



Political geographies, ‘unfaithful’ translations and anticolonialism: Ireland in Élisée Reclus's geography and biography



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ABSTRACT

This paper addresses the role of Ireland and Irish republicanism in the geography, biography and political thinking of the French anarchist geographer Élisée Reclus (1830–1905). This paper sheds new light on the construction of a scientific and political discourse, one which was radically opposed to external and internal colonialisms in the Age of Empire, analysing primary sources such as Reclus' texts and correspondence, along with his transnational networks. It draws on present-day debates on 'geography and anarchism', postcolonial Ireland and international circulation and localisation of knowledge. Finally, it is a contribution to evaluating the importance of the 'British Isles' as a place for production and reception of the geographical and political works by both Reclus and the other anarchist geographer Pëtr Kropotkin (1842–1921), scholars and militants who lived there in different periods of their respective careers.

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Introduction

This paper addresses the role of Ireland in Élisée Reclus' geography, biography and political thinking (1830–1905). Born in South-Western France and exiled for most of his adult life, Reclus is considered of the 'fathers' of modern geography and one of the founders of the anarchist movement, whose first formal organisation, the *Fédération jurassienne* (1871–1880) was established in Switzerland during the years Reclus spent there with other members of the network of anarchist geographers such as Pyotr Kropotkin (1842–1921) (Ferretti, 2014a,b; Pelletier, 2013).

The little-studied encounter between Reclus and the Celtic island, where the anarchist geographer spent one year in his youth and where he decided to write his first geographical work, has a twofold importance: firstly, in Ireland there occurred an important step in Reclus' training and social consciousness through his direct observation of the damages of the 1845–1852 Great Famine, recently mapped by studies in historical geography (Crowley, Smyth and Murphy, 2012). Secondly, Ireland was one of the first cases to which Reclus and other anarchists applied their anti-colonial views in the Age of the Empire. Reclus, Kropotkin and the anarchist geographers contributed to the transnational

diffusion of a mentality favourable to the cause of national liberation in European and extra-European countries, including Ireland, and their networks had direct relations with Socialist and Republican components of the Irish national movement. It is worth noting that, before the 1871 Paris Commune, many of the founders of the anarchist movement declared themselves as 'Republicans' and that their ideas remained close to the republican tradition which was characterised by the idea of 'freedom as non-domination' (Pettit, 1997). During the 'long nineteenth century', European republicanism was generally a left/wing and sometimes a very radical political movement, in contrast to present-day perceptions of Republicans as Right Wing in countries like France and the United States. Scholars of Irish Republicanism like Niall Whelehan have highlighted the proximity between early anarchists and Irish militants, providing also international comparative cases of collaboration between anarchists and republicans, for instance in Italy. In the 1870s, rural regions of Southern Italy were chosen as the place for insurrectional attempts by both groups, who were striving for social justice and against the 'internal colonialism' of the Savoy Monarchy (Whelehan, 2012, p. 64). The concept of 'internal colonialism', elaborated by Antonio Gramsci, was then extended by Michael Hechter to British colonialism in the 'Celtic Fringe' including Ireland (Hechter, 1978).

This paper is based on comparative textual analysis of primary sources, especially the chapters Reclus focused on Ireland in his

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main works *La Terre* (1867–68), *Nouvelle Géographie universelle* (1876–1894) and *L'Homme et la Terre* (1905–1908), which I compare with the English translations produced at that time, often noticeably modified in comparison to the French original, and the (published and unpublished) correspondence of Reclus and his collaborators. I especially address materials from the Jean Grave collection at the *Institut Français d'Histoire Sociale* in Paris and in the RGS-IBG historical archive in London, in order to analyse the social and militant contexts of the original texts, i.e. the publishing and political networks of early anarchist geographers. In addition to these historical sources, I draw on the international literature on geography and anarchism (Springer, 2012; Springer, Ince, Pickerill, Brown, & Barker, 2012; White, 2009; Souza, 2014) equally addressing the genealogies and 'roots' of anarchist geographies (Ferretti, 2014a; Pelletier, 2013; Springer, 2016). My aim is also to contribute to the interdisciplinary literature on transnational anarchism (Bantman, 2013; Di Paola, 2013; Turcato, 2007), and on anticolonial and postcolonial anarchism in the Age of Empire (Anderson, 2007; Hirsch and Van der Walt, 2010). The above-mentioned authors argue that anarchism was the first great transnational political movement in and of itself, considering the mobility and cosmopolitanism of its militants for reasons of political persecution, economic emigration and international propaganda. This also contributed, as they demonstrated, to establishing an early anticolonialist line of reasoning through direct contact between anarchist militants of European origin and the protagonists of national liberation struggles and indigenous movements outside Europe. The main contribution this paper can provide to this body of literature is to show the anticolonial concerns of early anarchist geographers, which have generally been neglected until a few years ago, and to address for the first time their engagement in issues of internal colonialism in Western Europe.

An important historical and theoretical framework for my paper is furnished by the literature on postcolonial Ireland and internal colonialism (Carroll & King, 2003; Nally, 2011; Whelan & Pollak, 2007), and on the historical and critical geographies of colonial and subaltern Ireland (Kearns, 2013; 2014; Morrissey, 2003; 2004), a field of research which has been recently stimulated by the commemorations underway in Ireland for the successive centenaries of episodes linked to national liberation such as the 1916 Easter Rising and the establishment of the Free State in 1922. In his seminal work *Human Encumbrances*, David Nally has highlighted the colonial nature of the Irish Great Famine, and the fact that readings on its alleged ineluctability were already challenged by a number of contemporaries: 'The tendency to attribute social failings to "natural" environmental causes or to judge famines as "the fiat of the Almighty" ... was both undermined and satirised by a number of Victorians' (Nally, 2011, p. xii). Below, I show how Reclus and early anarchists contributed to these debates.

From the standpoint of literature, I draw on the theoretical frame of the transformation of knowledge by its localizations and circulations through different places (Livingstone, 2003). According to David Livingstone and Charles Withers, 'as there is a rich history of science, so there is a rich geography of science ... Coming to terms with science's somewhere is as vital as surveying and explaining its sometime and its somebodies' (Livingstone & Withers, 2011, p. 3). As this body of work considers not only locations, but also movements of knowledge between places, I address

here the case of the complex transfer of Reclus' works in the British Isles,¹ and relate it to the international networks that he constituted with the aforementioned Kropotkin, based in London for a large part of his life (Avakumovic & Woodcock, 1950; Ferretti, 2011a, 2017a; Kearns, 2004, 2009). In this sense, it is worth noting the importance of biographies for understanding geographers' works (Withers, 2007), as well as the effectiveness of publishing cultures and the circulation of texts in the study of geography's political and imperial issues (Driver, 2001; Heffernan, 2009; Keighren, 2010).

In the first part of this paper, I analyse Reclus' biographical experience in Ireland (1852), in the wider context of his stays in the British Isles. In the second part, I address Reclus' social and political geography of Ireland as expressed in *Nouvelle Géographie universelle* (1876–1894) through a cross-referenced reading of the 1879 French original text and its (ideologically oriented) English 1882 translation *Earth and its Inhabitants*, which allows me to stress the political and social points that could have been considered rather thorny for Reclus' English publishers at that time. In the third part, I place Reclus' writings in the context of international anarchists and anticolonialist networks, which also explains the political radicalisation of the last of Reclus' works, *L'Homme et la Terre* (1905–1908), and the militant reception of his scientific discourse.

