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Title	Ugly criticism: union and division in Irish literature
Authors	Connolly, Claire
Publication date	2008
Original Citation	CONNOLLY, C. 2008. Ugly Criticism: Union and Division in Irish Literature. Field Day Review, 4, 114-131. http://www.jstor.org/stable/25469725
Type of publication	Article (peer-reviewed)
Link to publisher's version	http://www.jstor.org/stable/25469725
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Download date	2026-11-02 00:03:01
Item downloaded from	https://hdl.handle.net/10468/797



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final victory in 1797. And he would have certainly seen the hulking prison where men strongly implicated in the killing of William Hamilton had been held — James Friel and Robert Floyd of Fánaid and John Kinkaid of Newtowncunningham, none of whom was convicted yet none of whom remained at home.[161] He would have seen too the courthouse from which Barney McCafferty, the haunted man he may have met on the road to Donemana in 1812, had walked a free man having been acquitted of murdering the man he had helped to kill.

The dead woman being well known and well to do, there was probably a large attendance at the funeral — people from Strabane and Lifford, but also from the Presbyterian towns and villages of the Laggan — people from Castlefin, who, in 1798, had been among the last to relinquish their arms and people from St. Johnston, who would have known the family of Oliver Bond and shared his republicanism, but particularly people from the dead woman's own town, Ballindrait, who had ventured all and lost in 1798. All ghosts — what had actually happened in their youth denied an honest account in print, only spoken about, and then only quietly, and more often than not at night, when *true stories* were told as ghost stories.

On this occasion, the half-sighted doctor went into the church rather than wandering through the churchyard. And there on a spring day, in the church in Lifford, during the reading of the funeral service, surrounded by ghosts, John Gamble died.[162]

161 Kinkaid jumped bail in summer 1797. Floyd was arrested in Fánaid that June, brought into Derry and then sent out of the country. Friel was taken up the following month, but released in September on giving bail; in summer 1798 he left for America, where he became clerk to the inspector of state prisons in New York. Letterkenny, 17 July 1797, John Rea to ——, NAI, RP 620/31/241; Derry, 12 June 1797, R. G. Hill to John Beresford, NAI, RP 620/31/78; Copy of Information of John Dougherty, Manor Cunningham, 9 July 1797, NAI, RP 620/31/214; New York, 20 November 1799, James Friel to Rev. James Friel, Rossnakill, NAI, RP 620/57/104; *Dublin Evening* Post, 30 September 1797.

162 On Gamble's death, see *Strabane Morning Post*, 10 May 1831. He is buried in the parish churchyard of Leckpatrick. Campbell, *Notes*, 33, also remarks on his death at a funeral.



James Gillray, *Cincinnatus in Retirement*, 1782, etching on paper, 25.8 × 35.0 cm. © Trustees of the British Museum.



1 From Sinéad Morrissey, 'Advice', *The State of the Prisons* (Manchester, 2005), 34.
2 Sinéad Morrissey, 'Reading the Greats', in *The State of the Prisons*, 35.

Ugly Criticism

Union and Division in Irish Literature

Claire Connolly

> You think it ugly: drawing lines
> with a knife
> Down the backs of those
> writers we exist to dislike.
> But it's life.[1]

Sinéad Morrissey's poem 'Advice' scrutinizes the 'ugly' object of literary criticism: the everyday business of dissecting, dividing and analysing a body of literary work. The voice of this poem (composed while Morrissey was writer-in-residence at Queen's University Belfast) might be that of the creative-writing tutor, urging the recalcitrant poet to find his or her own voice by picking a fight with the literary tradition, those 'big fish' described in the next poem in Morrissey's collection as 'the Greats'.[2] 'Advice' offers an ironical celebration of splits and divisions. It pours scorn on the

notion of an 'undivided' body, understood biologically, or as literary corpus, or as cultural group or coterie:

> You think it ugly: drawing lines with a knife
> Down the backs of those writers we exist to dislike. But it's life.
>
> One is disadvantaged by illustrious company
> Left somehow undivided. Divide it with animosity.
>
> Don't be proud —
> Viciousness in poetry isn't frowned on, it's *allowed*.
>
> Big fish in a big sea shrink proportionately.
> Stake out your territory
>
> With stone walls, steamrollers, venomous spit
> From the throat of a luminous nightflower. Gerrymander it.

Divisions are to be inflicted by 'stone walls', 'steamrollers', 'spit' and — in a final sentence that itself marks a division from the preceding sound patterns — by external political agency. The term 'gerrymandered' suggests manipulated or manufactured political divisions, and carries with it more than a whisper of reference to the border between the six counties of Northern Ireland and the 26-county Republic, and to officially sanctioned sectarian political practices within the Northern state. In this final phrase, 'Advice' brings the political realities of severed states to bear upon the business of literary value.

Ugliness, lines, the body in pain: the image patterns of Morrissey's poem stand in striking relation to the terms assembled by Edmund Burke in his 1757 treatise on aesthetics, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful*.[3] Opening with an invocation of 'those things which a daily and vulgar use have brought into a stale unaffecting familiarity', Burke forges a philosophical space within which the sensations can be defined and analysed. Assuming that there is a shared stratum of sensations that are nonetheless subject to cultural differences, the *Enquiry* depicts a world of highly particularized feelings within which 'the three states, of indifference, of pleasure, and of pain' may be seen to operate.[4] Many of the striking opening examples Burke produces are designed to shock readers into a grasp of his argument by forcing an imaginative participation in extreme sensations: 'Suppose ... a man ... to receive a violent blow, or to drink of some bitter potion, or to have his ears wounded with some harsh and grating sound', opens his discussion of how pain involves more than the absence of pleasure. '[S]tretch Caius upon the rack,' he invites, extending the argument to show how pleasure and pain have an existence beyond their relation to one another.[5]

The *Enquiry*'s desire to divide and thus analyse the sensations is always shadowed by subjection. Even its famous distinction between the sublime and the beautiful fails to distance either term from a 'disabling passivity': 'both the sublime and the beautiful are defined in Burke's *Enquiry* as states of subjection and domination,' argues John Whale.[6] Luke Gibbons has conclusively linked Burke's aesthetics to 'the turbulent colonial landscape of eighteenth-century Ireland', and in particular to agrarian unrest in eighteenth-century Munster.[7] Gibbons's account of the *Enquiry* stresses the formative influence of Irish places on its young author, in particular the famine-struck Cork of his boyhood and the colonial Dublin of his adolescence. Burke's aesthetic treatise was however begun in London in the 1750s, during the time he spent studying at the Middle Temple and holidaying in England and Wales. It is amidst these linked relationships and journeys — between Britain and Ireland, one the one hand, and aesthetics and politics, on the other — that

3 The collection in which 'Advice' appears enacts a wider dialogue with the eighteenth century, and in particular with the Enlightenment faith in perfectibility manifested in John Howard's plans for prison reform. Morrissey borrows the title of her collection from Howard's 1777 essay 'The State of the Prisons'.

4 Edmund Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry into the Origin of Our Ideas of the Sublime and Beautiful* (Oxford and New York, 1990), 31.

5 'Caius is afflicted with a fit of the cholic; this man is actually in pain, stretch Caius upon the rack, he will feel a much greater pain; but does this pain arise from the removal of any pleasure?' Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 31.

6 John Whale, *Imagination under Pressure, 1789–1832: Aesthetics, Politics and Utility* (Cambridge, 2000), 22, 23.

this essay locates the continuing relevance of Burke's *Enquiry* in our critical constructions of Irish literature.

