the arrival of the undead “Old Mahon” and Christy’s re-attempt at murder, reject their former vessel and reinstall the very repressive regime whose tyranny motivated the entire process to begin with. Christy’s eventual reciprocation of their rejection, his contemptuous classification of the Mayoites as “fools of the earth,” his final declaration that they have “turned [him] a likely gaffer in the end of it all,” and Pegeen’s closing lament that she has lost the “one and only playboy of the western world,” have been read by critics such as Declan Kiberd as gesturing toward a proto-Fanonian diagnosis by Synge of the tensions and contradictions attending decolonization, and as a warning to the play’s audiences regarding “the pitfalls of national consciousness.” Christy’s initial performance of a fetishized criminality is thus viewed as constituting the second, reactive stage of colonial history, wherein the colonized, rejecting the norms of the occupier, simply inverts them in a simplistic and ultimately unproductive attempt at ideological purgation, and his final rejection of both those norms and their inverse is thus taken to represent a properly libertory model of postcolonial self-determination.⁹¹

The play’s identification of the Irish incarnation of this archetypal model of decolonization as mediated by mental habits instilled through the consumption of British popular culture enriches this reading significantly. *The Playboy* suggests that because contemporary Ireland, as a “metropolitan colony,” participates in the same modern consumer practices as the domestic inhabitants of the ruling territory, it is more complexly impacted by British colonialism than colonies in Africa, South Asia and the Caribbean where such practices have yet to be disseminated. In the Irish context, the celebrityization of Christy Mahon suggests, the route

toward liberation is hindered by a very specific and very historically advanced form of capitalist reification. Synge's Irish, as readers of the "Police Intelligence," have been transformed into *consumers of their own oppression, and also of their resistance to that oppression*. Their nationalist impulses are refracted through the generic lens of British "sensation," and are thus doubly hemmed in not simply by repressive colonial norms which set the terms by which resistance must proceed, but also by a reifying epistemology which converts both acts of oppression and acts of resistance into *entertainment*. In such a society, the supposedly "great gap between a gallous story and a dirty deed," between a radically transgressive act and its representation in narrative, becomes narrow indeed given the deep entanglement of the realm of real human action with the realm of generic convention. Synge suggests, finally, that a postcolonial Ireland purged only of the tyranny of British rule and Catholic mores and not also of the reifying, *hegemonically reproductive* popular-cultural forms of modern consumer capitalism will remain severely limited in its ability to achieve full self-determination.

Within this context, the oft-repeated observation that the so-called "Playboy Riots" which ensued during the first week of the play's performance at the Abbey Theater in early 1907 effectively confirmed Synge's identification of the pitfalls of Ireland's repressed condition is also complicated. If, just as the Mayoites ultimately torture Christy for throwing into relief the suffocating repressiveness of their lives under British and Catholic rule, so Synge's Dublin audience, driving him from the nationalist tent with cries of "kill the author," demonstrated his play's remarkable diagnostic and predictive accuracy, an additional layer of meaning accrues to this irony when one reflects that *The Playboy*, though perceived as an affront to nationalist orthodoxy, in fact adheres quite faithfully to the staple, *factionally neutral* nationalist position of opposing the incursions of British popular culture.⁹² By all rights, Synge's audience should have

found the play's message about the adulterating effects of British "literary garbage" quite commodious to their ideological outlook. That they clearly did not do so indicates their having doubly missed the point. Presented by Synge's deft modernist text with the imaginative means of breaking out not only of the double bind of nationalist decolonization but also of the further snare of capitalist reification, the Abbey audiences opted instead to drown its imperative message in a flood of boos, hisses, catcalls, and threats of violence. The resemblance between the debacle that resulted from such "dirty deeds" and the contents of the sensational, "gallous stories" of the "Police Intelligence," is difficult to ignore.

We may now return to the question with which we began the analysis of *The Playboy*, namely the question of whether an Irish modernist drama more responsive than the "tragic" elitism of Yeats to the "vulgar" popular-cultural terrain of the Irish literary marketplace at the *fin-de-siecle* could have succeeded in retraining Irish consumers in the appreciation for "high cultural" ideals where he so thoroughly failed. As we have seen, Synge's play undertakes a remarkably deft and thorough *immanent critique* of one of the most popular of British popular-cultural genres. By figuring the emergence of a genuinely libertory Celticist nationalism as necessarily accompanied by a casting off of the reified mental habits attending Irish popular-cultural Anglicization, and by structuring his play in a manner geared not only toward transferring awareness of this necessity to his audience but also toward *producing* such a casting off *directly*, Synge's dramaturgy unquestionably fulfills the criterion of such responsiveness. If Yeats's drama maintains a "high modernist" disdain for the popular-cultural and is thereby prevented from "getting fully down into the hearts of the people," the modernism of *The Playboy of the Western World* would be better described as *avant-garde* by virtue of its deep engagement with Anglo-Irish popular culture, and would thus seem to bear a far greater potential for

reforming the “heart” of the Irish consumer.⁹³ Indeed, it would not be hyperbolic to see in Synge’s manipulation of the epistemological habits accompanying the “Police Intelligence” a full-blown Brechtian “alienation effect,” whereby the theatrical consumer is “roused” from his/her “vulgar” bourgeois slumbers by having presented to him/her an estranging dramatization of that very vulgarity.⁹⁴ For all its “alienating” aesthetic ingenuity, however, Synge’s masterpiece became, instead, the foremost historical illustration of the impenetrability of the cultural fog placed over the popular Irish mind by the popular-cultural forms of British capitalism. It would therefore seem that Yeats’s “high modernist” disillusionment with the Revival’s decades-long effort to reform the tastes of the Irish consumer was far from entirely misplaced.

James Stephens’s *The Charwoman’s Daughter* and the “cracked looking-glass” of Irish Art

Surprisingly, Synge was not the only participant in the Celtic Revival who devised an “avante-garde” aesthetic strategy for combating British popular-cultural literature from within its generic domains. James Stephens’s *The Charwoman’s Daughter*, first published in 1912, presents its readers with an equally deft immanent critique of the “vulgar” literary practices of the British metropole. Though it is what might be called a “late Revivalist” text, having been authored on the very precipice of the turbulent political events of the mid-to-late 1910s and early 1920s that would forever alter Irish perceptions of the movement, Stephens’s novel nonetheless represents a pristine example of the Revival’s Celticist anti-capitalism by virtue of its remarkably creative interrogation of the Anglicization of the early twentieth-century Irish literary marketplace. Specifically, the text chooses for its low-cultural target the uber-popular British genre of “Romance fiction,” a genre which, much like “The Police Intelligence,” was identified by Revivalist ideologues such as Douglas Hyde and D.P. Moran as one of the driving forces

behind Irish “West Britonism.” As we witnessed in the previous chapter in such instances as Moran’s denunciation, in the essay “The Gaelic League,” of the “petticoats in [the] thousands filing into the circulating libraries and the penny novelette shops for reams of twaddle about Guy and Belinda,” the nationalist concern over the Irish consumption of Romance fiction was particularly focused on the figure of the Irish female (80). Stephens’s novel participates directly in this gendered commodity critique, and thus returns us to one of the central themes of this chapter, that of the perceived national threat entailed in the consumption by Irish females of British “literary garbage.” As we shall see in what follows, Stephens’s version of this “metonymic” capitalist critique is far more perceptive and sophisticated, and consequently far more successful—at least in theory—than the earlier versions we have encountered in texts such as Martyn’s *Maeve*, Bernard Shaw’s *John Bull’s Other Island* and Yeats’s *The Land of Heart’s Desire*.

Though it ostensibly takes the form of a “fairy tale,” *The Charwoman’s Daughter* is, in fact, a form of “respectable fiction” in disguise, in Nancy Armstrong’s seminal definition of the genre, in her book *Desire and Domestic Fiction*, as “that which represent[s] political conflict in terms of sexual differences” and which resolves such conflict through the endorsement of “a peculiarly middle-class notion of love” (41). Very early in the novel, Stephens signals to the reader that its fantastical narrative tenor is, to a significant extent, merely an exaggerative variation on this staple Victorian genre. Just as “respectable fiction,” and the low-brow Romance fiction that was its historical descendent, defined the female protagonist’s adolescent life as directed unwaveringly toward marriage and domestic economy, so Mary Makebelieve begins her *bildung* trapped within a Victorian gender script which radically constricts her imaginative horizons:

Her mother spoke sometimes of matrimony as a thing remote but very certain: the remoteness of this adventure rather shocked Mary Makebelieve; she knew that a girl had to get married, that a strange, beautiful man would come from somewhere looking for a wife, and would retire again with his bride to that Somewhere which is the country of Romance . . . When the subject of matrimony was under discussion her mother planned minutely the person of the groom, his vast accomplishments, and yet vaster wealth, the magnificence of his person, and the love in which he was held by rich and poor alike . . . All these wonders could only concentrate in the person of a lord. Mary Makebelieve's questions as to the status and appurtenances of a lord were searching and minute; her mother's rejoinders were equally elaborate and particular . . . Mary Makebelieve would have loved to wed a lord . . . (9)

Mary's self-conception is thus routed through the generic trappings of "Romance" from the novel's very beginning, and—for the time being at least—its "fairy tale" structure is directly aligned with one of the staple components of "respectable fiction," the marriage plot. Though Mrs. Makebelieve's "elaborate and particular" narratives define the matrimonial ideal as an aristocratic one that only a wealthy "lord" is able to fulfill, the novel's "Romance" narrative is far more closely aligned with the "middle-class notion of love" that is the keystone of Victorian respectability.

Mrs. Makebelieve's outlook on her and her daughter's very narrowly bounded social world asserts the novel's initial alignment with this British gender code in no uncertain terms. Through the unique brand of free and indirect discourse that controls the novel's interface, the reader learns that

For her a woman's business was life . . . God did not need any assistance, but man did, bitterly he wanted it, and the giving of such assistance was the proper business of a woman. Everywhere there was a man to be helped, and the quest of a woman was to find the man who most needed her aid, and having found, to cleave to him forever. In most of the trouble of life she divined men and women not knowing or not doing their duty . . . A partner, a home and children—through the loyal cooperation of these she saw happiness and, dimly, a design of so vast an architecture as scarcely to be discussed. (78)

Mrs. Makebelieve is so ensnared by the exacting demands of “respectability” that she can only conceive of its contingent behavioral dictates toward the attainment of “a partner, a home and children” as constituting “life” itself. Though her “loyal cooperation” with these dictates subjects her to their patriarchal limitations, her investment in them is so fervent as to generate a compensatory, imaginative “design of so vast an architecture as scarcely to be discussed” (78). Stephens makes certain to secure the connection between the “respectable” template of Mrs. Makebelieve’s epistemology and the novel’s “Romance” narrative by defining the duty of a woman to adhere to this template as her “quest” in life. This description unmistakably recalls Mary’s perception of marriage as an “adventure” in the passage quoted previously, and suggests that the novel’s “fairy tale” structure is—at its outset anyway—merely an embellished version of “respectable fiction.”

The majority of the novel’s female characters have, however, a very conflicted relationship to this “middle-class” gender norm by virtue of their working-class standing. The code in which they are so heavily invested in fact proves to exacerbate the miseries attendant upon their poverty by holding them to a social standard they are materially incapable of meeting. The Makebelieve’s neighbor in their Dublin tenement, Mrs. Cafferty, plays a pivotal role through her interactions with them in producing critical narrative distance from the exacting demands of Victorian “respectability”:

Mrs. Cafferty held that there was something wrong somewhere, but whether the blame was to be allocated to the weather, the employer, the Government, or the Deity, she did not know, nor did Mrs. Makebelieve know; but they were agreed there was an error somewhere, a lack of adjustment with which they had nothing to do, but the effects whereof were grievously visible in their privations. (83)

Within such a privative, working-class situation as the Makebelieves and Cafferties reside in, the enjoinder to respectable, middle-class social norms cannot but heap misery upon misery. The

hardships brought on their lives by the “lack of adjustment” in the British capitalist system in which they are trapped are compounded further by their lacking the means to adjust them to the middle-class ideology by which they have been so successfully interpellated. Thus, in her work as a charwoman, Mrs. Makebelieve is repeatedly terminated by her employers as a result, first, of her inability to conceive of herself as socially beneath them, and, second, of her inability to refrain from chastising them for their deviations from respectable morality:

She could not remain for any length of time in people’s employment without being troubled by the fact that these folk had houses of their own and were actually employing her in a menial capacity. She sometimes looked at their black silk aprons in a way which they never failed to observe with anger, and on their attempting (as they always termed it) to put her in her proper place, she would discuss their appearance and morals with such power that they at once dismissed her from their employment and incited their husbands to assault her. (20)

Mrs. Makebelieve’s tenuous finances are thus ironically made yet more so by virtue of her obsessive adherence to the middle-class ideology. Her conception of “her proper place” as not only equal to but greater than that of her employers by virtue of her hyper-vigilant moral self-surveillance only distances her further from the class with which she so deeply identifies.

For Stephens, as for contemporary theorists such as Armstrong and Michel Foucault, “respectability” constitutes nothing short of a *biopolitical technology* ensuring, through its subjects’ behavioral self-policing, the reproduction of the deeply interwoven gender and class ideologies of the Victorian period.⁹⁵ *The Charwoman’s Daughter*, however, is also keenly attuned to the ways in which this hegemonic regime is refracted by the operations of Anglo-Irish colonialism. Another reflection of Mrs. Cafferty’s on the gendered division of labor demanded by respectable ideology begins to gesture toward this attunement: “men made the laws and women administered them—a wise allocation of prerogatives, for she conceived that the executive female function was every whit as important as the creative faculty which brought

these laws into being” (87). As numerous critics working within Irish Studies have demonstrated, the Anglo-Irish colonial Union was pervasively defined by the British throughout the nineteenth century as a heterosexual “marriage” in which the Irish played the role of wife. Mrs. Cafferty’s endorsement of the arrangement by which “men made the laws and women administered them” as a “wise allocation of prerogatives” cannot but resonate with this gendered colonial ideology, and suggests that for the Irish, adherence to the biopolitics of “respectability” contributes to the reproduction of colonial subordination. If respectability enjoins its female participants to surrender the “creative,” law-making prerogative to their male counterparts, it also implicitly enjoins the Irish to invest ideologically in their own “feminine” enthrallment to British rule.

It is precisely the function of Mary Makebelieve’s courtship with the unnamed “policeman” who stalks her across Dublin to secure this crucial insight for the novel’s readers and to secure, in turn, the recognition of “Romance” fiction as the primary generic apparatus by which the Irish female reader is interpellated by the colonially reifying dictates of British “respectability.” Almost immediately after the narrative has specified the foundation of Mary’s self-conception in “Romance,” it proceeds to lay the groundwork for the policemen’s entry with a rather disturbing passage describing her attraction of male violence:

She fancied she would not mind being hit by a man, and then, watching the vigour of their movements, she thought they could hit very hard, but still there was a terrible attraction about the idea of being hit by a man. She asked her mother . . . had a man ever struck her? Her mother was silent for a few moments, and then burst into so violent a passion of weeping that Mary Makebelieve was frightened. (10)

The gender ideology of “respectability” that the Makebelieves’ fantasies of “Romance” instill is thus identified as instilling a corollary fascination with and attraction to male brutality. In the gendered context of Anglo-Irish colonialism, this sublime state cannot but connect with the

novel's other ruminations on the hegemonic implications of "respectability." Soon enough, Mary encounters in the policeman, described as a "monument of solidity and law" (11), a figure capable of satisfying her desire for male violence:

. . . the figure of the massive policeman fascinated her. Surely everything desirable in manhood was concentrated in his tremendous body. What an immense, shattering blow that mighty fist could give! She could imagine it swinging vast as the buffet of an hero, high-thrown and then down irresistibly—a crashing, monumental hand. She delighted in his great, solid head as it swung slowly from side to side, and his calm, proud eye—a governing, compelling, and determined eye . . . She did not think he noticed her; but there was nothing he did not notice . . . One day her shy, creeping glance was caught by his; it held her mesmerized for a few seconds; it looked down into her—for a moment the whole world seemed to have become one immense eye—she could scarcely get away from it. (12)

The "immense, shattering blow" the policeman's "crashing, monumental" hand seems capable of giving thus stimulates Mary Makebelieve's Romantic involvement with him, and although, as Joe Valente has very recently demonstrated, the policeman is not a colonial official but merely an Irish "shoneen," or Anglicized Irish subject, his status as a "governing, compelling" representative of colonial law enforcement further clinches the symbolic complicity of her Romantic epistemology with the reproduction of Anglo-Irish colonial rule.⁹⁶

The Irish female subject embodied in Mary is thus trained through her investment in the Romantically-exaggerated gendered division of "respectable" labor to desire a perpetuation of the violent domination of Irish subjects by the British state. I have yet to demonstrate, however, the full extent of *The Charwoman's Daughter's* self-reflexive awareness of the colonially retrograde tendencies of the Irish female consumption of Romance fiction. Indeed, the novel does not merely itself partake of the generic trappings of Romance, but describes the female inhabitants of Dublin, Mary Makebelieve chief among them, as ubiquitously engaging in consumption of the genre. Early in the novel, the reader is informed of the daily activities with

which Mary occupies herself while her mother is off charing the middle- and upper-class homes of Dublin. While much of her time is spent wandering the city, browsing in the windows of its shops, “Sometimes she did not go out at all. She stayed in the top back room sewing or knitting, mending holes in the sheets or the blankets, or reading books from the Free Library in Capel Street” (17). There should be little doubt at this point, given the extent to which her mind is colonized by its generic characteristics, that the “books” Mary acquires from the “Free Library” are likely of a Romantic orientation. Should any doubt remain as to the generic gravitation of Mary’s reading habits, however, it will be dispelled by a subsequent description of one of Mary’s numerous strolls in search of her newfound beau:

Leaving the big road, she wandered into wider fields . . . Great numbers of children were playing about in distinct bands; each troop was accompanied by one and sometimes two older people, girls or women who lay stretched out on the warm grass or leaned against the tree-trunks reading novelettes, and around them the children whirled and screamed and laughed. (26)

This passage returns us then to D.P. Moran’s “petticoats in [the] thousands filing into the circulating libraries and the penny novelette shops for reams of twaddle about Guy and Belinda,” and suggests strongly that Mary Makebelieve’s Romantic proclivities derive from participation in an Irish-female-adolescence-wide practice of consuming British “literary garbage.” The narrative further establishes the normativity of this consumer practice during one of Mary’s subsequent strolls, in which she is accompanied by the policeman to Phoenix Park:

Soon they came to a more populous part of the Park. The children ceased from their play to gaze round-eyed at the little girl and the big man; their attendants looked and giggled and envied. Under these eyes Mary Makebelieve’s walk became afflicted with a sideward bias which jolted against her companion. She was furious with herself and ashamed. She set her teeth to walk easily and straightly, but constantly the job of his elbow on her shoulder or the swing of his hand against her blouse sent her ambling wretchedly arm’s-length from him. When this had occurred half a dozen times she could have plumped down in the grass and wept loudly and without restraint. (31)

The irresistible “sideward bias” with which Mary’s gait is “afflicted” is clearly produced by the giggling, envious attention her accompaniment by such a “monumental,” “manly” figure has drawn from the adolescent female “attendants” of the children populating the Park, the very same “attendants” who, in the earlier description, are describes as reading “novelettes” while lounging against its tree trunks. Mary’s self-conception is thus doubly filtered both through her own engagement with Romance fiction and through her intuitive awareness of the similar engagement of Dublin’s other female adolescents.

The novel also links the policeman’s “shoneen” identity and “West British,” Anglicizing significance to Mary’s *bildungsroman* with the consumption of British “literary garbage.” In perfect keeping with the Revivalist castigation of the Irish consumption of such “vulgar” fare, he cites “reputable English journals, such as *Answers* and *Tit-Bits* and *Pearson’s Weekly*” in support of his assertion that Phoenix Park is “the third largest in the world, but the most beautiful,” rather than “the local newspapers, whose opinion,” he warns her, “might be biased by patriotism” (29). He even regales Mary with narratives of his exploits as a policeman which employ the “sensational” generic tropes of none other than “The Police Intelligence”:

He told her stories also, wonderful tales of great fights and cunning tricks, of men and women whose whole lives were tricks, of people who did not know how to live except by theft and violence; people who were born by stealth, who ate by subterfuge, drank by dodges, got married in attics, and slid into death by strange, subterranean passages. He told her the story of the Two Hungry Men, and of the Sailor who had been Robbed, and a funny tale about the Barber who had Two Mothers. He also told her stories of The Eight Tinkers and of the Old Women who Steal Fish at Night-time, and the story of The Man he Let Off, and he told her a terrible story of how he fought five men in a little room, and showed her a great livid scar hidden by his cap, and the marks in his neck where he had been stabbed with a jagged bottle, and his wrist watch which an Italian madman had thrust through and through with a dagger. (41-2)

The capitalization of such stories as “the Two Hungry Men” and “The Man he Let Off” unmistakably identify “The Police Intelligence” as the source of the policeman’s narrative

repertoire, and suggest that Mary Makebelieve's fascinated enthrallment by this "governing, compelling" figure of law enforcement is doubly produced by generic engagement with British "literary garbage." Not only her Romance reading but also his self-presentation—a la Christy Mahon—as the protagonist of this awe-of-law-inspiring genre primes her to view this colonialist "shoneen" as an ideal, "respectable" mate. Like the Mayoite villagers of *The Playboy*, Mary has been trained through her immersion in the Anglicized literary marketplace of Ireland to view her nation's imperial subordination as a source of *entertainment*.

The remarkable extent to which Mary Makebelieve's self-conception has come to be routed through empire-abetting literary genres informs what is perhaps the novel's central symbol, namely the "cracked looking glass" on the wall of the Makebelieve home. In what is clearly an allusion to Oscar Wilde's "The Decay of Lying," in which, paraphrasing the thesis of his counterpart in Socratic dialogue, "Vivian," that "Life imitates art far more than Art imitates life," "Cyril" states, "I can quite understand your objection to art being treated as a mirror. You think it would reduce genius to the position of a cracked looking glass" (307). Through this symbol, Stephens suggests that Mary Makebelieve's "life" is imitating the low-brow "art" of Romance and "The Police Intelligence," thus reducing it to a "cracked," distorted, servile imitation of British culture. This symbol makes its first appearance during the opening exposition of the Makebelieves' lives, which describes:

They often stood together before the little glass that had a crack running drunkenly from the right-hand top corner down to the left-hand bottom corner, and two small arm crosses, one a little above the other, in the center. When one's face looked into this glass it often appeared as four faces with horrible aberrations; an ear might be curving around a lip, or an eye leering strangely in the middle of a chin. (14)

The significance of the Cubism-like fragmentation in this passage only becomes clear, however, when the mirror is identified as integral to the sartorial preparations Mary makes in order to

perform her role in the Romance narrative she conceives of her courtship as participating in. After she has caught her first glimpse of this “monument of solidity,” Mary’s preexisting, “respectability”-derived obsession with her appearance becomes all the more intense. As she prepares to go out searching for him, she attempts to arrange herself with equal gender “solidity” as an enticement to his further attentions: “She polished her shoes, put on the white dress, and then did up her hair in front of the cracked looking-glass” (23). Mary is arranging herself so as to conform to her Anglicized conception of Romance, and by virtue of this conformity the “cracked looking-glass” takes on a symbolic association with “shoneen”ism.

This association is confirmed at the conclusion of her first stroll with the policeman, as Mary experiences a powerfully ambivalent reaction to his manner of taking leave of her. She is thrilled beyond measure by his gentlemanly performance but is mortified, equally beyond measure, by a perceived flaw in her dress:

. . . this was the first time a man had ever uncovered before her . . . As she went away down the road she felt that his eyes were following her, and her tripping walk hurried almost to a run. She wished frantically that her dress was longer than it was—that false hem! If she could have gathered a skirt in her hand, the mere holding on to something would have given her self-possession, but she feared he was looking critically at her short skirt and immodest ankles. (31)

The policeman’s “uncover”ing of his head in farewell to Mary satisfies her Romantic desire, but in response to his performance, the shortcoming in her own, complementary performance, becomes glaring and alarming. She accordingly flees the scene while attempting to suppress the powerful urge to conceal the “immodest” view of her “ankles” provided by her “short skirt.” That she imagines him “looking critically” at this un-respectable display reflects the extent to which her mind has been colonized by the generic conventions of British Romance, by the hegemonic moral code those conventions buttress, and by the corresponding, normative gaze of

this “West British” “shoneen.” Another description from this scene just prior to the above further confirms this reading of the symbolic meaning of the “cracked looking glass”:

After a while Mary Makebelieve arose and was about bidding him a timid good-bye. She wished to go away to her own little room where she could look at herself and ask her questions. She wanted to visualize herself sitting under a tree beside a man. She knew that she could reconstruct him to the smallest detail, but feared that she might not be able to reconstruct herself. (31)

The reification of Mary’s perceptions by Romance is so complete that she wants to depart from the very scene of its fulfillment in order to “visualize herself” with the “man” in the privacy of her room. Mary, in effect, fantasizes about composing mentally her own Romantic narrative of their encounter. In keeping with the symbolism of the “cracked looking glass,” however, while she is quite certain of her ability to “reconstruct him to the smallest detail” in that narrative, she is not nearly so confident in her ability “to reconstruct herself.” A Mary so thoroughly refracted by the generic conventions of British Romance fiction and, by her consumption of such fiction, by the biopolitical regime of which it is the literary handmaiden, could only appear as “horribly” distorted and fragmentary as the female subjects of such canonical Cubist paintings as Pablo Picasso’s “Les Demoiselles D’ Avignon.”