Ireland in Reclus' biography and training

In the three-page preface to *La Terre* [The Earth] dated 1 November 1867, and later withdrawn from the English edition published in 1871 by Henry Woodward (see below), Élisée Reclus stated that it was during his sojourn in Ireland that he decided to write this book (the first important work of his career), in order to 'narrate the earth's phenomena'.

The book which I publish today began not in the silence of my office, but in open nature. It was in Ireland, on the top of a butte which dominates the Shannon rapids ... Lying on the grass, close to a ruined wall which was once a castle and which the humble plants had demolished stone by stone, I was languidly enjoying this immense life of things ... It was there, in such a wonderful place, that I had the idea to narrate the earth's phenomena and that I immediately sketched the draft of my work ... To know the earth, I studied not only books, but the Earth itself. After long research in the libraries' dust, I always came back to the great source and revived my spirits through the direct study of natural phenomena ... I have gone about the world a free man; I have contemplated nature with a gaze simultaneously innocent and proud, remembering that ancient Freya was the goddess of both earth and freedom (Reclus, 1867:I-III).²

Biographical sources on Reclus date this stay to the summer of 1852, the year that saw Reclus in Ireland from April to December (Brun, 2015, p. 21).

On 1 January 1852, Élisée and his elder brother Élie Reclus (1827–1904) made their way to London to escape persecution by the French partisans of Napoleon III, who on 2 December of the preceding year had carried out a coup d'état against which the Recluses had unsuccessfully tried to spark a revolt among their fellow citizens. The life of the exile in the British capital was difficult

¹ Aware of the linguistic disputes on this definition and of the possible alternatives (like 'Anglo-Celtic Isles', etc.), I prefer using here, for simplicity, the terminology employed in Reclus' days, the one which he also used in French (*Illes britanniques*).

² All the quotations from French sources have been translated by the author. For quotes from the 1879 original edition of the *Nouvelle Géographie universelle*, the French original is given between brackets to help the comparison with the 1882 English corresponding version. Quotes from this 1882 edition are given in the original English, and when they are not accompanied by a comparison with the corresponding French, this means that I do not see specific political issues in their translation.

for these two young socialists and scientists, who experienced a number of months of unemployment and poverty (Reclus, 1911, pp. 50–57). Nevertheless, London was a very important place for their scientific training because there they started to integrate their initial literary and theological education with the study of British natural sciences, sometime before the Darwinian revolution, as they stated a number of years later in a letter to Auguste Nefftzer: 'With our theological studies over, we devoted ourselves to the natural sciences in England'.³

In April 1852, through the Irish connections of his brother who served as a teacher to the children of the Fairfield family (Dunbar, 1996), Élisée obtained a post as an administrator in Kippure Park. Situated in the county of Wicklow, fifty kilometres south of Dublin, this estate comprised 82 hectares of bogland and was owned by an absent landlord called Webster, based in London. According to the editor of Reclus' published correspondence, his sister Louise Dumesnil-Reclus, he accepted this appointment for urgent economic needs and because 'he felt interested in agriculture' (Reclus, 1911, p. 58). Reclus' correspondences available for this period show that his Irish experience was a very formative one not only for the future geographer, but also for the future anarchist. At the time, Ireland was suffering the direct consequences of the Great Famine, which Reclus addressed in his *New Universal Geography*, having been quite affected by the misery and depopulation of the Irish countryside. In 1852, Reclus had plans to make the land produce more by technical advances and draining bogland, and asked Webster to invest the necessary capital, because in his mind 'agriculture here has remained in the state it was in perhaps in the days of the ancient Celts' (Reclus, 1911, p. 60). Some disagreements with Webster over these modernising proposals led to Reclus' departure and bitter deception. The geographer wrote then to his brother that: 'The property is in disarray, and the dissatisfaction has reached dreadful proportions' (Reclus, 1911, p. 66). During a trip to western Ireland, which provided the occasion to see the Shannon rapids, Reclus visited another of Webster's employees, Pennefeather, an Irishman whom the French exile mocked for his silly and unconditional submission to all authorities (or 'voluntary servitude' in Etienne de la Boétie's definition), relating the gesture with which Pennefeather accompanied the phrase (quoted in the original), 'I delight in mi queen, in mi nobleman, in mi gentlemen' (Reclus, 1911, p. 6).

Nevertheless, Reclus was fascinated by the beauty of the landscape. 'The country is wild and picturesque; from my window, I can see the big mountain of the place, the Mullaghcleevaun, which I want to scale one of these days, and I hear the sound of the Liffey cascades; the waters of this river are black like ink and crash against the rocks producing a reddish foam; last Sunday, I followed its course back to the point where it disappears under the snow' (Reclus, 1911, p. 60). It was accordingly in Wicklow that Reclus developed the idea of settling in an isolated place to cultivate land with other French exiles, a proposal which he tried then to put into practice some years later in Colombia (Mächler Tobar, 2014). Celtic traditions also exercised a fascination in his own geographical imagination. In *L'Homme et la Terre*, Reclus described Ireland as one of the most civilised countries in Europe in the early Middle Ages, because 'Ireland had escaped Roman conquest: the peoples of Erin had never been broken and degraded by servitude like the Gauls and Bretons, so they have maintained more initiative and strength, as well as a greater freedom than other Christians in their way of believing' (Reclus, 1905a, p. 386). Consistent with his anticlericalism, Reclus goes on to note the responsibility of Pope Adrian IV in

the English invasion of Ireland in the 12th century, ironically stressing the contradiction between the affection of many Irish for the Roman Church and the historical faults of the latter, which was tangled up with the start of the island's colonial condition: 'Henry II built his palace in the city of Dublin to establish forever his power, so the Irish were deprived of their independence and of their own civilisation; thrown into poverty and barbarity, they started the painful phase of their history that is characterised by servitude and degradation, which has continued to this day and, by a strange irony of fate, has closely linked them to this Roman Church by which they had been sold to England' (Reclus, 1905a, p. 594). According to Reclus the later involvement of many Irishmen in Europe's religious wars in the 16th century, resulted in the fact that, 'doubly enemies to the English, they were then doubly oppressed, firstly as Irish and then as Catholics' (Reclus, 1905b, p. 362).

In Reclus' anticolonial critique, the loss of freedom and independence is always presented as a cause of backwardness and 'moral degradation' for the peoples concerned, who were under the ethical obligation to rise up against oppression. In this sense, Reclus' arguments are akin to those advanced a century later by Edward Said (1935–2003), who reasoned that the place of colonialism in Irish history has to be studied to understand contemporary Irish identities. According to Said, failing to see Ireland as a postcolonial country would mean that all its problems 'are its own and certainly cannot be ascribed to British colonialism' (Said, 2003, p. 177). It is thus possible to conclude that Reclus' sojourn in Ireland was important in shaping his ideas on social justice, as he directly witnessed extreme poverty and hunger, and developed a critique of 'voluntary servitude', expressed in his harsh sarcasm about the state of psychological subjection toward the Crown, the Church and the landlords of several people he met.