'Drawing lines with a knife': Union and Division

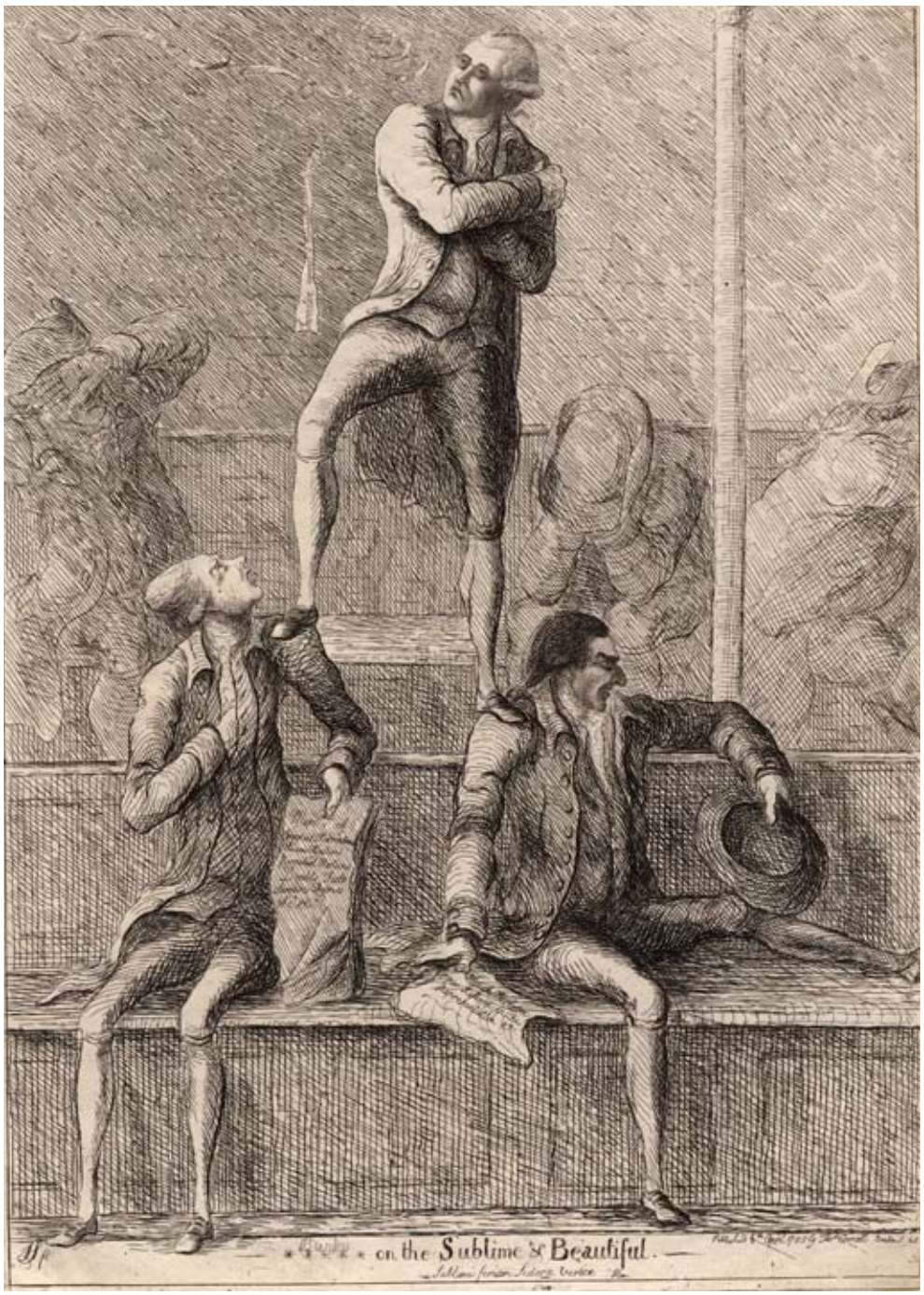
Burke presents an especially complicated case study in what is an observably pre-Union cultural phenomenon: a writer whose career has been seen to divide in paired oppositions, chiefly between Britain/Ireland, on the one hand, and aesthetics/politics, on the other. His reputation is split between his writing on aesthetics and on politics, on cultural geography (in England, France America, India and Ireland), and on political philosophy (Burke the conservative and counter-revolutionary versus Burke the defender of local attachments turned proto-postcolonialist). Writing in the 1820s in the context of his biography of Richard Brinsley Sheridan (another figure dominated by comparable fissures), Thomas Moore describes the divided Burke in the following terms: 'His mind, indeed, lies parted asunder in his works, like some vast continent severed by a convulsion of nature, — each portion peopled by its own giant race of opinions, differing altogether in features and language, and committed in eternal hostility with each other.'[8] Moore offers an aerial survey of the fragmented territory of the Burkean imagination in language that echoes across the literary culture of eighteenth-century Ireland, evoking the well-known instabilities of narrative position in travel writing, the geographical discourse of Union and Jonathan Swift's *Gulliver's Travels*.

The figure or trope that is most commonly used to unite the divided Burke is the family romance of the mixed marriage: child of a Protestant father and a Catholic mother, Burke, we are told, carried Ireland's confessional divisions within himself and reproduced them in the intricate accounts of sympathy in his philosophical and political writings. The text that seeks to anatomize such figures of feeling, his *Enquiry*, is, according to the psychoanalyst Adam Phillips, 'among other things, a prospective autobiography'.[9] Or, to the critic of Irish literature, a proto-national tale. Its sensuous — Phillips says 'erotic' — empiricism unites at the level of philosophical method a lived division between passion and reason that critics have traced back to Burke's early formation in east Munster. F. P. Lock has found in Burke's early upbringing 'the stuff of fiction': he compares Burke's education among Catholics, Anglicans and Quakers to the position of an eighteenth-century heroine with a philosophically or morally mixed group of guardians.[10] Yet the way in which familial, local and national dynamics are mapped onto one another within Burke's biography is closer to the narrative strategies deployed by the generation of Irish writers that came after him, in particular the national romances pioneered by Maria Edgeworth and Sydney Owenson.

In many ways, Burke's career reinforces and perpetuates a set of divisions that can be said to structure Irish literary history. To the 'divided' Burke, we can at the very least add, as exemplars of a comparable division, Edmund Spenser, Jonathan Swift and Maria Edgeworth. Since the 1980s, major advances in scholarship have helped to restore the Irish side of these writers' reputations: these would include Anne Fogarty's reading of Ireland within the 'ideological anxieties, symbolic patterns and narrative dynamics' of Spenser's *Faerie Queene*; Ian Campbell Ross's biographical and textual analyses of Swift's 'complex and troubled relationship to Ireland'; and Gibbons's book, *Edmund Burke and Ireland*.[11]

For authors to be 'Irished' or 'ReIrished' has acquired, as James Chandler points out, 'the status of quasi-disciplinary procedure' within Irish Studies.[12] Of the revisions I have mentioned, Gibbons's is perhaps most tightly bound up with the advent of Irish Studies as a critical practice. The critical energy invested in these 'shifting perspectives' is

7 Luke Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland* (Cambridge, 2003), 23.
8 Thomas Moore, *Memoirs of the Life of the Right Honourable Richard Brinsley Sheridan*, 2 vols. (London, 1825), vol. 2, 148.
9 Adam Phillips, Introduction, in Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, xiv.
10 Lock cites Susannah Centlivre's play *A Bold Stroke for a Wife* (1718) and Frances Burney's novel *Cecilia* (1782) as examples, with the latter text being greatly enjoyed by Burke. See F. P. Lock, *Edmund Burke*, 2 vols. *Volume I: 1730–1784* (Oxford, 1998), 27.
11 Anne Fogarty, 'Literature in English, 1550–1690: From the Elizabethan Settlement to the Battle of the Boyne', in Margaret Kelleher and Philip O'Leary, eds., *The Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, 2 vols. (Cambridge, 2006), vol. 1, 140–90 (151); Ian Campbell Ross, 'Prose in English, 1690–1800: From the Williamite Wars to the Act of Union', in Kelleher and O'Leary, eds., *Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, vol. 1, 232–81 (249).
12 James Chandler, 'A Discipline in Shifting Perspective: Why We Need Irish Studies', *Field Day Review*, 2 (2006), 19–39 (27).