The duration of Stephens’s novel accordingly comes to be devoted to “reconstruct”ing Mary’s Anglicized identity. With the policeman’s discovery of Mary Makebelieve’s working-class standing during her substitute performance of her mother’s charing duties at his aunt’s upper-middle class household, his consequent downgrading of her from potential wife to intended sexual conquest, and the simultaneous entry of the “young lodger” into the Cafferty tenement, the narrative affiliations of this “fairy tale” shift subtly from an alignment with British Romance fiction to an alignment with at least two different genres of decolonizing, nationalist configuration. As Valente’s reading of the novel points out, the lodger’s prototypical Irish

nationalist sentiments—his “fervor of passion” for Ireland, his conception of the nation “as a woman, queenly and distressed and very proud,” and his “yearn[ing] to do deeds of valor, violent grandiose feats which would redound to her credit and make the name of Irishmen synonymous with either greatness or singularity”—align him with the heroic male protagonist of the most prevalent of Revivalist genres, the “Shan Van Vocht” (90-100). Mary Makebelieve’s rejection of the policeman’s predatory sexual overtures, her swift recovery from the mortifying disappointment their courtship has resulted in through her interactions with the lodger, her and her mother’s closing of ranks against the policeman during his violently possessive proposal of marriage to Mary, and the lodger’s fistfight with him following his ignominious retreat from the Makebelieve home, all operate to realign the novel’s “fairy tale” narrative with the “chivalric,” “sovereignty”-generating formula of this genre, and through this realignment contribute to the “reconstruction” both of Mary Makebelieve and of the Irish nation of which she is the symbolic, Cathleen ni’ Houlihan-like embodiment.

As Valente argues, though the gender politics undergirding this “chivalric” genre “could not but cooperate in the very Seoininism it officially reprehends, helping to enthrall its audience in a set of ‘non-Irish’ values,” values which, I have attempted to demonstrate, are those of the British norm of “respectability,” and although, given the novel’s deep sensitivity to the retrograde, Anglicizing influence of this norm, Stephens signals his awareness of this nationalist genre’s complicity with colonial patriarchy, *The Charwoman’s Daughter* ultimately overrides such critical considerations in favor of a “fairy tale” wish-fulfillment fantasy of achieved decolonization (Valente 130). The novel thus communicates “both an explicit affirmation and an implied critique of the nationalist ethos it represents,” as Valente puts it, endorsing the nationalist fantasy of the “Shan Van Vocht” even as it registers that fantasy’s profound ideological

limitations (137). It also, however, overlays both narratives, that of British Romance and that of its nationalist competitor, with yet another narrative, that of the Celtic “fairy dream,” and implies that it is only by virtue of the Makebelieve’s inhabitation of its “magical,” mythological domain that they are able to escape the contradictions of its real-political resolution. Within this “magical narrative,” one by one, each of the socio-political institutions which previously entrapped them into hegemonically investing in their own gender, class, and colonial subordination dissolves into insignificance.

Though it is the middle term of these three, class, which is resolved last by the novel’s Celtic “fairy dream,” it is necessary to address it first as a result of its serving as this narrative’s most explicit vehicle. By the time it begins to affirm its Celticist affiliations directly, the novel has already laid the groundwork for a supernatural narrative transformation through the grave illness of Mrs. Makebelieve, which waxes and wanes in mystical accord with the progression and regression of Mary’s courtship with the “West British” policeman. Upon the collapse of that courtship, Mrs. Makebelieve recovers quickly from her illness and, during her convalescent slumbers, experiences a vision of the family’s economic deliverance from their “privations”:

She had slept like a top all through the night, and, moreover, had a dream wherein she saw her brother Patrick standing on the remotest sea point of distant America, from whence he had shouted loudly across the ocean that he was coming back to Ireland soon, that he had succeeded very well indeed, and that he was not married . . . Dreams, said Mrs. Makebelieve, did not come for nothing. There was more in dreams than was generally understood. Many and many were the dreams which she herself had been visited by, and they had come true so often that she could no longer disregard their promises, admonishments, or threats. (66)

Stephens slyly signals to the reader the Arnoldian allusion implied in this passage by juxtaposing it with another description of a dream, this time Mary Makebelieve’s:

Mary said that sometimes she did not dream at all, and at other times she dreamed very vividly . . . once she had dreamed that some one gave her a shilling which she placed carefully under her pillow, and this dream was so real that in the

morning she put her hand under the pillow to see if the shilling was there, but it was not. (67)

The resonance of this description with the Arnoldian/Renanian Celtic characteristic of “mistaking dreams for reality” could hardly be clearer. The Makebelieve’s, then, are not simply Irishwomen, but are also *Celtic* ones, and their collective dream of financial deliverance, either by Mrs. Makebelieve’s brother Patrick’s American “success” or through the magical appearance of a shilling beneath Mary’s pillow, thus constitutes a recognizably Celticist response to the “despotism” brought upon their lives by British capitalism. Where for Arnold, however, this response bespeaks merely a practical haplessness on the Celt’s part in the domain of “fact,” *The Charwoman’s Daughter* ultimately brings this dream to fruition in just the manner Mrs. Makebelieve has envisioned. The inheritance by the Makebelieves of a vast capitalist fortune from her long-absent brother Patrick at the novel’s conclusion thus not only resolves the material “privations” to which they have been subjected as members of the Dublin working-classes but also indicates the presence in them of the “magical” imaginative faculty of the Arnoldian Celt, thereby converting the novel’s aesthetic form into such a Celtic “fairy dream.”

Within this newly-Celticized narrative frame, the very socio-political and generic factors which produced the Makebelieve family’s hardships become the means by which they transcend those hardships. During the scene in which mother and daughter spurn the matrimonial overtures of the policeman, it is “respectability,” the biopolitical technology which formerly ensnared them in colonial patriarchy and its attendant class system, which enables them successfully to fend off his oppressive advances. Where Mrs. Makebelieve’s investment in this normative moral code once prevented her from holding a job, in this scene, this investment instead becomes a means for her positive empowerment. Thinking to herself that the policeman’s connection to Mrs. O’Connor, his aunt and her employer, is “a disqualification

never to be redeemed,” Mrs. Makebelieve listens patiently as, “with dreadful jocularly, he commenced to speak of himself, his personal character, his sobriety and steadiness” (105). His presentation of his credentials complete, Mrs. Makebelieve turns the tables on the policeman, disqualifying him as a suitor by virtue of his deviation from the dictates of “respectability”: “‘I don’t know at all,’ said she, ‘why you should speak to me about this, for neither my daughter nor yourself have ever hinted to me before that you were courting one another’” (107). The policeman is thus forced to admit that he failed to do “the right thing” in his manner of pursuing Mary, and, having admitted his failure to deal respectably with her, is left with no alternative but to quit that pursuit (108).

As with “respectability,” so the Makebelieves’ related investment in fashion, which formerly served as the primary symbolic vehicle of Mary’s disfigurement in the “cracked looking glass” of Irish “shoneenism,” becomes, upon the narrative emergence of the Celtic “fairy dream,” another medium of Irish cultural self-assertion. Though Mrs. Makebelieve’s gifts as a seamstress and fashion maven have been evident throughout the novel, it is only upon this narrative shift that these gifts begin to fulfill their promise of aestheticized, utopian labor:

. . . for Mary she planned garments with a freedom and bravery which astonished while it delighted her daughter. She combined twenty styles into one style of terrifying originality. She conceived dresses of a complexity beyond the labor of any but a divinely inspired needle, and others again whose simplicity was almost too tenuous for human speech . . . She explained the basic principles of dress to her daughter, showing that in this art, as in all else, order cannot be dispensed with . . . Mary could scarcely hear enough of her lore. (92)

One is reminded of the descriptions of “festive” work in Synge’s Aran Islands, where, “due to the absence of any division of labor,” production has the character “of the artistic beauty of medieval life” and the individual producer is able to attain a “correspondingly wide development” of his/her personality. That Mrs. Makebelieve’s needle is “divinely inspired”

further secures the Celticist affiliations of her utopian “art,” as does its “terrifying originality” and imaginative genius.

Finally, *The Charwoman’s Daughter*’s Celticist “fairy dream” is able to override that most thorny of Revivalist nationalism’s ideological contradictions, that which I have referred to throughout this chapter as the “fetishism of failure.” As Valente’s reading of the novel so convincingly demonstrates, Stephens invokes this ideological staple through the young lodger’s enthusiastic embrace of the drubbing he experiences at the hands of the policeman. The lodger’s reflection that “he was a man predestined to bruises” and that “they would be his meat and drink and happiness and sanctuary forever,” and his concomitant compulsion toward maintaining himself in a state of “hunger” and dietary privation, unmistakably instantiates this “fetishism,” but, as with the retrograde gender implications of the “Shan Van Vocht,” the novel ultimately overrides this entanglement with the Celticism-laden ethos that “everything that can be thought can be done” (118).⁹⁷ Through the valiant, though failed, resistance of this nationalist knight errant to the “bold, bad policeman,” whom the novel’s narrative denouement identifies as an incarnation of a fully metaphysical “evil,” the Celticist “fairy tale” that *The Charwoman’s Daughter* has become is able to “give birth to a Dancing Star” and achieve a particularly aestheticized form of Irish national sovereignty (118-9).

Like *The Playboy of the Western World*, then, Stephens’s novel envisions the successful accomplishment of the decolonizing goals of Irish nationalism as proceeding not merely through political or militant acts of resistance, but also through a painstaking labor of extricating Irish subjects from the reifying influence of the popular-cultural forms of turn-of-the-century British capitalism. Only after the de-nationalizing influence of the British literary marketplace on Mary Makebelieve’s self-conception has been combated *from within its own generic domain* through

deft, immanent critique, does the replacement of “West British” cultural ways with Celtic ones become possible. By subtly modulating the reader’s experience from immersion in British Romance narrative to immersion in an aestheticizing, utopian “fairy dream,” the reader-response transaction built into the novel ensures that its consumers, especially those female consumers who are most susceptible to the gendered variety of “shoneenism” bred by the former genre, undergo such an epistemological shift *directly*. If, as its allusion to Oscar Wilde implies that it hopes, life indeed imitates art, then *The Charwoman’s Daughter* makes a remarkably efficacious contribution to the de-Anglicizing and Celticizing of the Irish consumer and, through her, to the “reconstruction” of the “cracked looking glass” of Irish national culture.

It is necessary to note, however, that the novel’s conclusion also communicates a subtly ironic reminder of the ideological contradictions latent within its sovereignty drama-style narrative resolution. As the narrator bids farewell to the reader, he takes his leave of Mary Makebelieve in a manner that cannot but resonate with the novel’s earlier criticism of the biopolitical, hegemonic operations of British “respectability”:

Even ordinary, workaday politeness frowns on too abrupt a departure from a lady, particularly from one whom we have companioned thus distantly from the careless simplicity of girlhood . . . The world is all before her, and her chronicler may not be her guide. She will have adventures . . . She may even meet bolder and badder men than the policeman—shall we, then, detain her? I, for one, have urgent calls elsewhere, will salute her fingers and raise my hat and stand aside, and you will do likewise, because it is my pleasure that you should. (120)

To the careful reader, the connection between the gallantry of the narrator’s “departure” from Mary and the earlier departure of the policeman could hardly be clearer. Like the “bold, bad policeman,” the narrator “uncovers” before her in gentlemanly salute to her “lady”hood. Stephens thus embeds a subtle reminder of the deep commonality between the patriarchal tenets of British “respectability” and the gender politics of the Shan Van Vocht, and thereby gestures

toward a fundamental continuity between the “shooneenism” of the colonial era and the cultural makeup of the “sovereign” Ireland that will succeed it. The novel’s conclusion is thus fork-tongued, and, though its commitment to the supplanting of “West British” popular-cultural forms with Celtic ones is unwavering, it communicates a warning to its readers of the extent to which the ideological modalities of contemporary Irish nationalism tend toward the establishment of a postcolonial state incompletely extricated from the thrall of colonial patriarchy. Insofar as “respectability” is also a hegemonic logic for the reproduction of the capitalist class hierarchy, and insofar as the social adherence to this Victorian moral code necessarily precludes the full Celticization of Irish culture, *The Charwoman’s Daughter* remains somewhat dubious as to the nation’s prospects of fully casting off the reifying forms of British capital. While it firmly maintains its ideological allegiance to the Celticist anti-capitalism of the Revival, therefore, the text also prefigures the critique of movement’s anti-capitalism advanced during the subsequent, postcolonial moment which will form the subject of the next chapter, that of Irish Late Modernism.

Conclusion: “A terrible beauty is born”

By the time of the publication of *The Charwoman’s Daughter* in 1912, it seemed to Yeats that the Irish public had become irreversibly entrenched in the “vulgar,” Anglicizing influence of “The Puritan and the Merchant.” The popular-nationalist assault on Synge’s *Playboy* had seemed but another confirmation of the widespread Irish adoption of the “Puritan conviction and shopkeeping timidity” Yeats identified with England, and had precipitated a defiant affirmation of his high-cultural ideals during the public debate at the Abbey Theater on 4 February 1907 (“Controversy” 348). There, he defended his actions in having “called in the police” to quell the “riots,” citing the “laws common to all civilized communities” as an essential tool for

“protect”ing the theater and its audience from “the tyranny of cliques” and for preserving the integrity of “the precious things of the soul” from the contaminating influence of “popularity,” “vague sentiment”’s and the “trodden mire” of popular taste (350-1). And in keeping with his uniquely generic method of interpreting Irish culture and Irish history, he had further defined such “laws” as indispensable to guarding the national public sphere from the disruptive din of “the rattling bells on the cap of the fool” (351).

The withdrawal in 1913 of Hugh Lane’s offer to bequeath thirty-nine Impressionist masterpieces to the city of Dublin amid similarly controversial circumstances could only further strengthen Yeats’s perception of recent Irish history as *comedy*.⁹⁸ The contrast, in “September, 1913,” between the “paudeen” and “bidly” who occupy their days “fumb[ing] in a greasy till/ And add[ing] the halfpence to the pence/ And prayer to shivering prayer” (2-4) and the heroic, “Romantic” deeds of those Irish heroes “for whom the hangman’s rope was spun” (13), defines an Irish epoch severed from the elevated generic realm of tragedy. Only an imaginative ecstasy, a “the delirium of the brave” like that which once possessed men such Robert Emmet and Wolfe Tone (22), filling them with the desire to “give” their lives selflessly for the national cause, could meet the criteria of this “high”est of genres. The self-interested, “Puritan and Merchant”-driven ethos to “pray and save” which now possessed the Irish populace (6), “dry[ing] the marrow from the bone” of the national being (5), confined it instead to the “low”est, most “vulgar” genre of British popular culture.

When, however, on “Easter, 1916,” nationalist forces seized control of the General Post Office, declaring the foundation of an Irish republic, and when, in the wake of those revolutionary acts, sixteen of the participants in the “Rising” were summarily shot and hanged by British authorities, thereby exhibiting in the present tense the very self-sacrificing “delirium” he

had thought “dead and gone,” Yeats’s generic assessment of recent Irish history could not help but be “changed utterly” (15).⁹⁹ At a stroke, the nationalist martyrs shattered the “homogeneous, empty time” of comedy, a “meaningless” (8) temporal domain “where motley is worn” (14) and where “words” (8) carry only the “low” significance of “a mocking tale or gibe” (10), and ascended, through the sublime, “terrible beauty” (16) of their deaths, to the “full” temporality of post-colonial nationhood. The desired end of Yeats’s Herculean Revivalist effort to “transform” (39) Irish “hearts” (41) from an alignment with the “casual comedy” of British capitalist rule to alignment with the “dream”-like (70), aestheticized ontological plenitude of Celtic tragedy came to be achieved at a distance from his “long . . . sacrifice” (57), amid the very “living stream” (44) he had been “certain” (13) was no longer capable of “high,” “Romantic” action, and his “high-cultural” aloofness toward this main “stream” could therefore only be likewise “transformed.” The “mocking” accents of “September, 1913” would thus disappear and be “changed in [their] turn” (38) to the somber, self-effacing tones of bardic commemoration. “Murmer[ing] name upon name” (61), the Yeats of “Easter, 1916” can only observe in rapt, “bewildered” (73), ambivalent fascination the realization of his nationalist desires. “Wherever green is worn” (78) in the Celticized “time to be” (77) of the newly founded Irish republic, there too would be cast off the “motley” garb of British popular culture, in whose “vulgar” forms were once concentrated the de-nationalizing influences of both colonialism and capital. That only a tragic “defeat” of such “terrible” magnitude could bring about the material fulfillment of his Revivalist ideological vision, however, would be a realization—indeed, an *anagnorisis*—that would haunt both Yeats and Ireland for decades to come.

Chapter 6: Irish Late Modernism

Parnell came down the road, he said to a cheering man:
“Ireland shall get her freedom and you still break stone.”

-W. B. Yeats, “Parnell”

The contours of the literary-historical movement with which this study’s final chapter is concerned, a movement I have already begun to refer to as Irish Late Modernism, are perhaps most neatly delineated by a text written well in advance of the socio-historical moment to which it constitutes a response, namely James Joyce’s “Araby.” Composed at the height of the Celtic Revival, Joyce’s brief tale of an adolescent boy’s failed romantic quest nonetheless presages, with remarkable precision, the critical interrogation and ironic deflation of Revivalist ideals that would become the calling card of modernist Irish writers laboring in the context of post-independence Ireland, central among these ideals being the commitment to cultivating Celticist alternatives to the civilizational forms of capitalist modernity. Joyce freights the protagonist’s infatuation with a neighbor girl known only as “Mangan’s sister” with numerous Revivalist associations in addition to those evoked by this name. By alluding to the early nineteenth-century Irish poet, James Clarence Mangan, whose work has been read as a pioneering modern adaptation of such longstanding nationalist genres as the Shan Van Vocht, Joyce places the nameless narrator’s sojourn to the title bazaar within the framework of such genres, but he adapts their conventions in order to address what is undoubtedly the story’s most prominent, and thematically central, nationalist context, namely Revivalist anti-capitalism. Through the protagonist’s unconscious mental investment of his quest with both nationalist and anti-capitalist significance, and through that quest’s subsequent failure to fulfill the high, “romantic” aspirations of Celticist nationalism, Joyce communicates a savvy, penetrating rumination on the

contradictions inherent in the Revival's racial and economic self-conception. "Araby," well in advance of its historical arrival, limns the concerns of Irish Late Modernism and lights upon its central historical insight: that an Irish nationalist program bound to a set of anti-capitalist ideals amid a world dominated by capital was always doomed to failure.

"I had never spoken to her, except for a few casual words, and yet her name was like a summons to all my foolish blood," the narrator recalls of his budding obsession with "Mangan's sister," thus initiating the process by which his youthful devotion to the older girl transforms, through his semi-conscious immersion in the nationalist culture of *fin-de-siecle* Dublin, into a sort of Shan Van Vocht-cum-grail quest devoted to the chivalrous rescue of a symbolic female embodiment of the Irish nation (22). Through the especially deft narrative style for which *Dubliners* is justly famous, Joyce gestures toward the interdependency of this gendered version of nationalism with the economic nationalism it so often accompanied throughout the Revival:

Her image accompanied me even in places the most hostile to romance. On Saturday evenings when my aunt went marketing I had to go to carry some of the parcels. We walked through the flaring streets, jostled by drunken men and bargaining women, amid the curses of the laborers, the shrill litanies of shop-boys who stood on guard by the barrels of pigs' cheeks, the nasal chanting of the street-singers, who sang a *come-all-you* about O'Donovan Rossa, or a ballad about the troubles in our native land. These noises converged in a single sensation of life for me: I imagined that I bore my chalice safely through a throng of foes. (22-3)

The "throng of foes" through which the narrator imagines himself bearing a grail-like "chalice" is united by commerce. It is a cultural milieu marked by "bargaining women," "curses of . . . laborers," "litanies of shop-boys," and "street-singers" chanting "come-all-you"s for their bread. The "single sensation of life" against which the boy comes to define his quest is, unmistakably, the sensation of capitalist activity, activity which, by reducing all human purpose to the quest for money, is undoubtedly "most hostile" to the "romance" with which the boy attempts to imbue his existence. As in so many narratives contemporary with the boy's late nineteenth-century

adolescence, the homogeneous, empty life of capital provides a negative standard against which to define a set of “high” personal and nationalist ideals.

Joyce, however, has already begun to puncture the boy’s subconsciously nationalistic self-aggrandizement by indicating, through the activities of the “street-singers,” for whom “the troubles in our native land” are a means of earning a living, the extent to which Revivalist nationalism is inextricable from capital and dependent upon it. The seeds of the demise of the boy’s individual fantasy are soon sewn by “Mangan’s sister” herself when, “twirl[ing] a silver bracelet round and round her wrists” in indication of her own materialist proclivities, she inquires whether the boy will be attending “Araby,” a “splendid bazaar” to which she “would love to go” but which, unfortunately, she cannot attend (23). Eager to please his Dark Rosaleen, the boy responds, “If I go, I will bring you something” (23). Seemingly unawares, the protagonist has committed himself to just the sort of activity as he formerly defined his “romance” against: a trek to a commercial center to make a purchase. Upon his arrival there, however, encountering, first, “Before a curtain, over which the words *Café Chantant* were written in coloured lamps, two men . . . counting money on a salver” and “listen[ing] to the fall of the coins,” the base materialism of his mission begins to announce itself more insistently, and he can only recall “with difficulty” the original fantasy he has come to fulfill (27). Expecting a world of “eastern enchantment” against which his quest would take on “high” significance and purpose, the boy instead notes the “English accents” and low sexual innuendo of the bazaar’s representatives (27). Approached then by a “young lady” who “asked me did I wish to buy anything” in a “tone of . . . voice” less than “encouraging,” the narrator recalls, “I looked humbly at the great jars that stood like eastern guards at either side of the dark entrance to the stall and

murmered: No, thank you” (27). The full puncture and shipwreck of the boy’s nationalist, anti-capitalist fantasy then arrives in the form of the story’s “epiphany”:

I lingered before her stall, though I knew my stay was useless, to make my interest in her wares seem more real. Then I turned away slowly and walked down the middle of the bazaar. I allowed the two pennies to fall against the sixpence in my pocket . . . Gazing up into the darkness I saw myself as a creature driven and derided by vanity; and my eyes burned with anguish and anger. (27-28)

Unable to make his “interest in her wares seem more real” and thereby find fulfillment of his fantasy in the material world, the boy’s anti-capitalism sags limply, and, where before he would certainly not have done so, he “allow”s the coins in his pocket to jingle together, thus clinching his inextricable immersion in the economic lifeworld indexed earlier in the “salver.” Educated through the failed playing-out of his anti-capitalist nationalist ideals, the boy’s epiphany consists of a recognition of the “vanity” entailed in his earlier, exalted, “high” self-conception, a conception which fundamentally misgauged the possibilities for transcending the base materialism of the Dublin marketplace.

“Araby” enacts in miniature the literary-historical process which it is the goal of this chapter to document. The image of the boy turning away from his nationalist anti-capitalism in embittered recognition of its foolish “vanity” might, indeed, be offered as a tableau symbolic of the entirety of Irish Late Modernism, a literary movement in which the anti-capitalist goals of the Celtic Revival are tried and found wanting on several accounts, some ideological and some real-historical. The Catholic definition of the word “vanity,” a definition of which Joyce was surely aware, as “the idle effort to obtain recognition or respect for what a person does not have a rightful claim to,” could appropriately adorn the gravestone which, for various reasons, came to be placed above the Revival’s anti-capitalist, Celticist cultural vision during the several decades following the Anglo-Irish Treaty in 1922.¹⁰⁰ That is, what “Araby” shows, above all else, is the

extent to which that vision was predicated upon an immersion in capitalism so thorough as to render any nationalist fantasy tainted by its forms down to its very roots. The boy's distaste for the base money-grubbing of Dublin provides the direct impetus for his anti-capitalist quest, and that quest is therefore not only indebted to capitalism at a genetic level, but also delusional insofar as it claims for Irish nationality a separation from capitalism that it cannot rightfully claim. Joyce indirectly scathes Revivalist nationalism for failing to forge its ideals from the real constituent elements of turn-of-the-century Irishness, among which elements capitalism can only be admitted as central. During the post-independence moment at which the experiment of the Irish nation could be said to have had ample opportunity to take its course, a number of Irish writers—some old-guard nationalists, some part of a new generation— would arrive at the same “epiphany” as *Araby*'s protagonist: the realization that the dream of an anti-capitalist, Celtic nationality had failed, and that Irishness, both real and ideal, remained inextricably bound up with the civilizational forms of capital.

This retrospective, critical moment in the history of Irish writing provides an example of what a number of literary critics in recent years have come to call “Late Modernism.” The attempt to define such an aesthetic practice which most resonates with the subject matter of this chapter is that of Tyrus Miller in his influential book *Late Modernism: Politics, Fiction, and the Arts between the World Wars*. For Miller, the term designates a set of aesthetic practices prevalent during the interwar years that are distinct from both modernism and postmodernism, and that represent something of a transitional phase mediating between the “high” formal strategies of the former and the “low,” more pop-oriented strategies of the latter. As Miller describes, in the effort to point up the failures of high modernism to contain the radical historical pressures attending the dramatic increase in early twentieth-century Euro-America of

“technological culture, mass politics, and shock experience,” “late modernist writing . . . reopens the modernist enclosure of form onto the work’s social and political environs, facilitating a more direct, polemical engagement with topical and popular discourses. From the point of view of the external context, it also registers the ways in which intense social, political, and economic pressures of the period increasingly threatened the efficacy of high modernist form” (20).

Presaging the later abandonment of aesthetic mastery carried out by postmodernist texts, late modernist texts evince “a painstaking pursuit of literary ‘failure’” wherein the program of modernism is subjected to critical interrogation through the presentation of “a deauthenticated world in which subject and object, figure and ground, character and setting,” and the other antinomies of the politics of modernism, “are only weakly counterposed or even partly intermingled,” a world, that is, in which modernism’s strategies begin to dehisce (62).

The preceding chapter took pains to establish that the Celticist aesthetic strategies of such members of the Revival as Yeats, Synge and Stephens do indeed represent proper instances of formal modernism, and that the modernism these figures devised was essential to the Revival’s ability to effectuate a transformation of a mainstream Irish culture entirely suffused with capital. Miller’s schema of Euro-American literary history in the mid-twentieth century might easily be adapted to schematize the tectonic shift in aesthetic politics that occurs between the Revival and the World War II, a shift that results in large part from the effective establishment of an independent Irish state and the concomitant practical opportunity for putting Celticist civilization ideals into practice. As a result of a number of factors attendant upon post-independence Irish history, Irish writers came to conclude that the Celticist anti-capitalism of the Revival had foundered, and, as a means of registering that failure, these writers undertook a “painstaking pursuit” in their work of demonstrating the “failure” of both Revivalist ideals and of the aesthetic

modernism that had been their most creative vehicle. The world of Irish Late Modernism is a world in which the Revival's anti-capitalist ideals have been all but extinguished by the onrush of an ever-accelerating capitalist world-system. The task of Irish Late Modernism in such texts as I survey here, from Joyce's *Ulysses* to the late poetry and drama of Yeats, Flann O'Brien's *At Swim-Two-Birds* and Samuel Beckett's *Murphy*, is to take stock of the failure of Revivalist nationalism to accomplish its aims. As we shall see in what follows, capital forms, perhaps, the central socio-historical pressure determining the modification of pre-independence conceptions of Irish nationality. The texts of Irish Late Modernism thus index the increasingly globalizing trajectory of Irish society, and its inevitable submission to the same capitalist system once defined by Revivalist nationalism as irresistibly alien to the nation's Celtic racial composition.

