

The Anglo-Irish writer, Emily Lawless (1845 - 1913), has not, in the period following her death, been a very well-known, or widely appreciated, author. At the end of the 19th century though, she was popular with the English reading public, mainly because of her two contemporary Irish peasant novels, *Hurrish: A Study* and *Grania: The Story of an Island*, in which she managed to awaken English society to the plight of the impoverished Irish peasant.

As Emily Lawless has not been widely studied nor written about only until recently, my access to resources, both primary and secondary, is very much limited. For this reason, I was able to acquire only one of the novels (*Hurrish*) as a printed publication, while the other novel *Grania* was available to me only in an electronic version. While William Linn's dissertation "The Life and Works of the Hon. Emily Lawless, First Novelist of the Irish Literary Revival" has been a valuable source of all the details of Lawless's biography and writings in general, the critical articles have been only a few. These include the 1980s first critical "appreciations" after years of neglect, by Elizabeth Grubgeld and Betty Webb Brewer, and more recent essays of James Cahalan, Jacqueline Belanger and Heidi Hansson. This thesis will attempt to introduce the writer in terms of life experience, family origin and an overview of other writings, and also to put her into context of the political and cultural events and developments of her times. Further, it will analyse the two peasant novels in terms of Emily Lawless's appurtenance to the Protestant Ascendancy and with respect to the aesthetic theories of the Celtic race advanced by Ernest Renan and Matthew Arnold, and to examine Lawless's role in the heterogeneous context of awakening nationalism, aiming at a definition of the true Irishness for a future independent national state.