James Sayers, * * * * * *[Burke] on the Sublime and Beautiful*, 1785, etching on paper, 32.8 x 23.2 cm. Trustees of the British Museum.

what leads Chandler to place Irish Studies in the forefront of the overthrow of the *ancien régime* of the disciplines currently taking place across the humanities. Perhaps because of this wider revolution, in none of the cases mentioned here has a writer's reputation settled into anything like orthodoxy. In general, there remains a demand for greater equilibrium in our critical apprehension of divided *œuvres*, a sense that more work

must be done and a better balance must be achieved. Joseph Valente, for instance, has upbraided Irish Studies scholars for their over-Irishing of *Dracula*.[13] But however one appraises the interaction of British and Irish elements, or of aesthetics and politics in the case of these major writers, it is important to note how ideals of balance and organic unity continue to inform our understanding of the ways in which they ought to be read. Consider, for example, Lock's accusation that the 'Irish' or 'post-colonial' Burke lists too far towards one side of Burke's thought; a side of Burke that is, problematically for him, much too closely connected with our current preoccupations and prejudices. Critics from Conor Cruise O'Brien to Luke Gibbons are accused of having 'delved so deep as to obscure some of the most prominent contours of the Burkean mindscape'. Lock invokes on his own behalf the ideal scholarly perspective that could see Burke's British and conservative, as well as his Irish and humanitarian, affiliations.[14]

Readers will be able to supply other versions of this kind of complaint or criticism as it relates to texts or writers that they know well. What concerns me particularly here, however, is the problem of the divided *œuvre* more generally. Does it apply especially to our critical constructions of pre-1800 writers? Where the issue persists past the nineteenth-century heyday of the Union, we find it adheres most closely to the reputations of writers to whom the term 'Anglo-Irish' would be conventionally applied (Bram Stoker, Elizabeth Bowen). So has the Union a role or after-effect that is detectable in the literature that succeeded it? It might be argued that Act of Union itself seems, through much of the nineteenth century, to soften, if not solve, this dilemma of radical division paradoxically by enhancing the divisions and differences that the Act, in attempting legislatively to draw the two countries together, had produced. As William Parnell put it: 'the Union is a name, a sound, a fiction; there is no Union; the nominal Union is only an additional source of discord'.[15] The public discourse of unity served to underline rather than erase Ireland's inferior role in the Union. As such, it proved a rich reserve of 'discord'.

As with the Burkean mindscape visualized by Moore and Lock, the territory of Irish Studies is often conceptualized in terms of issues of union and division, and remains closely bound up with questions of perspective. In many of the most hotly contested cases of re-Irishing, Chandler points out — citing Burke as 'an especially good case in point' — 'the question of an author being "Irishable" is intensified by the sense that, internal to his or her *œuvre*, we can find not only another side to the story but beyond this, an anticipation of what it means to be able to see or not see the story from that other side'.[16] Burke's exemplary status in Chandler's argument depends on his reputation for political prescience, itself closely related to what is often described as the supplementary or excessive character of his language.[17] The flexibility and fluidity of Burke's prose style maps onto a kind of special knowledge regarding the outcome of the political events on which he comments: Burke's style is linked to an almost improper, and, according to Matthew Arnold, 'un-English' knowledge of the future. [18] This is perhaps what Yoon Sun Lee means when she describes Burke's tropes as having a 'deterritorializing effect': Burke's prose possesses an affective force that serve to 'open up passages and connections between positions that are, in theory, diametrically opposed'.[19] Whether analysed in terms of Burke's prophetic powers or in terms of the special power of his language, what interests me here is the declension of the difference between aesthetics and politics into a linked relationship between poetry and prose, with poetry taken to exemplify the special role of literary language.

Pascale Casanova's recent work contends that it is only with James Joyce that Irish writing attains what she calls 'autonomy' within 'Irish literary space'; out of the highly politicized context of the revival, argues

13 Quoted in Chandler, 'A Discipline in Shifting Perspective', 27.
14 F. P. Lock, 'Burke, Ireland and India: Reason, Rhetoric and Empire', in Seán Patrick Donlan, ed., *Edmund Burke's Irish Identities* (Dublin, 2007), 154–70 (155).
15 William Parnell, *Inquiry into the Causes of Popular Discontents in Ireland*, 2nd edn. (London and Dublin, 1805), 72.
16 Chandler, 'A Discipline in Shifting Perspective', 27.
17 See Tom Furniss, *Edmund Burke's Aesthetic Ideology: Language, Gender and Political Economy in Revolution* (Cambridge, 1993), 4; Seamus Deane, 'Phantasmal France, Unreal Ireland: Sobering Reflections', in *Strange Country: Modernity and Nationhood in Irish Writing since 1790* (Oxford, 1997), 1–48 (1–2).
18 See Matthew Arnold, 'The Function of Criticism at the Present Time', in *Lectures and Essays in Criticism*, vol. 3, *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor, 1962), 267.
19 Yoon Sun Lee, *Nationalism and Irony: Burke, Scott, Carlyle* (Oxford, 2004), 40. A contemporary caricature of Burke shows him using a box labelled 'Tropes' as his political armoury. See Anon., 'House-breaking, before Sun-Set', published 6 January 1789; Nicholas Robinson, *Edmund Burke: A Life in Caricature* (New Haven, 1996), 127.



William Dent, *Grand Irish Air Balloon*, 1784, etching on paper, 33.7 x 24.7 cm. Trustees of the British Museum.

Casanova, Joyce enacted a double rejection — he broke with both the language and literature of empire and with the aesthetic imperatives of cultural nationalism.[20] As Joe Cleary has shown, however, there remains a need to analyse this constitution of literary space in terms of the asymmetries instituted by the Union and perpetuated by the economic and political cleavages of the nineteenth century.[21] The emergence of

20 Pascale Casanova, *The World Republic of Letters*, trans. M. B. DeBevoise (Cambridge, Mass., 2004), 315.

21 See Joe Cleary on decolonization and its effect on the world literary system sketched by Casanova: 'The World Literary System: Atlas and Epitaph', *Field Day Review*, 2 (2006), 197–219.

22 Adam Potkay, *The Passion for Happiness* (Ithaca and London, 2000), 2–3.

23 Giles Deleuze, 'He Stuttered', *Essays Clinical and Critical*, trans. Daniel W. Smith and Michael A. Greco (London and New York, 1998), 112, quoted by Susan Manning, *Fragments of Union: Making Connections in Scottish and American Writing* (Basingstoke, 2002), 257. Manning (17) relates Deleuze's interest in the 'federative and paratactic' qualities of American writing to Scottish Enlightenment theories of fragmentation and union.

an idea of national literature as a category belongs centrally to these dynamics of union and division. Among other things, it involved a series of divisions inflicted upon 'the wholeness of the eighteenth-century world of letters' and a resulting reorientation of the relationship between aesthetics and politics.[22]

There are of course a great many writers who, for commercial and other reasons, split their output between, say, Irish, English and Indian novels and tales. The issue, though, may be more narrowly identified as one of style: 'the foreign language within language' in Gilles Deleuze's terms.[23] The divisions that structure our understanding of writers like Spenser and Swift often boil down to the difference between the *Faerie Queene* and *A View of the Present State of Ireland*, on the one hand, or *Gulliver's Travels* and *A Modest Proposal*, on the other. Seamus Deane's account of what is most 'interesting' in Burke and Swift — the relationship between politics and style in their writings — is richly suggestive in this respect.[24] Burke's *Enquiry* itself played an important part in the creation of a category of literature that is at once aesthetic (different from other kinds of writing) and political (different from the kind of imaginative writing that has emerged in other places).