“In capital spirits”: Counter-Revivalism in *Ulysses*

In the 1907 essay “Ireland: Island of Saints and Sages,” the young James Joyce expressed a sentiment that was to inform the aesthetic practice of his later, “high modernist” masterpiece, *Ulysses*. In what is surely a polemic against the prevailing tendency in *fin-de-siecle* Ireland to define Irishness by characteristics diametrically opposed to those of the British metropole, Joyce declared:

Our civilization is an immense woven fabric in which very different elements are mixed. In such a fabric, it is pointless searching for a thread that has remained pure, virgin and uninfluenced by other threads nearby. What race or language . . . can nowadays claim to be pure? No race has less right to make such a boast than the one presently inhabiting Ireland. Nationality . . . must find its basic reason for being in something that surpasses, transcends and that informs changeable entities such as blood or human speech. (118)

Numerous critics in recent years have analyzed Joyce's mature aesthetic practice from either the context of contemporary Irish nationalism or the context of a burgeoning capitalist modernity to which that practice, particularly in the case of *Ulysses*, seems especially responsive by the

standards of early twentieth-century literature.¹⁰¹ However, to date there has been very little sustained consideration of the manner in which these two contexts inform one another—that is, of the manner in which Joyce’s capitalism-attuned aesthetic might constitute a challenge to prevailing nationalist definitions of Irishness as inherently anti-capitalist. Yet this particular conception of the Irish as a Celtic race, “pure, virgin and uninfluenced” by British conquest, capitalist suffusion, and historical change in general, is surely one of the great polemical targets of Joyce’s national epic. Joyce’s novel implies, through its aesthetic chronicle of what we might call “actually existing Irishness,” what the above passage states openly, that “no race has less right” to “boast” of purity and pristineness “than the one presently inhabiting Ireland.” Joyce’s barb might, indeed, be taken as the credo of the entirety of Irish Late Modernism, whose *raison d’être* is to demonstrate the impossibility of defining Irishness apart from the historical influences to which centuries of conquest and migration had subjected it. *Ulysses*’s special attention to the thorough interpenetration of Irishness and capital positions it not only as a more advanced incarnation of the insights of “Araby,” but also as the founding text of this movement. In *Ulysses*, as in the other texts to which we will subsequently turn, the Revivalist mythology of a Celtic Irishness aesthetically-constituted and inherently alien to the reifying forces of modern capitalism is subjected to devastating critique. In *Ulysses*, the mutually reinforcing “high” cultural vision and modernist aesthetics of turn-of-the-century Irish Revivalism is brought “low” through the recognition that both Irishness and any aesthetic practice hoping to chronicle it are inextricable from capital.

As Joseph Valente has recently argued, the fundamental purpose of Joyce’s mature aesthetic is to depict early twentieth-century Ireland as, in effect, “a modern trans-nation,” in whose precincts are visible incarnations of all the innumerable complexities and conflicts of our

globalized, culturally hybridized modern condition (“Joyce’s Politics” 90). Surely Joyce’s choice to proffer Leopold Bloom, a Jewish adman, as his representative Irishman is informed by such a purpose. With regard to no category of the Irish cultural purity asserted by Revivalist nationalism does this choice have greater polemical consequences than that of the putative Irish purity from capitalist contamination. Bloom as *homo economicus* repudiates with his every step across Dublin and every shift of gaze the mythology of Irishness as antagonistic to capital. Through Bloom’s advertisement-gearred perceptions of 1904 Dublin, Irishness in fact becomes defined by capitalism and its attendant popular-cultural forms above all else. Soon after the reader is introduced to Bloom, a scene ensues that contains in miniature the majority of the elements of the novel’s post-Revivalist politics and aesthetic. In the “Calypso” episode, just after Bloom has eaten his scorched pork kidney, he retires to an outhouse, in preparation for which he digs up “an old number of *Titbits*” to “read at stool” (4.465-67):

Asquat on the cuckstool he folded out his paper, turning its pages over on his bared knees. Something new and easy . . . Our prize titbit: Matcham’s Masterstroke. Written by Mr. Phillip Beaufoy, Playgoer’s Club, London. Payment at the rate of one guinea has been made to the writer . . . Quietly he read . . . that slight constipation of yesterday quite gone . . . Ah! Costive. One tabloid of cascara sagrada. Life might be so. It did not move him or touch him but it was something quick and neat. Print anything now. Silly season . . . Neat certainly . . . Begins and ends morally . . . Smart. He glanced back through what he had read and . . . he envied kindly Mr. Beaufoy who had written it and received payment of three pounds, thirteen and six. Might manage a sketch . . . Invent a story for some proverb . . . He tore away the prize story sharply and wiped himself with it.
(4.500-37)

Bloom’s actions and attendant reflections are carefully calculated to index the extent to which Revivalist values fail to respect the makeup of “actually existing Irishness.” Not only is the publication he selects the very epitome of the English literary fare that Revivalist nationalism perceived as endangering the Irishness of the Irish consumer; additionally, Bloom’s response to its contents is based entirely on economic calculations. Bloom “envie[s] kindly” the

remuneration the British author of the “prize titbit,” and fantasizes that he might “manage a sketch” capable of earning a similar return for himself. Bloom’s is a mental world in which literature is almost entirely subordinated to profit. The passage goes beyond lampooning the “high” pretensions of what, in the attempt to distinguish the cultural politics of the Theater movement from that of “popular” or “Catholic” nationalism, I have called the “Literary” Revival, however; it also presents the “moral” bent of the latter faction of turn-of-the-century Irish nationalism as equally available for profit-generating utility. The “prize titbit,” to Bloom, is “smart” for beginning and ending “morally.” To Bloom’s adman’s gaze, morality itself can serve as a commodity, a thing of exchangeable value. The passage emphatically announces that Joyce’s own aesthetic will eschew the “purity” of Catholic nationalism’s holy trinity of Celtic virtues, as Bloom’s bowel movement and rectal sanitation are described openly and plainly. Both major factions of the Revival thus receive a potent repudiation in this passage.

It is not that Joyce presents *Titbits* as a legitimate literary alternative to the “high” Celticism of the Revival; far from it. Indeed, Joyce’s “literary” judgment seems adequately represented in both the Bloomean observation that “they” will “print anything now” and in his ultimate utilization of the “prize” story as toilet paper. The point, rather, is that Joyce views the reality of contemporary Irishness as ineluctably caught up in such reading practices and in the larger economic forces that Bloom’s reflections serve to instantiate, and that, from the Joycean perspective, an art faithful to that Irishness must confront and chronicle that involvement. To this end, Joyce carefully imbricates those nationalist ideological elements which sought to define Irishness as antithetical to capital with cultural elements that demonstrate the gross inaccuracy of such a definition. A few further examples will serve to illustrate this strategy, beginning with Bloom’s attempt to place an advertisement for the Dublin merchant Alexander Keyes in the

Freeman's Journal. Bloom's explanation of the symbolism underlying the proposed design to the paper's printer, "Councillor" Joseph Patrick Nannetti, defines the advertisement as a further instance of the subsumption of nationalism by capital: "Like that, see. Two crossed keys here. A circle. Then here a name. Alexander Keyes, tea, wine and spirit merchant . . . The idea . . . is the house of keys. You know, councilor, the Manx parliament. Innuendo of home rule. Tourists, you know, from the isle of Man. Catches the eye, you see" (7.149-51). Bloom's ingenious idea is to exploit Irish nationalism for profit. The "house of keys," evoking the house of parliament of the Isle of Man, a British territory which, in 1904, had achieved a functional "Home Rule," and which therefore served as a popular political touchstone in the campaign to secure a similar arrangement for Ireland, will, to Bloom's mind, "catch the eye" of the politically-minded reader and thereby lure him/her into unwitting exposure to an ad.¹⁰² Recalling such real-life examples of the exploitation of nationalist sentiment as the Carroll's "Emerald Gem" cigarettes advertisement from chapter four of this study, Bloom sees Irish national autonomy not as an end in itself, but as a means to the end of capitalist profitability. Nannetti's receptivity to the design indicates that Bloom's thinking is far from exceptional.

While it does not contain any explicit reference to the nationalist ideological vein with which it resonates, Bloom's longstanding vision for an advertisement for his former employer, H.E.L.Y.S. stationer's, consisting of "a transparent showcart with two smart girls inside writing letters, copybooks, envelopes, blottingpaper," may be read as another instance of the subversion of nationalist ideology by Irish capitalist reality (8.133). "Smart girls writing something catch the eye at once. Everyone dying to know what she's writing," Bloom reflects, bespeaking his nearly infinite capacity for remolding prevailing social norms toward profitability (8.134-5). To Bloom's eye, female writing, an act on which, in such seminal nationalist works as D.P. Moran's

“The Battle of Two Civilizations,” Edward Martyn’s “Maeve” and W.B. Yeats’s “The Land of Heart’s Desire,” the fate of the nation was perceived to hinge, is not only *not* in need of anti-capitalist cultivation in order to stem the tide of Irish popular-cultural Anglicization and vulgarization, but should be directly cultivated for capitalist ends. If this particular example of the positioning of female literacy as a node in the network of capital is only uncertainly related to prevailing nationalist discourse, however, Molly Bloom’s reading habits resonate with and repudiate such discourse in a far more definitive manner. In “Wandering Rocks,” through Bloom’s perusal of the pornographic text *Sweets of Sin*, which he eventually purchases for Molly, the reader of *Ulysses* is presented with a representative Irish female whose reading habits run dramatically athwart the “popular” nationalist emphasis on female sexual “purity.” Molly’s own reference at the outset of “Penelope” to a “smutty photo” of Bloom’s featuring a sexually profligate “nun” reinforces the association between female reading in Ireland and sexual *impurity* (18.22). All told, the thorough immersion of Irish femininity in consumption and advertising practices which directly violate the idealized, sexually chaste and non- or anti-capitalist female identity of the Revival, seems carefully calculated to explode the Revival’s gender politics by demonstrating that femininity’s near-total suffusion with capitalist forces.

In the later, more “experimental” episodes of *Ulysses*, the dynamic by which Revivalist nationalism-affiliated aspects of Irish culture are revealed as already incorporated by the British capitalist system that nationalism sought to combat becomes a full-blown stylistic, *formal* principle. Though there are innumerable moments during the latter half of the novel which could be adduced in illustration of this principle, there is one passage in “Circe” in which it is particularly neatly encapsulated. Just as his mock trial begins, Bloom, “pleading not guilty” to

charges of depravity in a “long unintelligible speech,” attempts to defend his “respectable” credentials:

An acclimatized Britisher, he had seen that summer even from the footplate of an engine cab of the Loop line railway company . . . glimpses, as it were, through the windows of loveful households in Dublin city and urban district of scenes truly rural of happiness of the better land with Dockrell’s wallpaper at one and ninepence a dozen, innocent Britishborn bairns lisping prayers to the Sacred Infant, youthful scholars grappling with their pensums or model young ladies playing on the pianoforte or anon all with the fervor reciting the family rosary around the crackling Yulelog while in the boreens and green lanes the colleens with the swains strolled what times the strains of the organtoned melodeon Britanniametalbound with four acting stops and twelvefold bellows, a sacrifice, greatest bargain ever . . . (15.898-922)

Bloom’s defense consists of a conjuring of the normatively “respectable” domestic scene, “glimpses” of which he claims to have received while gazing from “an engine cab of the Loop line railway company,” a scene which, in its Catholicism, “scenes truly rural of happiness,” and its “colleens” attended on Dublin “boreens” by “swains,” would seem to present a collection of values and cultural practices commodious to, if not culled directly from, Revivalist Celticism. Bloom’s attempt to depict such a scene, however, is compromised and frustrated in several related ways. First, in that the “bairns” who populate it are “Britishborn,” Bloom’s Dublin utopia is a thoroughly Anglicized one. Second, the “better land” which he initially presents as flesh-and-blood Irish men, women and children, turns out merely to be imagery adorning a commodity, “Dockrell’s wallpaper.” Third, in keeping with the Anglicizing- and capitalism-based adulteration of this quasi-Celticist utopian vision, Bloom’s narrative grinds to a halt amid the incursions of the language of advertising. The “organtoned melodeon” that provides the soundtrack to this fantastic, “rural” Dublin suddenly commandeers Bloom’s account, which peters out upon declaring the “Brittaniametallbound” instrument the “greatest bargain ever.”

What began as a nationalism-tinged vision of Irish domestic bliss transforms into an advertisement for a British commodity.

This passage provides a template for the analysis of the novel's related confrontations with Revivalist Celticism and capitalism: each time a Celticist ideal is asserted, it is dissolved by the forces of capitalist reification. The fluidity of identity of the "Circe" episode derives in part from Bloom's own malleability as an agent and subject of capitalist development, and the episode's particularly innovative, shapeshifting form is thus indebted to this historical process, in which "all that is solid melts into air." Certainly the episode's larger purpose is to plumb the depths of Bloom's "unconscious"; however, as this passage demonstrates, the processes of internal self-definition and conflict through which he passes are indelibly stamped by the all-dissolving, all-reifying influence of capital. The ultimate literary effect of this formal principle, whereby Revivalist values are asserted and then almost immediately revealed to be already involved in capitalist processes, is to produce *bathos*—and a bathos with the "high" pretensions of Revivalist nationalism as its direct target. In the world of Irish Late Modernism to which *Ulysses* in so many ways gives birth, the dream of Revivalist Celticism to foster an aestheticized, anti- or non-capitalist Irish society, is consistently subjected to just this effect, as, before the thoroughly compromised state of "actually existing Irishness," both this social ideal and the primitivist modernism that accompanied it collapse into impurity, absurdity and ridicule. From the post-Revivalist vantage of Irish Late Modernism, the reader's, or, in the case of drama, the viewer's, response, can only be, along with the auditor's of Bloom's comically shipwrecked speech, "general laughter" (15.894).

This insight provides the interpretive lens required to understand the stylistic tendencies of that most nationalist of the novel's episodes, "Cyclops." Before moving to examine this

chapter's stylistic tendencies, however, a short detour into its preoccupation with anti-Semitism is necessary, because these tendencies, which chronicle the immersion of everyday Dublin life in the popular-cultural discourses of modern capitalism, are closely linked with the dynamic by which Bloom gradually emerges as a target of the anti-capitalist anti-imperialism of both the Citizen and the chapter's narrator, the "Nameless One." Joseph Valente has argued that the nationalist sentiments expressed by the participants in the chapter's political discussion at Barney Kiernan's pub evince a simultaneous investment in notions of national separation from the British metropole and in the cultural forms attending Ireland's "metrocolonial" entanglement with it, to the point that what these participants express is not, in fact, a pure, unequivocal desire for such separation, but rather an ambivalent desire both for ongoing involvement with Britain and for a sundering of the colonial relationship. In Valente's description, "such subjectivities" as these participants display "take shape through split institutional dependencies, split ethno-gender identifications, split adherences to empire and to decolonization," to the point that their "support for local modes of cultural separatism . . . does not translate into support, nor even signify robust desire for a more violent separation from the metropolitan marriage" ("Neither" 116). The collective anti-semitism expressed by these "subjectivities" is, appropriately, Valente's prime example of the split identification as the "metrocolonial" subject necessarily experiences, in that Bloom's perceived alienness positions him as a sort of screen onto which metropolitan, "Shoneen" characteristics uncomfortably perceived as belonging to that subject can be projected outward and thereby psychically expurgated. Though Valente's diagnosis of the necessary structural ambivalence of the Irish condition as operative in "Cyclops" mostly concerns the domains of politics and race, the episode makes clear that Bloom's Jewishness also serves as a screen onto which the Citizen and others project associations of capitalist immersion they

subconsciously fear apply to themselves, in violation of prevailing nationalist doctrine. That is, the anti-Semitism these characters express serves to repress awareness of their thorough involvement with the capitalist forces their nationalist commitments demand they repudiate.

Amy Feinstein has recently observed that throughout *Ulysses*, a pattern exists wherein Irish subjects attribute “the awful characteristics of the British” to the figure of the Jew (“Usurers” 39). Feinstein argues that through such attributions “Joyce demonstrates that these popular expressions of resentment toward typically Jewish occupations are, in fact, a displacement of blame for Irish discontent under British occupation” (41). Valente’s assessment of the complex ideological process by which these subjects disavow rhetorically the very same characteristics their lives avow in practice enables us to perceive a further layer to the novel’s equivalence between Jew and Saxon, whereby their “expressions of resentment” are legible not merely as a “displacement” of grievances against the imperial power but also as a displacement of their own conflicted investment in imperial institutions, capitalism central among them. Joyce has already announced this ideological dynamic during the “Nestor” episode, in which Garrett Deasy’s anti-Semitic warning to Stephen Dedalus that “England is in the hands of the Jews. In all the highest places: her finances, her press” (2.346-8) sits in close, contradictory proximity to his own stated Shakespearean ethos, “Put but money in thy purse” (2.239). Deasy is no anti-capitalist, but the tinge of financial anti-Semitism, when combined with his own mercantile philosophy, serves to reveal his own tendency to project negative aspects of that philosophy onto the racial other of the Jew. The Citizen, however, expresses in numerous early instances in “Cyclops” the characteristic combination of anti-capitalism and nationalism which we have chronicled in previous chapters. As Bloom challenges his ideological investments in such staple nationalist positions as the need to cultivate Irish games and reject British ones and the

imperative to throw off British imperial bondage through physical “force,” the Citizen gradually turns his anti-capitalism cum nationalism against Bloom. “Those are nice things . . . coming over here to Ireland filling the country with bugs” (12.1141-2), he not-so-subtly comments in Bloom’s direction after J.J. O’Molloy has reported the outcome of the “Canada swindle case,” in which “one of the bottlenosed fraternity,” i.e. the Jews, defrauded a number of Irish men and women by falsely promising passage to Canada for “twenty bob” (12.1086-1093). The Citizen continues by describing the Jews as “Swindling the peasants . . . and the poor of Ireland,” and, quoting the uber-popular nationalist text *Cathleen ni Houlihan*, venomously declares, “We want no more strangers in our house” (12.1150-1). By defining the figure of the Jew as a “swindler” of the Irish peasants and poor and as a “stranger” in the “house” of Ireland, the Citizen unmistakably paints Bloom with the brush of nationalist anti-capitalism. Upon Bloom’s exit from Kiernan’s in search of Martin Cunningham, the Citizen further tightens the equivalence between Bloom as Jew and the exploitative Saxon “invader,” declaring that “Beggar my neighbor is his motto” (12.1491). However, in keeping with the chapter’s—indeed, the novel’s—broader tendency to plumb the complexities of Irish nationalist ideology, Joyce later implies that the Citizen himself might easily be accused of the very exploitative practices he attributes to Bloom, as the Nameless One reflects, to his anonymous auditor, that the Citizen is “All wind and piss like a tanyard cat . . . As much as his bloody life is worth to go down and address his talk to the assembled multitude in Shanagolden where he daren’t show his nose with the Molly Maguires looking for him to let daylight through him for grabbing the holding of an evicted tenant” (1311-16). The effect of the Nameless One’s claim that the Citizen is reputed to have committed what was, in many ways, the cardinal sin of Irish nationalism, the economic exploitation of the Irish peasant by another Irish subject, is to complete the circle whereby Joyce

indicates that nationalist ideology is driven by the need to disavow participation in practices defined as characteristic of the “Saxon robber.”

The Nameless One’s own ideological-practical contradictions—working as a “collector of bad and doubtful debts” for Moses Herzog, a Jewish merchant, but spewing anti-Semitic venom throughout his narrative—certainly serve as another illustration of the “vanity” of Irish anti-capitalist nationalism, to recall the key term of the epiphany of “Araby” whose symbolic function is to suggest that such nationalism pretends to an externality to capital that is thoroughly contradicted by the makeup of Irish culture (12.24-25). All such examples feed directly into the central symbol of “Cyclops,” the figure of the “eye.” The interpretive key required to decode this symbol is contained in Bloom’s reflection to the Citizen that “Some people, says Bloom, can see the mote in others’ eyes but they can’t see the beam in their own” (1237-8). That is, Bloom suggests, one’s own contradictions and inconsistencies are more easily displaced onto others than acknowledged. The Citizen’s status as the “Cyclops” of the novel’s Homeric structure positions him as the episode’s epitome of ideological self-blindness, and also positions Bloom as the sort of burr beneath his saddle, the unassimilable element which, announcing the contradictory complexity of Irish culture, threatens to tear down the Citizen’s separatist vision of the nation. Bloom’s constant insistence on the Citizen grasping his “point” cleverly alludes to the outcome of the Cyclops episode of *The Odyssey*, in which Odysseus blinds the giant Polyphemus by stabbing his eye with the “point” of a burning stick, such that his identification of redeeming value in such “Saxon” cultural institutions as “lawn tennis,” which the Citizen calls a “shoneen game” but which Bloom sees as beneficial to “the agility and training of the eye,” must be read as throwing into relief the faults in the prevailing separatist emphasis of Irish nationalism (12.889-91).

But it is not simply through the evident contradictions between the ideology and practice of the Citizen or the Nameless One that “Cyclops” implies that the anti-capitalist rhetoric of turn-of-the-century Irish nationalism falsifies Irish cultural reality. Indeed, the episode’s mock-epic style, with its copious “parodies” of the motley assemblage of discourses that characterize that reality, seems devised to illustrate the manner in which Revivalist anti-capitalism elides the widespread Irish engagement in practices of popular-cultural consumption characteristic of modern capitalism. Valente has also provided a very useful analysis of the manner in which Joyce presents the denizens’ of Kiernan’s as simultaneously repulsed and titillated by their reading of the pornographic contents of the American-based *National Police Gazette*. Valente’s Foucaultian argument that “tabloid journalism” such as that featured by this publication circa 1904 “not only traffics in transgressive pleasures, but maintains its own rhetorical force that marks them as such,” thus evoking contradictory yet interdependent and mutually reinforcing impulses of voyeuristic enjoyment and moralistic disapproval of salacious acts, incarnates in the sexual register the same ideological dynamic we have noted with regard to the ideological dynamic of “Cyclops” as a whole (“The Novel” 17). Indeed, the chapter’s presentation of Irish tabloid consumption as beset by dense ideological contradictions applies not only to the domain of the sexual, but also to the domains of the political and the economic. The ultimate effect of this presentation with regard to Joyce’s dissection of nationalist ideology is to suggest that Irish subjects are both repulsed and offended by the Irish subjection to the rule of British law and titillated or “turned on” by that subjection. That is, Joyce goes beyond merely suggesting that because Irish subjects partake ubiquitously in the consumption of “literary garbage,” the high-cultural pieties of Celticist nationalism misrepresent “actually existing Irishness,” to suggest also that the burgeoning popularity of tabloid journalism helps to petrify the Irish nationalist mind in

a state of pleasurable dependence upon the prevailing imperial order. In short, the Irish participation in the popular-cultural forms of modern capitalism becomes a vehicle for the subversion of separatist nationalism, in much the same way that, as demonstrated in the previous chapter, Synge's *Playboy* presents the Mayoite villagers as consumers, through their reading of the *Police Intelligence*, of both their own oppression and their resistance to that oppression.

However, where Synge ultimately sets Christy Mahon apart as an exemplary Celtic hero by virtue of his extrication from this particularly insidious brand of capitalist reification, in the world of *Ulysses*, no such "apart"ness seems possible. Instead, what the reader of "Cyclops" experiences is an incessant re-subsumption of nationalist discourse in general, and of the Celticist variety of such discourse in particular, by the dominant, incipiently global forces of capitalist development. One "parody" in particular serves to illustrate this claim, namely the especially long parody which ensues upon Alf Bergan's presentation of "hangman's letters" authored by H. Rumbold, a British executioner offering his services to the High Sherriff of Dublin. In this parody are visible simultaneously a popular nationalist discourse, that of the cult of the martyred hero, and an array of tabloid forces which subject that nationalist discourse to reification. Given the tremendous length of this parody, a somewhat lengthy quotation is necessary:

The deafening claps of thunder and the dazzling flashes of lighting which lit up the ghastly scene testified that the artillery of heaven had lent its supernatural pomp to the already gruesome spectacle . . . A posse of Dublin Metropolitan Police superintended by the Chief Commissioner in person maintained order in the vast throng . . . Considerable amusement was caused by the favourite Dublin streetsingers L-n-h-n and M-ll-g-n who sang *The Night Before Larry Was Stretched* in their usual mirthprovoking fashion. Our two inimitable drolls did a roaring trade with their broadsheets among lovers of the comedy element and nobody who has a corner in his heart for real Irish fun without vulgarity with grudge them their hardearned pennies. The children of the Male and Female Foundling Hospital who thronged the windows overlooking the scene were delighted with this unexpected addition to the day's entertainment . . . The

viceregal houseparty which included many wellknown ladies was chaperoned by Their Excellencies to the most favourable positions on the grandstand while the picturesque foreign delegation known as the Friends of the Emerald Isle was accommodated on a tribune directly opposite . . . The arrival of the worldrenowned headsman was greeted by a roar of acclamation . . . The learned prelate who administered the last comforts of holy religion to the hero martyr when about to pay the death penalty . . . offered up to the throne of grace fervent prayers of supplication. Hand by the block stood the grim figure of the executioner . . . as he awaited the fatal signal . . . of his fell but necessary office. . . On a handsome mahogany table near him were neatly arranged the quartering knife, the various finely tempered disemboweling appliances (specially supplied by the worldfamous firm of cutlers, Messrs John Round and Sons, Sheffield), a terra cotta saucepan for the reception of the duodenum, colon . . . etc. . . . Quite an excellent repast consisting of rashers and eggs, fried steak and onions, done to a nicety, delicious hot breakfast rolls and invigorating tea had been considerably provided by the authorities for the consumption of the central figure of the tragedy who was in capital spirits when prepared for death . . . The *nec* and *non plus ultra* of emotion were reached when the blushing bride elect burst her way through the serried ranks of the bystanders and flung herself upon the muscular bosom of him who was about to be launched into eternity for her sake . . . She swore to him as they mingled the salt streams of their tears that she would ever cherish his memory, that she would never forget her hero boy . . . and, oblivious of the dreadful present, they both laughed heartily, all the spectators, including the venerable pastor, joining in the general merriment. That monster audience simply rocked with delight . . . Every lady in the audience was presented with a tasteful souvenir of the occasion in the shape of a skull and crossbones brooch, a timely and generous act which evoked a fresh outburst of emotion . . . (12.525-668)

This passage depicts a cultural setting in which the nationalist cult surrounding the “hero martyr” Robert Emmet undergoes a wholesale transformation at the hands of the “sensational” devices of tabloid journalism. A “ghastly,” “gruesome spectacle” of the very same kind that suffuses the “Police Intelligence”-controlled perceptions and desires of the Mayo villagers in *The Playboy*, Emmet’s execution is subjected to a thorough conversion into “entertainment,” before which Viceregal and nationalist-affiliated delegations alike emit a “roar of acclamation.” Political antagonisms dissolve beneath an array of literary techniques derived not only from “Police Intelligence”-style reportage but also from other genres such as Romance fiction (as Emmet’s “brushing bride elect” casts herself upon his “muscular bosom” and the two “mingle . . . the salt

streams of their tears”), catalogue advertisement (as the hangman’s tools, “finely tempered disemboweling appliances . . . supplied by the worldfamous firm of cutlers, Messrs John Round and Sons,” are presented alongside “an excellent repast . . . done to a nicety” for Emmet’s “consumption”), and society column gossip-mongering. The combined audience “simply rock[s] with delight,” bursting the bounds of national and factional allegiance. The “spectacle” also provides the basis for further aesthetic merchandizing as Mulligan and Lenehan do a “roaring trade with . . . broadsheets” filled with “droll,” comedic fare, and each “lady” spectator receives a “skull and crossbones brooch” as a “souvenir of the occasion.” Joyce’s use of the phrase “capital spirits” in his depiction of the combined literary and commodity forces that dissolve the pathetic force of “tragedy” and render this canonical nationalist event fodder for “comedy” could hardly be more apt.