Lost in translation: a geography of Ireland

On a number of occasions, in his mammoth geographical works Reclus addressed topics linked to Ireland, an island to which he devoted a chapter of seventy-two pages in the *New Universal Geography*. This chapter was reduced to fifty-seven, accordingly due to a difference of format, in the English edition published by Ernst Georg Ravenstein (1834–1913), a naturalised British geographer of German origin well known for his studies of world population (Grigg, 1977). Reclus' books were very popular at the time, not only amongst academics and scientists but also the wider, literate public. The promotion of such publications was part of a conscious strategy of early anarchist geographers to disseminate their ideas among different audiences and led to their collaboration with big mainstream publishers like the French Hachette. This had outstanding results from the standpoint of the publics reached, as the *Nouvelle géographie universelle* was a bestseller in France, with 20,000 copies printed, with translations made into several languages including English, Italian, Spanish and Russian (Errani, 1984). Moreover, the correspondence between Kropotkin and John Scott Keltie (1840–1927) shows the great interest in Reclus' works stimulated in British publishing milieus (Ferretti, 2017a).

Research in the field of translation studies has shown the ideological nature of translation practices. The English translations of Reclus' work are an example of what Lawrence Venuti calls 'the translator's invisibility'. Venuti argues that a translation is generally considered as acceptable for 'most publishers, reviewers, and readers when it reads fluently when the absence of any linguistic or stylistic particularities makes it seem transparent. [Yet], the illusion of transparency is an effect of fluent discourse' (Venuti, 1995, p. 1). In the case of the *New Universal Geography's* English translation, this transparency effect renders impossible to appreciate the ideological nature of the translation without a comparison with the

³ Paris, Institut Français d'Histoire Sociale (IFHS), 14 AS 232, dossier IX, Elie and Élisée Reclus to A. Nefftzer, 6 January 1858.

original French. I use the word 'unfaithful' in the title of this paper not to reclaim a positivist view of language and translation, but to highlight the voluntary omission and manipulation of some parts of the work for very precise political aims. Still, it is worth considering that translations are never 'faithful', because 'translation never communicates in untroubled fashion because the translator negotiates the linguistic and cultural differences' (Venuti, 2000, p. 482) and, as Nicolaas Rupke argues, it finally conveys 'a different message from the one the author had in mind' (Rupke, 2000, p. 210). Likewise, postcolonial scholarship has shown that translation 'is not an innocent, transparent activity but is highly charged with significance at every stage' (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999, p. 3). Susan Bassnett and Harish Trivedi use the metaphor of the translator as a cannibal, in which translation 'may be likened to a blood transfusion, where the emphasis is on the health and nourishment of the translator' (Bassnett & Trivedi, 1999, p. 5), arguing that colonial translations consist in the appropriation of foreign texts by rewriting them in colonial languages and especially in English. Reclus' British translators can be considered as a case in this 'cannibalistic' idea of translation.

As I pointed out in the preceding section, in Reclus' first major work, *La Terre*, one finds important differences. In *The Earth*, translated by Henry Woodward (Reclus, 1871) the preface that I quoted above was completely withdrawn. Because of the lack of sources evidencing Reclus' statements on Woodward's work, it is difficult to establish whether this lacuna was determined by political reasons or an editorial choice alone. If the enthusiastic and romantic description that Reclus painted of Irish landscapes might recall a certain type of colonial writing, such as travel literature, it is possible to hypothesise that its withdrawal was due to the importance that the world-famous French geographer gave to Ireland. Reclus' choice to locate his geographical vocation there, might have puzzled his first London publishers.

With regards to the *New Universal Geography*, we do not know if its translation was personally done by Ravenstein, but it is clear that he supervised it, and that this work was very sensitive to political issues raised by the original text. In this edition (printed at the same time in London and New York), most of Reclus' anticolonialist, or simply critical, statements on Ireland were removed with surgical precision. Again in this case, we have no record of Reclus' reaction to this translation, although it is possible to argue that the French geographer was unable to check the numerous translations of his mammoth works, as he was very busy at this time with the weekly publication of the French originals (Ferretti, 2014a). Recent studies have noted that, in many of the *New Universal Geography* editions in Italian, Portuguese, and Spanish, the original text was modified, sometimes heavily, for respective nationalist aims (Ferretti, 2009; Miyahiro, 2010; Ramirez Palacios, 2010), and traces of Reclus' direct control over the texts are very rare.

In the archives of Hachette, Reclus' publisher in Paris, the contracts for the foreign editions spelled out only the monetary and quantitative conditions of the sale of the rights while no condition of fidelity to the original text was stipulated.⁴ In Reclus' original contract for the French edition, it is written only that 'the sums produced by the sale of the rights to translate the present work into one or more foreign languages will be divided equally between the publisher and the author'.⁵ Drawing on recent studies of the material production of Reclus' geography and its editorial networks (Alavoine-Muller, 2013; Ferretti, 2014a), I would argue that Reclus had no legal title, time, or true interest in controlling the numerous

international translations of his work. Moreover, according to other studies on the translations and the international circulation of geographical publishing in the nineteenth century, the practice of heavily modifying texts while translating them, sometimes even without declaring all the sources, seems to have been rather common and apparently not perceived as a particularly troubling way of working (Ferretti, 2014b). I can also empirically state that in the RGS-IBG historical library in London, the *New Universal Geography* edition which is said to have been presented by the author is the French original (Reclus, 1879). Finally, it is worth noting that the 4th volume, devoted to the British Isles, was the last one of the English editions edited by Ravenstein and his team, whereas from the 5th volume onwards, the work was edited by Augustus Henry Keane (1833–1912), a writer of Irish origins and a Kropotkin's friend and correspondent.⁶ Nevertheless, direct contacts between Reclus and Keane are not documented.

On the first page of the chapter devoted to Ireland in the *Nouvelle Géographie universelle*, when Reclus introduced the relationship between this island and Great Britain, some lines and words were withdrawn in the version edited by Ravenstein. Both versions stated that the political union between Ireland and Great Britain 'has not brought about an intimate coalescence between the Irish and their neighbours of the larger island. On the contrary, there exist feelings of strong hostility ... The Irish look upon themselves as a conquered race, injured in its most sacred rights and interests' (Reclus, 1882, p. 378). However, in the French version it was also stated that the Irish were conquered 'by force [*Par la force*]' (Reclus, 1879, p. 739) and that 'many of them speak of their masters with hate [*C'est avec haine que nombre d'entre eux parlent de leurs maîtres*]' (Reclus, 1879, p. 739). The English version also excludes Reclus' statement that the British 'often mock their poor fellow citizen Paddy, laughing at his poverty and failings, using malicious proverbs and offensive comparisons towards him [*Ils tournent en dérision leur pauvre compatriote, Paddy, se moquent de sa misère et de ses défauts, se servent à son égard de proverbes malveillants et de comparaisons désobligeantes*]' (Reclus, 1879, p. 739). Both versions, however, did recognise that Ireland was a political problem for Britain by comparing it to Poland, the most popular example of an oppressed nationality in Europe at the time, and which the anarchist geographers Reclus, Metchnikoff and Kropotkin supported (Ferretti, 2014a). For example, as Reclus noted, 'Ireland has sometimes been called an English Poland, but two centuries have elapsed since the Irish were able to place an army in the field to fight for their alleged rights' (Reclus, 1882, p. 378). The word 'alleged' was added in the English version, whereas Reclus, in the original, had simply written 'their rights [*Ses droits (à l'Irlande)*]' (Reclus, 1879, p. 739).