'Viciousness in poetry': National Literature between Aesthetics and Politics

W. J. T. Mitchell's reading of the *Enquiry* situates Burke's treatment of the difference between image and word in the context of the *Enquiry*'s development of the ancillary differences between prose and poetry and the beautiful and the sublime.[25] Among the examples of his contention that 'WORDS may affect without raising IMAGES', Burke offers a self-reflective commentary on the process by which words acquire meaning. Discussing a blind professor of mathematics who could give 'excellent lectures upon light and colours', Burke argues that: 'it was as easy for him to reason upon the words as if he had been fully master of the ideas. Indeed it must be owned he could make no new discoveries by way of experiment.'[26] In attempting to capture the experience of the blind professor, Burke draws attention to his own language:

> He did nothing but what we do every day and in common discourse. When I wrote this last sentence, and used the words *every day* and *common discourse*, I had no images in my mind of any succession of time; nor of men in conference with each other; nor do I imagine the reader will have any such ideas on reading it.[27]

In showing how everyday words — which include words like 'every day' — operate independently of images raised in the mind, Burke aims for as cool as possible a criticism of figurative theories of language. In doing so, he 'wants to reassert the boundaries between texts and images' and 'to defy the prevailing Lockean notion of mental images/ideas as the referents of words'.[28] Burke inflects the post-Lockean distinction between words and images with the developing categories of the beautiful and the sublime: words as clear and modern aspire to the status of the beautiful, while images are primitive and obscure and potentially sublime. The force of Mitchell's argument, however, is to show us that Burke's anti-pictorialism results in a paradoxical state of 'sublime words and beautiful images'. Mitchell ingeniously argues that, by the end of the *Enquiry*, Burke will have reversed these values so that 'the tendency of language to arouse obscure, confused images, or no images at all, will begin to seem normative'.[29] Poetry is the ultimate expression of language free from the tyranny of images:

> Indeed so little does poetry depend for its effect on the power of raising sensible images, that I am convinced it would lose a very considerable part of its energy, if this were the necessary result of all description. Because that union of affecting words which is the most

24 What is extraordinary about Swift and Burke, according to Deane, is the rhetorical energy that is expended in the service of a dying cultural formation. The conservative politics that are officially endorsed by Swift and Burke have already passed out of time or can no longer achieve realization in the (for them, fallen) present. There is a nostalgia here that is historically inflected but politically aware. For Deane, this takes the shape of a temporal pressure that is brought to bear on language, finding expression in forms of brokenness and fragmentation but also post-modern stylistic devices such as self-referentiality. Seamus Deane, 'Phantasmal France, Unreal Ireland', 2–3. See also his account of Joyce's *Dubliners,* which argues that 'immense psychic as well as rhetorical energy has to be expended on the production of stasis'. 'Dead Ends: Joyce's Finest Moments', in Derek Attridge and Marjorie Howes, eds., *Semicolonial Joyce* (Cambridge, 2000), 21–36 (21).

25 W. J. T. Mitchell, *Iconology: Image, Text, Ideology* (Chicago and London, 1986), 121–29.

26 Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 154–55.

27 Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 154–55.

28 Mitchell, *Iconology*, 123.

29 Mitchell, *Iconology*, 1.

> powerful of all poetical instruments, would frequently lose its force along with its propriety and consistency, if the sensible images were always excited.[30]

The example given — the description of thunder forming in Vulcan's cavern in Virgil's *Aeneid* — involves the reader (once more) in 'affecting words' that tend toward violence and distress. Following through Burke's stress on the 'deep and lively impressions' of words, Mitchell thus captures an aspect of the *Enquiry* that tracks the threat to sympathy posed by the darkness and isolation of the sublime.

Gibbons, however, recuperates this same dynamic for a happier version of intersubjectivity. For him, the *Enquiry*'s anti-pictorialism is concerned to show how mimetic theories of language fall woefully short of comprehending 'the evocative capacity [of words] generated through social usage'. Rather than each word generating a related image or graphic representation, 'meanings are carried over from their original contexts through habit and custom, the usages which we share as members of an interpretive community'. The force of Gibbons's argument is to push forward this insight into an understanding of the power of words to generate imaginative sympathy. This bolsters his depiction of a Burke who believes in a 'flow of sympathy that emanates from the moral imagination'.[31] Gibbons embeds this discussion of the *Enquiry* within a broader understanding of Burke the theorist of community and proto-postcolonialist.

These tensions around language and community are condensed in one of the *Enquiry*'s memorable scenes of sympathy. The *Enquiry* is explicitly committed to a version of imaginative sympathy that leads towards the formation of community, as Gibbons argues. In this, Burke follows David Hume in depicting sympathy not so much as a series of acts of transfer from one individual to another, but rather as an outward radiation 'in concentric circles of diminishing intensity'.[32] Burke differs in his account of how such circles are configured, and in particular with regard to the limits he wishes to place on 'imitation'. The *Enquiry* installs a difference between imagined and real sympathy that depends on a distinction between fiction and reality:

> We delight in seeing things, which so far from doing, our heartiest wishes would be to see redressed. This noble capital, the pride of England and of Europe, I believe no man is so strangely wicked as to desire to see destroyed by a conflagration or an earthquake, though he should be removed himself to the greatest distance from the danger. But suppose such a fatal accident to have happened, what numbers from all parts would croud to behold the ruins, and amongst them many who would have been content never to have seen London in its glory?[33]

There is a problem, however, in the figuration of sympathetic absorption as a scene of pain and ruin. Moreover, this is a scene of specifically imperial ruin, with the decline of London here, as always in the eighteenth century, echoing the decline of Rome. Imagining subjective responses to the compelling spectacle of the ruined metropolis as part of a set of feelings that are only activated in the case of distress allows Burke to dismiss 'immunity' as an inadequate explanation of the attraction of such scenes. A negative sense of one's own safety from danger is not enough, in other words, to explain either the compelling aesthetic spectacle of ruin or the auratic deficit he associates with completion, order, prosperity and commerce — all those things conventionally associated with London in its glory. The concept of 'immunity' enters Burke's argument here as a way of underlining the fiction/reality distinction but also for its potential to return thought to the body, the site where 'affecting words' make their primary impression.

The compelling spectacle of London in ruins draws the spectator to the very

30 Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 155.
31 Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland*, 27.
32 Potkay, *The Passion for Happiness*, 109.
33 Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 44.

brink of destruction even as it generates the possibility of sympathetic identification: without this tension between the roles of spectator and fellow sufferer, the full force of what Gibbons characterizes as the *Enquiry*'s 'fraught engagement with the anxieties of empire' cannot be appreciated.[34] The section concludes: 'we can feel for others whilst we suffer ourselves; and often then most when we are softened by affliction; we see with pity even distresses which we would accept in the place of our own'.[35] Accepting the distresses of others as part of one's own experience produces a version of sympathy that moves the argument towards a necessary but essentially destructive engagement with the pain of others: something very like the notion of auto-immunity.