The prescience of the diagnosis of the trajectory of capitalist modernity gestured toward by this passage is truly astonishing. Joyce’s implication that longstanding differences of identity and social divisions of political and gender orientations will ultimately be superseded by a common capitalist culture which, like the printing presses of “Aeolus,” converts all human raw materials into a unified, conglomerated storehouse of profitable information, presages in the second decade of the twentieth century developments which would only be complete as its *last* drew to a close, and as the worldwide web emerged on the scene of human history. Indeed, there is perhaps no better conceptual model for the stew-like mixture of info-tainment discourses that the above “parody” embodies than that of the *internet search engine main page*, in which, just as in this and other passages of *Ulysses*, all categories of human identity and experience are alike ground together in the blender of commodification. What makes this “parody” an instance of “Late Modernism” rather than “postmodernism,” an aesthetic practice which such a description

certainly suggests *Ulysses* approaches, is that its “postmodern” “cultural logic” is attached to, and directed toward the comic deflation of, a nationalist genre—the “tragic” genre of the martyred hero—which served as the staple subject matter of modernist projects like those of Yeats, Synge and Stephens during the Revival period. As with Tyrus Miller’s anatomy of Late Modernism in general as adumbrated in this chapter’s introduction, Irish Late Modernism as inaugurated by Joyce depicts an incipiently postmodern world, but trains its gaze on those remnants of the modernist project of aesthetic resistance to capitalism which survive, unmoored from their “alternative” ideological foundations and stripped of their reformatory power, amid its all-subsuming flux.

A brief commentary on the significance of Stephen Dedalus to the project of *Ulysses* is necessary before moving to analyze other examples of this unique literary-historical moment. There is a definite sense in which Stephen represents nothing less than the ego-ideal of the “Literary” faction of the Revival, that faction which, under the banner of the so-called “Celtic Note,” attempted to rally the Irish public toward the realization of an anti-capitalist and aesthetically-textured civilization. Stephen’s profiling at the hands of the English folklorist Haynes is not, in this sense, entirely wrongheaded, as his impecuniosity is undoubtedly driven by a set of artistic ideals which determine that aesthetic achievement be defined both in national terms (one hardly needs to quote the conclusion of *A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Man*) and against the contamination of the “marketplace.” The sterility of Stephen’s actual artistic output, limited as it is to a minor composition adapted from Douglas Hyde’s *Love Songs of Connacht*, is surely another face of the novel’s deflation of Revivalist ideology, and alongside such capitalism-suffused, magisterial, vibrant aesthetic productions as the “parody” above, that sterility suggests that an Irish art which excludes large portions of Irish reality, in particular those

portions that relate to the nation's immersion in modern capitalism, is doomed to insufficiency and immediate obsolescence. *Ulysses* as Irish national epic is not only a comprehensive, all-embracing cultural exposition of *fin-de-seicle* Ireland and Irishness, but is also, by virtue of this modus operandi, a massive and scathing counter-Revivalist text. To Joyce, and to the numerous aesthetic practitioners writing in the wake of the Free State's establishment in 1922, a nationally-devoted art must face, as perhaps its primary documentary task, the reality of "actually existing" Irish culture, a reality which, from the colonial to the postcolonial period, would remain immured within a capitalist system marked by an increasingly global trajectory.

Official Ideologies and Cultural Realities in Ireland after 1922

In the wake of the Anglo-Irish Civil War, the newly-established Irish Free State government ushered in an official milieu in keeping with the tenets of the Catholic, "popular" faction of Revivalist nationalism, thereby attempting to foment, in "top-down" hierarchical fashion, the regenerated, post-British civilization that had long been that nationalism's dream. The vast body of historical literature chronicling this early independent period emphasizes such repressive measures as the Censorship of Films Act (1923), the movement by the Dail Eirann in 1925 to outlaw divorce, and the Censorship of Publications Act (1929), as the most significant steps taken by W. T. Cosgrave's Cumann na nGaedheal government toward such fomentation. These measures reflect the thorough continuity between prominent turn-of-the-century nationalists such as D.P. Moran and the ideology of the figures superintending Irish governmental autonomy during its opening decade, and have led to an impression that Irish life at this time deviated wholesale from both the "Shoneen" mores of the colonial period and the aesthetically-minded, cosmopolitan resistance to such mores by the "Literary" faction of the Revival. A "joint pastoral" issued by the Irish Catholic hierarchy, the agency which was to have

perhaps the greatest influence in crafting both the official state policies of the Free State and, particularly through its control of the nation's educational system, everyday life during this period, reflects the extent to which such longstanding "popular" notions informed these measures, declaring, "the evil one is ever setting his snares for unwary feet. At the moment, his traps for the innocent are chiefly the dance hall, the bad book, the indecent paper, the motion picture, the immodest fashion in female dress—all of which tend to destroy the characteristics of our race" (qtd. in Brown, *Ireland*, 33). Aside from the novel addition of "the motion picture," these sentiments evince total continuity with the Catholic contingent of Revivalist nationalism, the contingent which, as we witnessed in this study's fourth chapter, sought to define Ireland's immersion in British capitalism as a dangerously ontologically expansive state of affairs. Presented for the first time with a practical opportunity for choosing between an ontologically repressive or generative set of norms, the Free State government seemed to affirm an unequivocal commitment to the former, to the detriment of those expansive, cosmopolitan values that the Revival's "literary," Celticism-inspired participants had so passionately promoted.

Following the global economic crisis of the late 1920s, an event whose nightmarish fallout seemed to recommend a further severance of Irish ties with capitalist modernity, the Irish public opted to install the Fianna Fail Party of Eamon de Valera, a veteran nationalist figure who participated in the Easter Rising, in power in 1932, in part to effectuate such severance. De Valera's loyalty to the economic doctrines of Arthur Griffith's Sinn Fein, central among these being national "self-sufficiency," "exploitation of native resources," and the pursuit of "industrial development behind protective tariffs," affirmed the State's endorsement of longstanding anti-British economic thinking as a response to contemporary exigency (Daly, *Industrial*, 38). De Valera's broadcast on the State-sponsored station, Radio Eireann, on 6

February 1933, in which he called on Ireland to help “save Western civilization from the scourge of materialism,” further reflects the endurance of Revivalist anti-capitalism under Fianna Fail’s rule from 1932-1948 (Brown, *Ireland*, 31), as would, even more emphatically, his broadcast on St. Patrick’s Day, March 17, 1943, six years after a new Constitution had given birth to the first fully independent Irish state, Eire, and in the midst of the so-called “Emergency” measures taken by the new government in response to the continental rage of the Second World War:

The Ireland we have dreamed of would be the home of a people who valued material wealth only as a basis of right living, of a people who were satisfied with frugal comfort and devoted their leisure to the things of the spirit; a land whose countryside would be bright with cosy homesteads, whose villages would be joyous with the romping of sturdy children, the contests of athletic youths, the laughter of comely maidens; whose fireside would be the forums of the wisdom of old age. It would, in a word, be the home of a people living the life that God desires that men should live. (qtd. in Garvin, 35)

De Valera’s vision of an Ireland whose citizens “valued material wealth only as a basis of right living,” who would be “satisfied with frugal comfort” and whose “leisure” activities would bespeak a commitment to “the things of the spirit,” as a sort of mission statement of the newly-founded state, incarnates the dream of the Revival to establish an Irish economic sphere whose links with global capitalism would be as slender and few as possible, and whose practices would accord with perceived “native,” or Gaelic, values. Irish macro-economic policy during the ‘30s and ‘40s thus extended the motivation underlying the micro-economic legislation of the Free State in the ‘20s by aligning Irish society yet more closely with the vision of Catholic Revivalism, a vision of the Irish nation as “the home of a people living the life that God desires that men should live.”

Yet, in recent years, a modified account of Irish reality in the decades following independence has emerged which suggests that the nation’s attempted severance of ties with an increasingly global capitalist modernity was far from efficacious. As Brian Fallon’s *An Age of*

Innocence: Irish Culture 1930-1960 has recently argued, though official state and Church proclamations and policies during this period projected an image of Ireland that accorded with Revivalist ideals, the nation's popular-cultural reality in fact more closely resembled its "Shoneen," colonial predecessor. As Fallon describes, circa 1930, "English importations flooded the market, censors or no censors," feeding an ongoing, ever-increasing popular taste for "thrillers, Westerns, popular love stories . . . and their like"—literary and cinematic—and a general "Anglo-American domination" of Irish culture (11). In Fallon's estimation, "when all this is taken into account, the accepted picture of a culturally chauvinistic statelet shutting its doors on international currents turns out, in several respects, to be almost the reverse of the truth"; "instead, Ireland, badly in need of developing a national culture of her own, was hopelessly outgunned by external forces—mainly commercial—over which her leaders had little control, and few institutions or public bodies knew how to combat these forces effectively" (11). The "alternative modernity" toward which I have argued Revivalist nationalism labored seems, given this more comprehensive, "bottom-up" "picture" of the newly-independent nation, seems never to have arisen, in spite of the best efforts of de Valera and his administrative and clerical compatriots. In its place, there instead emerged an independent Ireland far from independent from the popular-cultural forms identified during the Revival as the foremost threat to autonomy from the capitalist civilization of the "Saxon robber."

The composite portrait I have constructed above, of an independent Ireland attempting to effectuate the nation's longstanding ideal of extrication from capitalist modernity through censorship and the erection of tariffs but unable to combat an ever-mounting tide of popular-cultural forces emanating from that modernity, provides the background against which the duration of Irish Late Modernism after Joyce emerges as a coherent movement. Each of the Late

Modernist practitioners this chapter will move on to survey—the late Yeats, Flann O’Brien and Samuel Beckett—were inspired in some way by this complex array of often-contradictory social conditions, and, most importantly, by the marked deviation of such conditions from the stated ideals of the Revival, especially the Celticist ideals of its “Literary” faction. Aligning themselves through their aesthetic practice with the cosmopolitan tenor of this faction, and perceiving, like the Joyce of *Ulysses*, an “actually existing Irishness” instead simultaneously ontologically repressive and culturally vulgar, these writers cultivate, to recall the words of Tyrus Miller, an “aesthetics of failure” whose primary target is the Celticist modernism of the “Literary” Revival. That is, Irish Late Modernism after Joyce, training its gaze on the ultimate, real-life precipitate of almost four decades of Revivalist nationalism, chronicles the manner in which that precipitate incarnates a set of values and cultural practices entirely at odds with that nationalism’s anti-capitalist, Celticist ideals. Whether emphasizing the repressive Catholicism of Irish life under the Free State and Eire or emphasizing the ongoing Irish immersion in the popular-cultural habits of consumption associated by the Revival with an Anglicizing capitalism, the aesthetic aim of Irish Late Modernism is a constant: to demonstrate the collapse of the Revival’s Celticist ideals by staging both their reification and bastardization and the bathetic deflation of those modernist aesthetic practices that served as their vehicle. In short, Irish Late Modernism narrates the destruction and collapse of the radical, utopian aims of Revivalist nationalism amid an Ireland increasingly suffused with by the forces of capital.

“If Folly Link with Elegance”: Capitalism, Eugenics, and Bathos in Yeats’s Late *Oeuvre*

Recent years have brought extensive critical commentary concerning the role of the pseudo-science of eugenics in Yeats’s later poetics and dramaturgy. Heightened attention to the presence of this discourse in Yeats’s work has produced valuable insights into the manner in

which Yeats's political thought finds expression increasingly through themes of sexuality and sectarian violence. Particularly in the period of the late 1930s, Yeats's mounting disapproval of the political and cultural status quo under the Free State and Eire governments is couched in these terms, which serve to index in a brute, physical register the widespread degeneration he viewed contemporary Ireland as undergoing in direct repudiation of the "high" ideals of his Revivalist nationalism. The ongoing presence and prominence of symbols and themes related to capitalism, themes which occupy such a central place in Yeats's pre-independence aesthetic project, in the texts authored at this time has been far less remarked, as has the manner in which these longstanding concerns intertwine with his newfound eugenic perceptions. However, in keeping with the brief historical sketch conducted above, in which, after achieving its independence, Ireland, while continuing to pay lip service to Celticist ideals, nonetheless maintained its immersion in the capitalist forces those ideals had sought to combat, Yeats's late '30s texts display an ongoing, undiminished preoccupation with capitalism, a preoccupation which must be taken into account if either Yeats's eugenic thought, or the larger aesthetic politics of which that thought is a crystallization, is to be properly understood.¹⁰³ Attention to the ongoing presence of capitalist concerns in Yeats's late work reveals not only that Yeats perceived the nation as yet held in thrall by capitalism, but also that Yeats viewed his own, earlier, Celticist nationalism, and its attendant aesthetic, as indelibly inflected and contaminated by those very forces. From the vantage of the later 1930s, Yeats looks critically on a contemporary Ireland that resembles the civilization of its former imperial masters far more than any of the Revivalist ideals he held dear, and he proceeds to transform the stock of symbols that once housed his ideals for national regeneration into a stock instead devoted to emblemizing national degeneration. Through the demolition of the symbols and themes associated with both

his original Celticist nationalism and his subsequent “Big House,” Anglo-Irish nationalism by the forces of capital, Yeats announces the foundering of his nationalist project on the rock of capitalist modernity. In so doing, he molds his late works into the characteristic form of Irish Late Modernism.

As late as 1932—for instance, in the essay “Ireland, 1921-1931,” published in *The Spectator* on June 2—Yeats could be found uttering positive sentiments regarding the fledgling Free State government, in spite of several earlier confrontations, primary among them the Senate debate over outlawing divorce in 1925, in which his and its stated values came into direct conflict. For the duration of his life, however, one witnesses an ever-mounting displeasure with the nation’s official and cultural composition, a displeasure which, beginning with the volume of poems *Parnell’s Funeral* in 1935, seems precipitated especially by the policies of Eamon de Valera’s Fianna Fail Party. The title poem of this volume presents a scene in which a gathering of Irish citizens before Parnell’s tomb bespeaks the ignominious role of “popular” sentiment in destroying the nationalist messiah’s career, reputation and life. Yeats writes, in an impassioned bitterness that must also relate to contemporary Irish circumstance, that “all that was said in Ireland is a lie/ Bred out of the contagion of the throng,” and thereby calls into serious question whether even the halcyon nationalism of the *fin-de-siecle* period can any longer pretend to freedom from contamination by the “low” influence of the “crowd” (26-7). Yeats speculates that recent Irish history might have run a different course “had de Valera eaten Parnell’s heart” and thereby infused his government with the “bitter wisdom” that “enriched” Parnell’s “blood” (II, 2, 12). Instead, however, Ireland, cut adrift from Parnell’s legacy, is at the mercy of a “loose-lipped demagogue” whose “school” was that very popular “contagion” (II, 3). The poem’s final stanza serves to measure the distance between Yeats’s former nationalist ideals, both Revivalist

and “Big House,” and the current Irish status quo, as its speaker, catching himself in the act of constructing a list of government figures that resembles the heroic roll of honor of “Easter, 1916,” suppresses his bardic impulses, declaring, “but I name no more” (9). In the context of the Free State of the early 1930s, the “high” offices of bardic commemoration have been vacated, the ideals whose achievement was their *raison d’être* having been brought “low” through the victory of “popular” nationalism.

The later poem “Church and State,” from the penultimate volume Yeats would release prior to his death in 1939, *New Poems* (1938), goes on to make clear that the Catholic values which so deeply informed “popular” nationalism during the turn-of-the-century period form a significant portion of the root of Yeats’s disapproval. “What if the Church and the State/ Are the mob that howls at the door!/ Wind shall run thick to the end/ Bread taste sour,” its speaker bemoans, gesturing toward the insidious alliance of the Catholic and Free State/Eire hierarchies as fomenting Ireland’s widespread descent into “mob” (9-12). However, several of the volume’s other poems make equally clear that Yeats’s definition of “mob” values hinges to just as great an extent on capitalism. In “The Curse of Cromwell,” the speaker complains that “Nothing but Cromwell’s house and Cromwell’s murderous crew” controls the land, driving out the “lovers,” “dancers,” “tall men” and “horseman,” those figures who have indexed national ontological plenitude and vitality throughout Yeats’s career (2-4). The poem’s second stanza specifies capital as perhaps the foremost catalyst in this decline:

All neighborly content and easy talk are gone,
But there’s no good complaining, for money’s rant is on,
He that’s mounting up must on his neighbor mount
And we and all the Muses are things of no account. (9-12)

Yeats continues to identify in contemporary Ireland the capitalist characteristics he has always defined as British in derivation, and the current nation’s enthrallment to “money’s rant” defines

its popular mores as continually defined by colonial norms. In such an Anglicized, capitalist Ireland, materialism and competition drive both “neighborly” intercourse and the aesthetic values of the “Muses” out as “things of no account.” An Ireland yet enmeshed in capitalist modernity is an Ireland yet enmeshed in “Shoneen” values, and Ireland’s realization of its decolonizing ideals has yet to be achieved. Even more direct indictments of contemporary Ireland for failing to throw off its capitalist chains arrive in the brief poems “The Great Day” and “Parnell.” The former undercuts its opening nationalist sentiment, contained in the exclamatory statement “Hurrah for revolution and more cannon shot,” by defining both the period before revolution, in which “a beggar on horseback lashes a beggar on foot,” and the period after, in which “the beggars have changed places but the lash goes on,” as controlled by what the opening chapter of this study called “social domination,” that is, a capitalist system in which all participants regardless of class standing experience an ontological deficit brought about by that system’s siphoning off their lifeblood (1-4). The Ireland prior to revolution, wherein the Anglo-Irish “beggar on horseback” is socially preeminent, is identical to that which has followed revolution, wherein the former subaltern, Catholic class, the “beggar on foot,” has gained the upper hand, by virtue of the utter lack of departure from the systemic “beggar”ing of the human subject under capitalism. “Parnell” makes the very same argument, though a bit more tersely: “Parnell came down the road, he said to a cheering man:/ ‘Ireland shall get her freedom and you still break stone’” (1-2). To the eye of the Yeats of the mid-to-late ‘30s, the Ireland that has resulted from the fight for national independence bears all the marks of continued dependence on the British colonial order, as both before and after that fight, the nation’s subjects “break stone” under capitalist “domination.”

But it is not only in those poems whose primary national object of attention is capitalism that Yeats defines contemporary Ireland as continually subject to its “low” dictates. Indeed, even in those texts whose primary metaphorical language is eugenic, Yeats gestures toward capitalism as a powerful catalyst of national “degeneration.” As Marjorie Howes has convincingly argued, during the “high modernist” phase of Yeats’s career, the phase that aligns neatly with his increasing commitment to Anglo-Irishness and “Big House” culture as the prime reservoirs of his national ideals, he came increasingly to emphasize female sexual desire as the linchpin of holding those ideals together. “Proper” female desire for a mate of sufficiently “high” quality would breed the Ireland of his dreams, where errant female desire would instead breed an Ireland of “low,” nightmarish character in keeping with the debased ontology of its former colonial masters.¹⁰⁴ Yeats’s eugenic thought represents a full-blown version of such incipiently biological criteria of national valuation, and those poems and plays which partake of this eugenic turn thus predictably depict Irish degeneration as precipitated by errant female sexual desire.

The *New Poems* work “Colonel Martin,” for example, presents a figure who in many ways aligns with Yeats’s cosmopolitan nationalist ideals, a navy officer who during his journeys “spoke with Turk and Jew/ With Christian and with Infidel/ For all tongues he knew”, betrayed by his wife during his absence (1-4). In the poem’s quasi-folktale plot, the Colonel, convinced upon his return that “She may be in the town” in “a young man’s bed,” “met a peddler,” “agreed their clothes to swop,/ And bought the grandest jewelry/ In a Galway shop” in an attempt to catch his adulterous spouse in the act (19-22). The Colonel therefore “put jewelry in the pack” and presented himself as a travelling purveyor thereof at the door of the “rich man” he suspects as her paramour (24, 28). Duping the house “maid” into conducting him to her “mistress[’s]” bedroom, “his wife he found and the rich man/ In the comfort of a bed” (43-44). In the

aftermath, the poem describes, the “Assize Court” “awarded him for damages/ Three kegs of gold,” gold he goes on to redistribute to the poor throughout the “town” (46-49). “Colonel Martin” thus instantiates the errant female desire that is the linchpin of Yeats’s late nationalist ideals and eugenic thought, but combines this primary biological register with capitalist materialism to suggest that the degenerate choice of its protagonist’s wife is based on a desire for “rich”es. The “low” desire for material gain and commercial dross that is indexed in both her newfound household’s receptivity to jewel peddling and her coupling with a “rich man” of the “town” implies that a significant dimension of Yeats’s eugenics is directed toward the nation’s immersion in the “money’s rant” of capitalist modernity.

In other words, in “Colonel Martin” Yeats *biologizes capital*, converting what was always an implicit assessment in his work, that capitalism drives a narrowing, centripetal ontological trajectory directly at odds with the national ontological regeneration he desired, into a fully *genetic* state of affairs. His most eugenic play, *Purgatory*, gives off an identical implication through the downfall of the ancestral, “Big House” genetic line of the “Old Man.” The play’s argument, wherein the “Old Man,” finding his son unreceptive to his warnings regarding the cause of their house’s demise, murders him in an attempt to “finish . . . all that consequence” that followed his mother’s errant choice of a groom as a sexual and marital partner, is Yeats’s most fully realized aesthetic embodiment of the eugenic prescriptions of the contemporary prose tract *On the Boiler*. Reduced in reality to the societal position inhabited fictionally by Colonel Martin, that of “a peddler on the roads” (433), the Old Man links this lowly occupation with his mother’s degenerate desire by defining it as “no good trade, but good enough/ Because I am my father’s son,/ Because of what I did or may do” (433). Finding his lessons regarding the proper, class-bound outlet for noble female desire unheeded by his son,

who, in response to his statement that his mother's "mother never spoke to her again,/ And she did right," displays his own degenerate sexuality and materialism by wondering, "What's right and wrong?/ My grand-dad go the girl and the money," and who then, finding his father distracted by thoughts of the past, attempts to "to slip away," the "bag of money" accumulated through his father's peddling "between [his] fingers" (434), the Old Man determines to halt his line's downward genetic spiral with his "jack knife," stabbing his son repeatedly, just as he murdered his mother's lover from the same motivation sixteen years previous (431). The Old Man is hopeful that this eugenic act will set his family's legacy aright and free his mother's trapped soul according to the Catholic religious principle stated earlier that transgressions "upon others" may be atoned for by others, while those begotten "upon [oneself]" can only be counteracted by God (431), but, upon his attempt to recover the money, he again hears the "hoof-beats" that announce his father's drunken arrival and yet another reenactment of his mother's sexual crime (436). In *Purgatory*, as in "Colonel Martin," Irish degeneration proceeds in tandem with the ascendancy of capitalist values, and the fully debased Irish populace embodied in the Boy's money-grubbing proclivities will bear in its awry genetic code a marked capitalist trait.