In the same text, Reclus goes on to point out, 'every attempt at a resurrection—even that of 1798, when 30,000 men took the field—has been promptly suppressed. But though England need no longer dread an open rebellion, she has nevertheless to contend with the sullen hostility of a majority amongst the inhabitants of the sister island. More than once the foreign policy of Great Britain has been hampered through the discontent animating Irishmen on both sides of the ocean' (Reclus, 1882, pp. 378–379). In the French version Reclus specified that 'more than once the millions of Irish émigrés in the USA have provoked serious difficulties for British diplomacy [*Plus d'une fois les millions d'Irlandais émigrés aux États-Unis ont créé des sérieuses difficultés à la diplomatie de la Grande Bretagne*]' (Reclus, 1879, p. 739). This is already enough for considering that Reclus' *New Universal Geography* was not a

⁴ Caen, Institut Mémoire de l'Édition Contemporaine (IMEC), HAC 59.7, Clichés et droit de traduction en langue anglaise cédés à MM. Virtue & C., 14 January 1876.

⁵ IMEC, HAC 59.7, Géographie descriptive et statistique, 2 July 1872.

⁶ GARF (State Archive of the Russian Federation), Fondy P-1129, op. 2, H. Keane to P. Kropotkin, 5 March 1892.

'descriptive geography', as it has long been considered, but a text addressing at the time very urgent social and geopolitical stakes, and that Ravenstein's intention was to attenuate the social and political prickliness of the work.

Again in the Universal Geography, several modifications were made in the pages where Reclus addressed the Gaelic language problem. Firstly, the English version suppressed Reclus' comparison between Scots Gaelic, the 'ancient language of the Highlands [*L'ancienne langue ... des Highlands*]' (Reclus, 1879, p. 769) and the Irish Gaelic, mainly spoken in western Ireland, 'in Connaught, above all in Galway, which deserves its name of "Land of the Welsh", in the counties of Kerry, Donegal, Waterford, and in some remote districts [*Dans le Connaught, surtout dans le Galway, qui mérite son nom de 'Pays de Galles', dans les comtés de Kerry, de Donegal, de Waterford, et dans quelques districts écartés*]' (Reclus, 1879, p. 769). Some statistics on the progressive 'disappearance' of Irish Gaelic were added by Ravenstein to Reclus' original text, apparently to strengthen his statement on the ineluctable extinction of this language. If Reclus was rather pessimistic in stating that the number of Gaelic speakers had almost been halved from 1851 to 1871 (Reclus, 1879, p. 769), he did not reach the harsh conclusion added in the English version (and absent in the French one), where it was said that 'the days of Irish are numbered. Not a newspaper is published in that tongue, and the translations of the *Iliad* and of Moore's *Irish Melodies*, recently prepared by the Most Rev. John McHale, are not works intended to meet a popular demand' (Reclus, 1882, p. 400). On the contrary, Reclus acknowledged the important written tradition of Gaelic languages, which were used to write the first Irish annals, and made a point similar to the one posited by Kevin Keegan who, addressing the historical continuum between speaking Gaelic and speaking English in colonial Ireland, questioned the received wisdom that 'oral Irish' had been supplanted by 'written English' (Keegan, 2013). These arguments recall the studies devoted to subalterns and the impossibility they face of speaking in an autonomous voice (Spivak, 1988). Other studies have demonstrated the presence of an 'Irish Orientalism', based on an identification between Celtic and Gaelic traditions and ancient Asian literature, implicitly suggesting the backwardness of the former. It is an Orientalism that was nevertheless endorsed by several Irish authors as a mark of originality (Lennon, 2003).

Even in the ethnographic descriptions of the Irish native population, many details in the English version take the tone of a denigrating description, which is impossible to find in Reclus' more empathic original text. For instance, when Reclus addressed the legend of the disappearance of serpents owing to St Patrick, he noted that 'people of the countryside are very superstitious [*Dans les campagnes irlandaises le peuple [est] très superstitieux*]' (Reclus, 1879, p. 765) whereas his English translator wrote that 'Irish peasants [are] a very superstitious race' (Reclus, 1882, p. 365), clearly putting this topic not in a cultural but in a racial context, aiming to stress the 'inferiority' of the 'Irish race' as in the well-known expressions of scientific racism applied to the Irish which are easy to find in works of that time (Constable, 1888). This was also the case in a note on the character of the inhabitants of the remotest districts, which according to Reclus 'could be said to be a wild one [*Un aspect que l'on peut qualifier de sauvage*]' (Reclus, 1879, p. 776), whereas the translator wrote that 'the aspect of the inhabitants is almost that of savages' (Reclus, 1882, p. 402), recalling the idea of racialisation and implicit comparisons with other so-called 'savage races' subjugated by the British Crown. As Diarmid Finnegan has demonstrated, British anthropology in the nineteenth century had a clear discourse on the 'racialisation of the Irish', which were seen as something like 'Celtic Calibans' to justify their repression (Finnegan, 2014).

However, the clearest examples of the political concern of

Reclus' geography, and consequent ideological nature of many parts of the translation, were related to the colonial condition of Ireland. According to Reclus, 'English conquest was the incursion of barbarians, which stopped the free development of Irish genius [*La conquête anglaise fut l'irruption de barbares qui vint arrêter le libre essor du génie irlandais*]' (Reclus, 1879, p. 778), and the crimes by John Norreys (1547–1597) and Oliver Cromwell (1599–1658) were then laid out. One of the main changes in social and political life determined by English conquest, according to Reclus, was 'the revolution in the regime of property. In days of old the land was held in common [*la révolution dans le régime de la propriété. Autrefois la terre était commune*]' (Reclus, 1879, p. 781) and belonged not to individuals, but to clans. The sources that Reclus draw on comprised a range of historical literature available at the time, including the *Proceedings of the Royal Irish Academy* and the works of Irish archaeologists like George Petrie (Reclus, 1879, p. 790). Reclus was also quite clear about religious persecutions, stating that 'deprived of their land by Englishmen, the Irish were also long persecuted by them on account of their religion [*Privés de la terre par les Anglais, les Irlandais ont été aussi longtemps persécutés pour cause de leur religion*]' (Reclus, 1879, p. 81), while the English translator omitted the words 'by Englishmen' and 'by them' (Reclus, 1882, p. 405), thereby noting the persecutions but not their perpetrators.

The most serious omission of the English edition is undoubtedly a short phrase concerning the famines which repeatedly affected Ireland during the nineteenth century. While the English version stated neutrally that 'famines have been of frequent occurrence in Ireland' (Reclus, 1882, p. 406), the original French text argued that this happened ever 'since Ireland ceased being her own master [*Depuis que l'Irlande a cessé de s'appartenir*—literally, 'ceased to belong to herself']' (Reclus, 1879, p. 783). The latter was a clear declaration that misery and famine were the result of English rule and Ireland's colonial condition, and the statement was excised by the translator for obvious political reasons. The mere statement that the Great Famine was provoked by a potato illness could be politically 'neutral', whereas suggesting that it was produced by colonial economic relations and thus that British imperialism had direct responsibility was too anticolonialist to be articulated. Recent research is clear on this topic, confirming Reclus' statements. Among a number of scholars, Gerry Kearns has argued that 'the Great Famine of 1845–52 was the last in a traumatic series but it was managed by the British in a novel fashion, both modern and cruel ... The use of mass starvation for social engineering was, like plantation and partition, to become part of the arsenal of British colonial technologies' (Kearns, 2013, pp. 22–23). Likewise, Reclus' work correlates with contemporary arguments made by Nally, that 'the colonial experience is central—not incidental—to this situation' (Nally, 2011, p. 18).