A reference to recent mobilizations of the concept of immunity in debates about community serves to remind us of what is at stake here. Burke produces immunity as a concept in order to indicate the inadequacy of his culture's idea of tragedy. No more than aesthetic distance provided by fiction, immunity does not account for what Burke characterizes as a delighted or eager flocking to the scene of pain or distress. In terms of current theory, much of it under the sway of Jacques Derrida's late writings on the topic, immunity helps us to theorize the relationship between self and community and particularly those parts of the self that can be held back from incorporation within wider communal or national structures.[36] In J. Hillis Miller's account of these debates, Derrida is nearly unique in opposing the idea 'that the individual is and should be his social placement, with no residue or leftover that is not determined by the surrounding culture'.[37] What space Burke's *Enquiry* does make for meanings generated outside 'social placement' is found in the discussion of language, which, as suggested above, powerfully imagines, if it does not endorse, an isolationist vision of communication as part of its anxiety over the limits of imitation in the fostering of sympathy.

Burke is often studied as one of a group of eighteenth-century theorists of language who sought to show how language is best analysed in terms of its aesthetic effects. A set of distinctions emerges in the eighteenth century between polite or 'beautiful' language, associated with proper and modest forms of communication, and impolite language, which is rude, aggressive and excessive. The supposedly central experience of polite language emerges as the object of philosophical concern, with impolite language allotted a residual or peripheral space. In depicting a version of polite language that had recourse to 'the authority of subjectively experienced aesthetic effects', Adam Smith's Glasgow University *Lectures on Rhetoric and Belles Lettres* (1748) set in motion a set of linguistic ambiguities that bear the markings of the thematics of union and division.[38] Janet Sorensen notes that the main advances in theory and practice of 'polite English' were authored by a group of what she calls 'non-English British nationals'. Scottish and Irish thinkers such as Thomas Sheridan, Hugh Blair, Adam Smith, Francis Hutcheson and Edmund Burke found in the 'amphibious discourse of aesthetics' an appealing admixture of private responses (located in the culturally particular world of the senses) and universal standards (represented in the abstractions of taste). As Sorensen puts it: 'Neither pure abstraction nor total embodiment, tasteful language appeals to subtle physical responses, forever universalizing while also relativizing them.'[39]

These linkages were underwritten, as Adam Potkay has shown, by a temporal schema, with impolite language — eloquence — consigned to the past.[40] There, however, it lays important claims to a sense of civic betterment and community. Eloquence and its political analogue, enthusiasm, thus trouble the formulation of theories of polite language. Even Hume admits to a bias in favour of enthusiasm, at least if the alternative is superstition, because the former historically has links to liberty and the dissenting tradition. In general though, Scottish culture can manage this problem

34 Gibbons, *Edmund Burke and Ireland*, 88.
35 Burke, *A Philosophical Enquiry*, 44.
36 *Philosophy in a Time of Terror: Dialogues with Jürgen Habermas and Jacques Derrida*, interviewed by Giovanna Borradori (Chicago, 2003).
37 J. Hillis Miller, 'Derrida Enisled', *Critical Inquiry*, 33, 2 (2007), 248–76.
38 Janet Sorensen, *The Grammar of Empire in Eighteenth-Century British Writing* (Cambridge, 2000), 141.
39 Sorensen, *The Grammar of Empire*, 148.
40 Adam Potkay, *The Fate of Eloquence in the Age of Hume* (Ithaca, 1994), ch. 1.



William Dent, *The Long-Winded Speech; or, the Oratorical Organ Harmonized with Sublime and Beautiful Inflation*, 1788, 14.8 x 10.0 cm. Trustees of the British Museum.

through the elaboration of cultural synthetic forms: most famously evidenced in James Macpherson's *Poems of Ossian* and Walter Scott's Waverley novels. As Potkay says of *Ossian*: 'Macpherson capitalized on this archaizing of eloquence by paradoxically

41 Potkay, *The Fate of Eloquence*, 8.

42 Katie Trumpener, *Bardic Nationalism: The Romantic Novel and the British Empire* (Princeton, 1997), 132.

modernizing the ancient clan: that is, the Ossianic forgeries *reconcile* the age's nostalgia for sublime eloquence and political community with its taste for subdued manners and private life.'[41] In eighteenth-century Wales, the notion of *hwyl* developed under the influence of Nonconformist religion: namely, an emotionally charged and enthusiastic form of speech that gained authority from its association with pulpit preaching but later became linked with more debased forms of oratory.

The transnational context enables a fuller appreciation of the treatment of language in Romantic Ireland, as part of what Katie Trumpener has characterized as the 'transperipheral Irish-Scottish public sphere'.[42] Burke's time at Trinity College Dublin would have exposed him to the classical model of eloquence, best known from the publications of his friend Thomas Leland, whose translation of Demosthenes appeared between 1754 and 1761 and whose *Dissertation on the Principles of Human Eloquence* was published in 1764.[43] There is a sense in which pursuing a political career in Britain created the conditions in which Burke's language came to be understood and analysed: had he remained within this Dublin context, what critics often describe as the excesses of his style might never have come to be diagnosed in these terms.[44] Such a counterfactual proposition denies, of course, the realities of British–Irish relations in the eighteenth century, but does serve to highlight how the importation of the Trinity College Dublin speaking model to the British parliament plays a part in the invention of an idea of Irish culture.

If, in Burke's *Enquiry*, there is always a sense that language will exceed its brief (Stephen Land refers to Burke's claims for 'a rhetorical surplus in language'[45]), then, in Irish literary production from the eighteenth century onwards, there is an ongoing set of worries over the issue of eloquence and its relationship to political enthusiasm.[46] Moore's biographies of both Sheridan and Lord Edward Fitzgerald continually try to divide eloquence from politicized enthusiasm. Irish Romantic drama, whether in plays by Alica LeFanu, Richard Lalor Sheil, Charles Robert Maturin or John Banim, treats the issue of eloquence at a kind of meta-level, aware of the drama's dependence on rhetorical skills yet making the power and limits of eloquence part of the thematics of the plays. Sheil believed Irish rhetorical skills were much hampered by the closure of the Trinity College Historical Society, which was suppressed by Lord Castlereagh as a consequence of the 1798 rebellion. And clear evidence of the backlash against Irish eloquence can be found in Mary Russell Mitford's description of Maturin's *Women; or, Pour et Contre* as 'a detestable book — a mere hotch potch of *Glenarvon* and *Corinne* mixed up with that indescribable nonsense which most Irishmen and Irishwomen call eloquence, and which is as like it as rouge is to the bloom of fifteen'.[47]

These linguistic tensions form the matrix from which first Romantic then modern definitions of literature itself emerge. The theories of linguistic difference elaborated by Scottish and Irish thinkers during the eighteenth century mesh with debates around taste to create a new and significant role for culture. Even opposed thinkers like Burke and Hume share a desire to widen the constituency of taste beyond the kind of élite group imagined by thinkers like Shaftesbury earlier in the century, and alike participate in the establishment of national boundaries on culture. In Irish Studies, we are familiar with a definition of Irish literature that traces its beginnings in the late eighteenth century and Maria Edgeworth's *Castle Rackrent*. But the Scottish perspective allows us to see that it is the idea of national literature itself that is being produced at this moment. Alongside *Castle Rackrent*, Edgeworth published (with her father) *An Essay on Irish Bulls*, a text that is extensively engaged with the cultural and political horizon of language in the context of the newly created United Kingdom.

The role of literature within the Union described thus far depends on debates

43 Katherine O'Donnell, 'Gaelic Poetry, Rhetoric, Rhetoricians and Burke's Philosophical Enquiry', paper presented at the Royal Irish Academy Conference, 'Edmund Burke and Irish Literary Criticism, 1757–2007', April 2007. See also Jean Dietz Moss, '"Discordant Consensus": Old and New Rhetoric at Trinity College, Dublin', *Rhetorica*, 14, 4 (1996), 383–441.