The eugenic murder committed by the Old Man represents an attempt to counteract such degeneration-cum-capitalization through redemptive violence, an attempt to eradicate capitalist values by force. However, in keeping with the defining criteria of Irish Late Modernism, this anti-capitalist, nationalist act ultimately fails, and the alternative values professed by the Old Man collapse back in their turn into the "low" sexual and economic domain that inspired them. This pessimistic outcome to the play's attempt to reinfuse a benighted Ireland by violent fiat with "high" social and aesthetic value corresponds to the similarly pessimistic outcome of the poem "Three Marching Songs" from *Last Poems*. The poem's third "song" is attributed by an

unnamed speaker to his “grandfather,” an “old man” whose vestigial embodiment of Anglo-Irish values becomes the basis of an attempt to convert the “mass” audience present at his hanging to the “good strong cause” of throwing off sexual profligacy and craven materialism (1-4). The grandfather sings, “Hear, gentlemen, ladies, and all mankind:/ Money is good, and a girl might be better,/ But good strong blows are a delight to the mind,” initially presenting an ambiguous opposition between the former, sexual and economic values, and the set of undefined values his “good strong blows” hope to defend (2-4). The song’s second verse delivers his message of conversion with greater specificity: “A girl I had, but she followed another,/ Money I had, and it went in the night,/ Strong drink I had, and it brought me to sorrow,/ But a good strong cause and blows are a delight” (11-14). The addition of “a good strong cause” as an explanatory description, combined with the poem’s later attachment of the staple Yeatsian “Big House” emotion of “pride” to the old man’s defiant promotion of anti-popular values, begins to suggest that his violence, like that of the Old Man in *Purgatory*, will be devoted to fending off a degenerative threat to an Anglo-Irish lineage. However, both the poem’s definition of the characteristics of that lineage and the grandfather’s attempt to convert his audience, which seems on the verge of achieving its re-generative aims as “all there ca[tch] up the tune” and urge him, “On, on, my darling man” (15-16), are ultimately cut short: “. . . the rope gave a jerk there,/ No more sang he, for his throat was too small” (23-4). The grandfather’s beacon-like promotion—indeed, advertisement—of his “cause” and his recruitment of his hearers to that cause, an aesthetic attempt to convert a popular audience which, beneath its heightened emphasis on violent means, recalls the Revivalist propagandism of Yeats’s early career, is thus implicitly cut down by the Irish State, whose capital punishment chokes that attempt in embryo. In the world of Yeats’s late poetry, as in his late dramaturgy, a degenerated, sexually indiscriminate,

capitalistic Irish status quo, abetted by the State power that is its official crystallization, smothers any attempt to revive the “high” “cause” of Yeats’s nationalism.

Yeats’s ongoing commitment to a set of nationalist ideals from which contemporary Ireland had only increasingly deviated since the colonial period converts the majority his late texts into so many bathetic fulfillments of the dire warning contained in the first “song” of “Three Marching Songs”: “Fail and that history turns into rubbish,/ All that great past into a trouble of fools” (21-2). Indeed, Yeats’s perception of the Ireland of the 1930s as degenerated and irrecoverably “popular” seems to have precipitated a transformation not only in his political thought, which comes to take on a fully genetic interpretation of the nation’s obstinate commitment to “low” cultural values, but also in the *generic* basis that underlay that thought from the Revival period forward. As demonstrated in the foregoing chapter, Yeats’s aesthetic ideal during his most engaged nationalist phase was defined most pivotally by the distinction between the “high,” exalted offices of tragedy and the “low,” degrading effects of comedy. This tragic aesthetic standard served also as a vehicle by which Yeats sought to convert the “popular” audiences of the Irish Literary Theater, Irish National Theater Society and Abbey Theater from a “comedic” entanglement with British imperial rule and its capitalist concomitant to an embrace of “tragic” ecstasy as an aesthetic correlate for the general national ontological plenitude he desired. As we also witnessed, Yeats viewed the nationalist martyrdom of “Easter, 1916” as elevating the nation to the status of tragic ennoblement, in repudiation of the capitalism-driven comedy he had perceived Ireland as inhabiting in such poems as “September, 1913.” By the mid- to late-‘30s, however, one discovers a recession of such “tragic” aesthetic tropes and a marked increase of their “comedic” counterparts throughout Yeats’s work.

In fact, Yeats's late aesthetic goes beyond a mere return to pre-independence practices of "comedic" lament and recrimination to suggest that in contemporary Ireland, not only is a "tragic" elevation of the national culture no longer viable, but the very distinction between "tragedy" and "comedy" is no longer comprehensible. The Ireland that had materialized by this time, in other words, was to Yeats's eyes so suffused with "low" values as to render inconceivable any "high" alternative. In this regard, perhaps the most fitting epigraph for this aesthetic is contained in the poem "The Old Stone Cross," whose speaker declares,

Because this age and the next age
Engender in the ditch,
No man can know a happy man
From any passing wretch
If Folly link with Elegance
No man knows which is which. (9-14)

This stanza combines Yeats's newfound eugenic lens of social assessment with his longstanding generic lens to argue that in the benighted Ireland of the present "age," which "engender[s]" in the symbolic "ditch," the "folly" of comedy and the "elegance" of tragedy have become indistinguishable. The very basis of an alternative to the salacious and capitalistic Irish status quo has been swallowed up by that status quo, as plays such as *Purgatory* and poems such as "Three Marching Songs" have already averred. The Ireland of Yeats's early nationalist dreams has been subsumed by the "homogeneous, empty time" of capitalist modernity so completely that even his own art, "link"ed to contemporary Ireland just as the "song" of the "grandfather" is linked to his popular audience, must capitulate to its bathetic trajectory.

For corroboration of this late complication in Yeats's genre-based mythopoesis, we need look no further than *The Death of Cuchulain* (1939). The play's jarring opening speech, delivered, according to stage directions, by "A very old man looking like something out of mythology" who can only represent Yeats himself, partakes of the traditional Yeatsian

indictment against “popular” Ireland, but goes further than that indictment to suggest that the crucial value distinction on which it hinges can no longer be confidently drawn (438). The “Old Man” informs his audience, “I have been asked to produce a play called *The Death of Cuchulain* . . . I have been selected because I am out of fashion and out of date like the antiquated romantic stuff the thing is made of,” thus distancing his “high,” mythology-based values from the current “fashion” he assumes they collectively obey (438). That this late play requires an overtly antagonistic narrative frame itself bespeaks the extent to which the “elegance” of the “antiquated” ideals of Yeats’s nationalism has been eclipsed by the “folly” of contemporary Irish reality, but it is the interlinkage and mutual indistinction of these opposed sets of values that bears the majority of the frame’s emphasis. The Old Man’s description that “When they told me that I could have my own way, I wrote certain guiding principles on a bit of newspaper,” is a fitting condensation of such “link”ing, as, throughout his career, from his early, Celticist phase to his later, “Big House” period, the “guiding principles” of Yeats’s aesthetic had always been explicitly opposed to those of the “newspaper” (438). But it is the Old Man’s complaint regarding his inability to “find a good dancer” to perform the role of Emer, who later dances about the severed head of Cuchulain “in adoration or triumph” (445), that contains the most glaring evidence regarding the parallel indistinction of aesthetic and national-historic genres (439). He describes,

. . . I was at my wit’s end to find a good dancer; I could have got such a dancer once, but she has gone; the tragi-comedian dancer, the tragic dancer, upon the same neck love and loathing, life and death, I spit three times . . . I spit upon the Dancers painted by Degas. I spit upon their short bodices, their stiff stays, their toes whereon they spin like peg-tops, above all upon that chambermaid face. They might have looked timeless . . . but not the chambermaid, the old maid history. I spit, I spit, I spit. (439)

The old man's definition of the prevailing aesthetic norm among dancers as a "tragi-comedian" one which fails to distinguish between properly distinct emotions and states such as "love and loathing, life and death," affirms the unbreakable "link"age between Yeats's late aesthetic and the debased, degenerate materials of Irish modernity. That aesthetic must now utilize "low" materials in its pursuit of "high" cultural ends. The "chambermaid face" of such dancers indexes their degenerate quality, and no matter how vehemently he "spit" on them or on the downward-spiralling "history" of which they are the products, the Old Man has no alternative but to employ them and thereby compromise the "high" aims of his dramatic project.

The extent to which capitalism informs the Old Man's conception of historical degeneration is indicated by Yeats's choice to delegate the decapitation of his preeminent Celtic hero to "the Blind Man of 'On Baile's Strand,'" who, driven by the promise "that if I brought Cuchulain's head in a bag/ I would be given twelve pennies," reduces this "tragic" symbol to the "comedic" level of capitalist exchange value (444). It would seem, however, that the play's concluding verses, uttered by the "Street Singer" who, in its opening speech, the Old Man vowed to "teach . . . the music of the beggarman, Homer's music" (438-9), protectively enclose a small but hard kernel of "high" aesthetic and cultural value in the form of the "statue" of Cuchulain installed in the Dublin General Post Office. Unlike in the "late" poem "The Statues," however, where this statue symbolizes the "proper dark" of a "plummet-measured" Irishness set apart from the "formless, spawning fury" of the "modern tide" in which actually-existing Irishness is so thoroughly engulfed (28-32), the import of this closing song, recited in tandem with "the music of some Irish fair of our day," is far from stable (445). First, the "street-singer" places the "elegant" music of Homer in the mouth of a "harlot," who "sings to the beggar man" about Celtic heroes, "Conall, Cuchulain, Usna's boys,/ All that most ancient race," but whose

degenerate sexual identity calls into question her fitness to deliver such an encomium (445). As the song proceeds, it becomes additionally clear that as a result of Ireland's contemporary immersion in the "tide" against which the play's title character once warred in "tragic ecstasy," the values such an act would instantiate are now only imperfectly comprehensible. "I adore those clever eyes,/ Those muscular bodies, but can get/ No grip upon their thighs," the "harlot" complains, and continues by describing that instead of such heroic meat, "the flesh my flesh has gripped/ I both adore and loathe" (445). The compound of adoration and loathing to which contemporary "flesh" gives rise in the "harlot" represents a clear affective corollary to the "tragicomedy" described by the Old Man at the play's outset, rendering physiologically the generic indistinction he bemoans in the prevailing dancing "fashion."

If it would seem that the song's final two stanzas enshrine a "high," nationally-resonant set of values through their "Statues"-esque litany of ruminations on "what" it was that "stood in the Post Office/ With Pearse and Connolly" on Easter day, 1916, this impression is destabilized by the lines which run, "No body like his body/ Has modern woman borne,/ But an old man looking on life/ Imagines it in scorn" (446). As David Lloyd has argued in a very perceptive essay, Yeats's mature poetics adopts a *syntactic indeterminacy* in protest of the rigid, monological values he identified as emanating from the Free State government.¹⁰⁵ In the preceding lines, such an indeterminacy obtains with regard to the referentiality of the final pronoun "it." Does the "it" "imagine[d] . . . in scorn" by the "old man" refer to "life," or to the very "body" of Cuchulain whose "lineaments" would seem to incarnate Yeats's nationalist ideals? If the former, a "high," tragic, "proper" set of ideals might indeed be set apart from the play's "tide" of tragi-comic leveling, but if the latter, than those very "high" ideals might be the object of "scorn" rather than the "life" that is busy dismantling them. This last possibility,

considering the Old Man's jaded, cynical self-description as an "antiquated" piece of "mythology," cannot readily be dismissed, and the play's closing verses might therefore be read not as "dancing" before Cuchulain's statue, Emer-like "in adoration or triumph," but instead as a renunciation of the figure who, throughout Yeats's career, has most incarnated his nationalist ideals. Having already referred to the "popular" audience he expects the play to be performed before, an audience made up of "people who are educating themselves out of the Book Societies and the like," as "pickpockets" in the play's opening speech, this reading points toward the strong possibility that Yeats viewed contemporary Ireland and its adulterated, State-sponsored nationalism as having stolen his foremost nationalist icon, repurposed it for "comedic" purposes, and as thereby converting that icon to an object of "scorn" in the eyes of his creator. Removed from his aesthetic control and subjected to "popular" iconography, Yeats's Cuchulain has been degradingly converted to a kind of currency, in perfect correspondence to the fate of his severed head, exchanged by the "Blind Man" of *On Baile's Strand* for a handful of coins. That the decision between this, negative reading of these closing lines and their alternative, positive significance is a syntactically impossible one only further reinforces the play's endorsement of the generic-historical assessment of the speaker of "The Old Stone Cross."

"What can I but enumerate old themes?," wonders the speaker of the poem which, more than any other, emblemizes the defeatism and fatigue of Yeats's late aesthetic relative to his former nationalist project, "The Circus Animals' Desertion" (9). "Being but a broken man" at this late moment in his life and literary career (3), Yeats reviews the collection of "themes" that has accumulated during his more than half a century of devotion to the nationalist cause, from "sea-rider Oisín" (12) to "The Countess Cathleen" (17), Cuchulain, "those stilted boys, that burnished chariot,/ Lion and woman and the Lord knows what" (7-8), and finds them all equally

compromised by their lowly origins in the “vain” “dreams” of his “embittered heart” (11-13). Unable to imagine an alternative “theme” which would transcend the predicament by which each aesthetic and national ideal—or “mask”—is irrevocably stained by the “low” cultural materials whose baseness inspired it, Yeats, in keeping with the bathetic “link”age adumbrated by the other “late” plays and poems surveyed here, instead undertakes an even more scathing and merciless demolition of his former work:

Those masterful images because complete
 Grew in pure mind but out of what began?
 A mound of refuse or the sweepings of a street,
 Old kettles, old bottles, and a broken can,
 Old iron, old bones, old rags, that raving slut
 Who keeps the till. Now that my ladder’s gone
 I must lie down where all ladders start
 In the foul rag and bone shop of the heart. (33-40)

In methodical fashion, Yeats dismantles the “masterful images” that “grew” to “complete”ness and ideal perfection in the crucible of his “pure mind” by tracing their origins in the detritus of a decidedly urban and capitalist modernity, the world of “refuse,” street “sweepings,” scrap “iron,” abandoned, “broken” utensils, moldering clothes and “raving” cashiers that gave rise to the “ladder” that is his entire literary and personal life. The aesthetic hallmark of Irish Late Modernism, the deflation of the aesthetic and cultural ideals of Revivalist nationalism by the very capitalist forces whose degradation and ontological poverty inspired them to begin with, could hardly be more succinctly rendered than in this stanza’s closing couplet, in which Yeats’s “heart’s desire” collapses in a heap in the very symbolic locale that has represented all that that desire viewed as anathema, the “shop.” No component of Yeats’s nationalism, either in its Celticist or its Anglo-Irish phase, had been as vehement as his assault on the “shopkeeping” mores he identified as emanating from British cultural hegemony in Ireland. To define that nationalism as indistinguishable from such mores, as one more version of the practice of buying

and selling wares, is thus not only to admit the defeat of that nationalism, but also to admit its inseparability from them.

“The highest and the lowest in the same story”: *At Swim-Two-Birds*

Flann O’Brien’s *At Swim-Two-Birds* has been nominated for membership in a large array of aesthetic groups over the past several decades, from “postmodernism” to “absurdism” to the “carnavalesque” tradition of “Mennipean satire.”¹⁰⁶ While the novel’s remarkable plasticity of meaning renders it more than amenable to such classifications, amid its ever-shifting sea of signifiers, several kernels of meaning stand out whose historical filiations align it perhaps most fully with the aesthetic traits of Irish Late Modernism. What distinguishes this movement or literary-historical moment from such protean designations as the above is not so much its brand of historical self-assessment—Irish Late Modernism, as with Late Modernism as a more general Euro-American phenomenon, partakes of an incipient phase of capitalist globalization, and is therefore inevitably homologous in its formal tendencies to texts that emerge in subsequent decades and that are classified as “postmodernist”—but that this assessment is targeted at a specific set of referents and values that are inextricably tied to the modernist moment. In the case of *At Swim*, I would therefore argue that Late Modernism, rather than Postmodernism, is the more proper literary-historical designation, because the novel’s primary concern is to demonstrate the extent to which the distinctions that drove both the modernism of the Revival and the broader cultural milieu of turn-of-the-century Irish nationalism—between the literary “high” culture and “low,” popular culture, between Celt and Capital, between Catholic moral purity and modern depravity, between literary creation and capitalist production, and innumerable others—have become untenable by virtue of the thorough immersion of Irish culture in the 1930s within the relentlessly destabilizing forces of capital. It is in this regard that

the novel's primary literary model is Joyce's *Ulysses*, a text in which the constituent elements of "actually-existing Irishness" are incessantly merged into and severed from one another in the teeming cauldron of capitalist reification. Where the novel differs from its predecessor is in its later historical vantage, written after the establishment of an independent Irish state and after a concomitant discreteness had begun to emerge in the national culture. As we shall see, however, O'Brien's aesthetic practice in *At Swim-Two-Birds* corroborates in its assessment of the Ireland of the 1930s the prognostications made by Joyce decades earlier, as, in the novel's madcap world, the constituent elements of Irishness are relentlessly subjected to the deracinating, reifying effects of capital, to the point that those very effects may, indeed, be viewed, to the spectral dismay of ghosts of the Revival, as Irishness's prime constituent element.

The nameless narrator of the novel raises the issue of modernist authorship repeatedly both in his descriptions of his life and work and in his reports of conversations with his college classmate and confidante, Brinsley. His opening description of his bedroom in his uncle's house refers to a collection of books each of which "was generally recognized as indispensable to all who aspire to an appreciation of contemporary literature," listing among them works by Huxley and Joyce (3). When Brinsley complains that the narrator's work falls short of the standards of characterization found in "contemporary literary works of a high-class, advanced or literary nature," he evinces the very same aspiration as the protagonist expresses, and their two-person literary cabal would thus seem a sort of modernist enclave devoted to the cultivation of "high" aesthetic standards of appreciation and creation (174). The narrator's explanation to Brinsley of the "argument" or "daemon" of his incomplete opus avers this devotion in striking fashion:

The novel, in the hands of an unscrupulous writer, could be despotic. In reply to an inquiry, it was explained that a satisfactory novel should be a self-evident sham to which the reader could regulate at will the degree of his credulity. It was undemocratic to compel characters to be uniformly good or bad or poor or rich.

Each should be allowed a private life, self-determination and a decent standard of living. This would make for self-respect, contentment and better service. It would be incorrect to say that it would lead to chaos. Characters should be interchangeable as between one book and another. The entire corpus of existing literature should be regarded as a limbo from which discerning authors could draw their characters as required, creating only when they failed to find a suitable existing puppet. The modern novel should be largely a work of reference . . . A wealth of references to existing works would acquaint the reader instantaneously with the nature of each character, would obviate tiresome explanations and would effectively preclude mountebanks, upstarts, thimbleiggers and persons of inferior education from an understanding of contemporary literature. (19-20)

Part manifesto for modernist elitism, that elitism taking the form of fashioning the “modern novel” from a “wealth of references” in order to “preclude . . . persons of inferior education from an understanding of contemporary literature” (a la *The Waste Land* or *Ulysses*), and part comic manifesto for the democratic rights of literary characters, this passage should be read as professing a thoroughly avante-garde and “high-class” conception of modern fiction. “Largely a work of reference,” a flux of literary contents whose mobility and lack of “uniformity” approximates in the aesthetic domain the utopian, democratic freedom and equality its author denies the uneducated reader, it would seem that this mission statement partakes fully of the widespread modernist goal of compensating for real dissatisfactions with aesthetic idealization. It would seem, that is, that the aesthetic flux of *At Swim-Two-Birds* represents not some heady postmodern stew of cultural mixture, but a properly modernist project devoted to erecting a literary world purged of the problems of modernity.

Already, however, by virtue of the glaring contradiction between its democratizing aesthetic ideal and its retrograde, elitist conception of modern conditions of literary consumption, this passage begins to dehisce into the contradictory, mutually negating polarities of Late Modernism. Indeed, what one discovers throughout the novel is not a dizzying freedom of aesthetic experimentation whose import is to model a social ideal, but an aesthetic flux driven

instead by the reifying, all-dissolving movements of capital. Brinsley's discovery that "there are two ways to make big money . . . to write a book or to make a book," begins to flesh out the specific conduit by which aesthetic plenitude is revealed as a precipitate not of modernist creativity but of the capitalist subsumption of all human culture throughout this particular book, namely the predominance of the "low" proclivities of the "mass," "popular" culture of modern capitalism (19). The identical functionality of authorship and bookmaking or gambling as routes to a financial windfall immediately calls into question and destabilizes the "great divide" between the author's "high" modernist philosophy and the "low" cultural materials associated with "persons of inferior education." Additionally, when the novel begins to incorporate the numerous "references" portended by the narrator's manifesto, it becomes increasingly clear that such an aesthetic technique inevitably contaminates the modernist novel through the textual encroachment of such materials. So it is that, finding a portion of his manuscript wanting in "high-class" characteristics such as "structural cohesion and . . . literary style," the narrator chooses to "present in its place a brief resume (or summary) of the events which it contained, a device frequently employed by newspapers to avoid the trouble and expense of reprinting vast portions of their serial story" (59). The ensuing "Synopsis, being a summary of what has gone before, for the benefit of new readers," violates the narrator's "preclu[sive]," exclusive philosophy in flagrant fashion, effectively demonstrating that the aesthetic principle of "reference" the novel obeys will inevitably entail the steamrolling of any distinction between the literary high and low (59). This particular "reference," a *Ulysses*-like incorporation of the profit-driven, literarily adulterating practices of the modern newspaper, commandeers the novel's modernist program and delivers its "high" intent into the hands of the "low" demands of the ill-informed, convenience-minded consumer.

O'Brien thus marks the distance of the novel's aesthetic from the exclusive modernist principles espoused by its narrator and suggests that its real form, while similarly based in "reference," will demonstrate not the achieved freedom of the modernist craftsman but instead the obsolescence of the notion of such a freedom in a world increasingly suffused with "low" popular-cultural forms. O'Brien conceives a formal technique of cut-and-paste whose portent is continuation and acceleration of Ireland's cultural merging with capitalist modernity. We therefore verge on pinpointing the manner in which *At Swim-Two-Birds* may be classed as a post-Revivalist text. As demonstrated by the previous two chapters, both the predominant factions of the nationalist movement known as the Revival expended a great deal of energy criticizing the rapid incursion into the Irish domestic marketplace of the "literary garbage" of the British "gutter press" and the parallel predominance of other brands of entertainment such as the music hall comedy. The "referential" technique of *At Swim*, whereby the novel's fictional world comes to incorporate the dominant discourses of Irish culture in the 1930s, reveals that it is the very same genres of pop-cultural fare against which the Revival railed which provide the average Irish man or woman with his/her everyday sustenance. The novel repeatedly incorporates "relevant excerpt[s] from the press" in comic exposition of its plot developments and thematic emphases, excerpts which commonly consist of "Police Intelligence"-style narration, as when Paul Shanahan regales the recently-created villain Furriskey with an account of the pilfering of "negro maids" from the cattle ranch of his former "employer," the Western novelist William Tracy, as well as inflecting the subplot centered on the moralist writer of fiction, Dermot Trellis, with elements of both "Romance" fiction and its cruder cousin, pornography. Additionally, in keeping with what F.S.L. Lyons, in paraphrase of the 1925 Censorship Act, calls the "Californication" of Irish culture during the decades following the Anglo-Irish Treaty—that is,

its accelerated permeation by the cinematic fare of Hollywood—the novel also “refers” to the elements of popular film genres such as the Western, thereby further infusing its aesthetic with “low”-brow materials Revivalist ideology viewed as anathema to the national cause (*Ireland Since the Famine* 677). All together, the panoply of such materials that at various moments commandeers the narrative apparatus of the novel indexes the accession of mainstream Irish culture post-independence to a rapidly globalizing and already transatlantic popular culture. In many ways the cultural face of capitalist modernity, this “mass” conglomeration of literary and cinematic genres constitutes the primary pole toward which all the novel’s “high” ideals, literary or otherwise, inevitably gravitate.

Beyond the general level at which the dominance of “mass” cultural materials in contemporary Irish culture may be viewed as puncturing the Revivalist fantasy of purging Irishness of capitalist contamination, the novel also presents a number of more specific Revivalist institutions as ground into obsolescence by those materials and the “low” aesthetic predilections their consumption has engendered. These institutions fall into two distinct categories, each defined by the values of one of the two main factions of the nationalist movement, the “Literary” and the “popular.” With regard to the first, the primary target for bathetic deflation is the “mythological” figure of Finn MacCool. Most of the novel’s parodies of the Celticist values localized in this demigodly character by the “Literary Revival” take their lead from the similar mock-epic style of the “Cyclops” chapter of *Ulysses*. The early statement that “three fifties of fosterlings could engage with handball against the wideness of his backside,” and the innumerable later passages in which Finn himself “relate”s tales from ancient Celtic legends, all employ this Joycean descriptive vein (2). These passages specifically mock the Arnold-derived wont of the “Literary” faction to attribute aesthetic values to the figure of the Celt, such

as when Finn “relate”s to his audience of fellow Celtic heroes “the attributes that are to Finn’s people” (10). Finn describes that “till a man has accomplished twelve books of poetry, the same is not taken for want of poetry but is forced away” from the Celts, and continues by explaining that if a man be unable to “sit on the brow of a cold hill with twelve-pointed stag-antlers hidden in his seat” without “cry[ing] out,” “eat[ing] grass stalks,” or “desist[ing] from the constant recital of sweet poetry and melodious Irish,” that man “is not taken but is wounded” (10). Such descriptions signal unmistakably that it is the Revivalist ideal of an inherently artistic Irishness, a Celtic racial composition naturally given to generating an infinity of “books of poetry” in “melodious Irish,” that is targeted for ironic demolition.

But beyond such Joyce-derived mock-epic devices, O’Brien devises an original brand of caustic irony relative to the aestheticizing, Celticist racial ideals of the “Literary Revival” by constructing a scene wherein Finn’s comically-inflated narrative style is received with disdain and incomprehension by a group of characters representative of average, lower-class Irishness. Just after the birth of John Furriskey, the character who will, in the hands of Dermot Trellis, serve to model sexual depravity and rapine, he arrives at the room in the “Red Swan Premises” where his lower-class retainers, Shanahan and Lamont, have already gathered in anticipation of his arrival. Both men have been regaled while waiting by Finn’s inflated heroic yarns, and have grown increasingly irritated by the grandeur of his oral compositions. Referring to Finn derisively as “Mr. Storybook,” and as a “terrible man for talk” given to tall tales whose contents one must receive with a “grain of salo,” the two men brace Furriskey for further “relat”ions (62). At Conan’s prompting, Finn proceeds to narrate “the account of the madness of King Sweeney . . . on a madman’s flight through the length of Erin” (63). His tale, full of “staves” of “sweet poetry” recited by the mad king while perched in the trees of Ireland, is quickly interrupted by

Shanahan, who then proceeds both to shun Finn's legendary fare and to proffer in place of its "high" tenor the doggerel verse of his own favorite poet, Jem Casey, the "poet of the people" (74). Shanahan prefaces his recitation of Casey's verses by criticizing the inaccessibility of Finn's tale of Sweeney:

Now take that stuff your man was giving us a while ago . . . about the green hills and the bloody swords and the bird giving out the pay from the top of the tree. Now that's good stuff, it's bloody nice . . . It's good, very good. But by Christopher it's not every man could see it, I'm bloody sure, one in a thousand . . . You can't beat it, of course . . . the real old stuff of the native land, you know, stuff that brought the scholars to our shore . . . It's the stuff that put our country where she stands today . . . But the man in the street, where does he come in? By God he doesn't come in at all as far as I can see. (76)

Paying lip service to the inestimable value Finn's "stuff," the "real old stuff of the native land," has contributed the nation's history, Shanahan complains that "it's not every man could see it," and therefore proposes the Casey ballad "Workman's Friend" as a more demotic alternative. The poem's subject, a "drink of porter," which elixir is presented as a panacea for all human ills, from starvation to debt and sickness, instantiates a species of "low" literature which it was the chief aim of the "Literary" faction of the Revival to eliminate from popular Irish consumption. Upon the completion of his recital, Shanahan highlights further the high/low aesthetic divide whose destabilization is the scene's thematic purpose by asking "Mr. Storybook" for his impression of Casey's work, as he asks, "Tell us, my Old Timer . . . What do you think of it? Give the company the benefit of your scholarly pertinacious fastidious opinion" (80). Finn, though he has fallen asleep during the interval, is roused by this direct address and resumes his narration, which Lamont proceeds to dismiss as "more of your fancy kiss-my-hand" (80).