In the same work, after the description of the famine's death rate, Reclus addressed another central social and political topic for contemporary Irish history, viz. emigration and the growing Irish communities in Great Britain and America. In the latter case, Reclus observed that the number of Americans with Irish roots was then higher than the number of inhabitants in Ireland, and this had geopolitical value, because Irish nationalists 'hoped that this population might serve them as a fulcrum for starting a war between the American Republic and Great Britain [*ont espéré que cette population pourrait leur servir de point d'appui pour faire éclater la guerre entre la République américaine et la Grande Bretagne*]' (Reclus, 1879, p. 785). This hope was also based on a remark by Reclus that was dropped from the English edition of his work, that 'Irish migrants, even when they have become United States citizens, are constantly in touch with their compatriots overseas and send them money. A touching example of the spirit of solidarity which

distinguishes the Irish [*Les émigrants irlandais, même lorsqu'ils sont devenus citoyens des États-Unis, restent constamment en rapport avec leurs compatriotes d'outre-mer. Touchant témoignage de l'esprit de solidarité qui distingue les Irlandais*] (Reclus, 1879, p. 785).

On Irish emigration to Great Britain, Reclus' cartographer Charles Perron (1837–1909) drew a demographic map of the concentration of Irish population in Britain (Fig. 1). Reclus linked this phenomenon to the poverty and spatial segregation of Irish communities in the main British industrial cities: 'Every populous city of Great Britain has its "Little Ireland", poor, dirty, and airless neighbourhood where the unlucky Paddy must first seek refuge [*Chaque ville populeuse de la Grande-Bretagne a sa 'Petite Irlande', quartier pauvre, sale, mal aéré, où le malheureux Paddy doit chercher d'abord son refuge*] (Reclus, 1879, p. 787). Here, the English edition added a disparaging aside which was completely absent from Reclus' text: '[Paddy] might grow wealthy, if it were not for his improvidence, and although he generally marries among his own kin, his presence must in the end displace the Anglo-Saxon element in our labouring class, which is almost daily sustaining losses through emigration' (Reclus, 1882, p. 408). Thus, whereas the original French text denounced the poverty of Irish migrants, the English version justified it by their implicit 'inferiority', clearly evoked by their supposed improvidence and endogamy, even going so far as to see in their growing number a threat to the Anglo-Saxon working-class.

Reclus' social description of the miserable condition of Irish and British working classes was further toned down by the British publishers through the apparently conscious omission of words like 'proletarians [*Proletaires*] (Reclus, 1879, p. 788). Moreover, in the general chapter on the British Isles' social situation, Reclus stressed the persistence in both the English and Irish countryside of feudal institutions and the presence of large private properties and the consequent concentration of wealth and privilege. Here, a sarcastic Reclus' remark was removed from the English version: 'The Englishman, Mr Gladstone said, has the religion of inequality [*L'Anglais, dit M. Gladstone, a la religion de l'inégalité*] (Reclus, 1879, p. 825).

In the regional description of some Irish counties, the different political concerns of Reclus and his translator are also clearly apparent. In a page devoted to the city of Belfast, the violent contrasts already existing between Orangemen and Home Rulers were noted, whereas the English edition did away with the lines in which Reclus explicitly takes a stand against the Orangemen: 'The Protestant enemies of Irish independence are organised in secret lodges modelled on those of Freemasonry. Orange is their rallying word and they distinguish themselves in ceremonies by a yellow ribbon. Legislation has tried many a time in vain to break up this league of foreigners which, on the very soil of Ireland itself, assigns itself the task of insolently reminding the Irish people of their defeat and their political servitude. The Orangist League, which, it is said, enjoys the complicity of civil and ecclesiastic dignitaries of the race of the conquerors, can continue to defy the pride and dignity of the defeated: whence the cause of the battles which so frequently make blood flow in the streets of Belfast [*Les protestants ennemis de l'indépendance irlandaise se sont organisés en loges secrètes sur le modèle de la franc-maçonnerie. Orange est leur mot de ralliement et dans les processions et les cérémonies ils se distinguent par un ruban jaune. C'est en vain que la législation a maintes fois essayé de rompre cette ligue d'étrangers qui, sur le sol même de l'Irlande, prend à tâche de rappeler insolemment leur défaite et leur servitude politique aux Irlandais: soutenue, dit-on, par les dignitaires civils et ecclésiastiques de la race des conquérants, la ligue des Orangistes peut continuer de braver l'amour propre et la dignité des vaincus: de là ces batailles qui ensanglantent si fréquemment le pavé de Belfast*] (Reclus, 1879, p. 798–799).

The deletion of these lines from the English translation is a clear example of how 'science's practices and forms of communicative action are always grounded in particular settings, and questions regarding site, institutional organisation, and social relationship in place ... matter to an explanation of science's cognitive content and variable reception' (Livingstone & Withers, 2011, p. 13). Ravenstein and the English-speaking publishers of the *New Universal Geography* did not share Reclus' political ideas, and in this sense their publishing cultures clearly had implications for the British reception of Reclus' geography. Given the links between anarchist geographers like Reclus and Kropotkin and the Royal Geographical Society, which included direct collaboration between Reclus and Scott Keltie,⁷ it is worth looking into existing sources to shed light on the relationship between Reclus and his English translators. Ravenstein was a fellow of the Royal Geographical Society in the years that Reclus and Kropotkin attended a number of RGS meetings in London (though Reclus never was a full society member), and the correspondence between the two anarchist geographers makes plain the personal connection between them and Ravenstein, as well as exchanges of ideas they had with him. Ravenstein is mentioned by Reclus in the long list of the acknowledgements for the French edition of the *New Universal Geography* (Reclus, 1879, p. 939) but no detail is given on his possible contribution. In 1894, Reclus wrote a letter to Kropotkin containing the plan for a new and reorganised English edition of the *New Universal Geography*. As Reclus notes, the translator ought to have been Kropotkin himself. 'You propose to translate the work yourself, saying that an English friend will read the proofs. I am ready to start whenever you want. You distrust Ravenstein, but I have always considered him as a very nice friend. I say this out of friendship for him, not out of willingness to do the work with him. To each his work.'⁸

From the sources currently available, it is impossible to know precisely the reasons for Kropotkin's diffidence with respect to Ravenstein, but this letter spells out some of Reclus' dissatisfaction with the work of the latter, albeit their personal relations were apparently good. Reclus might have trusted a Ravenstein's note which appeared at the beginning of the volume *British Isles*, where the Editor stated that he had 'carefully abstained from intruding his own opinions when these were not quite in accord with the views held by the Author' (Reclus, 1882:iv). This section shows that Ravenstein's statement was not correct, at least for the chapter on Ireland. Considering that Reclus and Kropotkin had very close contacts with British scholars like Scott Keltie, Keane, Hugh Mill and Patrick Geddes, and their British networks even included a conservative geographer like Halford Mackinder (Ferretti, 2011a; Kearns, 2009), this apparent mistrust of Ravenstein is an indication that they perceived important political and epistemological differences. Today, Ravenstein's 'law of migration' has been reconsidered, and scholars of Irish migration like Mary Gilmartin praise his 1885 map of the migratory fluxes between Ireland and Britain as 'a wonderful way of showing how difficult it is to capture the movements of people, but it also works to show the different ways in which those movements are connected' (Gilmartin, 2015, p. 22). Ravenstein's works on this topic were likewise valued by Reclus, who quoted them while addressing Irish migration in Britain (Reclus, 1879, p. 787), but the two geographers' views clearly clashed on the Malthusian legacy which still lasted in Ravenstein's ideas on the globe's 'carrying capacity' in terms of the relation between population and resources (Ravenstein, 1990). In the

⁷ RGS-IBG Department of Manuscript, CB7, E. Reclus to J. Scott Keltie, 5 December 1894.