44 I am grateful to Terence Brown for discussion of this point.

45 Stephen K. Land, *From Signs to Propositions: The Concept of Form in Eighteenth-Century Semantic Theory* (London, 1974), 48.

46 Reading Burke shortly before Home Rule, Gladstone was told that 'your *perfervidum ingenium Scoti* does not need being touched with a live coal from that Irish altar'. Quoted by Conor Cruise O'Brien, 'Introduction to the Cresset Library Edition', *Irish Affairs: Edmund Burke*, ed. Matthew Arnold (London, 1988 [1881]), xi.

47 See Moore's *Sheridan*, vol. 2, ch. 11, for his discussion of the public speaking styles of Sheridan and Edmund Burke; M. W. Savage, ed., *Sketches, Legal and Political, by the Late Right Honourable Richard Lalor Sheil*, 2 vols. (London, 1855), vol. 1, 16; letter of Mary Russell Mitford to Mrs Hofland, 17 April 1819, in *Letters of Mary Russell Mitford. Second Series*, ed. Henry Chorley, 2 vols. (London, 1872), vol. 1, 59–60: cited in http://www.british-fiction.cf.ac.uk/anecdotal/wome18-41.html.

around the representational power of language itself, and in particular the relationship between word and image. The Scottish case is important for comparison because both the Union of 1707 and the difference embodied by the role of literature within that Union are more complete. Ireland has problem areas of incompletion, one of which is crucially the idea of eloquence and enthusiasm, often diagnosed as a kind of unregulated spill-over of affecting words. This is in contrast to Jon Mee's account of the ways in which British Romantic culture worked to differentiate forms of enthusiasm from the authentically 'literary', so that 'the idea of literariness itself' came to be defined in its difference from rancour in religion and politics.[48] Mee has revalued T. E. Hulme's sceptical definition of romanticism as 'spilt religion' to show the myriad ways in which political and religious enthusiasm were subsumed into the poetics of British romanticism.[49] A residual problem within the formulation of theories of polite language — eloquence/enthusiasm — thus becomes a kind of figure for both poetry and the difference of literature, even as it accumulates connections with the experience of foreign, 'Oriental' and peripheral places.

For the Irish and Scottish writers who advanced their theories of language in terms of subjectively experienced aesthetic affects, these connections with place were often secondary to an embodiment that could lay claim to a certain universality. Later accounts of this difference, however, came to be understood increasingly in terms of national character. When Matthew Arnold reworked Burke for the post-Famine decades, he 'went further than Burke would ever have dared' in 'introducing the "Celtic" idea as a differentiating fact between Ireland and England'.[50] Arnold positions 'Celtic literature' on the cusp of definitions drawn from both linguistics and the discourse of national character. His notorious attribution of sentimentalism to the Celt — 'Sentimental, *always ready to revolt against the despotism of fact*' — is another way of absorbing all those qualities that troubled the formulation of polite language in the eighteenth century.[51]

'venomous spit / From the throat of a luminous nightflower': Theory and Tradition

Writing about Burke in the Preface to his 1881 edition of Burke's *Letters, Speeches and Tracts on Irish Affairs,* Arnold deploys the figures of difference that I have been tracing so far — Britain/Ireland, aesthetics/politics, poetry/prose — to invoke the need for a more complete English culture. In Arnold's efforts to remind his audience of the importance of Burke as the great master of English prose, the Britain/Ireland difference becomes at least partly submerged, only to resurface as irony: among the many paradoxes attendant upon the celebration of Burke the English prose stylist is its reliance upon a construction of Burke the commentator on Irish affairs. Arnold introduces Burke's political speeches to an audience that he characterizes as forgetful of his greatness. Arnold characterizes the dangers attendant upon forgetting Burke (and with him, Swift) in terms of loss and division. To lose Swift and Burke 'from our mind's circle of acquaintance' is to ignore prose at the expense of poetry (no one now forgets to read Shakespeare and Milton, Arnold argues) and to inflict a harmful division upon the national body: 'the unacquaintance shuts us out from great sources of English life, thought and language, and leaves us in consequence very imperfect and fragmentary Englishmen'.[52]

In Arnold's view, Burke's prose assumes a position within the tradition of English letters that is not unlike the role Arnold accords to Celtic literature within his broader scheme of cultural union. Arnold's famous essay 'On the Study of Celtic Literature' contends that a blending of racial types (Celtic and Saxon) within the United Kingdom is necessary for cultural

48 Jon Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm and Regulation: Poetics and the Policing of Culture in the Romantic Period* (Oxford, 2003), 24–25.

49 Mee, *Romanticism, Enthusiasm and Regulation*, 4–5.

50 Seamus Deane, 'Arnold, Burke and the Celts', in *Celtic Revivals: Essays in Modern Irish Literature, 1880–1980* (London, 1985), 22.

51 Matthew Arnold, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', *Lectures and Essays in Criticism*, vol. 3, *The Complete Prose Works of Matthew Arnold*, ed. R. H. Super (Ann Arbor, 1962), 344. Original emphasis.

52 Arnold, Preface, *Irish Affairs Edmund Burke*, xxxvii–xxxviii.

and political wholeness. The essay opens with its author in Wales, holidaying in Llandudno while he watches preparations for an *Eisteddfod*, a form of Druidic revival conceived during the late eighteenth century as part of an effort to revivify bardic language and culture. Arnold muses on the predicament of Welsh, focalized through the imagined perspective of a 'French nursery maid', and seen here as emblematic of the fate of Celtic languages within the Empire:

> As I walked up and down, … looking at the waves as they washed this Sigeian land which has never had its Homer, and listening with curiosity to the strange, unfamiliar speech of its old possessors' obscure descendants, — bathing people, vegetable sellers, and donkey-boys, — who were all about me, suddenly I heard, through the stream of unknown Welsh, words, not English, indeed, but still familiar. They came from a French nursery maid, with some children. Profoundly ignorant of her relationship, this Gaulish Celt moved among her British cousins, speaking her polite neo-Latin tongue, and full of compassionate contempt probably, for the Welsh barbarians and their jargon. What a revolution was here! How had the star of this daughter of Gomer waxed, while the star of these Cymry, his sons, had waned![53]

In *Haunted English*, Laura O'Connor expresses her outrage at Arnold's silencing of the Welsh language in this passage.[54] However, Arnold's treatment of Welsh depends on his ability to imagine the affective response of the nursery maid, whose Frenchness alone is perhaps enough to turn Arnold's mind to Burke: 'What a revolution was here!' It is not only the Burke of the *Reflections*[55] who is present here, but also the Burke of the *Enquiry*. Arnold refreshes Burke's distinction between words and images for a community that has experienced a tragic loss of the link between proud place name and debased national status:

> ... the poor Welshman still says, in the genuine tongue of his ancestors, *gwyn, goch, craig, maes, llan, arglwydd*; but his land is a province, and his history petty, and his Saxon subduers scout his speech as an obstacle to civilisation; and the echo of all its kindred in other lands is growing every day fainter and more feeble; gone in Cornwall, going in Brittany and the Scotch Highlands, going, too, in Ireland; — and there, above all, the badge of the beaten race, the property of the vanquished. [56]

Here, Arnold imagines the feelings of a 'poor Welshman' whose rich topological language (*white*, *red*, *rock*, *field*, *chapel*, *lordship*) raises images that exceed the political status of his country as 'a province' whose history has been rendered 'petty' by incorporation within the Empire. And yet something does happen in this mismatch between word and image: a space opens in which the 'genuine' 'faint' and 'feeble' sounds of the Welsh language can be heard.