This crucial scene should be taken to model the entirety of the novel's assessment regarding the high-cultural ambitions of "Literary" Revivalists such as Yeats and Synge. The absurdity of attempting to make such working-class, pop-culturally primed figures as Shanahan,

Lamont and Furriskey receptive to the Celticist aestheticism of Finn's legendary tales and Sweeney's "melodious Irish" poetry indexes the extent to which the Revival's racial conception of the nation disregarded the cultural composition of "actually existing Irishness" during the first decades of the twentieth century. The normative Irishness of the 1930s that such "vulgar" characters index could hardly be farther from and less amenable to the consumption of such Revivalist productions or the refined values they promote. Declan Kiberd has argued that "the versions of the Sweeney poetry" that populate Finn's narrative are not subject to a similar comic deflation, and asserts that "alone among the various styles reproduced in the work" these "staves" "remain exempt from O'Brien's corrosive parody" and "provide . . . a point of rest, a still center" amid the novel's all-consuming bathetic "daemon" (506, 509). Kiberd's assessment recommends Sweeney's "sweet poetry" as a repository of stable meaning and aesthetic value akin to that which Revivalist Celticism intended its productions to furnish. However, given the extent to which the derisive description of Finn's narration as "fancy kiss-my-hand" is based in these very "staves," such a claim begins to seem quite dubious. Indeed, during the later scene in which, led by the novel's other primary mythological figures, the Pooka and the Good Fairy, Sweeney, along with Jem Casey and two additional representatives of working-class Irishness, "Shorty" Andrews and "Slug" Willard, makes a pilgrimage to the newly-created, bastard son of Dermot Trellis, Orlick, his poetry is subjected to the very same puncturing by "low" cultural materials as Finn's folktales have already undergone. As this motley crew await Orlick's arrival, they engage in an activity whose "low" associations could hardly be stronger: gambling. After the Pooka, the Good Fairy, Slug, Shorty and Jem have all anted, Sweeney, prompted by Slug's inquiry as to whether he has "any money," rouses himself and "address[s] himself to the utterance of this stave": "They have passed below me in their course, the stags across Ben

Boirche, their antlers tear the sky, I will take a hand” (150). That this particular “stave” is delivered in prose form, as opposed to the poetic arrangement of Sweeny’s previous compositions, punctuates the message communicated by its jarringly discrepant contents, wherein lines which seem in keeping with “high” aesthetic standards, such as the description of the “antlers” of the “stags” “tear[ing] the sky,” are succeeded by a final line declaring Sweeny’s willingness to gamble, namely that all Revival-derived or –inspired attempts to erect a cultural domain according to aesthetic values founder when confronted with an “actually existing Irishness” dominated by “low,” “vulgar” cultural practices. The comic arrival of Sweeny’s stanza at a destination defined by a materialist motive not only bespeaks the reification of Celticist values and their rerouting according to capitalist principles, but also bespeaks a parallel *formal* process wherein “high” Revivalist aesthetics is contaminated by the “low” influences it would purge from the national culture. Sweeny’s poetry begins to transform into a doggerel style reminiscent of Jem Casey’s “Workman’s Friend.”

O’Brien’s bathetic *modus operandi* not only targets the aesthetically-minded productions of the “Literary” Revival, however, but also the Catholic values of that faction’s contemporary competitor for national political hegemony. These values are given an a compound meaning in the novel in that they relate not only to turn-of-the-century nationalist ideology but also to the official, state-sponsored nationalism predominant in Ireland after 1922, a nationalism much closer in makeup to its “Catholic” forerunner than its “Literary” one. The primary characters who emblemize the novel’s caustic treatment of these values are the Pooka, the Good Fairy, Dermot Trellis and the narrator’s overbearing uncle. The former two characters represent a complicated mixture of nationalist components deriving both from the “Literary” contingent of the Revival and its Catholic counterpart, and it is difficult to determine the extent to which the

puritanical morality of the Pooka and Good Fairy relates more to the “shoneen” “respectability” that covertly informed much Revivalist Celticism or to the Catholicism that so thoroughly informed “popular,” “Gaelic” nationalism. In that they represent stock characters culled from Irish folklore or mythology, and given that the aesthetic employment of such characters during the Revival was far more commonly a practice of the former faction, it is reasonable to identify in the Pooka and Good Fairy a parodic representation of *both*. Immediately upon their meeting, just prior to their pilgrimage to the birth of Orlick Trellis, the two supernatural agents display a remarkable degree of convergence in their moral thought in spite of their diametrically opposed, respectively evil and good, mythological functions. The Pooka, who of the two would be expected to deviate from propriety and prudery, nonetheless requests of the Good Fairy, who has just affirmed his/her own puritanical morality by declaring, “my sex is a secret that I cannot reveal,” “if you are of the woman class I must courteously request you to turn your back,” before rising from his bed (117). After the two have agreed to accompany one another to Orlick’s birth and to determine there whose influence, evil or good, will hold sway over his life, and following their introduction to Slug and Shorty, a brief scene ensues in which their common endorsement of repressive morality is on glaring display. After Jem Casey has emerged from a thicket and agreed to join their party, Slug inquires of him, “what were you doing in that clump there?,” and after Shorty interjects, “By God I know what *I’d* be doing,” implying a bodily function either urinary, fecal or masturbatory, both the Pooka and the Good Fairy both respond to this bawdy implication with protestations of moral outrage (127). The Good Fairy complains “quietly to the Pooka,” “They have no respect . . . no respect and no conception of propriety,” and, “nodd[ing],” the Pooka responds, “I hope I am broad-minded . . . but I draw the line at vulgarity and smut. Talk the like of that reflects on them and on the parents that brought them up. It speaks very

poorly for their home life” (127). Thus, in spite of their opposite metaphysical and moral functions as agents of “good” and “evil,” and in spite of their derivation from the decidedly unprude world of ancient Irish folklore, both the Pooka and Good Fairy converge in a “respect”able aversion to “vulgarity” and “smut” and commitment to “propriety” and “family” values. These Revivalist figures thereby emblemize the staid, morally repressive and ontologically contractive trajectory of early-twentieth century Irish culture.

Yet O’Brien undercuts their respectable ideology in at least two related ways. First, upon their arrival at the “Red Swan Premises” and Shorty’s suggestion that the group play cards while awaiting Orlick, in spite of the Pooka’s moral objection, “I don’t hold with gambling . . . for money,” both he and the Good Fairy not only participate in the activities but do so quite zestfully (149). When the Pooka relents, stating, “Of course a small stake to keep one’s interest from flagging . . . there is no great harm in that. That is a different thing,” it becomes evident that these Revivalist figures are, at some level, merely further representatives of the lower-class, “vulgar” norm of “popular” Irish culture (149). Again then, the “low” gravitational pull of mainstream, “actually existing Irishness” flattens on the terrain of popular-culture a set of “high” nationalist values, though in this case those values bear a moral, rather than an aesthetic, ideological valence. Second, beyond this reality-based deflation of nationalist ideals, O’Brien implies that there is an aspect of any such exclusive, “high” ideology that inevitably tends toward its own subversion, self-contradiction and self-betrayal. This implication is evident from the very beginning of the Pooka and Good Fairy’s interaction with one another. During the amusing sequence in which the Pooka attempts to fix the physical location of the invisible Fairy, the Fairy specifies one of his positions as “kneeling” in the Pooka’s “navel” (111). Upon receiving the Pooka’s intelligence that “this here beside me is my wife,” the Fairy then explains that “that is

why I left,” a “respect”ful explanation to which the Pooka in turn replies with moral considerations that countervail the Fairy’s: “. . . if your departure from my poor bed was actuated solely by a regard for chastity and conjugal fidelity, you are welcome to remain between the blankets without the fear of anger in your host, for there is safety in a triad, chastity is truth and truth is an odd number” (111-112). It will shortly become clear that as a component of their respective devotions to evil and good, the Pooka and Good Fairy bear allegiances to even and odd numerical values. “Truth” being “one,” the Pooka defines two as his “own personal number” (113). Yet the Pooka’s endorsement of the Good Fairy’s considerations of “chastity” and odd-numbered “truth” directly violate his numerology, bespeaking once more the common commitment of both figures to a repressive, “respectable” morality.

Beyond this contradiction, however, a further complication emerges wherein, in assigning an odd numerical value to “chastity” via his syllogistic reasoning, the Pooka unwittingly endorses his, his wife’s and the Fairy’s participation in a ménage-a-trois. By dint of this deft reversal of moral standards, O’Brien implies that a further principle underlies his bathetic practice, namely the principle of the *structural interdependence and mutual constitution of binary opposites*. O’Brien’s persistent collapsing of binary terms into one another is surely at the root of the critical tendency to ally his fictional practice with the larger aesthetic tendencies grouped under the name of “postmodernism,” as it is the chief insight of this diverse literary-historical phenomenon to broadcast the *total destabilization of values* in advanced capitalist modernity. Just as the late Yeats comes to recognize the “vulgar” origins of his “pure” aesthetic in “The Circus Animals’ Desertion,” and just as he ultimately affirms the genetic imprint the “low” materials of capital have left on his “high” modernist and nationalist project, so O’Brien’s novel demonstrates that at the “late” socio-historical moment of 1930s Ireland, a moment at

which the nation's incorporation into capitalist modernity was more or less complete, in spite of official state proclamations by de Valera and others to the contrary, the pretention to exclusive, stable ideological mastery of the national culture was doomed to comic failure and contradiction. This fully poststructuralist historical discovery provides much of the impetus behind the aesthetic of *At Swim-Two-Birds*, an aesthetic in which, in keeping with both classic Marxist and post-Marxist assessments of life under capitalism, "all that is solid melts into air." That it is the specific values of Revivalist nationalism of both main varieties that are most often subjected to such destabilization, dissolution and bathetic collapse, makes the novel a specimen of Irish Late Modernism, rather than of "postmodernism," in this reading, but its engagement with the historical condition designated by the latter term is unmistakable.

As I have argued, however, amid the flux of the novel's aesthetic world, certain practices and values continually emerge as stabilizing forces. Given the capitalist constitution of the global epoch that provides the conditions of possibility for such poststructuralist "truths" as the above, it should come as no surprise that such stabilizing, gravitationally-centric forces are those which best serve both the profit imperative of capital and its systemic reproduction. As the "cultural face" of capitalist modernity, the pop-cultural materials "refer"red to continually by the novel's excerpts and gestured toward through the aesthetic demands of Shanahan, et al, provide one stable point amid its shapeshifting terrain. For a second such point, one must turn to the character who most represents the official nationalist culture of the Irish Free State and Eire, namely the author-narrator's uncle, the "holder of [a] Guinness clerkship the third class" whose harpings on the need to avoid the "sin of sloth" (2) and the imperative for maintaining "a good record, a clean sheet" (23) derive from his rigid Catholicism but, aligned as these moral dictums are with considerations of industrious labor, begin closely to resemble the capitalism-attuned

“Protestant work ethic” bemoaned by both Matthew Arnold and Max Weber in this study’s opening chapter. The uncle’s activities as an organizer for a local branch of the Gaelic League bespeak his representative status relative to the Catholically-repressive, provincial philosophy of the official state culture of De Valera’s Fianna Fail, as: he denounces the “old time waltz” as unfit for inclusion in the upcoming “Ceilidhe,” according to the principles that “we have plenty of our own dances without crossing the road to borrow what we can’t wear” and that the “clergy” are “opposed” to it (143); he insists upon the token inclusion of “a few words in Irish” at the outset of the festivities (145); he demands that the committee obtain “three clean respectable women to cut the bread” for the very “strict” figure of eminence who will be attending them (147-48). If such priorities would seem to confirm the insularity and anti-modernity of contemporary Irish culture, however, the uncle’s hegemonic mix of respectable mores and “native” pieties nonetheless directly abets the very capitalist forces that they would seem to repudiate. His advice to Brinsley that “To the flesh we say: thus far and no farther” gestures toward the deep alignment of contemporary Catholic values and the repressive-productive imperative of capitalist labor (177). The very figure whose service as an ideological and organizational footsoldier of the Eire government would seem to position him as a representative of Ireland’s separation from modernity’s “cosmopolitan” trajectory thus emerges as perhaps its primary representative of the nation’s ongoing pursuit of that trajectory. The post-independence cultural context depicted by the novel thus bears out the diagnoses of Revivalist thinkers such as Yeats who viewed Ireland as in thrall to the repressive ontological regime of “the Puritan and the Merchant,” in turn emblemizing the nation’s failure to fulfill those Revivalist ideals that most imaginatively challenged that regime.

The character who is in many ways the uncle's counterpart, Dermot Trellis, and like him seems to represent the counter- or anti-modern values associated with the Irish state, ultimately serves to reveal the identity of such values with capitalism in an even more crucial register, that of literary production. Creating his characters through the supernatural faculty of "aesthology," an auto-generative principle of authorship motivated by a "lifelong dream of producing a living mammal from an operation involving neither fertilization nor conception" (36) whose ideological rationale, in addition to the goals of obviating "uncalled for fecundity" (37) and of eliminating "the mortifying stratagems collectively known as birth control" (38), is to provide reproductive "issue . . . born already matured, teathed, reared, educated and ready to essay those competitive plums which make the Civil Service and the Banks so attractive to the younger bread-winners of to-day," thereby transforming procreation "from the sordid struggle it often is to an adventurous business enterprise of limitless possibilities," Trellis both affirms the uncle's fusion of the repressive Catholic morality of De Valera with capitalist reproduction and adapts this religio-economic regime as an aesthetic principle (37-8). It is through this literary adaptation of the repressive, ontologically contractive norms of 1930s Ireland that Trellis illustrates the narrator's warning that "the novel . . . could be despotic" and "undemocratic" if its author "compel characters to be uniformly good or bad": "He is compelling his characters to live with him in the Red Swan Hotel so that he can keep an eye on them and see that there is no boozing . . ." (30). The narrator's further description that Trellis insists upon his current work, a "book on sin and the wages attaching thereto" (30) which, he hopes, will "show the terrible cancer of sin in its true light and act as a clarion call to humanity" (31), being bound in the color green further aligns his despotic, morally repressive authorship with the official culture of De

Valera, and with the more general, adulterated, “tokenist” nationalism that is its “popular” counterpart. “All colors except green,” the narrator explains,

he regarded as symbols of evil and he confined his reading to books attired in green covers . . . For many years he experience a difficulty in obtaining a sufficiency of books to occupy his active and inquiring mind, for the green colour was not favoured by the publishers of London . . . The publishers of Dublin, however, deemed the colour a fitting one for their many works on the subject of Irish history and antiquities and it is not surprising that Trellis came to be regarded as an authority thereon and was frequently consulted by persons engaged in research, including members of the religious orders. (104-5)

Trellis’s surface observance of nationalist piety through his determination to avoid reading non-green books is informed by interrelated religious and economic factors, in that this color exclusively bears associations of Catholic “good” and only Dublin publishers, not their “evil” London counterparts, adhere to this principle of publication. At every level, Trellis embodies the “despotic” regime of Catholicism-cum-capitalism that predominated in contemporary Irish society, and at each such level, his aesthetic practice bespeaks the betrayal and destruction of the ontologically expansive, “freedom”-fostering ideals of the “Literary” faction of the Revival.

Indeed, Trellis’s restrictive aesthetic/religious/economic philosophy provides the primary target for the novel’s own ideological agenda. In keeping with the novel’s “postmodern” epochal alignment and concomitant “referential” aesthetic, this monological philosophy proves self-contradictory and auto-deconstructive, as its logocentric emphasis on sexual purity collapses bathetically into its opposite by virtue of its necessary engagement with the “popular” literary marketplace. The narrator explains to Brinsley that because “Trellis wants his salutary book to be read by all,” and because he “realizes that purely a moralizing tract would not reach the public . . . he is putting plenty of smut into his book. There will be no less than seven indecent assaults on young girls and any amount of bad language” (30-1). Trellis’s compulsory inclusion of pornographic subject matter in his moralizing fiction bespeaks both the contemporary dominance

of the Irish marketplace by “vulgar,” “entertainment”-based fare, and the more general postmodern collapse of formerly stable binary value distinctions. His violation of his own moral beliefs renders the same destabilizing tendencies with even greater bathetic comedy, as, having already directed his story’s central villain, Furriskey, to assault a “domestic servant” named Peggy, “in order to show how an evil man can debase the highest and the lowest in the same story” Trellis “creates a very beautiful and refined girl called Sheila Lamont” whose beauty is so “blind”ing “that he so far forgets himself as to assault her himself” (60-1). Trellis’s lapse bespeaks the indistinction to which binary oppositions such as that of good and evil, or of sexual purity and depravity, have been reduced by virtue of the thorough reification of both the conditions of literary production and the conditions of subjectivity more generally in an incipiently postmodern Ireland.

However, the primary vehicle by which the novel proposes to counteract the rigid, morally repressive, ontologically contractive and aesthetically debasing agencies routed through Trellis’s authorship is the literary rebellion carried out by his aestho-autogamously bred son, Orlick. In Orlick, O’Brien resurrects the now-antiquated institution of “Literary” Revivalist modernism as a “high” literary and cultural bulwark against the depredations of these assembled forces. Following six months of training under the tutelage of the Pooka, who “sow[s] in his heart throughout that time the seeds of evil, revolt, and non-serviam” (163), it becomes evident upon the discovery of “a manuscript of a high-class story” by his fellow characters in Trellis’s work that “Orlick has inherited his father’s gift for literary composition” (178). Importuned by Furriskey, Shanahan and Lamont to participate in their nascent resistance to the tyranny of Trellis’s authorship, and “smouldering with resentment at the stigma of his own bastardy, the dishonor and death of his mother, and incited by the subversive teachings of the Pooka, he

agrees” to author a counter-text in which Trellis will be subjected to similarly “despotic” control, thereby freeing his characters for self-determination (178). Orlick begins by conceiving a plot in which Trellis will first be exalted by a cleric named “Moling” prior to his eventual destruction, but finds that his “high class” plot does not meet with the satisfaction of his co-conspirators, who complain that his writing does not gratify their desire for revenge quickly enough: “This is a bit too high up for us. This delay, I mean to say. The fancy stuff, couldn’t you leave it out or make it short, sir?” (181). Orlick protests, “You overlook my artistry . . . You cannot drop a man unless you first lift him. See the point?” (181), but, after Shanahan insists that the story be recalibrated to the brief attention span and cruder taste of “the man in the street,” he proceeds, though with mounting “anger in his words” at their interference (195), to alter his plot in fits and starts in order to meet their demands, lighting on the more expedient services of the Pooka as a convenient resource. The Pooka, at Orlick’s direction, superintends a full-blown “stasis of the natural order” in which Trellis is subjected to a degree of torture and torment otherwise unbearable by the human body, to the sadistic delight of Furriskey et al (191). Not only, then, is Orlick’s “high class story” aligned with the *cultural* principles of “Literary” Revivalists such as Yeats, Synge and Stephens, who collectively sought to eradicate Ireland’s dependence on the “vulgar” fare of Anglo-American popular culture just as Orlick seeks such an eradication through his opposition to the “low” literary practices of his father; upon its recruitment of the Pooka, a figure from Celtic mythology, and its subjection of its fictional world to his physical law-violating, time-bending magical powers, that story also becomes aligned with the *primitivist modernism* fashioned by those figures. Orlick’s counter-text thus represents a “late” specimen of “Literary” Revivalist Celticism, whose cultural and aesthetic politics it recovers as a resource for resistance to the narrow, impoverished ontology of 1930s Ireland.

However, Orlick's revised tale continues to draw the dissatisfaction of his audience, whose demands for brevity and simplicity impinge on its "high class" fabric. Indeed, after Orlick excuses himself briefly from this increasingly antagonistic exchange in order to recover his composure, his advisors commandeer his narrative and subject it, through the authorial stylings of Shanahan, to their "low" aesthetic preferences. Orlick then returns to the room armed with a renewed strategy for purging his work of such "vulgar" incursions and informs them, "I have devised a plot that will lift our tale to the highest plane of great literature" (200). His strategy, which consists of inserting a brief passage in which each of his three auditors is flatteringly described as possessing various cultured attributes, bespeaks the extent to which any "high cultural" aesthetic product is doomed to compromise and bowdlerization by virtue of the need to appeal to the "low" demand of the contemporary Irish literary marketplace. However, just as his Revivalist predecessors, Synge and Stephens, devised an ingenious, hybrid aesthetic form in which, Trojan-horse like, a "high" aesthetic agenda is concealed behind a "popular" generic façade, so Orlick proceeds to author a culminating "torment" for Trellis that promises to "lift" his "tale" in the manner he has described. What then ensues is a truly remarkable scene in which Trellis is put on trial for violating the rights of his characters, who serve as judges, witnesses and jury while the Pooka orchestrates his submission to the ribald proceedings. As characters such as "Slug" Willard and Shanahan begin to take the stand, O'Brien's design in constructing this scene becomes clear. "Slug" refers to Trellis as his "employer" and proceeds to lodge various complaints against him, such as that he failed to honor "a claim which [he] advanced of compensation for impaired health" (215). When Shanahan follows with a similar testimony, describing how, "In company with other parties, he presented a petition to the accused praying relief from certain disabilities and seeking improved pay and conditions of service"

(221) it becomes evident that Trellis's characters have *unionized* against him, and that their rebellion will now take an overtly *Communist* or, recalling the term utilized earlier by the Good Fairy during a Jeremiad on the state of the nation, "Bolshevist" form (128). Thus, O'Brien reunites the Revivalist Celticism that informs Orlick's "high class story" with its one-time ally against the Irish subjection to capitalism's "despotic" dictates, the Irish Socialist tradition which reached its zenith in the "Celtic Communism" of James Connolly. Orlick's narrative thus resuscitates these allied, Celticism-inspired, ontologically expansive, progressive forces as resources for overthrowing the tokenistically Celticist, ontologically contractive, literarily degrading regime now dominant in Ireland, in effect attempting to reverse three decades of Irish history and return to the moment of Revival, a moment in which, allied against the forces of empire and capital, Irish cultural politics seemed poised on the verge of generating a truly "alternative modernity." Warning his assistants of the gravity and "importance of the step that is about to be taken," Orlick raises his pen and prepares to deal the death blow to the repressive, "low," capitalism-suffused, errant national order that has now almost completely eclipsed that moment's radical, utopian vision (227).

However, the novel's tripartite conclusion quickly quarantines this vision and restores the prevailing norms of 1930s Irish society. The bathetic humor with which the mock-trail is so heavily freighted portends this conservative outcome by undermining the novel's revitalized iteration of the ideology of Revivalist Celticism, but even that portion of aesthetic freedom that endures in its "referential" aesthetic—a last vestige, perhaps, of that ideology's creative consciousness—is ultimately dissipated by the ensuing destruction of Orlick's revolutionary manuscript and the narrator's parallel submission to the "respectable" dictates of his uncle's normative Irishness. Having "passed [his] final examination" and thereby earned the right to

enter the ranks of clerkish employees who staff the nation's constrictive collective life (228), the narrator anticipates the satisfaction he will experience upon his uncle's discovery that he has achieved a "creditable margin of honor" in spite of his inveterate "sloth" (228). His ensuing encounter with his uncle and his companion in respectability, Mr. Corcoran, seems initially to confirm his expectation, as he is forced to endure a lecture on the perils of this cardinal sin. "Lord save us," his uncle harangues, "there is no cross in the world as heavy as the cross of sloth, for it comes to this, that the lazy man is a burden to his friends . . . Idleness darkens the understanding; idleness weakens the will; idleness leaves you a very good mark for the sinful schemes of the gentleman below" (233). His summary maxim "keep on the move and you'll move towards God" tightens once more for the reader the link between Catholicism and capitalism in contemporary Ireland, and the reader braces for a further repudiation of these arrayed repressive forces by the narrator's bathetic wit (234). Instead, to his "great surprise," the narrator receives the two men's hearty congratulations at having "done the trick" of securing his credential, and in place of that wit the narrator expresses "thanks, utilizing formal perfunctory expressions" that were previously the epitome of anathema to him, thanks that he extends upon receiving as a gift the object most emblematic of the prime biopolitical technology of capitalist modernity, respectability, a watch, again "without [the] verbal dexterity or coolness" that has been his stock-in-trade to this point (234-5).¹⁰⁷ Deviating radically from his previous "descriptions" of his uncle throughout the novel as a "rat-brained," "cunning," "concerned-that-he-should-be-well-thought-of" "holder of Guinness clerkship the third class," the narrator now sees his uncle in a new light, as a "simple, well-intentioned . . . responsible member of a large commercial concern" (236). Struck by "an emotion of surprise and contrition extremely difficult

of literary rendition or description,” he finds his aesthetic powers immediately crippled by his acculturation to the impoverished mainstream ontology of 1930s Ireland (236).