⁸ GARF, Fondy P-1129, op. 2 khr 2103, f. 97–98, É. Reclus to P. Kropotkin, 5 October 1894.



Fig. 1. Charles Perron, 'Irish migrants in Great Britain' (Reclus, 1879, p. 787).

context of the struggle anarchist geographers conducted against Malthusianism (Ferretti, 2011b; Kinna, 2016), Reclus overtly criticised Ravenstein's calculations on world's population, deeming them lacking 'any serious value' (Reclus, 1905c, p. 332).

On Irish decolonisation

To better understand Reclus' relationship with Ireland, it is important to consider the political context in which his geographical work was conceived. Several authors have noticed a political radicalisation in the works of the last ten to fifteen years of Reclus' career, such as *L'Homme et la Terre*, which was written between 1894 and 1905, and published between 1905 and 1908, but never translated into English. In this section I discuss Reclus' later statements on British Empire and Ireland both in this work and in other writings from the same years, including his papers and book reviews in the Belgian socialist journal *L'Humanité nouvelle* (Ferretti, 2013).

At the turn of the twentieth century, the anarchist movement in France and a large part of Europe was subject to strong repression by state authorities, and numerous continental anarchists found refuge in London, which became the major hub for transnational anarchism (Bantman, 2013; Di Paola, 2013). In London a number of Fenians, militants for Irish independence who were already the protagonists of violent attacks, got in touch with French anarchists. According to Constance Bantman, some reports by the French police, which had informers in London, stated that 'the revolutionaries in refuge here work in agreement with the Fenians and share in their cause [for] blowing up Westminster' (Bantman, 2013, p. 37). Even though 'such rumours are probably best interpreted as agents' speculations at a time of heightened Fenian and anarchist activism' (Bantman, 2013, p. 37), it is nevertheless true that between the respective networks there existed forms of solidarity, which led to a radicalisation of the Irish national movement and the growth of its socialist and republican components (Whelehan, 2012). This can be traced in the correspondence of Jean Grave, one of the most famous French anarchists of that time and a very close friend of Reclus, with the editors of *L'Irlande Libre* (Fig. 2), the journal of the Irish migrants in Paris that was published from 1897 to 1900. The Grave archives include unpublished letters from the journal's editor-in-chief Maud Gonne (1866–1953), the founder of the feminist group *Inghinidhe Na hÉireann* (Daughters of Ireland), collaborator of James Connolly, and wife of John MacBride (both Irish militants who were executed after the 1916 Easter Rising), all activists whose struggle for independence was clearly characterised by a socialist-republican mindset (Delany, 2001; Stokes, 2012, pp. 1896–1916). Moreover, some authors have stressed Connolly's involvement, in Ireland and in North America with the Industrial Workers of the World (IWW), in Revolutionary Syndicalism, a movement traditionally close to anarchist communism (Mac Giollamóir, 2004).

The best-known anarchist geographer in the English-speaking world, Kropotkin, seems to have inspired other Irish militants like Jack White (Keohane, 2014), and, as witnessed by his correspondence, was personally in touch with William Butler Yeats (1865–1939), Gonne's close friend and a protagonist of the 'Celtic revival'.⁹ A survey of the anarchist journal *Freedom*, co-founded by Kropotkin in London in 1886, confirms that the interest of anarchists in the Irish cause was relevant in the 30–40 years preceding Irish independence.

If anarchists displayed a critical standpoint vis-à-vis Irish Nationalism, because in their internationalism the social question took precedence over the national one, this did not impede solidarity and collaboration between *L'Irlande Libre* and the journal edited by Grave (and supported by Reclus and Kropotkin), *Les Temps Nouveaux*. Grave advertised Gonne's journal, welcoming it as the representative 'of the Irish who struggle for the independence of their country'.¹⁰ In her letters (Fig. 3) Gonne tried to convince Grave of the consistency between the national cause and the social one in Ireland. If, on the one hand, she said, 'our first problem is to kick out the English',¹¹ on the other, she argued that the maturity of social forces was enough to consider that 'without the brutal force of England, the [landlords] would have been expelled and the land returned to Irish peasants long ago'.¹²

Recounting a lecture given by Gonne, Grave endorsed her demonstration of the repression which the Irish people suffered, and her denunciation of those 'terrible scenes of eviction', but he went on to advance his own critique, 'The speaker kept to an exclusively patriotic point of view, but she should add that the facts against which the Irish people complain with full reason have both political and economic stakes: we are curious to know if there are also Irish nationals among the landlords who resort to the force of the English army to expel the miserable Irish from their fields'.¹³ Thus, anarchist readings were sensitive to the complex intermingling of social, cultural and national identities embedded in colonial relations, challenging what John Morrissey calls today 'simplified reading[s] of subjugation and resistance' (Morrissey, 2003, p. 144).

As recent literature underscores, the relationship between anarchism and nationalism was a complex one; on the one hand, anarchism is internationalist, and on the other, if the nation does not coincide with the state, it is considered a legitimate form of territorial self-organisation. According to Davide Turcato, 'an inclusive idea of nation does not clash with anarchism' (Turcato, 2015, p. 30), as abundantly confirmed by Reclus', Kropotkin's and other early anarchists' works endorsing the struggles for national independence of 'oppressed nationalities' in Eastern Europe such as the Polish, the Finnish, the Ukrainians and the Bulgarians (Ferretti, 2014a). As Benedict Anderson (2007) showed, early anarchists contributed to shape an 'anti-colonial imagination' both in Europe and in the colonised world outside Europe. This also explains why in the collective work *Patriotisme et colonisation* [Patriotism and Colonisation] edited by Grave in 1903 and prefaced by Reclus, which is considered the first collective expression of left-wing anticolonialism in France (Liauzu, 2012), Irish fighters were praised as 'the most admirable existing patriots' (Grave, 1903, p. 6), without this affirmation sounding especially contradictory in an anarchist text, where in fact patriotic feelings for anticolonial liberation were (albeit critically) endorsed.

Among the most important and radical Reclus' contributions to anarchist anti-colonial debates at the time one can mention his statements against the French occupation in Algeria and the British one in India, numerous in his works and correspondence (Ferretti, 2013), and his call for a general revolt of colonised peoples against their oppressors. What is noticeable is that Ireland was included in the main list of colonised peoples. 'This hatred of the slave who revolts against us is right and proves that there is still hope of redemption. It is natural that the Hindus, Egyptians, Kaffirs and Irishmen hate Englishmen; it is natural that Arabians execrate

¹⁰ *Les Temps Nouveaux*, vol. 3, n. 3, 15–21 May 1897, p. 4 [available at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>].