The nature of this space is determined by a sentimental relationship between past and present. Sentiment is undoubtedly the dominant note sounded in Arnold's characterizations of Celtic literature, something for which the essay has been severely censured. Shaun Richards specifically locates the emergence of theoretical approaches to Irish literature in a rejection of Arnoldian sentimentalism allied with the emergence of a politicized strain of criticism. Recalling splits that took shape at the International Association for the Study of Anglo-Irish Literature conference of 1984, held in the University of Graz, Richards remembers the 'mystical-magical' version of Irish literature put forward in the contribution of the late Professor Robert O'Driscoll: a paper entitled 'The Irish Literary Renaissance in the Context of a Celtic Continuum' (published in the conference proceedings as 'A Greater Renaissance: The Revolt of

53 Arnold, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', 292.
54 Laura O'Connor, *Haunted English: the Celtic Fringe, the British Empire and De-Anglicization* (Baltimore, 2006), 26–27.
55 Edmund Burke, *Reflections on the Revolution in France* (Harmondsworth, 1969).
56 Arnold, 'On the Study of Celtic Literature', 293.

the Soul Against the Intellect)'. Richards's recollections can barely contain the felt impatience at Driscoll's dated Arnoldian position: 'O'Driscoll glossed his position in the question period: "The Celts could not have invented the refrigerator", and for that we were to be grateful, irrespective of the curdled consequences.'[57]

Most recently, O'Connor insists that Arnold's admiration for the richness of the Welsh language is only the second part of a 'double move of screening out Celtic languages and apotheosizing Celtic culture onto a pedestal'. The Welsh language acquires an affective dimension in Arnold's account that positions it within the realm of the beautiful rather than the sublime. Together, the deafness to the language and its exoticization in elegy serve to 'tune out the thick texture ... of Welsh culture and sublimate it into something else, an abstract notion of the Celt, which transforms ... Wales into a spectacle of ruin'.[58] The network of Burkean meanings is suggestive. Arnold here partakes of the eighteenth-century and Romantic convention of the flight of philosophical speculation brought on by the experience of revolutionary change. What comes into view in the moment of revolutionary or colonial destruction is the previously vague — because lived as everyday and filling out our vision without need of framing — field of traditional culture.

There have been a number of scholarly efforts to rescue Arnold as an early, if flawed, theorist of multiculturalism. Robert Young, for instance, opposes what he calls 'Arnold-bashing' with the suggestion that his ethnographic politics foregrounded the role of race in the formulation of ideas of culture.[59] Comparing English, Irish, Welsh-American and African-American theorists of culture, Daniel Williams has also been concerned to show how ethnicity is integral to the late nineteenth-century construction of cultural authority, rather than something that assails culture from the outside.[60] And in an Irish context, Mary Jean Corbett



William Dent, *French Flight; or, the Grand Monarque and the Rights of Kings Supported in a Sublime and Beautiful Manner*, 1791, etching on paper, 39 × 11.4 cm. Trustees of the British Museum.

proposes that 'Arnold's willingness to imagine that Union could no longer be conceived as a matter of Ireland becoming more like England, but must instead proceed on principles that would newly articulate the meanings and uses of cultural difference,

57 Shaun Richards, 'Our Revels Now are Ended': Irish Studies in Britain — Origins and Aftermath', in Liam Harte and Yvonne Whelan, eds., *Ireland beyond Boundaries: Mapping Irish Studies in the Twenty-First Century* (London, 2007), 48–57 (50). See also his 'Irish Studies and the Adequacy of Theory: The Case of Brian Friel', *Yearbook of English Studies*, 35, 1 (2005), 264–78.

58 O'Connor, *Haunted English*, 28.

59 Robert J. C. Young, *Colonial Desire: Hybridity in Theory, Race and Culture* (London and New York, 1995), 87–88.

60 Daniel Williams, *Ethnicity and Cultural Authority* (Edinburgh, 2007).

also constitutes a powerful critique of Englishness'.[61] Perhaps this proto-Irish Studies aspect to Arnold is what the Fenian John O'Leary registered when he listed Arnold's essay among his 'best hundred Irish books' in 1886, noting that 'he is always more or less suggestive and mostly very sympathetic, even if, occasionally ... a little patronizing'.[62] D. P. Moran's comments on Arnold in his *Philosophy of Irish Ireland* are also suggestive. Moran condemns 'On the Study of Celtic Literature' as dangerous but at the same time registers its critical pliability when he bemoans how it takes the place of an indigenous Irish (specifically Irish-language) conceptualization of our traditions:

> We were all on the lookout for somebody to think for us, for we had given up that habit with our language. Matthew Arnold happily came along just in the nick of time, and in a much-quoted essay suggested, among other things, that one of the characteristics of Celtic poetry was 'natural magic' ... We seized on the phrase like hawks ... Then yet another Irish make-believe was born, and it was christened 'The Celtic Note', Mr. W. B. Yeats standing sponsor for it.[63]

What interests Moran about Arnold is his having established a principle of difference that, because muddled and mystical, created the conditions in which much sharper and more hard-edged forms of cultural and social inquiry could take shape.

For Arnold as for Burke, the taken-for-granted aspects of culture — the things that fill out the edges of vision and might be thought of as sublime — come into perspective as part of a widespread framing of national traditions, itself part of the longer history of European romanticism. In linguistic terms, words obscure, but that obscurity is in the process of acquiring a value that is bound up with ideas of affect. Tradition thus goes from a state of sublimity to one that is associated above all with beauty: the soothing effects of custom, ritual and repetition. Seamus Deane, drawing on Burke, describes the ensuing cultural politics in the following terms:

> Tradition ... refers to ... modes of feeling that are the more precious for being out-of-time and therefore enduring, rather than in time and therefore merely fashionable or transient. Above all, such feelings, while they would seem at times to run merely from the moist to the lachrymose, were most traditional when they included within them a sense of the tragic dimension of human experience.[64]

The invocation of the 'merely' here and the discomfort with the 'moist' and the 'lachrymose' suggests that only feelings that incline towards tragedy carry complex meanings and values. Yet there is a case to be made for analysing these 'modes of feeling' in all their soggy variety. As Raymond Williams suggests, sentiment may be less a matter of 'historical error' and more one of 'historical perspective'.[65]

Deane's critical writing draws from Burke a deep and almost painful awareness of the antinomies of tradition and modernity and a conceptualization of their interrelation in the present moment (however that present is conceived). Deane's Burke spoke first to the Ireland of the 1980s and helped him to indict the paltry promises of pluralism and its shallow relationship to the history of our divided island. As Joe Cleary puts it: 'on these conundrums of Ireland and the modern, [Deane] has demonstrated, an entire national literature has battened, revisiting the vicissitudes of that problematic monotonously, occasionally with extraordinary brilliance'.[66] At the same time, though, there is a tendency to dismiss sentiment as the opposite of analysis, rather than forming a part of the condition under investigation. To put it in its most basic form, these conundrums of Ireland and the modern have an affective dimension. We might also notice here how embodied

61 Mary Jean Corbett, *Allegories of Union in Irish and English Writing, 1790–1870: Politics, History, and the Family from Edgeworth to Arnold* (Cambridge, 2000), 159.

62 Quoted in Margaret Kelleher, 'Prose Writing and Drama in English, 1830–1900: From Catholic Emancipation to the Fall of Parnell', in Kelleher and O'Leary, eds., *Cambridge History of Irish Literature*, vol. 1, 449–99 (477).