Clinching the “Late Modernist” significance of the narrator’s submission to the repressive-productive dynamic of capital, the novel’s “penultimate” conclusion rescues Dermot Trellis from the grip of Orlick’s Celticist and Marxist counter-tale by allowing “Teresa, a servant employed at the Red Swan Hotel,” to cast that tale into the fire burning in Trellis’s bedroom (236). Just as in the “extract” of the poem “‘The Shipwreck,’ by William Falconer” which the narrator peruses prior to obeying his uncle’s summons, “lowering vapors” now “shroud” the “sun-twinkle clearness” of Orlick’s fecund aesthetic, and its “rays” are now “caught” by the stabilizing, measuring instrument of the “compass,” which, like the narrator’s watch, renders “just angles known” and “restore[s]” the “polar truth” of religio-economic normativity (232). Returning to the hotel after being released from his Pooka-led torments, Trellis, ascending the stairs to his quarters, staring at the posterior of his “slavey,” and, “doubtful as to whether he had made a pun,” “mutter[s],” “ars est celane artem” (“it is true art to conceal art”), thereby signaling to the reader that his “low,” vulgar, popular-culture-based literary sensibility will be reinstalled as that normativity’s aesthetic concomitant (237). The novel’s “ultimate” conclusion seems temporarily to restore the multiple truth of the Pooka by meditating on the varieties of “madness” that have appeared throughout world history, but it places far greater emphasis on the language of science, described as “postulat[ing] a cerebral norm” by which all humanity may be measured, and on the significance of “numbers,” in whose binary code, odd and even, truth and falsehood, “good” and “evil” have been inscribed throughout the text (238-9). Its final description of a “poor German who was very fond of three” and who ended his life by “cut[ting] his jugular with a razor three times and scrawl[ing] with a dying hand on a picture of his wife good-bye, good-

bye, good-bye,” tames the radical, norm-destabilizing potential of madness by encrypting it as an odd, and therefore “true” and “good,” number (239). The “inverted sow neurosis wherein the farrow eat their dam,” wherein, that is, the repressive dictates of hegemonic Irish culture will undergo a revolutionary assault at the hands of its subjects, receives sufficient corrective treatment to ensure that its counter-hegemonic threat will be put down. The consolidated Irish world that wins out in the novel’s heated battle of “high” and “low,” conservative and progressive, ontologically contractive and expansive values, is thus perhaps most neatly symbolized by the narrator’s discovery, upon hearing the “peal” of the “Angelus far away,” that his watch is six minutes slow (236). The achieved “alternative modernity” of contemporary Ireland, existing only slightly out-of-kilter, through its Catholicism and tokenist Celticism, with the rapidly globalizing new world order of capital, is aptly rendered in such a description, as is the more general aesthetic bent of Irish Late Modernism, where the very possibility of a real “alternative” has all but vanished.

“Ubi nihil vales, ibi nihil velis”: *Murphy*

The recent trend in Beckett criticism toward heightened emphasis on matters related to Ireland and Irishness as interpretive factors of legitimate importance has initiated something of a historicist shift away from the philosophical issues long thought to control the *oeuvre*’s meaning.¹⁰⁸ Yet the former considerations are, in fact, far from incompatible with the latter in that, as we have witnessed repeatedly throughout this study, the diverse, transnational endeavor to envision an Irishness that would supplement, or even supplant, capitalist modernity, an endeavor I have labeled “Celticism,” necessarily traffics in the very same philosophical terms typically applied to Beckett’s work, foremost among them being the Cartesian binary of mind and body. The Celticist diagnosis of modernity as subjecting the subject to excessive ontological

repression and as calling out for an “imaginative,” ontologically expansive recalibration, and the constitution of the figure of the Celt as a wellspring of such recalibratory energies, may indeed be viewed as thickened, more content-freighted iteration of this formal philosophical divide. Given the emergence of mind/body dualism as perhaps the central problem of philosophy at the “early modern” moment of Descartes, a moment in which capitalism began to commandeer human history and to rearrange it according to the imperative to ever-more productive uses of the body, it is far from surprising that Celticism’s ontological problematics vis a vis capitalist “industry” bears the marks of this dualism. Indeed, Beckett’s most “Irish” novel, *Murphy*, overlays its interrogation of the dualistic arrangement of capitalist modernity on a thematic frame that unmistakably bears the marks of this Celticist heritage. Through this palimpsestal alignment of philosophical and ethnological concerns, *Murphy* crystallizes formally the ontological dynamic that informed Celticism from its Arnoldian inception. And as we shall see, by virtue its anatomization of the inevitability of the failure to resolve the mind/body antinomy of a modernity controlled by the repressive-productive dynamic of capitalism, the novel provides a fitting “Late Modernist” conclusion to this study’s chronicle of the history of Celticism.

Murphy’s exploration of the mind/body antinomy indeed pervades the novel; however, this exploration is imbricated with the encroaching forces of capital from the start. The opening scene in which Murphy “sat naked in his rocking-chair of undressed teak, guaranteed not to crack, warp, shrink or corrode, or creak at night,” as, outside his condemned London “mew,” “a cuckoo-clock . . . became the echo of a street-cry, which now entering . . . gave *Quid pro quo!* *Quid pro quo!* directly,” immediately establishes a thick economic context for Murphy’s quest to become “free in his mind” (2). Indeed, Murphy’s efforts to “quiet” his body as a prerequisite to the attainment of mental freedom are related to the endeavor to escape from the exchange-value

suffused modern world that body inhabits in more than incidental fashion: “He worked up the chair to its maximum rock, then relaxed. Slowly the world died down, the big world where *Quid pro quo* was cried as wares and the light never waned the same way twice” (6-7). The physical world from which Murphy seeks an exit is a world defined and controlled by the forces of capital, and even Murphy’s most successful efforts to escape this world necessarily engage with and depend upon some level of submission to those forces. His rocking chair, as the first quotation above makes clear, is tied to them through the language of advertisement, and, as reported to Neary by his pupil Wylie during their pursuit of him later in the novel, an even more extreme strategy developed by Murphy in order to chasten the body also depends on capital: “The last time I saw him . . . he was saving up for a Drinker artificial respiration machine to get into when he was fed up breathing” (49). Even the most advanced stages of de-physicalization to which Murphy aspires will require monetary support.

If, as assessed by Neary at the outset of its plot, Murphy’s “conarium,” the mechanism by which, in Cartesian philosophy, the body is linked to the spirit, “has shrunk to nothing,” thus indicating that Murphy’s attempt to sever the dual components of his being has made significant headway, the duration of the novel consists mostly of a romance fiction-type love story through which Murphy is re-bound to the physical through his magnetic attraction to Celia, the Irish-born London prostitute who accosts him while stargazing in an attempt to descry his life’s meaning (6). Celia’s alignment with those bodily forces that impinge on Murphy’s mental “freedom” is evident in the narrator’s free-and-indirect description that within his composite being “the part he hated craved for Celia, the part that he loved shriveled up at the thought of her” (8). It is through the biopolitical dictates of “romance” with Celia that Murphy’s mind comes to be moored to a capitalist foundation. Like her predecessor Miss Counihan, at whose behest Murphy migrated to

London from Ireland, Celia views love through the bifocal lens of domestic economy and respectability, agencies whose materialist imperatives render it a kind of “commerce” (6). Spurred on by her uncle, Willoughby Kelly, who responds aghast to her intelligence that Murphy “belonged to no profession or trade,” “came from Dublin,” “did nothing that she could discern,” and that he lives on “small charitable sums” acquired from an eccentric uncle (18), Celia, holding her sexual resources hostage, drives Murphy to “enter the jaws of a job” (38) in order to provide for a “domestic establishment” (19). Murphy’s protestations that “he could not earn,” “that he was a chronic emeritus,” that his reluctance to work is “not altogether a question of economy” but is based on “metaphysical considerations” (21), are quickly silenced by Celia’s command, “You can get up out of that bed, make yourself decent and walk the streets for work” (38). Murphy submits to her economic ultimatum, but not before uttering a warning to Celia that will determine much of the duration of the development of the novel’s plot: “What have I now? . . . I distinguish. You, my body and my mind . . . In the mercantile gehenna . . . to which your words invite me, one of these will go, or two, or all. If you, then you only; if my body, then you also; if my mind, then all” (39-40). Celia remains impervious to Murphy’s anatomy of the dramatic consequences employment will bear for the “metaphysical” and physical components of his being, and their domestic-economic negotiations thus resolve with Murphy’s chastened inquiry, “Look is there a clean shirt” (41).

The critical resistance to identifying Murphy’s transition from economic cipher to productive laborer as bearing a socio-political meaning related to his Irishness, rather than of a strict philosophical orientation, is understandable, given the novel’s, and Beckett’s own, personal, disdain for both the life and literature of the contemporary “Saorstát.”¹⁰⁹ The novel’s satirical representation of contemporary Irish literature in the person of “Austin Ticklepenny,”

the “pot poet for the County of Dublin” whose doggerel verse, a “Gaelic pseudoturfy” he composes as a “duty to Erin” (89), bears out the castigations of the contemporary essay “Recent Irish Poetry,” in which Beckett savages those poets who continue to employ Celticist “themes”—among them the model for Ticklepenny, Austin Clarke—as “antiquarians” who fail to address the pressing concerns of modern life, seems to rule out any potential convergence between its own aesthetic practice and Celticism’s aesthetic heritage (70). Its similar impatience with the sexual prudery and moral repressiveness of life under the Irish Free State, emblemized in Wylie’s admiration for Miss Counihan as “the only nubile amateur . . . in Twenty-six Counties who does not confuse her self with her body,” as “one of the few bodies, in the same bog, equal to the distinction” (216-7) and in its narrator’s description of her as “exceptionally anthropoid” for an Irishwoman (118) by virtue of her rejection of the prevailing conflation of mind with body outlined by the contemporary essay “Censorship in the Saorstat,” seems to sever its ties to matters Irish in no uncertain terms. However, perusing these contemporary non-fiction prose works, one discovers that Beckett’s central complaint against both the life and literature of the Free State concerns their “flight from self-awareness,” in the words of the former essay, and, concomitantly, their abandonment of aesthetic creativity and experimentation (71). As we have seen, the literary heritage of Celticism has been concerned first and foremost with these very priorities, the path toward a more expansive self-cultivation and toward more radical, innovative aesthetic forms. Beckett’s professed admiration for Synge, and his constant deployment of lines culled from the poetry of Yeats in these two essays, suggest that there were certain exceptions to his contempt for Irish writers utilizing Celticist “themes” and that that contempt concerned not those innovative, imaginative cultural and aesthetic visions that characterized the “Literary” faction of the Revival but rather the degraded, reified, ontologically repressive or “centripetal”

ideals of the “popular” version of such themes that achieved hegemony under the newly-founded state. *Murphy*’s central tableau of an “imaginative” Irishman haplessly engulfed and entrapped by England-based forces of capitalist development, forces which threaten to extinguish his imaginative “freedom” and amid whose rational organization he constitutes an unassimilable “surd” (77), is thus more than merely satirically related to the literary and cultural heritage whose underlying binary code is the dyad of Celt and Capital.

The taxonomy of mental “forms” adumbrated in “section six” of the novel provides a further basis for reading *Murphy*’s journey as informed by this binary, as its distilled account of the mind/body antinomies routed through him feeds directly into considerations of aesthetic “imagination.” The narrator describes that “*Murphy*’s mind pictured itself as a large hollow sphere, hermetically closed to the world without,” and proceeds to identify this division as the basis for erecting a mental realm in which the degrading modes of valuation in the physical can be redressed: “The mental experience was cut off from the physical experience, its criteria were not those of physical experience, the agreement of part of its content with physical fact did not confer worth on that part. It did not function and could not be disposed according to a principle of worth” (108). “Self-sufficient and impermeable to the vicissitudes of the body,” vicissitudes generated by the capitalist principle of exchange in which *Murphy* is caught up, “*Murphy*’s mind” consists of three distinct zones, a first, consisting of “forms with parallel” in the physical world, wherein he indulges in “the pleasure [of] reprisal, the pleasure of reversing the physical experience,” a second, consisting of “forms without parallel” in outer experience and defined by “contemplation,” and a third, consisting of a chaotic, primal “flux of forms,” a “matrix of surds” where he becomes “a mote in the darkness of absolute freedom” (111-112). *Murphy*’s quest to become “free in his mind” centers on the first and second of these “zones,” because in them he is

“sovereign” and subject to “no rival initiative,” and may therefore conceive of a virtual reality purged of the limitations and imperatives of modernity (112). Murphy’s potent faculty for inventive redress of the “Quid pro quo!”-governed external world converts the “whole fiasco” of that world to “a howling success” (111).

Prior to “Celia’s triumph over Murphy” (114), he had spent increasing amounts of time in the third zone, the “absolute freedom” of “non-Newtonian” chaos (113), in the effort to ascend ever farther from the “fiasco”-like world of capitalist modernity. Hailed irresistibly by that world through her enjoinder to gainful employment, Murphy requests that she couch her demand in the language of a system which, like his own mental one, will confer on the ignoble activity of wage labor a higher significance. He requests therefore that “she kindly procure a corpus of incentives based on the only system outside his own in which he felt the least confidence, that of the heavenly bodies,” and informs her of “a swami who case excellent nativities for sixpence” in nearby Berwick Street (23). When she returns with his “life-warrant,” Murphy surprises her by declaring that its contents will form the basis for his further avoidance of labor rather than his embrace of it (31). Compelled by her threat to deprive him of her sexual services, however, Murphy consents to obey its specifications of the precise criteria to which his employment should conform. The “Thema Coeli” devised by “Ramaswami Krishnaswami Narayanaswami Suk” outlines a dazzling series of heaven-ordained characteristics, a number of which bear striking similarity to those by which Celticism defines Irishness. “His highest attributes being Soul, Emotion, Clairaudience and Silence,” “Few minds are better concocted than this Native’s,” according to Suk (32). Possessed of a “great Magical Ability of the Eye, to which the lunatic would easily succumb,” bearing “a great desire to engage in some pursuit, yet not,” given to “Success terminating in the height of Glory” that will nonetheless “injure the Native’s

prospects,” Murphy, “with regards to a Career . . . should inspire and lead, as go between, promoter, detective, pioneer, or, if possible, explorer, his motto in business being large profits and a quick turnover” (32-33). Thus armed with a satisfactory pretext for “enter[ing] the jaws of a job,” Murphy sets out in obedience to Celia’s extortionate demands.

There is undoubtedly an element of Revivalist parody to Murphy’s “Thema Coeli.” Culled from an Indian immigrant “swami,” this “life-warrant” alludes unmistakably to the Theosophist bent of leading Revivalist Celticists such as Yeats, who viewed the “sentimental” characteristics of the Celt as giving rise to a cosmic insight which closely resembled that of Indian mysticism. Murphy is described as possessed of such Celticist characteristics, as his leading attributes of “Soul, Emotion, Clairaudience and Silence” combine with a “great Magical Ability of the Eye” to produce a constellation of traits redolent of the “natural magic” of Arnoldian “sentiment.” Additionally, the contradictory description wherein “Success” will result in “injur[y]” to the “Native’s prospects” is difficult to read without recalling the economic haplessness of the Celt, the unfitness for “high success in the world of fact,” in Arnold’s terms, that formed the point of origin for Celticism’s resistance to capitalist imperatives. However, this roll-call of Celticist attributes is already subordinated to those very imperatives, as the “thema” outfits Murphy with a “sixpence worth of sky” in delusory support of his of his vulgarly materialist enterprise. That such “magical,” “Native” characteristics should become the basis for “profits and a quick turnover” reflects Beckett’s bathetic inflection of Murphy’s quest fairly neatly. And yet, a residue of genuine ideological convergence remains after this ironic convergence has been registered, a convergence wherein this Celticist spin to Murphy’s pursuit of mental “freedom” and “sovereignty” is not entirely inappropriate, given the deep commonality between that pursuit and that of Celticism with regard to escaping capitalist reification. Beckett

thereby implies that Celticism provides something of a touchstone for conceptualizing further the motive energy underlying Murphy's anti-capitalist quest. On the outcome of that quest, now in peril by virtue of his submission to Celia's domestic-economic demands, will, to some extent, hinge the historical fate of Celticism's "alternative" project.

The comic mismatch between Murphy's investment in "metaphysical" values such as Celticism promotes and the "physical" reality of his economic mission foreshadows the eventual dehiscence of its unstable compound of elements. From the point at which he pours his life into the mold of "Suk's heaven," however, the narrative of Murphy enters an aesthetic mold defined by Celticism's literary-historical agenda of recalibrating modernity's ontological impoverishment. In the narrator's words, upon his adoption of a semi-Celticist medium of valuation in relation to his financial quest, and consequent acceptance of a position as "custodian" in the Magdalen Mental Mercyseat asylum, "this sixpence worth of sky, from the ludicrous broadsheet that Murphy called his life-warrant, his bull of incommunication and corpus of deterrents, changed into the poem that he alone of the living could write" (93). Murphy's chosen occupation seems uniquely well-suited to unify his desire for mental freedom and imaginative "sovereignty" with his need to furnish a life with Celia through engagement with the "quid pro quo" of capital, and thus seems to present an opportunity to *aestheticize modernity* and render it more commodious to his "metaphysical" desires. Indeed, the metaphysical/physical combination achieved by Murphy's "mad" labor is so commodious that of the three agencies "distinguish"ed by him earlier, his mind, his body and Celia, it is the third of these that "goes," and Murphy abandons Celia in favor of his inmates, who not only "cause Murphy no horror" in stark contrast to their effect on the Mercyseat's other custodians, but inspire in him "feelings" of "respect and unworthiness" (168). Murphy's "impression" of these deranged subjects upon his

first encounter with them is “that of self-immersed indifference to the contingencies of the contingent world,” the very state of mental freedom “he had chosen for himself as the only felicity and achieved so seldom” (168), and of a “race of people he had so long despaired of finding” (169). Perceiving “the patients not as banished from a system of benefits but as escaped from a colossal fiasco,” Murphy reflects:

If his mind had been on the correct cash-register lines, an indefatigable apparatus for doing sums with the petty case of current facts, then no doubt the suppression of these would have seemed a deprivation. But since it was not, since what he called his mind functioned not as an instrument but as a place, from whose unique delights precisely those current facts withheld him, was it not most natural that he should welcome their suppression, as of gyves? (177-8)

Utterly severed from the world of “facts” arranged “on correct cash-register lines,” Murphy views in them “what he would be” if he were to continue along his current path toward “freedom,” and to his inspired eyes, “It meant that nothing less than a slap-up psychosis could consummate his life’s strike” (184, emphasis added). That consummation in fact arrives in the form of his mimetic self-arrangement in correspondence to the near-catatonic state of his favorite patient and mentor in madness, Mr. Endon. Following an utterly nonsensical chess match with Endon, Murphy kneels before him, “took Mr. Endon’s head with his hands and brought his eyes to bear on his,” and, “seeing himself stigmatized in those eyes that did not see him,” temporarily achieves the psychotic state which constitutes a “strike” against modernity’s “quid pro quo” (249). “Murphy began to see nothing, that colourlessness which is such a rare postnatal treat, being the absence . . . not of percipere but of percipi,” and, finally at “peace,” a “mote” in the “absolute freedom” of “nothing”ness (246).

However, the narrator describes, though this state of total separation from the imperatives of the “body” and the rationalist, capitalist system that binds it fulfills Murphy’s most fervent desire, “it was his experience that this should be stopped” (252). He thus determines to pull back

from the brink of psychosis and resume the compromised freedom of his former existence with Celia. His fate, however, has seemingly been sealed as a result of his obsessive flight from “physical” entanglement, and, returning to his “garret” in the Mercyseat dormitory, Murphy perishes in the “superfine chaos” of the flammable “gas” emitted by his makeshift radiator (252-3). Murphy’s final hour thus oscillates between the “physical” and “metaphysical” extremes with which we have grown so familiar throughout this study. In his delirious, “psychotic” state of achieved mental freedom, it is not difficult to discern the features of the primordial “ecstasy” which has been associated with the modernist embrace of the ontological resources of the Celt, just as, in the ultimate self-destruction, indeed self-immolation, of that freedom, and consequent reintegration with the gross, determinist domain of the “body,” are plainly visible the ontological features of the total capitalist reification of the modern subject. It is no great interpretive leap to identify in Murphy’s achieved “ecstasy” a “late” iteration of the “defeat”ist Celticist proclivity for spurning the world of “fact” in favor of the aesthetically-attuned realm of the imagination, and to identify in Murphy’s final recoil from such a self-destructive anti-realism a further identification of a hybrid, “mixed” ontological state, a state of compromise between aesthetic and economic priorities, as a more advantageous and practicable “alternative” to that destructive course. But the consequence of Murphy’s total commitment to a primitive ecstasy loosely yet definitively linked with the ethnological makeup of the Celt ultimately bears out the historical diagnosis of Irish Late Modernism rather than affirming such a compromise formation as viable. His achieved state of mental freedom thus runs to ground, repossessed by the capitalist system whose dominance motivated his quest to begin with, when Murphy’s corpse is incinerated, at the instructions of his motley throng of friends and lovers, in “a small close furnace of the reverberatory type, in which the toughest body, mind and soul could be relied on to revert, in

under an hour, for the negligible sum of thirty shillings, to ash of an eminently portable quantity,” and when, in the hands of Cooper, the servant of Neary who has stalked Murphy through London throughout the novel, his remains are finally scattered, “freely distributed” and mingled with the filthy detritus, “the sand, the beer, the butts, the glass, the matches, the spits, the vomit,” on the floor of a London pub (272-4).

The novel’s final description provides a fitting conclusion to this study’s chronicle of the complicated, fraught dialectic of Celt and Capital in Anglo-Irish literary history. Therein, the long-anticipated flight of Celia’s uncle Willoughby’s kite in Hyde Park transforms into a conceit for the “mad” course of modern history:

Mr. Kelly let out a wild rush of line, say the Industrial revolution, then without recoil or stop, gingerly, the last few feet. The kite being how absolutely at the end of its tether, he sat up and opened his eyes . . . Except for the sagging soar of line, undoubtedly superb so far as it went, there was nothing new to be seen, for the kite had disappeared from view. Mr. Kelly was enraptured. Now he could measure the distance from the unseen to the seen, now he was in a position to determine the point at which seen and unseen met . . . The ludicrous fever of toys struggling skyward, the sky itself more and more remote, the wind tearing the awning of cloud to tatters, pale limitless blue and green recessions laced with strands of scud, the light failing . . . The wail of the rangers came faintly out of the east . . . *All out. All out. All out* . . . the winch sprang from his fingers, struck violently against the railing, the string snapped, the winch fell to the ground . . . *All out. All out* . . . The end of the line skimmed the water, jerked upward in a wild whirl, vanished joyfully in the dusk. Mr. Kelly went limp . . . *All out.* (282)

Mr. Kelly’s kite, and, metaphorically, the “wild rush” of modernity since “the Industrial revolution,” a historical process motivated by the Enlightened philosophical urge to “measure the distance from the unseen to the seen,” though temporarily “enraptur[ing]” to the subject buoyed by its movements, at the end of its tether returns “violently,” as in Marxist assessments of capitalism’s “second nature,” to a state of cosmic entropy, “the string snapp[ing],” “the light failing,” its promise of a synthesis between spiritual and material ideals gone “limp.” Exhausted by his involvement with this process and stranded at the “end of history,” Mr. Kelly becomes the

vehicle of a fully “postmodern” reincarnation of the ontological urge which underlay Celticism from its Arnoldian inception, the urge to escape, to be “out” of capitalist modernity’s “ludicrous fever.” And thus, in the words of perhaps the central figure of this study, in yet one more guise and through one final twist of the “Anglo-Celtic dialectic,” do that modernity’s “gyres run on.”

Notes

¹ See Williams, *Ethnicity and Cultural Authority from Arnold to Du Bois*, Johnston, “Cross Currencies in the Culture Market,” and Appiah, *Color Conscious*, in addition to Pecora, “Arnoldian Ethnology,” which I discuss further above.

² See Pecora 376 and Appiah 61 for these last insights, regarding, respectively, the mysterious secondary racial element of the English and the malleability of race-oriented thinking at mid-century.

³ See Stefan Collini, *Arnold*, 76-7.

⁴ In addition to Mandler see Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 62-9, and Curtis, *Anglo-Saxons and Celts*, 66-74, for discussions of Teutonic or Anglo-Saxonist discourse. See also Curtis’s *Apes and Angels*, *passim*.

⁵ For a concise discussion of this gendered division of labor in nineteenth-century England, see Nancy Armstrong, *Desire and Domestic Fiction*.

⁶ This summary of the “modernization” process is more or less the standard one, and I will return to it throughout this and later chapters; however, for shorthand reference the following three works are useful: *The Subject of Modernity*, by Anthony J. Cascardi; *Making a Social Body: British Cultural Formation, 1830-1864*, by Mary Poovey; and *The Structural Transformation of the Public Sphere*, by Jurgen Habermas. Poovey and Habermas deal with the English segment of the process more directly than Cascardi.

⁷ Stocking refers similarly to “the enterprising, liberty-loving Saxon, self-reliant and self-controlled” (*Victorian* 62), while Curtis discusses “reason, restraint, self-control, love of freedom and hatred of anarchy, respect for law and distrust of enthusiasm” as the chief traits of “Anglo-Saxonism,” which he, like Mandler, sees as offering “a powerful emotional appeal to Englishmen who sought some explanation for the coexistence of political stability and economic prosperity” (*Anglo Saxons* 12).

⁸ See also “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time” for Arnold’s use of this phrase.

⁹ Joseph Valente is a leading authority on “British Muscularity” as the nation’s predominant ideology of masculinity. See his “The Manliness of Parnell” for reference on this point.

¹⁰ For a discussion of the political economic doctrine of *laissez-faire* and its role in mid-nineteenth century English politics, see Bernard Semmel, *The Rise of Free Trade Imperialism*.

¹¹ For a more in-depth analysis of the *homo economicus*, see Mandler, chapter 2, Stocking, 215-23, and also Catherine Gallagher’s recent book *The Body Economic*.

¹² See “The Function of Criticism at the Present Time,” 33-6.

¹³ See almost any of Marx’s works—two signal ones are *The Economic and Philosophic Manuscripts of 1844* and the *Grundrisse*, *passim*—Nietzsche’s *Genealogy of Morals*, *passim*, and Freud’s *Civilization and Its Discontents*. Herbert Marcuse provides a useful discussion of Freud’s theory of repression, which arises at the impasse between his “pleasure principle” and “reality principle,” in *Eros and Civilization*.

¹⁴ I am referring to Moishe Postone’s *Time, Labor and Social Domination* in particular, but Terry Eagleton offers an interestingly similar anatomization of the ontology of modernity in his chapter on Marx, “The Marxist Sublime,” from *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*.