¹¹ Paris, IFHS, Jean Grave Papers, 14AS134, M. Gonne to J. Grave, n. d.

¹² Paris, IFHS, Jean Grave Papers, 14AS134, M. Gonne to J. Grave, 30 May 1897.

¹³ *Les Temps Nouveaux*, vol. 2, n. 51, 1897, p. 3. [available at <http://gallica.bnf.fr/>].

⁹ National Library of Ireland, Manuscripts Reading Room, Ms 25,639(59), P. Kropotkin to W.B. Yeats, 5 July 1905. The Celtic Revival was a literary movement which rediscovered traditional cultures with the political aim to contribute to the construction of an Irish national identity.



Fig. 2. A cover of *L'Irlande libre*, caricaturing Queen Victoria. The caption says 'Her work', with a clear reference to both repression and famine.

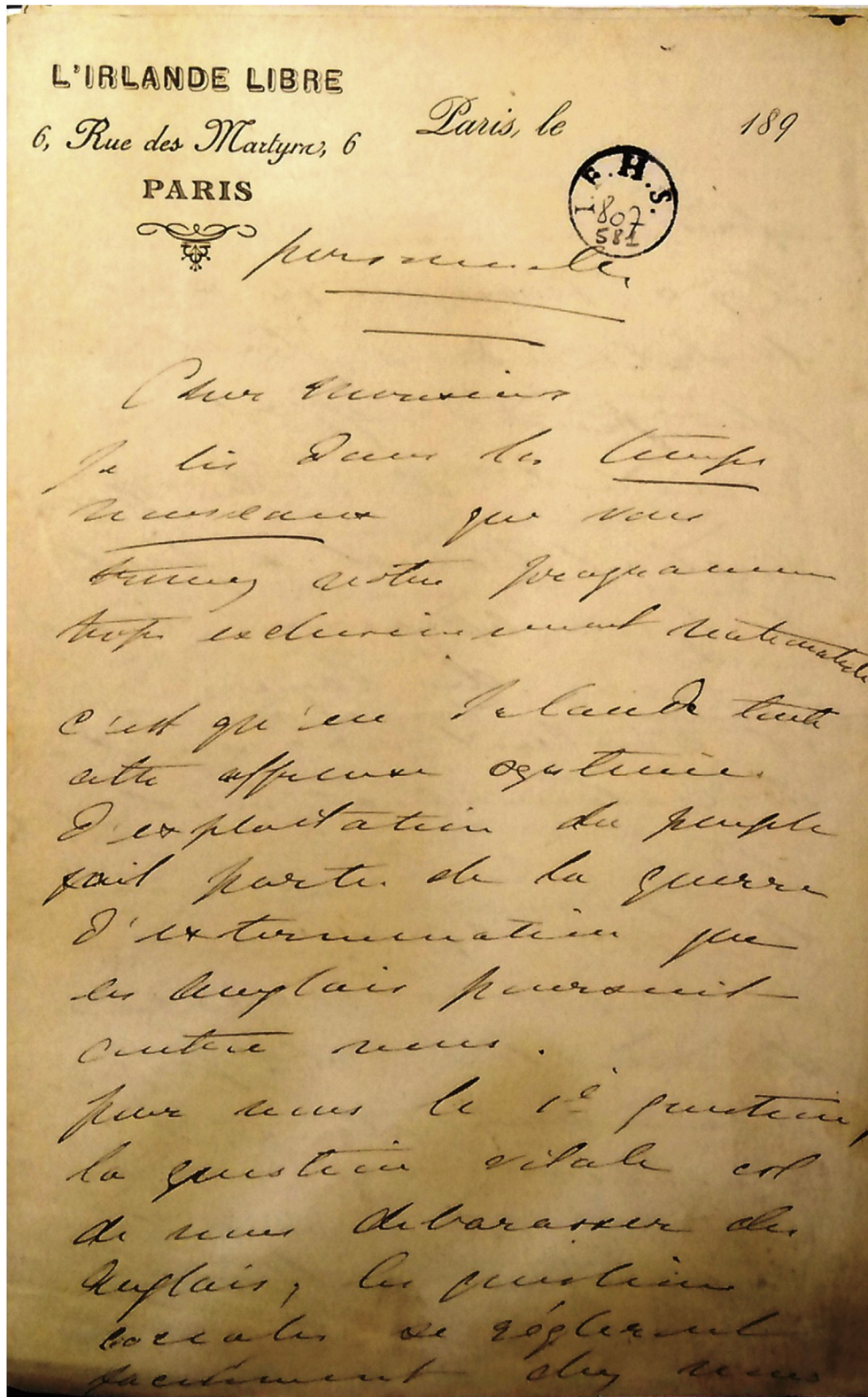


Fig. 3. Letter from M. Gonne to J. Grave, IFHS, 14AS134.

Europeans. That's justice!' (Reclus, 1899, p. 248). It is worth noting that the term 'natural' was not an allusion to any essentialist civilizational difference, but a rhetorical device used as synonymous with 'obvious', as shown by recent works clarifying the use of

'naturalistic' categories in the works of early anarchist geographers (Ferretti, 2017b). Ireland was thus viewed as a colonised land in the same way as India and Algeria were, which sheds new light on the anticolonialism of early anarchists and anarchist geographers. If a

recent debate existed on whether Ireland was a colony or not (Said, 2003; McDonough, 2005), the position of Reclus stands clear: it was.

In *L'Homme et la Terre*, often considered the most radical expression of Reclus' thinking (Pelletier, 2013), the chapter on the British Empire is a classic expression of the anarchist case against colonialism. In the pages devoted to 'the Scots and the Irish', the author pointed to social injustice as the first cause of political and social division in the UK: 'The United Kingdom is divided, like all the other countries of the Capitalist world, into two hostile classes; thus it has still not achieved its political unity' (Reclus, 1908, p. 22). The political unity 'to be achieved', according to Reclus, was not the complete submission to monarchist rule, but, on the contrary, the free federation of peoples according to the anarchist idea of free territorial aggregation on a cultural and linguistic basis after the abolition of capitalism and the state.

The first country addressed in this chapter was Scotland. Here Reclus proved quite empathetic with his friend and collaborator Patrick Geddes (1854–1932), a very complex figure and polymath who collaborated on some imperial enterprises as a planner (Matless, 2000) but at the same time was proud of his Celtic origins and compelled by the construction of a Scottish national identity (Withers, 2001). Based on his reading of Geddes's notes, Reclus stressed, on the one hand, the active participation of Scottish troops in British imperial expansion, and on the other, the high price they paid. Finally, he decried an opportunistic use of the Highlanders by the Crown which was interested in keeping all its subjected peoples divided: 'As for the Scottish ... from the Northern Highlands, they were decimated by wars: firstly by direct extermination, during the Stuarts' vain attempts to reconquer their throne; and then by the flattering and even more dangerous privileges that English kings have granted them, putting them in the front line to make them die in their service ... as in the case of the South African war' (Reclus, 1908, p. 22). This statement demonstrates that Reclus was sensitive to the articulations and hierarchies in colonial powers, and to the complexity of field practices and negotiations in the areas which are now considered the 'in-between spaces' of colonial projects and colonised societies (Morrissey, 2004).