63 D. P. Moran, *The Philosophy of Irish Ireland* (Dublin, 1905), 104.

64 Seamus Deane, 'Factions and Fictions', in *Foreign Affections: Essays on Edmund Burke* (Cork, 2005), 6.

65 Raymond Williams, *The Country and the City* (New York, 1973), 10.

66 Joe Cleary, 'Irish Modernity', in Joe Cleary and Claire Connolly, eds., *Cambridge Companion to Modern Irish Culture* (Cambridge, 2004), 1–24 (18).

emotions constitute a realm of experience, which, in the period after the *Enquiry* was published, came to be increasingly associated with women and — via a shared discourse of ornamentalism, weakness and dependence — with oppressed national cultures. This shared conjunction is almost certainly why Ireland saw the development of the genre of the national tale, with its marshalling of affective responses, in the hands of women writers and in the shadow of the Act of Union.

For Wales to be both the territory of abstraction and of ruin brings it close to the France of the *Reflections*, devastated by the abstraction wrought by both revolutionary and colonial systems and yet, out of the devastation, producing both new and newly systematized concepts. Wales then, or the Celtic countries, can be seen via this Burkean prism as, to borrow Deane's description of France, 'the territory of theory'.[67] It may seem strange to think of the Celtic world as the site of abstraction rather than rich particularity, but Burke's role in Romantic-era culture allows us to reconcile these contradictory possibilities. Most obviously, Burke was a powerful spokesperson for the case against abstract theory made in the name of cultural particularism. As Mike Goode has recently argued, however, the turn away from abstraction (associated above all with *Reflections on the Revolution in France*) suffered a loss of cultural authority during the Peninsular and Napoleonic wars. Goode highlights accounts of Burke's defence of French culture that sought to weaken its cultural authority by underlining its gendered, national and confessional dimensions.[68] Because the rejection of theory in *Reflections* operated in what came to be a negatively characterized sentimental and chivalric mode (witness the many contemporary caricatures of its author as a sad and hopeless knight-priest figure), Romantic-era cultural politics sought a space for a less sentimental version of 'forward-looking knowledge' — a more 'manly' history.[69] The scientific models of history developed in the early years of the new century (especially by Walter Scott) can be seen to work to exorcise a residue of sentiment that is for Goode condensed in the figure of Burke. Central to this process was a reorientation of the relationship between forms of philosophical knowledge and the national past that would allow the former to negotiate the latter without becoming subsumed by its demands: the feminized figure of the antiquary came to serve as a model for the dangers inherent in the process.

Theory, then, is neither simply the possession of centre or periphery but rather a tool to be deployed in a reclamation of the resources of national culture. From the Romantic period, this exorcism of sentiment has been coded as a necessary remasculinization of culture. In terms of the longer history of Irish literature, the problem may be identified as one of the subjective effects produced by language and the question of how to handle them in a literary tradition accustomed to tracking political rather than aesthetic issues. In manoeuvring between the related figures of difference traced throughout this essay, there is a danger that Irishness continues to be located on the side of politics, with aesthetics found elsewhere.

'Gerrymander it': Past Feeling

Burke's *Enquiry* concerns itself with the excess of affect over representation in ways that helpfully focus our attention on the role of the aesthetic in Irish literary and cultural criticism. 'Affects', according to Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, 'are no longer feelings or affections; they go beyond the strength of those that undergo them.'[70] Their speculations on art as '*a bloc of sensations*' are part of a wider reconsideration of affect within literary and philosophical thought. A major aim of the argument presented here is to open up Irish literary criticism to the resources of the new scholarship on affect. Sianne Ngai's 2005 book, *Ugly Feelings,* situates her work among that of a growing

67 Deane, 'Phantasmal France, Unreal Ireland', 7.
68 Mike Goode, 'Dryasdust Antiquarianism and Soppy Masculinity: The Waverley Novels and the Gender of History', *Representations*, 82 (2003), 52–86 (61).
69 Goode, 'Dryasdust Antiquarianism and Soppy Masculinity', 61–62.
70 Gilles Deleuze and Félix Guattari, *What is Philosophy*?, trans. by Graham Burchell and Hugh Tomlinson (London and New York, 1994), 164.

body of critics who believe that 'emotion may be recuperated for critical praxis'. Crucially, this is a critical praxis devoted to 'the effort of thinking the aesthetic and the political together'.[71] That sentimental discourse is above all defined by having formal properties is important here — it consists of a set of literary conventions which, if they are to be recognized, will be as 'a formal aspect of a text rather than an ideological position'.[72] Ngai's book is concerned to locate and analyse not so much a collection of affective responses as a series of what she calls 'representational predicaments' that revolve around 'the exact role and status of emotion in the aesthetic encounter'.[73] In terms of the figures of difference worked through in the course of this argument, to end on sentiment is to end on the related issues of aesthetics/politics and Britain/Ireland — and to suggest a way of thinking about these topics in terms of their interrelatedness.

Contemporary post-colonialism provides compelling accounts of the linkages between emotion, aesthetics and politics. In historical terms, Lynn Festa has helped us to think about how the turning inward of sentimental discourse is inextricably linked to the turning outward of expansionist empires (France and England).[74] Sentiment is not so much cover for empire as a 'structure of feeling' that allows for 'repetition without absorption'.[75] Sentiment is thus theatrical — which in Burkean terms means it offers both a perspective on and a necessary distance from power. In more contemporary terms, appeals to aesthetics afford a degree of immunity that can function as a kind of defence against the imperatives of community. Siobhán Kilfeather has located in Alice Maher's art a powerful example of such an appeal: 'Maher's ability to reinvigorate a sense of wonder around certain objects is a historicist act. It is harder to explain why her own art goes so far beyond simply suggesting what is already known about women, history and tradition.'[76]

The imperatives of history and tradition as the 'already known' are undoubtedly pressing. They are — as Burke knew — at once embodied and external: as such they possess the power to overwhelm individual understanding. To grasp this process, we need to realize a fuller sense — or perhaps sensation — of the power of history and tradition to inflict 'affective discomfort'.[77] Dipesh Chakrabarty, in *Habitations of Modernity*, writes of historiographical attempts to engage with — to reach out and touch — the threatened territory of tradition in terms that might have come straight from Burke's *Enquiry*. His prose carries Burke's sense of the attraction and dangers of community, enlivened with fresh anxieties about the limitations of such supposedly assured theoretical approaches as 'critical traditionalism'. The past, writes Chakrabarty, 'comes to me as taste, as embodied memory, as cultural training of the senses, as reflexes, often as things that I do not even know that I carry. It has the capacity, in other words, to take me by surprise and to overwhelm and shock me.' He goes on:

> That is why, it seems to me, that, in addition to the feeling of respect for traditions, fear and anxiety would have to be the other affects with which the modern intellectual — modernity here implying a capacity to create the future as an object of deliberate action — relates to the past.[78]

Creating the future of Irish literature in relation to its past demands reading practices alert to the full affective range embodied in texts that continue to cross borders shaped by uneven distributions of power.

71 Sianne Ngai, *Ugly Feelings* (Cambridge, Mass., 2005), 8, 3.
72 Lynn Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire in Eighteenth-Century Britain and France* (Baltimore, 2006), 15.
73 Ngai, *Ugly Feelings*, 22–23.
74 Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire*, 2.
75 Festa, *Sentimental Figures of Empire*, 54–55.
76 Siobhán Kilfeather, 'Alice Maher's Materials', *Field Day Review*, 2 (2006), 3–17 (17).
77 For this formulation, see Kevis Goodman, *Georgic Modernity and British Romanticism: Poetry and the Mediation of History* (Cambridge, 2006), 10. Goodman locates her work as part of 'a revised historicist method that reserves a place at the table for sensation and affect'.
78 Dipesh Chakrabarty, 'Modernity and the Past: A Critical Tribute to Ashis Nandy', *Habitations of Modernity: Essays in the Wake of Subaltern Studies* (Chicago, 2002), 38–47 (46).