¹⁵ Raymond Williams’s *Culture and Society* is a notable exception and reads Arnold’s Cultural ideas against the backdrop of industrialization. See 110-29.

¹⁶ Weber himself offers an interesting commentary on the tendency of the English to identify capitalist asceticism as “Hebraic,” arguing that the equation is not entirely unfounded. See *The Protestant Ethic*, 165-6.

¹⁷ For reasons of space, this chapter makes only limited references to contemporary events such as these in the Anglo-Irish colonial agon. A wonderful account of this dense process, however, is available in Liz Curtis’s book *The Cause of Ireland*.

¹⁸ Cairns and Richards do, however, go on to modify their initially simplistic account and admit that Arnold’s Celtic formulations are a bit more flexible. See *Writing Ireland*, 43-9. A notable exception to the limited political readings of Arnold practiced by the majority of Irish Studies critics is David Lloyd, in his *Nationalism and Minor Literature*. See pages 1-10 for his analysis of *The Study*.

¹⁹ The term “semi-autonomy,” which denotes the limited independence of historical domains beneath the capitalist mode of production, is of course Louis Althusser’s. For a useful discussion, see Fredric Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious*, 34-49.

²⁰ I have already cited Postone and Marx himself as the sources, respectively, of the terms domination and alienation. “Rationalization” is Weber’s term; see *The Protestant Ethic*, *passim*. “Reification” is a very common term within Marxism, but the *locus classicus* is Georg Lukacs, *History and Class Consciousness*; see 83-222. For

an excellent overview of the historical emergence of this ontological state of affairs, see Anthony Cascardi, *The Subject of Modernity*. For a neat summary of the concept of “overdetermination” which I utilize here, see Raymond Williams, *Marxism and Literature*, 83-9.

²¹ For another study which traces the racialization of English economic discourse around mid-century in relation to the Irish, see Peart and Levy, “Not An Average Human Being: How Economics Succumbed to Racial Accounts of Economic Man.”

²² For accounts of the Irish as “essentially feminine,” see Corbett, *passim*, and Cairns and Richards, chapter three. For the original account of Celtic femininity, see Renan, “The Poetry of the Celtic Races.”

²³ See Arnold, “England and the Italian Question,” 1-17.

²⁴ Again, my disregard of the “Latin,” “Roman” and “Norman” elements in *The Study* is conscious and intentional, based on my reading of their role in Arnold’s thinking as, at the most, marginal.

²⁵ See Stocking, *Victorian Anthropology*, 219-228 and Frazer’s massive compendium of Victorian anthropology *The Golden Bough*, 15-44, for descriptions of primitive homeopathic epistemology.

²⁶ For the origins of aesthetic discourse as a reintegrative social medium, see Guillory, *Cultural Capital*, chapter five, and Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*, *passim*. See also Cascardi, *The Subject of Modernity*, *passim*, and Habermas’s essay “Modernity: An Incomplete Project.”

²⁷ See Poovey, *Making A Social Body*, 1-9. Burgher’s *Theory of the Avante-Garde* describes the emergence of “subsystems” within capitalism in similar terms (33).

²⁸ I have in mind Michael Bell’s *Literature, Modernism and Myth* in particular, the first chapter of which outlines his understanding of Nietzsche’s formative role for modernist aesthetics.

²⁹ My use of the word “anomalous” is intended to evoke one of the central texts of the transformed Irish Studies, David Lloyd’s *Anomalous States*. Lloyd’s use of the term, however, refers mostly to the “anomalous” cases of Irish nationalist artists and thinkers who resisted the restrictive form of the new Irish Free State founded in 1923, on the heels of the Anglo-Irish War and subsequent Irish Civil War.

³⁰ I take these terms from Declan Kiberd’s *Inventing Ireland*, the volume of essays *Semi-Colonial Joyce*, and Joseph Valente’s *Dracula’s Crypt*, respectively. A noteworthy earlier text attempting the same terminological and conceptual shift is Michael Hechter’s *Internal Colonialism*.

³¹ See Cleary, “Misplaced Ideas,” and David Lloyd’s *Ireland After History*, for persuasive and detailed refutations of the “revisionist” tendency to discount the colonial aspects of Irish history.

³² The term “interpellation” is of course Louis Althusser’s. See “Ideology and Ideological State Apparatuses.”

³³ For further examples of research on British race prejudice toward the Irish, see Lebow, *White Britain and Black Ireland*, Liz Curtis, *Nothing But the Same Old Story*, and L.P. Curtis’s own *Anglo-Saxons and Celts*.

³⁴ See Arata, *Fictions of Loss*, for background on this late Victorian context.

³⁵ See Paula Krebbs, *Gender, Race and the Writing of Empire*, for an extensive discussion of Conan Doyle’s involvement in and writings on the Boer War.

³⁶ See the essay “Cave Canem Nocte” by Lloyd Rose on the “folkloric origins” of Conan Doyle’s hound.

³⁷ For discussion of the “woman as land metaphor,” see Heidi Hutner, *Colonial Women*, and Margaret Ferguson’s essay on Aphra Behn, “News from the New World.”

³⁸ See Liz Curtis, *The Cause of Ireland*, Ch. 5, for a thorough account of the Land Wars.

³⁹ Information on Lord Leitrim is taken from the website loughrynn.net, devoted to the ancestral home of the in County Leitrim.

⁴⁰ Terry Eagleton has an excellent essay detailing the difficulty Britain experienced achieving hegemony in Ireland in the eighteenth and nineteenth centuries in his book *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger*. See pp. 27-103. Like Arnold in his *Irish Essays*, Eagleton emphasizes Edmund Burke as the cardinal theorist for the British of “prescription” or hegemony during this period.

⁴¹ See O Cadhla, *Civilizing Ireland*, and also J.H. Andrews, *A Paper Landscape*, for historical accounts of the Ordnance Survey of Ireland.

⁴² Among the studies that advance some version of this reading of Kim’s Irish significance are McBratney, *Imperial Subjects, Imperial Space*, Nagai, *Empire of Analogies*, Watson, “Indian and Irish Unrest,” and Wegner, “Life as He Would Have It.”

⁴³ Two texts that partake in this broad critical movement are Elleke Boehmer, *Empire, the National and the Postcolonial* and the collection of essays titled *Ireland and India*, which contains the essay “Monstrous Hybridity” by Nessa Cronin, discussed further above.

⁴⁴ For a fascinating account of the Massacre and the Irish role in it, see Kenny, “The Irish in the Empire,” 90-95.

⁴⁵ The Indian Rebellion or “Sepoy Mutiny” was precipitated by the spread among the native ranks of the army of the British Raj of a rumor that its leaders had used animal fat to grease the cartridges of the infantry’s rifles. Native soldiers forced to bite these cartridges in order to load their weapons turned on their British superiors upon hearing that the animals used were cows, sacred to Hindus, and pigs, sacred to Muslims. See the book *Raj*, by Lawrence James, pp. 233-253, for an account of the events surrounding the Mutiny.

⁴⁶ On the origins of the concept and its foundational role in the first wave of British imperial expansion in the seventeenth century, see Wood, *Empire of Capital*, Ch. 5, Richard Armitage, *The Ideological Origins of the British Empire*, and John Locke’s *Second Treatise of Government*, which is considered the locus classicus of the doctrine of “improvement.”

⁴⁷ See Abdul JanMohamed, “The Economy of Manichean Allegory,” and Edward Said’s “Introduction” to the Penguin Classics edition of *Kim*, for analysis of the racial issues of the novel which display this sort of binary orientation.

⁴⁸ These quotations from Kipling’s poetry are of course from “The Ballad of East and West” and “The White Man’s Burden,” respectively.

⁴⁹ See Žižek, *The Sublime Object of Ideology*, 48-9.

⁵⁰ See Curtis, *Apes and Angels*, 96.

⁵¹ For an example of the emphasis on blackness as the central racial concern of Conrad’s novel, see Micheal North’s *The Dialect of Modernism*, Ch. 2.

⁵² See Patrick Brantlinger, “Heart of Darkness” and Jameson’s *The Political Unconscious*, Ch. 5, for arguments for Conrad’s style as a kind of impressionism.

⁵³ This outline of the transition from an imperial romantic to a modernist Celticism bears out the findings of Nicholas Daly’s book *Modernism, Romance and the Fin de Siecle*, which also identifies in British modernism a basic inversion of the ideological and aesthetic priorities of its predecessor. My analysis of this transition adds to Daly’s, however, a recognition of the centrality of Celticist ethnology to some of the most exemplary texts of both moments.

⁵⁴ Both these authors employ the Irish Celt in order to prosecute their idiosyncratic modernist agendas. Lewis, for example, in the novel *The Apes of God*, which relates, in virtuoso modernist fashion, the tale of a fledgling Irish artist named Dan Boleyn attempting to navigate the absurd world of British art in post-World War I London. This figure also informs Eliot’s “Sweeney” character, who appears in “The Waste Land” and is the primary concern of other poems such as “Sweeney Erect,” “Sweeney Among the Nightingales” and the unfinished long poem “Sweeney Agonistes.” Unfortunately, limitations of space forbid examination of either author’s version of British modernist Celticism.

⁵⁵ See Torgovnick, *Gone Primitive*, Ch.8, Grasiorek, “War, ‘Primitivism,’ and the Rise of ‘The West,’” and Booth, “Lawrence in Doubt.” See also Michael Bell, *Literature, Modernism and Myth*, pp. 93-119, and *D.H. Lawrence: Language and Being*, to which I refer further later in this section.

⁵⁶ For an account of the controversy surrounding McPherson’s fraudulent Celticism, see Sinead Garrigan Mattar’s *Primitivism, Science and the Irish Revival*, Ch. 1.

⁵⁷ Thus Thomas Richards, in *The Commodity Culture of Victorian England*, is able to deal with Ireland as but a regional site within the title “culture,” rather than as one ineluctably different from it by virtue of its colonial difference. As we shall see in this chapter and those to follow, Richards’s lack of such differentiation is highly problematic, and indicates a striking lack of attention to the simultaneously anti-capitalist and anti-imperial discourse of the Celtic Revival. For general histories of the rapid modernization of the Irish economy after the Famine, see Joseph Lee, *The Modernisation of Irish Society 1848-1918*, and also Cormac O’Grada, *Ireland: A New Economic History*. Chs. 9-14.

⁵⁸ This narrative is pervasive in Irish Studies, so much so that quoting specific passages is hardly necessary. Among those works which deploy it most prominently, however, are: *Celtic Revivals and Strange Country* by Seamus Deane, *Writing Ireland* by David Cairns and Shaun Richards, *Anomalous States* and *Irish Times* by David Lloyd, *Transformations in Irish Culture* by Luke Gibbons, *Heathcliff and the Great Hunger* by Terry Eagleton, *Inventing Ireland* by Declan Kiberd, and *Outrageous Fortune* by Joe Cleary.

⁵⁹ For a comprehensive history of the League itself, see Timothy McMahon, *Grand Opportunity: The Gaelic Revival and Irish Society*.

⁶⁰ For reasons of space, I have avoided engaging directly with the heated Revivalist debate over whether the admission of “cosmopolitan” influences exerted a de-nationalizing influence on Irish Culture. For an overview of this debate, see Kiberd’s *Inventing Ireland*, Ch. 9.

⁶¹ On this discourse, see Wood, *Empire of Capital*, Ch. 4. I define this discourse as “Lockean” in reference to John Locke’s *Second Treatise of Civil Government*, which may be taken as the *locus classicus* of the claim that cultivation of land equals ownership thereof.

⁶² Hyde writes here against the well-established imperialist argument that Ireland benefits from its Union with Britain. This argument is evident by such landmark texts as Prime Minister Gladstone’s *The Irish Question*, which contains the following representative passage: “What is there in Separation, that would make it advantageous for Ireland? . . . Why should she be supposed desirous to forego the advantage of an absolute community of trade with the greatest among all commercial countries, to become an alien to the market which consumes (say) nine-tenths of her produce, and instead of using the broad and universal paths of enterprise now open to her, to carve out for herself new and narrow ways as a third-rate State? Why, when her children have now, man by man, the free run of the vast British Empire, upon terms of absolute equality with every native of Great Britain, should she be deemed so blind as to intend cutting away from the greatest of all the marts in the world for human enterprise, energy, and talent, and to doom them to be strangers among nearly three hundred million men, with whom they have now a common citizenship? Why is she to be insensible to all the indications that nature herself has given of the destiny of Ireland to be our partner in weal and woe . . . What reason here indicates, history proves; for never did Separation become a substantive idea in Ireland . . . None but a few fanatics of crime dream of such a thing; and they, who impute it to the Irish nation, treat it as a nation made up of men who are at once and equally traitors, knaves and fools” (23).

⁶³ See *Douglas Hyde: A Maker of Modern Ireland* by J.E. Dunleavy and G.W. Dunleavy for further biographical information on Hyde.

⁶⁴ See the end of Hyde’s “Plea,” page 80, and Moran’s “The Future of the Irish Nation,” page 26, on this point.

⁶⁵ See Matthews, *Revival*, 100-103, on Moran’s consent for the continuation of Ireland’s imperial subordination.

⁶⁶ I came to this connection between the cultural politics of the Revival and Nietzsche’s *The AntiChrist* independently, however, David Lloyd’s essay “Counterparts” makes it as well. See pages 130-133 for Lloyd’s contextualization of Irish nationalism’s “transvaluation of values,” and see sections 61-2 of the original for Nietzsche’s presentation of this revolutionary imperative. I will return to Lloyd’s argument in the final section of the chapter.

⁶⁷ There is a degree of inconsistency to this particular Revivalist “theme” in that it tends toward defining the Celt’s anti-capitalist ontology, which has been defined above as a uniquely Irish racial inheritance, as universally accessible for the world’s peoples at the “primitive” historical stage. A symmetrical degree of inconsistency is evident in the concomitant tendency to define the ontology of capitalism alternately as inherently Teutonic or Saxon and as potentially diffusible among all the world’s races, in which picture its English incarnation is merely the paradigmatic instance of a historical process without a specific racial essence. But these occasional deviations from the essentialist equation of “sentiment” and capital with Celt and Teuton in such writings as those of Moore and AE above seem merely to reflect *tactical* adaptations to the exigencies of specific rhetorical moments, exigencies that demand simultaneously the attainment of universal sanction for Celtic characteristics and the amplification of the expansive threat of British capital. Such moves are consistently subordinated to the overall *strategic* one of defining Ireland as an anti-capitalist nation. Even where these binaries are inflected with a Lamarckian evolutionary qualification, they remain the dominant categories in which the Revival conceives of its cultural nationalist agenda.

⁶⁸ See Volume I of R.F. Foster’s biography of Yeats, *W.B. Yeats: A Life*, pages 170 and 213, regarding Yeats’s reading of Frazer.

⁶⁹ I have also omitted such texts as T.W. Rolleston’s “Imagination and Art and Gaelic Literature” and John R. Whelan’s “Literature and Nationality,” both of which, like Yeats’s early folklore, deploy an openly Arnoldian ethnological framework but divorce this framework from its capitalist underpinnings, from direct discussion here.

⁷⁰ In the chapter of his *Irish Classics* devoted to *The Aran Islands*, Declan Kiberd provides background information on the Revivalist fetishization of the islands that finds fulfillment in Synge’s work, and argues that such texts as Arthur Symons’s essay “The Isles of Aran,” published in *The Savoy* in 1896, lend it an “intertextuality” that undercuts its seeming essentialist agenda. See Chapter 24 of Kiberd’s book for these arguments.

⁷¹ In the same chapter, Kiberd argues convincingly that Synge’s writing displays feelings of guilt about his own responsibility for bringing modernity to the islands through such media as his Kodak camera. See pages 422-424 for this analysis.

⁷² See F.S.L. Lyons’s *Ireland Since the Famine*, pages 200-201, for further information on the Congested Districts Board.

⁷³ See Chapter 3 of Lyons's *Culture and Anarchy in Ireland 1890-1939*, for his overview of this nationalist factional split.

⁷⁴ Cleary's analysis is a good deal more complex than Matthews's. However, like Matthews, Cleary accepts the premise that Catholic nationalism "absorbed" much of its identity from England, from its "Victorian mass-culture sentimentalism" to its "philistine anti-intellectualism and the assiduous pursuit of bourgeois respectability" (65).

⁷⁵ See pages 59-60 of *Writing Ireland* for Cairns and Richards' account of the cultural roots of this "deployment of sexuality" by Catholic nationalism. Also of interest in this regard is Chapter 1 of Alexander J. Humphreys' book *New Dubliners*.

⁷⁶ See pages 35-45 of Matthews's *Revival* for an account of the "Mahaffey/Atkinson Affair."

⁷⁷ This phrase is taken from Duffy's essay "What Irishmen May Do for Irish Literature," where he opposes these virtues to what he calls "the dram-drinking of sensational literature" (13).

⁷⁸ The *locus classicus* for this aesthetic humanism is Schiller's *On the Aesthetic Education of Man*. For an excellent study of the historical evolution of the aesthetic critique of European modernity, see Terry Eagleton, *The Ideology of the Aesthetic*.

⁷⁹ See Cairns and Richards, 72-3, on the defeat of Yeats's nationalism by its Catholic opponent.

⁸⁰ Joseph Valente's work on Irish masculinity suggests that imperial stereotypes of gender, according to which, in the classic Arnoldian/Renanian formulation, the Celts were considered "an essentially feminine race," were similarly resistant to such "transvaluation." See his essay "The Manliness of Parnell" for the analysis of Irish nationalism's conformity to prevailing norms of Irish masculinity.

⁸¹ See F.S.L. Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*, pages 252-3, on this point. It is also noteworthy, within the context of the Revival's commodity critique, that Griffith draws further parallels between the commodity culture of Austria and that of England based on their common dissemination of "stage" caricatures of Magyar and Irish identity: "Nor were the potent weapons of calumny any more neglected by Austria than by England. Austria, like England, had the ear of the world . . . In her Press, in her theatre, in her society, the Magyar was ever held up to ridicule. His history was declared to be invention, useful only to burlesque, his traditions formed the material for the little wits of Vienna to exercise their humour on, his character was drawn in the grossest colours—he was a drunkard, a lazy ne'er-do-well, a blundering ignoramus, an ingrate who bit the hand of his Austrian would-be benefactor. In the Austrian beer-gardens—the equivalent of the English music-halls—vulgar beings, clad in grotesque imitation of the Hungarian costume, who sang vile songs reflecting on the Hungarian character, were the popular buffoons. The Austrians called them 'Magyar Miska,' or 'Hungarian Michaels'—Michael being the popular peasant-name in Hungary—as the English call their music-hall Irishmen 'Irish Micks' or 'Irish Paddies.'" (79).

⁸² In his book *Ireland: The Union and Its Aftermath*, Oliver MacDonagh records, "the pages of *An Claidheamh Soluis* were frequently used to drum up support for 'native manufactures' and to advance the argument that there was a link between the decline of the language and the loss of industry in rural Ireland in the nineteenth century. At times the campaign for Irish industry was pursued to the point of absurdity: in 1901 a directive was passed ordering that no prize be awarded to a competitor in the Oireachtas unless they [sic] were dressed in clothes of Irish manufacture" (28).

⁸³ For the *Homestead's* efforts on behalf of "Irish manufactures," see the special edition devoted to the Irish Textile Exhibition in Dublin in 1897, titled "Some Irish Industries."

⁸⁴ See Chapter 4 of Part II of *Ireland Since the Famine* for Lyons's discussion of "Constructive Unionism."

⁸⁵ For an overview of Connolly's involvement in these organizations, see Chapter 1 of *Communism in Modern Ireland* by Mike Milotte.

⁸⁶ For further background information regarding the political "vacuum" ensuing upon Parnell's demise, see chapter four of F.S.L. Lyons's *Ireland Since the Famine*. See also chapter eighteen of R.F. Foster's *Modern Ireland, 1600-1972*.

⁸⁷ Among the many readings of the play in which this dimension of the text goes more or less unnoticed are: David Cairns and Shawn Richards, *Writing Ireland* (84-88); Seamus Deane, "Synge and Heroism," in *Celtic Revivals* (51-62); Joseph Devlin, "J.M. Synge's *The Playboy of the Western World* and the Culture of Western Ireland Under Late Colonial Rule"; Luke Gibbons, "Synge, Country and Western: The Myth of the West in Irish and American Culture," in *Transformations in Irish Culture* (23-36); Declan Kiberd, "J.M. Synge: Remembering the Future," in *Inventing Ireland* (166-188); and Shawn Richards, "The Playboy of the Western World," in *The Cambridge Companion to J.M. Synge*.

⁸⁸ On the generic makeup and cultural place of “sensation” in mid- and late-Victorian society, see Nicholas Daly, *Sensation and Modernity in the 1860s*, as well as the collected essays in the volumes *Victorian Crime, Madness and Sensation* and *Victorian Sensations*.

⁸⁹ Devlin’s reading in particular is noteworthy for its insistence on the pre-modern character of the play’s setting, as he defines the play as depicting “a western world with its own idyllic pre-industrialized culture, owing little to Dublin or London” (374). However, Gibbons’s analysis, which describes it as “reverting to an image of pre-Famine Ireland,” also tends toward this characterization (34). A noteworthy exception to the tendency to define Synge’s dramatic settings as “pre-modern” is Nicholas Daly’s analysis of *Riders to the Sea* in *Modernism, Romance and the Fin-de-Siecle*. Daly argument that the play draws on elements of detective fiction through its female characters’ labors in interpreting the significance of Michael’s recovered clothing has important implications for my reading of the animating presence of “The Police Intelligence” to *The Playboy*’s thematic development. His reading only addresses the earlier play, however.

⁹⁰ As Devlin among others notes, “in early drafts” of the play, “Philly is described as ‘a thin political pauper’ and as ‘elderly, thin and political’” (382).

⁹¹ Kiberd’s reading of the play in *Inventing Ireland* is the foremost example of this recent critical trend toward reading Christy’s performance as an instance of the broader tendency of post-colonial nationalist “discourse” to be “derivative” of imperial conceptual categories, in the influential formulation of Partha Chatterjee’s *Nationalist Thought and the Colonial World*.

⁹² See Robert Kilroy’s *The Playboy Riots*, in particular 7-20, for an account of the audience’s “riot”ous response.

⁹³ I am drawing here on Andreas Huyssen’s distinction between a “high modernist” and an “avant-garde” aesthetic in *After the Great Divide*, which is organized according to their respective “autonomous” detachment from and engagement with popular-cultural forms. See pages vii-xii for this reading.

⁹⁴ The best-known formulations of the “alienation effect” of Brecht’s “epic theater” are his essays “A Short Organum for the Theater” and “Alienation Effects in Chinese Acting.”

⁹⁵ Michel Foucault’s *The History of Sexuality* remains the only study of which I am aware which considers the repressive dictates of Victorian “respectability” as a form of “biopower.” See, in particular, *Volume I*, which begins with the introductory essay, “We ‘Other Victorians,’” for Foucault’s analysis of this code’s revolutionary biopolitical effects in modern, mainstream Euro-American culture.

⁹⁶ See Valente, 129, for his analysis of the policeman’s embodiment of “shoneenism.”

⁹⁷ My analysis of the “double bind” in which the lodger’s “fetishism of defeat” places him is deeply indebted to Valente’s. See pages 137-139 in particular for Valente’s commentary on this “fetishism.”

⁹⁸ For an account of the “Hugh Lane controversy,” see the first chapter of Lucy McDiarmid’s *The Irish Art of Controversy*.

⁹⁹ See F.S.L Lyons, *Ireland Since the Famine*, 358-379, for an account of “The Rising.” For a more nationalistically-minded account, see Liz Curtis, *The Cause of Ireland*, chapter 9.

¹⁰⁰ This definition is taken from the *Modern Catholic Dictionary*, compiled by Father John Hardon.

¹⁰¹ Among the texts surveyed in development of this impression, that critical works examining Joyce’s response to capitalism tend to bracket examination of his response to nationalism and vice versa, are: Garry Leonard, *Advertising and Commodity Culture in Joyce*; Patrick McGee, *Joyce Beyond Marx*; Mark Osteen, *The Economy of Ulysses*; Franco Moretti, *Signs Taken as Wonders*; Emer Nolan, *James Joyce and Nationalism*; Vincent Cheng, *Joyce, Race and Empire*; Maria Tymoczko, *The Irish Ulysses*; and Enda Duffy, *The Subaltern Ulysses*.

¹⁰² See note 7.141 in Don Gifford’s *Ulysses Annotated* regarding “Home Rule” on the Isle of Man.

¹⁰³ Among the most significant studies of Yeats’s Eugenic turn are Michael North, *The Political Aesthetic of Eliot, Yeats and Pound*, David Bradshaw, “The Eugenics Movement in the 1930s and the Emergence of *On the Boiler*,” Marjorie Howes, *Yeats’s Nations*, chapter six, and Donald Childs, *Modernism and Eugenics*, chapter seven.

¹⁰⁴ See chapter four and five of *Yeats’s Nations* regarding the centrality of female desire to Yeats’s “Big House” ideology.

¹⁰⁵ See the essay “The Poetics of Politics” in Lloyd’s *Anomalous States* for his analysis of Yeats’s protestatory syntactical indeterminacy.

¹⁰⁶ The texts referred to here as defining O’Brien’s work as “postmodernist,” “absurdist” and “carnavalesque” are, respectively, Keith Hopper, *Flann O’Brien: A Portrait of the Artist as a Young Post-Modernist*, Declan Kiberd’s essay “Gaelic Absurdism,” in *Irish Classics*, and M. Keith Booker’s *Flann O’Brien, Bakhtin and Menippean Satire*.

¹⁰⁷ On the centrality, both material and symbolic, of the portable technology of the watch in capitalist modernity’s consolidation, see E.P. Thompson’s canonical Marxist essay “Time, Work-Discipline and Industrial Capitalism.”

¹⁰⁸ Among the works that have conducted this recent shift toward Irishness-based readings of Beckett's work are: Emilie Morin, *Samuel Beckett and the Problem of Irishness*; Alexander McKee, "Breaking the Habit: Samuel Beckett's Critique of Irish Ireland"; and the collected essay volume *Beckett and Ireland*.

¹⁰⁹ For an example of this resistance, see the "introduction" to C.J. Ackerley's *Demented Particulars: The Annotated Murphy*.

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