The case of Ireland is presented by Reclus in a very different way than that of Scotland; beyond the Irish sea, he said, 'Ireland remained not only a geographically distinct land, but one which ... remained rebellious against the political union proclaimed for centuries' (Reclus, 1908, p. 22). According to Reclus, even if the intermarrying between Gaelic Irish and English colonists who settled at different epochs rendered it difficult to make distinctions by 'blood' (a very common criterion at that time), the effects of place were so strong in Ireland that a cultural identity was finally acknowledged by the majority of the inhabitants. Thus, 'the native Irishman, even if with Anglo-Saxon origins and even English by speech, culture, and relations to the rest of the world, becomes in any case a natural enemy to the English and claims the political independence of Ireland, which his own ancestors usurped from his present compatriots' (Reclus, 1908, p. 23). As recently shown by William Smyth, an Irish identity started to emerge in the early modern era from a very composite ensemble of 'Old Irish' (Gael) and 'Old English' as a reaction to the invaders, who were the first to establish an Irish identity in negative vis-à-vis themselves (Smyth, 2014). Other studies have shown all the complex nuances existing in the self-definition and identification of the different camps of Irish, English, and Anglo-Irish (Kelly, 2013).

Reclus also noted the disdain of several Englishmen for the poor Irish 'whom they encounter in the humblest neighbourhoods of their cities' (Reclus, 1908, p. 23), arguing that 'England has hereditary faults towards Ireland, which is even defined ironically as a sister island: the offenders always hate the offended' (Reclus, 1908,

p. 23). Reclus goes on to state the debt that England owes Ireland for both the cultural contribution of intellectuals of Irish origin like Swift, Sterne, and Sheridan, and the military service of Irish troops. Reclus draws a comparison here with the Highlanders, judging that the employ of non-English troops in the imperial armies was a way to 'divide and rule'. 'By leading Paddy on its conquest of the world, England ensured both its own glory and the tranquillity of Ireland's poor countryside.' (Reclus, 1908, p. 24).

However, for Reclus, a violent clash between Ireland and Britain was unavoidable as the 'offense is irreparable: the people of Erin are a conquered one: the land they cultivate does not belong to them; their taxes ... profit above all a foreign aristocracy and the oppressor government; even the language they speak in almost all the territory is the language of the victor, because the indigenous tongue has been systematically banished from all the schools and all the public places where the master appears ... Now the Irish patriot claims not only his right to the land, to free speech and action, he also wants to recover the language of his ancestors. Will he succeed in climbing back up the slope that centuries-old oppression has thrust him down? That would be a miracle of willpower which no other people has yet demonstrated. Nevertheless, it is the oppressed that holds his master, and for as long as he is not allowed his autonomy, Great Britain will be deprived of her free initiative in the great activity of the world. Ireland is indeed the vulture gnawing at the side of the British Prometheus' (Reclus, 1908, p. 24).

This long quotation is important for understanding the details of Reclus' late views on colonialism. Firstly, he expressed a clearly geopolitical concern about political equilibrium understood as justice; this was a point he had already made about the Balkan question (Ferretti, 2014a). To his mind, only the people's freedom and the acknowledgement of national claims could guarantee political stability. Secondly, the Irish and other colonised peoples, he argued, had not yet demonstrated their capacity to recover their freedom through rebellion, and this adverb indicates that decolonisation for Reclus was inevitable in the future, as he had already announced for India and Algeria (Ferretti, 2013; Pelletier, 2013). Thirdly, Reclus confirms here the attention he paid to aspects of culture and identity beyond the questions of economics and class, emphasising the colonial and political nature of the progressive repression of Irish Gaelic and the importance of recovering it by the subaltern population in Ireland.

Conclusion

This paper demonstrates that some arguments developed in recent debates on postcolonial Ireland have an important precedent in the geography and politics of Élisée Reclus and other anarchist geographers, arguments that have some bearing on the present if we consider, along with Clare Carroll, that 'the effects of the colonial past are far from over in Ireland and Northern Ireland' (Carroll, 2003, p. 2). The importance of Reclus' statements for present debates should be viewed, to my mind, in the specific features of anarchist internationalism and anticolonialism, ideas that closely linked the national question to the social one. In the case of Reclus' Ireland, a further originality was his empathy for both the Irish traditions and Irish Republicanism, although the French geographer and anarchist opposed both the Catholic and Protestant Churches, seeing religion as a regressive element for the people's emancipation (it is worth noting that Reclus' family background was strictly Protestant). This is another line of research that has been posed in more recent postcolonial times when, again according to Carroll, one should lament 'a state-sponsored Catholicism whose tragic abuse of power has in large measure meant the loss of the spiritual authority it once had as an outlawed

Church' (Carroll, 2003, p. 2). Reclus' arguments can thus contribute to present-day debates, speaking to Nally's arguments on the role religion played in inventing Irish otherness. For instance, the colonisers could argue that the Irish famines were 'providential' devices, reinforcing a 'colonial ideology that equated civility with the imposition of English norms and values' (Nally, 2011, p. x) and allowing liberalist capitalism to get rid of 'those who stand in the way of progress, or refuse to be assimilated ... deemed to be worthless degenerates—in a word, *human encumbrances*' (Nally, 2011, p. 16).

I have also shown the importance of Ireland, and more broadly the British Islands, as places which had various effects on Reclus' geography and political thinking. Firstly there was his education and development as a geographer and an anarchist. Ireland was clearly one of the laboratories for Reclus' political and social geography, which critically addressed the problems of poverty and emigration within what would be called today a 'subaltern space' (Clayton, 2011), as Ireland was at that time. Secondly, there was also the reception of his geographical works, which, in the case of the *New Universal Geography*, were passed through a British filter, apparently due to Ravenstein, with the aim of depoliticising the French anarchist's arguments. This furnishes a clear case, which merits further research, of the effects of place in the spread of Reclus' (and Kropotkin's) geographies in the English-speaking world. It is also a confirmation of the strategic value of geography for social and political questions.

Furthermore, given the widespread popularity of his works at the time, the repercussions of Reclus' geography on the Irish cause were accordingly not negligible. Probably for lack of direct knowledge Reclus did not address in detail the authors and movements of the complex Irish political scene between the 18th and the 19th century, which has been recently studied by David Featherstone (2013) and Gerry Kearns (2014). Nevertheless, the direct links between Reclus' circle and the Irish Socialists and Republicans can be seen in the correspondence between Maud Gonne and Jean Grave, which confirms the existence of a grassroots solidarity, and hence mutual contamination, among transnational movements for social liberation in the Age of Empire. This contributes to contemporary scholarship on the 'anarchist roots of geography' (Springer, 2016) by clarifying the importance of early anarchist geographers' anti-colonial critiques, and the multiple directions, 'internal' and 'external', through which these critiques contributed to disseminate anti-colonial imaginations. All these topics, however, cry out for additional research.

Conflict of interest

I declare I don't have any actual or potential conflict of interest including any financial, personal or other relationships with other people or organizations within three years of beginning the submitted work that could inappropriately influence, or be perceived to influence, my work.

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